



K - ONE YEAR LATER:

CHAPTER 3: KUSANAGI'S SMOKING CESSATION AND THE "HOMURA" DAYS (BY TATSUKI MIYAZAWA)

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD

A year has passed since then.

Kusanagi thought that there were several reasons why he decided to quit smoking.

Smokers always feel the narrowness of his shoulders. Articles and news about health risks. The price is very small, but it increases year after year. It is common for bars to have heavy smokers.

"A little while ago a boy was born."

And,

"Kamisan is noisy."

He felt a bit lonely when he saw them coming out of the smoking category one after another. These factors overlapped in various ways.

He was clearly aware that he would quit when he went to the commercial district for business on a cold winter morning. He obtained the necessary documents to operate the bar safely and was hungry, so he came to a corner where the restaurants were lined up to grab a bite to eat.

When he first saw the procession,

"Is it a delicious ramen shop?"

So he thought, he glanced at first with interest.

And he was shocked there.

It was a public space for smokers. Several men were huddled in a glass-enclosed space, smoking.

Despite the centrally installed smoke exhaust device, the interior looked slightly cloudy with purple smoke.

The people queuing outside patiently waited for their turn while shrinking their backs as if they were cold.

(I wonder if smoking is that bad!)

Kusanagi agrees with the recent trend of smoke separation. Smoking should be done with good manners so as not to disturb others.

Nevertheless.

(I don't think it's wrong that there is a place where you can smoke a little.)

It was the real intention as a cigarette only.

And when he was looking at the procession as something mysterious, Kusanagi himself also wanted to take a break.

Although he thought it was stupid, he lined up at the end of the line. He had a hard time getting into the smoking booth as the Kogarashi was blowing, and when he tried to take out the cigarette, he bit his fingertips and dropped it on the floor twice.

Then when he finally lit the fire with trembling hands and inhaled the smoke.

(Not good. Consider quitting for a moment.)

He suddenly thought that.

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It was the first time in a long time that the main members met at the HOMRA bar.

Izumo Kusanagi, the master of the bar, Anna Kushina, the resident of that building, as well as Shohei Akagi, Saburota Bando, Yo Chitose, Masaomi Dewa, Eric Surt, Kosuke Fujishima, brought sake and snacks and gathered in groups of three and five.

The purpose was to hear the story of a trip from Eric, who had been away from Shizume for a while.

Eric has recently become addicted to wandering hitchhiking. Like Tatara Totsuka did for a while, he traveled around Japan with his camera in one hand, and when he found something that caught his eye, he would turn the camera lens and take a picture.

From time to time, he would take pictures that were as beautiful as a professional, but at the time it was still a hobby.

And Fujishima, who he often sends the photos to from his travel destination, is now a disciple of a senior builder in Shizume, and was on his way as a carpenter.

Originally, Fujishima, who liked crafts and was skilled, seemed to continue his training quietly.

And Chitose, who wanted Fujishima to "build his house one day", finally met a woman he could seriously face, and has an innocent relationship with her as a teenager.

On the other hand, Chitose's comrade Dewa is preparing to enter university saying, "I can seriously study something.". Chitose bought him a beer saying, "If you're smart, it's an easy win.".

By the way, Rikio Kamamoto and Misaki Yata had told Kusanagi that they would be a little late.

Kamamoto has taken over the liquor store in earnest, and Yata has been busy with skateboard shop work and started being an instructor.

There were no particular toasts, and each of them divided into small groups and drank alcohol. As he looked around at those friends,

"They've all changed a lot. I wonder if they've grown up?"

Akagi muttered with deep emotion. He himself has recently become addicted to tropical fish and is increasing the number of aquariums through various trials and errors, but there is no particular change in the environment.

Hearing that word,

"Is that so? Everyone still seems noisy as usual."

Kusanagi laughed. Then he narrowed his eyes.

"Well, there are some guys who have changed to strange winds."

Saying that, from a distance, he pointed at Bando, who was warming up to his heroic story, at the reluctant Fujishima.

He has been active in online gaming competitions lately and has been winning decent prizes. So to speak, he is in a semi-professional state of the game and is in an easy to understand way.

The name when entering the game is "Sanchan".

His sunglasses as a brand also became eye-catching.

"However, when it comes to big competitions, it seems like the pressure has crushed you and you haven't been able to produce much results, and the essence hasn't changed at all, San-chan."

Akagi responded with a bitter smile. Later,

"What about Kusanagi-san?"

Changing the subject, they pointed at Kusanagi.

"Huh, me? I'm not that different either."

The person himself was bowing his neck a lot, but Anna, who was quietly drinking orange juice next to him, opened her mouth.

"Izumo. He started to quit smoking."

It was like saying that a great change began.

It was noted that Kusanagi himself took a big step.

"Yes. No smoking! I haven't for about three days."

"Eh?"

Akagi looked away. And the "Homura" members, who had been chatting with each other until now, stopped talking at once and looked over there.

Kusanagi was confused by the reaction.

"What's going on?"

The next moment, everyone started laughing as if they were going to explode.

"No, that is impossible!"

"Kusanagi-san is quitting smoking? That's really weird and hard to believe, right?"

"It hasn't even been a week, right?"

Kusanagi was surprised at first, but little by little,

"Oh, you..."

He seemed to be angry.

Originally, quitting smoking did not start with such a heavy feeling. If he could continue, he would continue, and he began with a light stance.

But...

Kusanagi had no choice but to be hungry if he was covered in moss like this.

"Ok! If you believe that, you will quit smoking decisively!"

And he firmly promised everyone that if he broke the ban, he would serve the best liquor.

They all cheered.

It was strange and not too painful for a few days when he refused to smoke without any particular concern. In addition, the psychological margin of being able to return to smoking at any time alleviated the obsession with cigarettes.

However, from the day after everyone had a big problem, Kusanagi gradually died from smoking. The more he realized that he shouldn't smoke, the more he reached for the cigarette box and was surprised.

He tried chewing gum as a substitute or applying a commercially available nicotine patch, but it had almost no effect.

(It looks like the withdrawal symptoms will go away in about a month.)

Until then, it would be a long way to go.

Overall, Kusanagi's job was not a very good factor to quit smoking. Although times have changed, there are still many places where smoking is allowed, not only in HOMRA but also in bars that serve alcohol.

Ironically, the HOMRA Bar, since then, had been properly licensed, and had turned it into a commercial form that allowed cigarettes to be offered and sold in the store.

Kusanagi quit smoking as an individual, but he couldn't remove all the cigarettes from around him.

It was painful to see customers smoking deliciously.

Also, recently, the anko monster that he had stopped ordering anko, appeared frequently and drank anko cocktails that looked really delicious. He was jealous that she enjoyed luxury items to her heart's content.

This was how various tensions were accumulated. Kusanagi had a dream.

Suoh and Totsuka were at the HOMRA bar when they were young and relaxing.

As the soft sunlight shone down, Totsuka was still playing the guitar he had learned with clumsy hands, and Suoh was looking vaguely at the ceiling as he smoked a cigarette.

"Hey, King."

Totsuka put down the guitar and asked.

"Can I have a little cigarette?"

"Ah?"

Suoh looked at Totsuka.

"You tried it the other day, didn't you?"

"I want to try again."

Suoh laughed.

"Do it yourself."

Totsuka, who got permission, took out the cigarette and lit it on fire. He inhales the smoke. And the next moment...

"Geh gaaak! Not good."

"Hehe."

Suoh shrugged.

"Don't say that."

It was a soft teasing voice that was unusual for Suoh. Totsuka had teary eyes.

"Well, I also want to be a man who looks good with cigarettes like King and Kusanagi-san."

"Stop this."

The nostalgic and tearful exchange between those two people. Kusanagi woke up there.

By the time he realized it, tears were actually floating around the corners of his eyes. Kusanagi climbed onto the bed and laughed helplessly.

Although it was in a dream, was he happy to meet his friends for the first time in a long time, or was it regrettable that he wanted a cigarette even in his subconscious mind?

The next day, before the bar opened, Kusanagi was thinking about it with a brand of cigarette that he had smoked since he was a teenager.

Strangely, soft light was shining in the store as he saw it in his dream.

Totsuka and Suoh weren't there, but Anna was sitting by the window, slowly turning the pages of a hardcover literary book.

Anna suddenly said without warning.

"I liked the look of Mikoto smoking a cigarette."

Kusanagi looked at Anna.

"I also like to see Izumo smoking, but if you're worried about too many things, stop. I think Izumo does what he wants."

Anna said that and fell silent again. A soft smile floated slightly on his mouth.

By the way, Anna hadn't expressed any particular opinion about Kusanagi quitting smoking. She didn't describe it as a good or bad thing.

"....."

Kusanagi silently lowered his eyes to the cigarettes again.

That brand had memories. Originally, Mikoto Suoh did not have a smoking habit until he met Kusanagi. As they were about to hit it off, he saw Kusanagi casually take out a cigarette when the two of them were alone.

"Is it good, is it a cigarette?"

He heard that, so he told him.

"Would you like to smoke?"

He gave him one and lit it up when it was in Suoh's mouth, it was an act that he couldn't believe it was the first time he did it.

"Delicious."

So he looked up at the ceiling and muttered a word.

Kusanagi's face was broken. At the time, he was convinced that he was a fun guy.

In fact, after exchanging cigarettes at the time, Kusanagi and Suoh quickly deepened their relationship. He didn't think it was a bond created by cigarettes, but it was also true that there were cigarettes at the end of the memories of him with Suoh.

At that time, he put a lot of effort into the hand that was holding the box.

"Anna. Oh, colored glasses."

The door was flung open and Neko of the Silver clan staggered into the room.

Kusanagi and then Anna looked at her with round eyes.

It was covered in muddy mud.

"Well what did you do?"

Anna ran over and got a towel from the bathroom. She was ready to get dirty with mud and cleaned Neko's face.

Neko seemed to be apologetic seeing the mud splattered on Anna's clothes and the mud pooled under her feet.

"I'm sorry."

Unusually, she was very apologetic. Looking at her, she was quite fashionable.

She was dirty with mud.

"The store is not a good place for that."

Kusanagi said it once and for all.

"Isn't this a good place for this?"

"Yes."

Neko started talking about the situation with tears.

He heard that she had come to Shizume with her friends to go shopping. When she saw a grandmother who was the victim of a robbery and tracked down the criminal, it seems that the robber had the power of a Strain and he was hit back.

"A Strain that manipulates mud?"

Kusanagi frowned. Then his eyes shone behind his sunglasses like a swordsman.

"Don't be playing in our garden."

He clicked his tongue.

Neko often comes to see Anna over the last year or so. The clans they belong to are different, and although they have different personalities, they are oddly matched horses.

Her friend, a girl, was muddy, so Anna was angry, although the others had a hard time understanding it.

She told him quietly.

"I'll do the cleaning. I'll take Neko to the bathroom, so go get him."

It was a strict decree of the "King".

"I'll teach him discipline."

Kusanagi nodded loudly.

Kusanagi ran through the streets of Shizume.

He knew any secondary road in that city. When he crossed paths with an acquaintance at a key point, he obtained information from witnesses and gradually tracked down the criminal.

Kusanagi was thinking as he tracked down the Strain.

Although the power of the Slate was lost, the number of Strains that had explosively increased once did not decrease that much, and some of them committed crimes that way.

For now, he wanted to discuss the problem with Shiro, the "Silver King".

Kusanagi moved deftly and finally cornered the Strain in a corner of the alley.

He was a small middle-aged man.

"You can't escape anymore!"

When Kusanagi yelled, he turned around and glared at him. The man was even wearing waterproof clothing with a hood, rubber boots and rubber gloves.

(Why do not you come?)

Kusanagi was so skeptical for a moment.

"Take this!"

He was convinced as he avoided the fist-sized lump of mud that the other party suddenly expelled from his palm as he bent his upper body.

(I see. Because he handles mud, he doesn't want to wear such heavy equipment.)

The man floated a ball of mud on his left and right palms and fired them one after another.

Kusanagi gradually closed in on the opponent as he avoided the attack with plenty of space.

"I see, that's the idea."

At that moment, the man finally laughed and stepped on. At the same time, an unprecedented amount of mud spilled around the man.

".....!"

Kusanagi took off his glasses.

When he thought it was bad, he was swallowed by the mudflow in no time. Tons of mud covered the top of Kusanagi and filled the back alleys. It was also a disaster that the left and right sides were sandwiched between walls.

The seemingly modest power of manipulating mud becomes a deadly attack when it comes to the amount of scale of the disaster.

Kusanagi was suffocating in the torrent of mud.

(This is not good.)

He couldn't die for something like that.

He held a box of cigarettes and a lighter that he had unknowingly slipped into his pocket.

Mikoto Suoh.

(It does not seem.)

He felt that he was laughing.

At that moment, something exploded in Kusanagi.

The Strain that used the power of mud, was the first to evacuate to a telephone pole.

Looking towards the alley buried in the mud with a look full of superiority. He was nothing to a man to the point of a handsome boy dying.

After checking that there were no signs of pursuit, he tried to leave the scene.

He had to escape before "Scepter 4" came, which cracks down on different abilities.

And at that moment, the surface of the mud trembled once.

The man looked at him suspiciously.

The mud began to boil in front of him. The next moment...

"Gyaaaah!"

A column of flames erupted in front of the man, causing a huge explosion. Hot mud sprayed in all directions.

"Uh-huh!"

The man fell off the telephone pole as he clumsily yelled. It had been blown up, but there was still mud in the back alleys, the size of a muddy paddy field. The man's half body was buried in it.

"Wow, oh!"

The mud was also fiercely hot. The man rolled over and managed to lift his upper body.

There was a shadow slowly approaching there.

He was messy.

It was Izumo Kusanagi who stomped through the mud and came closer.

The usual fashion clothes were full of mud. The hair that was carefully combed was also covered in mud. A small amount of mud also adhered to the sunglasses.

However, Kusanagi had tremendous sex appeal and power. He smoked a cigarette and looked up at the sky.

Then, when Kusanagi saw him flinch, he stared at the trembling man and gently twirled the end of the cigarette he was smoking.

At that moment, several fireballs rushed out from there and exploded with a conspicuous sound in front of the man.

The man got scared.

"Ugugugu."

He blew bubbles, lay on his back, collapsed and passed out.

The case was too different.

Kusanagi lit the cigarette again.

"After all this is my style."

He laughed and lied about it.

In the end, Kusanagi was forced to buy high-quality sake for all the people in "Homura", but he was still in a good mood.

Next chapter, "Neko. Before the test. Canned.".