



「はじまり」にまつわる七つの物語

SEVEN STORIES ABOUT "THE BEGINNING"

CHAPTER 3: A SMALL WORLD (RAIRAKU REI)

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD

While boiling the soba noodles Totsuka had made, Kusanagi muttered to himself,

"You really do start all sorts of things. Next time, soba?"

Totsuka, who was preparing a colander for the soba noodles, tilted his head slightly.

"Isn't making soba noodles a common hobby? I think Kusanagi-san would like it too."

"Well, if you get into it, I might get involved too. I have no plans to, though."

"Kusanagi-san, you're a bit lazy with hobbies."

"You're too lazy with hobbies. You start everything yourself."

Ignoring Kusanagi's puzzled look, Totsuka laughed slightly.

"But isn't it fun? Starting something you've never done. It feels like a whole new world has begun."

"That's an exaggeration."

Kusanagi gave a bitter smile, but he couldn't quite understand what he was thinking.

Learning things you didn't know, playing things you've never played before, and learning to enjoy them. Something new.

Kusanagi remembers the freshness of starting something new and the feeling of discovering a new world.

However, starting something new requires energy and stamina. Furthermore, Kusanagi is aware that he's the type who "gets hooked if he gets hooked", so he was cautious about the time and money he would have to spend if he did get hooked. Totsuka's claim that he's "a bit lazy when it comes to hobbies" wasn't wrong.

"Kusanagi-san, appreciate and delve into each world."

Totsuka said this as if he'd read Kusanagi's mind.

"Really?"

"Like alcohol and food."

"Well, that's work, you know?"

As he watched the soba slowly swirl in the boiling pot, the stove timer rang.

The boiled soba was rinsed with cold water. Next to him, Totsuka was serving soba soup made with thickly sliced bonito flakes into cups for each person.

"Everyone, it's soba time!"

As he carried a mountain of soba noodles that didn't fit the bar's atmosphere, the HOMRA regulars cheered.

"Finally, it's ready! My soba!"

Kamamoto took up his chopsticks with even more joy. It seems that this time, Totsuka went to make soba noodles with Kamamoto. Sometimes Totsuka starts a new hobby alone, but often he involves his friends.

Kamamoto scooped up a mound of soba noodles with his chopsticks, dipped them in the soup, and slurped them down.

"Delicious! All the effort of making soba was worth it!"

"Kamamoto, you ate too much at once!"

Yata elbowed Kamamoto in the stomach.

"You said you were going to start making soba noodles with Totsuka-san as a hobby, but in the end, what you like isn't making them, but eating them!"

"I can't deny it! The truth is, I'm content to be the one eating the noodles other people make for me!"

Totsuka laughed at Kamamoto's statement.

"Kamamoto is strong, and he seemed to be good at making soba."

"But my taste for soba has grown—or rather, my appreciation for it has grown—so I'm glad I came!"

Kusanagi also extended his chopsticks, laughing at the exchange between Kamamoto and the others.

After examining the freshly made soba with his eyes, he slurped it up.

Although they had some irregularities in the thickness, the noodles had a smooth texture and a strong buckwheat aroma that made them delicious. This could be the beginning of a new world, Kusanagi thought, remembering Totsuka's words. It wasn't the time to delve into the world of soba making, but it piqued his interest.

"With Totsuka-san, you have more opportunities to try things you've never tried before.", Akagi said as he added wasabi to the soba soup.

"We went together the other day to play a very obscure sport, right? Bicycle soccer."

"Bicycle soccer! I thought there was something like that and it sounded fun, so I invited Yata, Shohei, and San-chan to the club Murai-san runs."

"Who is Murai-san?"

Kusanagi joked with Totsuka about his mysterious acquaintance and murmured the same impression as Totsuka: "Is there something like that?"

"It was more fun than I thought!"

Yata said in a cheerful voice.

"At first, it didn't seem logical to play bicycle soccer, but it was actually quite fun dribbling with the front wheel, moving your body and the bike like that, and then shooting the ball!"

"Yata is used to using the skateboard as if it were part of his body, so he was good at bicycle soccer, right?"

"No, I don't understand how to play bicycle soccer!"

Bang! Bando slammed the table.

"Hahaha, San-chan, you fell over and over again!"

Bando glared at Akagi, who was smiling brightly beside him.

"Bicycles are for transportation, not for playing soccer!"

"Shohei was pretty good, but Bando was pathetic, really."

Yata roundly criticized Bando and shouted, "Don't call me pathetic!"

"Did you play anything?"

"Yes. Cycle soccer is played two against two on an indoor court. I won because I was paired with Yata."

Totsuka responded to Kusanagi's question with a peace sign.

"Totsuka-san was good with tricks! Shohei doesn't stand a chance against us with that baggage that is Bando!"

"Grrr...!"

"I had fun playing with you, San-chan!"

Shohei's comforting words must have hurt his pride even more, because Bando turned away with a frown, which showed he was very angry.

"You're playing strange games again. The three of us went camping the other day.", Chitose asked, and Dewa nodded as he added a generous amount of scallions to his soba.

"Chitose said she wanted to practice before asking a girl out, so Totsuka and I went out together."

"When you're with a girl, you want to set up a tent smartly and have her back you up, right?"

"I heard Yuna-chan liked nature, so I was excited, Chitose."

"Who's that Yuna-chan?"

Kusanagi interrupted again.

"Chitose, you weren't very good at setting up a tent."

"That's why you went to practice. Dewa is good at that sort of thing, and Totsuka-san liked camping as a hobby."

Totsuka seemed to have remembered something and said, "That's right.", putting down his soba cup.

"I've gone camping many times, but we played a game we've never played before!"

Chitose looked bitter at Totsuka's words, and Dewa looked away awkwardly.

"What did you do?"

"There was a family camping nearby, and when we saw the kids blowing bubbles, we decided to make some big ones ourselves."

"I'm saying it happened because Totsuka-san befriended the kids and got excited!"

"But Dewa got really excited and started researching the composition of the bubble solution, right?"

"I was right! Dewa, you're showing your obsession where you shouldn't!"

Dewa pulled down the brim of his hat, looking embarrassed.

"It was surprisingly deep when I tried it."

"Chitose also put a lot of effort into making the bubble-making tools."

"It was strange watching three grown men playing with bubbles! The parents were scared! But the children seemed excited, and it reminded me of my childhood!"

"In the end, we made bubbles big enough to fit Anna in! We also put some red power in them and created bubbles that glowed red-hot."

"What were they doing?"

Kusanagi was astonished by the waste of his supernatural power, but Anna looked at him, imagining the scene, and said, "That's nice."

"I wish Anna had been there at least..."

Chitose sighed.

"I went to a pottery class with Anna!"

"Isn't that a nice place to take such a cute little girl?"

Chitose looks at Totsuka with a disapproving look.

"Shige-san owns a pottery studio, so I went there to try it out."

"Who's Shige-san?"

Fujishima leaned forward slightly next to Kusanagi, who commented attentively.

"It was fun. I want to do it again."

"Fujishima, you were making a vase with a craftsman's face, right?"

Eric looked at Fujishima with a bitter smile.

"Shige-san also praised you and said you had something interesting. I thought about becoming your apprentice."

Fujishima didn't change his expression when Totsuka said that, but he didn't seem completely opposed to it as he moved his hands as if turning a potter's wheel.

"The time I spent in front of the clay calmed and cleared my mind."

"Fujishima, you've really entered a new world."

Eric shrugged slightly.

"I wasn't too keen on it, but it was quite fun creating something with my own hands."

"The plates you made, Eric, were beautiful."

After Anna said that, Eric blushed slightly and looked away.

"Ah.", Kusanagi guessed that the plate with the cat image that had somehow become attached to the cupboard had been made by Eric.

"Anna made a beautiful cup, right?"

Anna nodded when Totsuka said that.

"It was fun to make. I also got to see the kiln where it was fired. The inside of the kiln was dyed red and it was beautiful."

"Shige-san's kiln isn't electric; it's wood-fired! I wonder if we could make a pot with King's flames if we put them in the kiln."

Everyone's gaze shifted to Suoh, who had just finished his soba and was smoking after eating, at Totsuka's offhand comment.

Suoh was probably unaware of what they were saying. He raised his eyebrows in confusion at being suddenly drawn to their attention.

"Ah?"

"King, why don't you try pottery?"

Totsuka gave a somewhat exaggerated explanation.

"Do you think he'll do it?"

"I don't think so! But if it's just a matter of putting fire in the oven, I think he'll have a chance."

Totsuka laughed.

"It would be fun if King had a new hobby to take up!"

Then the conversation turned to what new hobbies they wanted Suoh to try. Everyone in Homura was happily contributing ideas and rejecting them, including Totsuka, while Suoh watched with complete indifference.

"Mikoto-san is cool no matter what he does, but I want him to do something really cool!"

Yata was giving a pointless speech.

Kusanagi picked up the empty soba basket and stood next to Suoh, lighting a cigarette.

"The beginning of a new world, you know?"

He muttered, and Suoh looked at him questioningly.

"That's what Totsuka said. Starting something you've never done before feels like starting a new world."

Suoh exhaled a long stream of cigarette smoke in acknowledgment.

"Yes, after hearing what these guys say, it seems like starting a new world is surprisingly easy... but I don't have the stamina for it."

When Kusanagi said that, Suoh burst out laughing.

"Are you overwhelmed with this bar and these guys?"

"Yes. There are a lot of things we need to protect."

"You've started something troublesome."

"Aside from the HOMRA Bar, you were the one who founded the Red Clan, Homra, right?"

Kusanagi narrowed his eyes and glared at Suoh.

But it's true that his life has already seen the beginning of a much larger world. Just taking care of the world he's created may be enough to fill his capacity.

Totsuka is the type to try many things and then get rid of everything he doesn't want to keep.

But Kusanagi is the type to only have what he can afford from the start.

Kusanagi may be hesitant to have something unnecessary because he already achieved what was important to him from the start.

"Hobbies aren't something to take so seriously."

"You're right. Why don't you find a healthy hobby, Mikoto?"

"Shut up."

In the middle of the bar, it seemed a band had sprung up as a hobby they wanted Suoh to try.

Opinions flowed. Some said it would be great if Mikoto played drums, and others said a band was something frivolous for Mikoto.

This led to a conversation about Totsuka's newfound passion for the guitar, and after being told they would monitor his progress, they gave him an acoustic guitar.

"Let's play a song.", Totsuka said, and began strumming enthusiastically.

He's really skilled. That was what he thought again. The sound resonating through the bar was pleasant.

The sound Totsuka played was soft. It was a melody he'd never heard before, so it could have been composed by him.

Kusanagi doesn't dislike music either. Although he doesn't plan to start playing it himself.

Listening to the sounds like that wasn't so bad, he narrowed his eyes silently.

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"It's fine to start anything, but Totsuka left them unfinished..."

Muttering to himself, Kusanagi watered the bonsai and trimmed the branches that grew unevenly with pruning shears.

It's been quite some time since Totsuka passed away, and he's grown accustomed to this task.

While tending to the bonsai, he felt like rearranging Totsuka's belongings.

He wiped the camera with a soft cloth, checked the projector, and took out all the hobby items he'd played with and had grown tired of, dusting them off, and putting them back.

"Fishing rods, sewing tools, paints, outdoor gear... what are they? And this? Isn't it trash?"

He probably used them for some hobby, but Kusanagi thought there were a lot of things that looked like trash or whose purpose was unknown, but he didn't throw them all away and put them back.

Well, he could sort them again sometime.

After finishing his work, he decided to take a break and make himself a glass of mizuware. He left the counter and sat on a stool to drink the cold mizuware, when he suddenly saw a guitar leaning on the edge of the bar.

"...The camera and the guitar were his thing until the end."

Kusanagi approached the guitar, still holding the mizuware.

This guitar is displayed as an interior decoration, so it receives regular maintenance. Therefore, it isn't covered in dust or has damaged strings.

For some reason, feeling this way, Kusanagi put down the watered-down cocktail he was holding on a nearby table and picked up his guitar.

He leaned back on the stool and picked up the guitar. As he plucked the strings, a nostalgic sound emerged.

Because he'd often seen Totsuka practice the guitar when he was a beginner, he knew the basic chords.

But when he tried it, the sound didn't come out as expected, so he grew frustrated and looked up guitar practice videos on his PDA.

"Hmm... I see. So it's easier if you do it this way. The sound is definitely clearer than before. So..."

"Izumo?"

Kusanagi stopped what he was doing when he heard the voice.

Anna and Yata had entered the bar unnoticed and were nearby.

Although the sound of his guitar made it difficult to hear, he was so absorbed that he didn't notice. Kusanagi smiled, embarrassed.

"Oh, okay. Welcome back."

Yata asked Kusanagi, who was holding the guitar, a simple question.

"That's Totsuka-san's guitar, right? Are you going to start playing the guitar too, Kusanagi-san?"

"No. I just played it a little while tidying up Totsuka's belongings..."

He was about to respond out of reflex, but suddenly stopped.

"But isn't it fun? Starting something you've never done. It's like starting a new world."

"You've started something troublesome."

Totsuka and Suoh's words came to Kusanagi's mind.

The three of them once welcomed the beginning of a new world. It was a world too big for Kusanagi, and the colors of what he had seen before changed completely. There were many fun and difficult things, and he felt like his life was focused on appreciating what he had learned there, and that he didn't have time to add more burdens to his other small burdens...

But..."

Ding Kusanagi strummed the guitar vigorously.

"Yes. It was fun when I tried it out. Maybe I should start playing the guitar."

Anna smiled softly and nodded.

"I'm really looking forward to hearing Izumo's music."

"Well, I don't know how long that will last, though."

"I'm sure Kusanagi-san will keep it up. When you like something, you like it."

Kusanagi smiled.

"You get it, Yata-chan."

It would be great to welcome the beginning of a new little world.