



THE FIRST STORY
RAIRAKU REI / GoRA

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

CHAPTER 6: SIN

"I will be a servant of the king."

When he first told him that, he thought this kid might be a little crazy.

Suoh met Tatara Totsuka when he was a high school student and Totsuka was a middle school student.

Suoh at that time was not yet a "king", he was just a boy who was strong in fighting. Rather, Suoh, who was rejected by those around him, did not socialize, and lived properly alone, was far from being a King.

However, Totsuka appeared at one point and followed Suoh calling him "King". At the end of the day, he said, "I will be a servant of the king."

He thought he might be crazy, but Suoh did not reject Totsuka. He thought it was okay for him to like him, and the friendly but not greasy Totsuka was not unpleasant, and when he realized it, he was like a friend.

Because he was close to Suoh, who had many enemies, Totsuka had been lynched. However, Totsuka, who broke his leg, broke the bones in his arm and fingers, broke his forehead and was lying in the hospital bed covered in bandages, laughed without breaking his usual tone. He shook off the question of who had hurt him and enveloped him in smoke. Although he called himself the servant of a king, he was too free to answer even a question from the person he called king.

"For the time being, I'll be going home."

Suoh was amazed and said that. It was a summer day shortly after Totsuka's wounds were completely healed.

Suoh went to the festival with Totsuka and Kusanagi. Kusanagi and Suoh, who were seniors and juniors from the same high school, naturally mixed with Totsuka, and by that time, it was becoming more common for the three of them to hang out together, and that day too, when he was walking with him. at night, he hears the noise of the festival passing by.

"I want to eat takoyaki! Come to the festival." Totsuka said, and Suoh replied, "I'm sorry." Totsuka looked a bit thoughtful and suggested, "Then the person who loses the game will go buy it." He said that thinking it was a good idea. Even if Suoh had a sour face, Totsuka was ready to say "Janken...", Kusanagi laughed and joined in, so Suoh made a move as well. Suoh takes his fist out of him, but Totsuka and Kusanagi spread their palms open. Suoh got even more astringent, but it was a game that he accidentally got into. When he silently turned towards the hustle and bustle of the festival, Kusanagi said in an interesting

voice, "Unexpectedly disciplined.", and Totsuka said, "It looks like fun, so let's follow him, Kusanagi-san."

He then thought he should go, but in the end he let his like it and the three of them walked between the stalls.

The crowd was woody, but hunger was fueled when he walked in the sound and smell of baked food.

Wandering the stall-lined streets, he bought some food, sat on the stone steps of the shrine, and Suoh looked good-naturedly at Totsuka piercing the takoyaki as he polished grilled corn with the fragrant aroma of burnt soy sauce. "What are you coming home to?" He said.

Totsuka tilted his head with a sharp look.

"You are not a servant, no matter what you think."

"Sure. I don't think there is any servant who wants to let the king go buy takoyaki."

Kusanagi puts the yakisoba on his knee and breaks the chopsticks.

Totsuka frowns in regret.

"I didn't let you go. I played fair. After all, the three of us went shopping."

"You do what you want."

Laughing at Kusanagi, Totsuka put a regretful look on his mouth. He was flirting with the heat.

"Your vision of the servants is certainly a mystery. No, when you said you would be a servant of the king, I had already thought that your idea was a mystery."

He swallowed the Takoyaki and thought Totsuka was weird. Kusanagi turned the tea from the side.

"Mikoto, King. What do you want to call him?"

"Oh, that's right. King, I wanted to call him 'King' because he felt like a king from the first glance."

Totsuka made a serious face and looked straight ahead.

"I think one day he will be a great person in the midst of people. At that time, I will work harder than I do now."

"What a servant job."

"In that case... Do you give the king a good laugh?"

"He is an entertainer who makes you laugh."

Totsuka laughed and saw Suoh.

"I'm the one who brings 'fun'. I'll keep doing it until King says he doesn't need me."

"I do not want."

"Bye."

"Hey. Isn't it useless to say no?"

He was a strange and energetic guy. But in the end, Suoh really enjoyed the festival that day.

King was supposed to be just a playful nickname given by Totsuka, but three years later, Suoh really became known as the King.

It was an awakening in the conflict. There was a big dispute involving the entire city of Shizume, Suoh was attacked by a man and during the fight, the Slate called out to him.

In the darkness he was thrown into, losing sight of his surroundings, Suoh felt his heartbeat synchronize with something.

The moment he instinctively felt that it was the beat of the "Slate", the power, memory and intention of the "Slate" flowed towards Suoh.

Suoh became "King". A huge red sword floated in the sky.

The Sword of Damocles.

A test of the "King", a symbol of the power of the "King", and a sword that judges and kills the "King".

Shame made him feel lost, which was rare for Suoh. Totsuka also thought that he might have been chosen by a strange man and because he called him by a stupid name.

Kusanagi and Totsuka looked at each other stunned, and Suoh spread his flaming hands and asked, without giving any explanation.

"Would you like to hold my hand?"

Suoh knew from "King's" instinct that if this flame passed, a part of Suoh's power would take root in them, but they didn't understand exactly what would happen if they took that hand. Others would not have. Still, they took Suoh's hand on fire without hesitation.

At that moment, Suoh chose a path. It is a way of making friends. It is a lie to say that he never thought that his choice was wrong, but it is also different if they ask him if he regrets.

Kusanagi and Totsuka also chose a path. They took Suoh's hand, and chose a path where they could enjoy Suoh's flames.

As soon as they took his hand, Kusanagi's and Totsuka's body was engulfed in flames. The flame did not burn them, but settled on their bodies. He did not inflict a single burn, but instead left proof that they were members of Suoh's clan on their bodies. On Kusanagi's right shoulder blade and Totsuka's left shoulder blade, a red figure of a flame emerged. The shape of the flame that inhabits the interior has emerged on the surface of the skin and is now permeating as a symbol of "Homura".

Even if Totsuka unexpectedly noticed the claim to "become a servant of the king" as the playful words he said when he was in high school, nothing changed.

As usual, he was free, he did not listen to Suoh's words and he lived happily as he liked.

Suoh offered a hand to anyone who asked, so the number of friends increased one after another. People who do not have a container to accept the flame will see pain, but many people who are prepared to hold the burning hand manage to accept the flame and gain power.

The ritual that gives birth to a Clansman. It seems that rigid people call it "installation", but in "Homura", the term "test" was repeated, and the number of people increased, and Suoh was placed on top of many people. He had the appearance of a "king".

Kusanagi and Totsuka formed, turned and organized a group of friends named "Homura" instead of Suoh, who was there. Kusanagi ran the organization with his skill, and Totsuka with his natural personality became a lubricant among the people, and created a place where the people gathered there could think of a "whereabouts".

It was just when he became a member of "Homura".

That day there was a silly conflict with the mob, and Suoh came out. He left behind the swirling flames and heat in his body and went all the way to radiate even a little.

The power of the "Red King" was out of control for Suoh. A mass of power like magma was so close to Suoh's nature and desires that he often seduced him.

The temptation to unleash all power, burn all the bonds that cling to him, destroy all the fences around him, and turn the area into a free and wide desert.

Even before he woke up as "King", that urge slept deep in his stomach. But he now he has the power to do it. If Suoh wants, he can destroy everything and turn the world into a scorched field.

Suoh had no choice but to suppress the pesky temptations and urges and sometimes diverge the power from him in small amounts.

That's why he also went to the battlefield that day. However, the result was only a punishment. They were just fragile humans, trying to pull the opponent's weapons from

him, the mob, and Suoh could only make the gesture of wielding a small limb by gently shaking his fist, which was restrained. Only the disease of the weak, as if intimidating, was left as a harsh aftertaste.

"I'm stressed."

When he returned to the HOMRA Bar, Kusanagi muttered with a sigh that seemed astonished. Anna, who was waiting at the bar, ran over and sat next to Suoh, who sat on the couch. Suoh looked at his right hand on his fist, not looking at her.

It is a fist that has just hit a person. The people around him flew and fell just by waving their arms without taking a step. If he put a little more effort into it, the shape of the person would surely collapse, and if he had increased the flame output a little more, it would have been burned to pieces.

Energy and heat with nowhere to go corrode Suoh from within.

He was so frustrated that he couldn't breathe. When he impulsively stood up, a soft, carefree voice rang out.

"Today's dinner is Thai soup!"

At that voice, the pressure that was tearing the outer skin from within Suoh relaxed, and Suoh stopped. He relaxed the fist he was holding firmly enough to make a sound. He looks up.

On the couch opposite, there was a bundle of white blanket. The edge of the blanket turned and Totsuka who was lying down came out.

"Are you here?"

"Of course. This is my place to nap. Thanks for your hard work."

Suoh lowered his fist in dismay at Totsuka, who was waking up with a relaxed voice.

"What job? It was a boring skirmish."

Totsuka finished waking up and got up. The blanket was still covering him, making him look like a monk.

"Kusanagi-san was wondering why King would move."

Suoh looked at Kusanagi at the counter. Kusanagi is polishing the glass as usual. Suoh himself was aware that he didn't need to do anything today. Although they didn't need to have Suoh, he came out and shook his fist, and as a result, he was recruiting more people.

A small sentence leaked out, leaning against the couch as if to throw it away.

"Why did I become a 'King'?"

"I knew from the beginning, that you were different from other people."

From the moment they met, Totsuka called Suoh "King". At the time, it can be said that Totsuka seemed to be crazy, but in the end he was right, and Suoh became the "Red King".

However, even now, Suoh still feels awkward about being in the "King" position.

Yata and the others treat "Homura's scarlet" as the most important thing. He is proud of the "sign" that appears below his left clavicle as proof of his partner, he looks at Suoh with hopeful eyes and defines "Homura" as the place where he lives. It's not just Yata. This is the case with many people in "Homura".

However, that power was also a straitjacket.

"I seem to attract everyone's attention. What kind of king is that?"

"Even if you say that, you are very important."

Totsuka said that with an unexpectedly serious voice.

He can't argue with him, Suoh folds his mouth into a U shape.

Totsuka smiled and pointed to the side. When he shifted his gaze according to Totsuka's fingertips, he met the big eyes of Anna sitting next to Suoh.

Anna's red eyes see through many things. Suoh was reluctant to see what was inside her in her eyes, and gently moved his gaze from her.

He cannot argue with Anna, the flame-burning friends with Suoh, Kusanagi and Totsuka, who have been by his side since he was a student, and this place where they meet.

But because of that, Suoh also feels clinging. He can't go anywhere because it's important. And if he makes a mistake, he will burn them.

Suoh looked at his palm. This is probably the hand of the mighty King.

But what is the "King" for? What will this hand, which has the power of destruction and the power of ruin, do in the future?

"I will one day."

Suoh spilled those words.

"Hey. Somehow, everything will work out."

Totsuka said that in a singing voice and stood up slowly.

"You have always been the carefree type."

Suoh said that with weakening consternation, and Totsuka came around the table and approached Suoh.

With a soft, confident smile, Totsuka looked at Suoh.

"There is nothing to fear. You are a King. Your power is not to destroy."

Totsuka points his fist towards Suoh, who reflexively catches it with his palm.

"It is there to protect."

Totsuka laughed, putting his powerless white fist in the hand of the "King" who has the power to destroy everything if he wanted to.

"I assure you."

Suoh looked at Totsuka for a while.

Totsuka once said that he would be the one to bring "fun" to the king. When he caught on, Totsuka certainly brought fun things to Suoh one after another, making an increasing number of friends laugh and creating a nice place to stay.

Suoh's power is said to be to protect, although the place may be erased.

Although he is not ignorant of the horror of fire.

He thought he should say something, but no good words came out, and in the end Suoh said in a silly voice that it didn't matter.

"What kind of soup?"

"Have you never tried it? It's like a hot and sour soup. It's reddish and looks really spicy, but it has an unexpected complex flavor."

Totsuka happily talks about a soup with a strange name that seems to be today's dinner. Anna, who had been sitting next to Suoh in silence until then, leaned forward a bit.

"It's red?"

"That's right, it's red. Anna, let's do it together."

"You are going to cook?"

Totsuka made a peace sign and laughed.

"I really like to cook right now."

Totsuka was an amateur. He tried to do what he thought was fun and his friends were involved in that hobby.

The Thai soup, which Totsuka made with Anna, seems to have been a time when cooking was among his hobbies, it had many spices and fragrances that Suoh would eat for the first time, and it certainly had a complicated taste. It seemed to be redder than usual,

probably to please Anna, who can only see the color red. The shrimp inside were delicious.

Suoh often has nightmares.

The dream usually comes when Suoh is about to lose power stability.

In his dream, Suoh is rumored to be on fire. The flames in his body roar in search of freedom.

The flame erupted violently from inside the body, and Suoh shed his fangs, driven by the sweet temptation to release it.

Suoh, who removed his fangs, turns into a beast. Human society, thoughts, ethics, emotions and all that kind of thing disappear and they become a fiery beast that is just instinct.

The flames thrown by Suoh turned into a fierce fire and swallowed the city. The familiar cityscape is burned by flames, swallowed up by boiling magma, and collapses.

The creatures evaporate blood, bones melt, and even ash disappears.

Suoh felt overwhelming pleasure as he gave in to the urge to destroy and blaze through him. The soul cried out for joy as it submerged freely and became a mass of pure power.

However, in a world where flames have witnessed it all, the city has dwindled and no one is alive, including his friends, Suoh stands up.

The world where the flames were extinguished was cold, and Suoh knelt to collapse.

In a cold world that has changed from the previous one, only Suoh is hot, and Suoh's breath is tinted white as smoke.

He is afraid of this all the time.

He feels that that moment will come one day.

Even if the world cools down, the flames in Suoh will not go out and the black charcoal will spread from Suoh's palm to the entire body as if the flames were eroding.

Suoh was terrified, as it seemed to be a sign that he himself was no longer human.

No, he is no longer really human. That hand is the hand of a monster that destroys everything.

At the top, he can hear the collapse of the sword of Damocles. It will soon reach the head of Suoh, who has lost his qualification of "king".

"Hey, I'll do something about it."

He hears a soft voice. Suoh raised his face like an idiot.

In a world where everything burns, Totsuka was standing and smiling.

Incorrect. Because he is gone.

"Your power is not to destroy, but to protect."

Totsuka says that with the same voice as that day.

At that moment, Suoh believed those words. He decided to believe him. By defining his power in that way, he looked away from the work that was under him and covered it.

However, the lid was opened.

Suoh was in a position, covering his face with his burned hands.

Suddenly, he heard a song of joy.

When he looks up, the abandoned castle of Suoh's burned remains and Totsuka's figure disappeared.

There, on the rooftop of the building at night, a boy standing by the fence is singing a song with his back to him and shaking his body.

The boy shook his shoulders and laughed, then turned and fired.

A gunshot sounds and a burning fever and severe pain spread through the stomach. Suoh slowly looked at his belly. He looked at the red blood spreading and touched it with his palm. He had the feeling that blood was pouring out of the hole in his stomach.

Well, Suoh wondered if he was shot dead like that.

"Is it a good night? Oh, sure it's a good night!"

The happy voice of the boy who shot echoed.

A flame rises from Suoh's body. Suoh has now completely renounced control of the flame.

The fire spreads like a red tsunami with Suoh as the center of explosion. The flame that turns everything into a desert perfumes the world.

Perhaps something important was coming out of the hole in his stomach along with the blood, and Suoh's insides were empty, and he felt a terrible loss. But at the same time, he was also impressed that it was so easy.

Unleashing the flames, Suoh spread his arms and looked up at the sky.

The sword of Damocles, which no longer retains its original shape, loses its light and begins to fall as if the thread had been broken.

"Mikoto."

A girl's voice reached his ears. Anna. A young but mature girl who snuggled close to Suoh. Totsuka told him that she was important and he couldn't argue with him.

She is calling Suoh.

"Mikoto, don't go."

But it's too late.

The tip of the falling sword comes close to Suoh's eyes.

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When he opened his eyes, his heart was screaming out loud.

He was sweating all over his body.

Suoh blinked several times, realized that he was dreaming and exhaled slowly.

He was in the "Scepter 4" detention center. Suoh lay on a board where he slept badly, staggering, and apparently had a nightmare that was a little different than usual.

He exhaled a long, warm breath.

Suoh did not make the world a scorched field.

Suoh's sword has not fallen.

Not yet.

When he curled his back a little, the chain on the deck made a loud metallic noise.

"Fool."

Poisoned by a person, Suoh closes his eyes again.

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He doesn't know Tatara Totsuka. He hasn't killed anyone.

Although he was convinced of that, the boy had a sense of anxiety that he could not erase.

The boy must have been in Gakuenjima at the time that person named Tatara Totsuka was killed. He has that memory in him. However, no one clearly stated that the boy was there.

Also, the bloody shirt that was shoved into the back of the boy's closet was a big problem.

"Here you have!"

A cheerful voice was heard, and a tray with a plate of steaming, good-smelling grilled fish was placed in front of the boy.

The boy comes to, and raises his face.

The boy stopped by a convenience store called "Yamadaya" during the purchase requested by Kukuri. It was an old shop with a retro interior and a simple menu, but it was a popular shop with Gakuenjima students because it was cheap and had an exceptional taste. Since it is located near the connecting bridge that connects to Gakuenjima, it is a favorite shop for commuters, and students living in dormitories often stop by when they go out in search of a warm family treat.

The boy has also visited this store many times with Kukuri and the others. That should be it.

The boy shook his head slightly when he realized that he had lost confidence in everything.

Freshly baked and fragrant horse mackerel, plump white rice, and hot miso soup. Did he really eat this menu many times?

Neko, beside him, happily waved the horse mackerel.

"Hey, what are you thinking? I'm telling you we're not done yet."

Kuro shook his eyes and said that looking at the boy.

"Ah, what?"

"There is still a suspicion against you. If you are not the murderer, then there must be someone who impersonated you."

"Oh, it's true..."

When he found that bloody shirt, the boy quickly hid it. Perhaps it was one of the clues to the true criminal that he hid that shirt, since he may have been beaten by the true criminal.

But he did not. When he saw that blood, he felt a sense of fear and self-doubt. He felt the existence of "Isana Yashiro, who was in Gakuenjima on the night of December 7", which he had taken for granted until a while ago, was reeling.

The boy is now more confused than Kuro and begins to doubt himself.

Neko, unaware of the boy's anguish, was secretly reaching for his chopsticks to steal his food after eating his own horse mackerel. Kuro slaps her hand without looking at her.

The boy smiled and transferred his portion to Neko's plate. To be honest, he now he didn't have much of an appetite.

When Neko received the horse mackerel she raised her hands and was pleased, she looked at him with a bitter face.

"We came here just because you keep complaining that you're hungry. Shut up for a bit."

After looking at Kuro who was scolding her like a mother, Neko, who was in a good mood, ate the delicious food without worrying about it. The boy looked around the store with his chopsticks stopped.

He is too early for dinner, so there are no customers but them. The owner crouched at the entrance of the store and gave a piece of fish to a stray cat. The owner who gleefully looks at the cat sticking his face into the plate and eating gently is a great cat lover, and this shop is popular not only with Gakuenjima students but also with cats, and there are stray cats coming frequently.

Looking further, he notices the cork board on the wall. There are plenty of snapshots with handwritten messages like "It was delicious!" And "I love Yamadaya-san's shop." There was also a photo of Kukuri, Inaba and Mishina.

"Sir, this photo..."

When the boy called him, the owner who was watching the cat's food got up and came over.

"Oh, these are photos of my usual customers. They have always been posted here."

"I don't see mine here."

"Oh, really? How strange. You're a regular customer."

The merchant mysteriously twisted his head.

The boy looks at the photo of Kukuri and the others. If he sees his friends being photographed like this, he should take the initiative to enter the scene. The merchant will probably try to point the camera at the boy. But why isn't there a photo of him? Did he happen to be busy when the boy came and wasn't trying to take pictures? For some reason, he can't remember well.

After finishing the meal, he left the store. As he moved on to Shizume, the boy couldn't get back on track.

Even when Neko spoke to the boy, which is usually vague, it was a distant feeling, like being called from behind a wall of glass.

"Hey... Hey, Isana Yashiro!"

Called by Kuro in a scolding voice, the boy raises his face. When he realized it, he was in front of "Kagitamaya". It's the place where the people from "Homura" attacked him right after he bought the fireworks the other day.

"He's too lazy for a while. Do you know exactly what Kukuri asked you to buy? What kind of fireworks do you buy here?"

"Uh, yeah, wait a minute. I've made a note..."

He handed the note he took out of his pocket to Kuro. However, as soon as he received the memo, he made a bold face.

"You... how am I supposed to read this?"

"Oh, I do not know..."

The boy's shopping memo was written in mysterious characters like hieroglyphs. It was terrible.

Maybe he was distracted by something else, he didn't write in Japanese, and in fact for some reason things like the alphabet got mixed up here and there.

Kuro drew a blue line.

"What good is a note if you can't read it ?!"

"Oh, wait, wait. I'm trying to remember what I was thinking about as I was writing it."

"You..."

Kuro stood up, but sighed a little as if he had immediately given up.

"Okay. All you have to do is contact Kukuri."

Kuro takes out a PDA from his pocket. Then suddenly...

"Nya!"

Neko screamed and ran towards Kuro.

"What?!"

"Why would you call her?!"

"What does that mean? I'm requesting contact information for this kind of time."

Kuro shows the PDA with a suspicious face. The boy was also dismayed by Neko's sudden uproar.

She was always energetic and noble, but now she had a surprisingly troubled face.

"You can go back and ask her directly! Hey, Shiro, let's go home!"

The boy was filled with words when they called out to him with narrowed eyes.

"Why do we have to go back? What do you think we have phones for?"

"Wow, I hate phones!"

"Why?"

Neko flushed and fell silent, eyes rolling uneasily as if she were searching for an excuse. However, maybe she didn't come out at all, she scratched her head with a crying face and yelled "Nya!" again as if she had a habit.

Immediately, she disappears and a little kitten appears more familiar to the boy than a girl. The kitten ran away with a strangely sad voice.

"Neko?"

"What was that?"

Kuro was looking in the direction Neko was leaving with a face mixed with confusion and dismay, but he operated his PDA as if he had regained his mind, and called out to Kukuri. He offered the boy the ringing PDA, so that he could speak for himself.

"Hello."

Immediately the phone was connected and he heard Kukuri's usual bright voice.

"Ah, it's me, Isana. We're here buying the fireworks, but..."

"Isana? Who?"

He hears Kukuri's mysterious voice.

The boy's breathing stops for a moment.

"What are you talking about? It's me, Isana Yashiro. You know, Shiro."

"Shiro? Sorry, but I don't know anyone named Shiro. You must have the wrong number."

The call was hung up while the boy was away and silent.

(Welcome, Shiro-kun! Come back early!)

Kukuri's voice that said that and laughed a while ago and Kukuri's voice that mysteriously said "Who?", overlap.

His feet wobble and the sense of reality disappears. The boy wandered in fear and anxiety that what he believed was broken and crumbling.

"Hey, give it back to me."

Sensing the change in the boy, Kuro seems suspicious. However, the PDA is no longer connected to Kukuri.

The boy was stunned and slowly lowered the PDA that he was holding to his ear.

"What happened?"

"Kukuri doesn't remember me. She says she doesn't know any Isana Yashiro."

For a moment, Kuro frowned.

"Was she kidding?"

"It didn't feel like a joke."

In contrast to the boy, who appears annoyed, Kuro seems to calmly think about the direction Neko was running.

"Neko was acting strange. She may have done something to Kukuri. For the moment, let's go back to Gakuenjima."

Kuro started walking without waiting for the boy's response. The boy silently grabs Kuro's hand. He felt Kuro stop and turned around, but the boy remained depressed and didn't look up.

"Hey, Kuro... can I borrow your phone again?"

"What are you going to do?"

"I'll call my parents' house."

"Why?"

"I want someone to tell me that I really am Isana Yashiro."

Then the world of the tottering and collapsing boy could rebound.

The boy writes the parents' house number, which he remembers slightly on the PDA, and gently holds the PDA to his ear when the call rings.

Oh, by the way, he thinks it's been a long time since he has talked to his family.

As he closed his eyes and waited nervously, he heard a small sound that made a call.

"Hi, I'm Yashiro..."

"The phone you called is not currently in use. Check the number."

The boy's world collapses.

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At dusk, the angled reddish sun shone through the window.

Kusanagi finishes a few work calls alone at the quiet HOMRA bar. He hasn't been able to open the bar properly in recent days, but he can't blame the business associates. He made his feel a bit resentful of his nature, causing him to change his daily life properly even in such an emergency.

Anna, who continues to use her responsiveness and eventually finds out where the criminal is, is tired and sleeping upstairs. It seems that Yata, who jumped, joined

Kamamoto on the way and entered Gakuenjima as expected, but not only did he have no results, but after fighting with Fushimi, he was stopped by Lieutenant Awashima. There was a report by phone.

When Kusanagi wondered what to do next, the doorbell rang.

Kusanagi smiled seeing the woman enter the bar with the sound of stomping on her heels.

"Before the store opens, okay?"

"How can I oppose such a beautiful lady? On the other hand, I heard you went after my boys."

A beautiful woman in an elegant dress, and decorating her neck and her wrists with pearl accessories, walks around him. Her chest-length hair was pulled down and slightly dislodged.

She walked over to the counter, took off her coat, and sat on the stool.

"How was your order? Lieutenant Awashima Seri from "Scepter 4". Also known as the merciless woman."

"Can you tell your boys not to do those things?"

"But Seri-chan, you are as cold as ice."

Awashima, when dressed in the uniform of "Scepter 4", is as strong as a man in a masculine, cold and scary society (this is why the nickname "merciless woman" suits her perfectly, as opposed to appearance Kusanagi), the atmosphere becomes a little softer in private, showing the femininity of a normal age.

She was a hidden customer of this bar.

"A Martini."

"Oui, mademoiselle. What's your recipe today?"

"Let me see... Four parts gin and one-part vermouth. And I'd like 5 parts of anko, please."

This order that destroys the Martini, as a master of a bar who loves cocktails, he was already used to.

"Oui, mademoiselle."

Kusanagi replied in a painful voice and took the container full of anko out of the refrigerator. Unfortunately, this bar always has anko to fulfill her special requests.

Dry martini with strong gin. Normally, an olive is added, but a large number of anko balls are added instead. Kusanagi doesn't want to call this desperate cocktail Martini, but Awashima always asks for this terrifying drink that makes the Martini taste disappear.

"That is one of the parts I can never love about you, Seri-chan."

In front of Kusanagi, who changes his expression, Awashima gracefully drinks the delicious Martini, whose anko balls sink thickly.

"What is the 'Red King' thinking?"

After putting down the glass and taking a breath, Awashima said in a low voice.

"Oh, right. Sounds like our boss is giving you a hard time."

"Your 'King' was captured by another 'King', but you look quite relaxed. What are you planning?"

As she says that clearly without changing the expression, Awashima breaks the anko dumplings with the toothpick and mixes them, turning the transparent Martini into a cloudy color.

"Oh, that's not a nice thing to say."

"I don't know why you're calm. I'm sure you're conscious, right?"

"What?"

"Weissman's deviation from the 'Red King' is reaching its limit. You know what will happen if he continues to exceed the limit."

Kusanagi smiled at Awashima, who did not allow him to dodge, and replied.

"You mean Kagutsu crater? It's a disturbing story."

A dozen years ago, Weissmann's deviation from the predecessor "Red King" exceeded the critical value, and the sword of Damocles fell. Called the case of a royal blast, it is a leak of enormous energy possessed by the royal authority, and it causes a large explosion that involves not only the royal authority but also a radius of several tens of kilometers. The predecessor, the "Red King", Kagutsu Genji, who was the head of "Purgatory", obliterated the entire southern region of Kanto, killed about 700,000 people and created a large crater in the belly of the Japanese archipelago.

"That is the power of the 'King'. If he loses control, the terrain of Japan will change a bit like then, are you saying that it is okay for this city to disappear?"

Awashima drinks when she makes a muddy cocktail. Kusanagi muttered as he stared at her white throat.

"That is why he is with you."

He may be a little tired too. Is it some kind of indulgence for her, or is it her honesty that he may be struggling with?

"At least you have someone who can stop him. Maybe he wanted to sleep without worrying about accidentally burning everything around him for a while."

Kusanagi laughed bitterly, thinking about what Suoh feared.

"He hated being patient, in control, and annoying things forever."

Awashima, who was holding the toothpick on her cheek, exhaled through her nose as if she was amazed.

"He is not qualified to be 'King'."

He is not going to argue that. He's sure that's what Suoh thinks more than anyone. Suoh is not suitable to be "King". However, he is an essential champion.

"He would probably have been happier, if he had been born as a lion somewhere in the savannah."

Kusanagi lowered his eyes, imagining a beast running alone, freely in the savannah.

"You are a surprisingly sentimental man. Well, we just do our job."

Awashima put the empty glass and the price of the cocktail on the counter and got off the stool. She tried to leave as she clicked her heels, but stopped midway.

She was looking at the bonsai and the projectors on the edge of the counter and the guitar leaning against the wall.

"One of our members brought that in. He was a guy with a lot of hobbies. Thanks to him, the inside of the store has become strange."

It seems that Awashima immediately realized who Kusanagi was talking about. She made her face look a bit understanding.

"I've never had contact with him. He was a non-combatant. The number 3 of "Homura", the weakest executive, the first member of "Homura" along with Izumo Kusanagi, Suoh Mikoto's friend for a long time. That's all I know. What kind of person was Tatara Totsuka?"

Kusanagi left the counter and lined up next to Awashima. Look at the things Totsuka left behind. Until a few days ago he used to tell him that he shouldn't take anything he liked to the bar and take it to his house, but now he doesn't feel like getting rid of those things anymore.

"A tamer of beasts."

"Beast tamer?"

"Oh. Most of our guys are tough, right? Normally, to bring them together, we use a kind of bond on the team, but there are also many who hate that kind of thing. "Homura" is

basically a free spirit principle, even so, the reason I didn't have a problem with "Homura" was because Totsuka was slightly softening our beasts in a loose atmosphere."

Kusanagi remembers seeing the bar with Totsuka. Even in the now quiet bar, when friends gathered and Totsuka was in the middle, they were usually overjoyed.

Totsuka was interested in Yata's skateboard and began practicing skateboard tricks at the bar with a table to one side. At that moment, Totsuka was surrounded by everyone and made everyone laugh. Yata got good at teaching Totsuka how to skateboard, Kusanagi scolded the skateboarders inside and Suoh sat on the counter and looked at everyone in a vague but relaxed way.

"That's why he was a beast tamer... I wonder if the best beast is the 'Red King'."

Awashima's calm eyes gaze at Kusanagi. Kusanagi shrugged slightly.

"Totsuka was... because he befriended a ridiculous beast like Mikoto."

He reached out and played the guitar that Totsuka used to play. A sound that was kind to his ears rang out.

(Can you sing something?)

Anna sometimes asked for a song like that.

Music was also one of Totsuka's hobbies, and Totsuka showed his own songs written and composed for everyone in addition to playing the guitar. "I'll do it thinking about all of 'Homura'!"

The song, which Totsuka laughed a bit shyly at, had a soft sound.

Suoh also listened to the Totsuka song, sitting on the bar and gently looking down.

Perhaps the tone of the guitar and Totsuka's voice probably had the power to put the beast to sleep.

"But the beast tamer is dead."

Awashima said that in a cold voice on purpose.

"If the beast tamer dies, the only thing left is to lock up the beast. That is true."

Turning her back on Kusanagi, Awashima heads for the bar door. The doorbell rang. Awashima stops once with the door open a little and looks at Kusanagi.

"But I wonder if there is a place to plant a bomb with a broken safety device."

Having said that, Awashima did not ask Kusanagi for an answer and left.

Kusanagi laughed a bit at the bar after being alone.

"It's tough, Seri-chan."

He muttered.

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"Take an umbrella."

His sister said so and offered him a red umbrella.

"But today is a good day, right?"

He looked up at the blue sky and laughed. But her sister gently held an umbrella in her hand.

"Because you are afraid."

She said that and smiled at him a concerned smile.

When they told him that, he suddenly felt that something was empty, and that something scary was coming from the sky, and he opened his umbrella even though it was not raining.

The umbrella his sister gave him covered the sky and he was relieved to feel protected underneath.

When she saw him, she reached out her slim white hand and touched his cheek.

"Come on, kid."

He thought that.

He was haunted by the feeling of discomfort that he did not understand.

It must have been a lonely dream, but the awakening came with a painful movement.

He went on the train. Yes, remember to go to his parents' house now.

After that call, the boy decided to go directly to his parents' house with Kuro. It seems that the boy took a nap on the train on the way and dreamed.

"What happened? Did you have a nightmare?"

Kuro, stood in front of the boy without sitting on the seat even though the inside of the train was empty, and said that. The boy laughs warmly and shakes his head.

"Yes, something like that. I dreamed that I was with my sister. It was a dream that felt strange, but... a dream is like that."

The boy has an older sister. His sister is his favorite and important to him. He remembered that and dreamed of going to his parents' house.

(When I return home, my real sister will meet me and welcome me. I'm sure of that.)

Even trying to think about it, the boy's frustration and anxiety didn't subside at all.

The automatic, inorganic voice that answered the phone call to his parents' house is still spinning in his ear.

"When I called my parents' house, they told me that currently that number is not in use. What can you think of in this case?"

At the very least, the boy moves his mouth to shape the whirlwind of frustration and anxiety. Kuro didn't reply and silently looked at the boy.

"One, I made a mistake on my parents' number. Two, something happened and they changed the phone number without telling me. Three, I'm lying."

From Kuro's perspective, the boy was originally a suspect. He believes the third possibility is the highest among the three, and a selfish smile comes to mind. However, Kuro has a very calm voice and follows the boy's words.

"If not, four, are your memories flawed?"

The boy was surprised, he opened his eyes and looked at Kuro. Kuro's eyes seemed clear and flat, not the hostile ones he encountered the first time, nor the suspicions he had when he was looking for an alibi.

The boy squeezed his hand on his knee into his fist, trying to regain his feelings.

"I'm Isana Yashiro. It's mediocre, but I have a pretty happy family, and now I'm away from my parents and I go to school, I'm a school student."

He looked at the red umbrella leaning to one side. The umbrella that his sister gave him in his dream. What is his sister doing now? Two years older... Did she go to college to study because she was a very smart person?

Somehow his mind was confused, and the boy seemed far away as if he wanted to shake off.

The train rattled and there were no other passengers. An empty box, where the setting sun was shining faintly, continued to shake regularly.

"Where did Neko go?"

The train enters the tunnel and the inside of the carriage sinks into darkness.

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Kusanagi remembers the last call many times.

When the call came, Kusanagi was about to leave the bar and go home with Yata, who helped clean up to the end.

When he closed the bar door and put the key in his pocket, the PDA announced the incoming call. When he took out the PDA while he was thinking about who he would be, at that moment, Totsuka's name appeared.

"Hello, Totsuka."

He answered the phone in a loose voice because it was his friend, Totsuka, but didn't get an answer right away. There was a subtle silence, and when Kusanagi shook his head in a strange way, he heard a painful little voice from the other side of the PDA.

"Kusanagi... san..."

Kusanagi's spine froze due to the weakness of his voice.

"Hey, Totsuka? What happened? Hey!"

The sound of dropping the PDA reached his ears. The impatience increased even more when he heard "Kusa..."

"Kusanagi-san, what happened?"

Yata leaned forward to see Kusanagi's extraordinary appearance.

"Yata, come with me! Totsuka..."

"Eh?"

Kusanagi ran into the parking lot and grabbed the car key. Yata runs through the grass without knowing why.

Meanwhile, Kusanagi continued to call Totsuka. When he pressed the PDA against his ear so that he could pick up any weak voice, he heard Totsuka's voice a little further than before.

"Kusanagi-san... Can you hear me...?"

He was breathing harsh and painful, but it was a calm voice.

"I have been happy."

Kusanagi was horrified by the words he heard.

"I still believe it..."

"Idiot, Totsuka!"

From the other end of the phone, he heard a slightly laughing exhalation and a painful cough.

Kusanagi kept calling Totsuka many times. Totsuka seemed to say something, but he groaned and couldn't quite reach Kusanagi's ears.

When he got into the car in sweat and frustration, he started the engine, he told Totsuka forcefully.

"Wait a bit, let's go there."

"Yes I'm waiting."

Totsuka's answers came to Kusanagi firmly. It was a weak little voice, but it was a tone that didn't lose the character of Totsuka even in that case.

He knew about the places Totsuka used to go for night views. Hirasaka Building. It is a building that even outsiders can climb to the rooftop from an external emergency staircase, and there is also a height from where you can get a panoramic view of Shizume city.

Kusanagi broke the speed limit, ran in front of the Hirasaka building, and climbed the emergency stairs with Yata. When he reached the rooftop, he jumped into his eyes the figure of Totsuka lying on his back without strength and a large clot of red blood underneath.

Kusanagi stood up for a moment, but Yata immediately yelled, "Totsuka-san!", And ran to support Totsuka's body.

Totsuka was still breathing and conscious.

"Totsuka-san! Hey! What happened?!"

Totsuka groaned and opened his eyes to Yata, who screamed in a crying voice, and looked at Yata. He seemed to vomit blood while he waited and his mouth was soaked with blood.

"King... Colorless..."

Totsuka squeezed the words out quietly.

"'King Colorless'...? Totsuka-san, were you attacked by another 'King'?"

"Yes, Yata. Don't force him to speak."

Unable to see it, Kusanagi said that in a murderous voice.

Totsuka, who said that he was waiting, was certainly waiting for Kusanagi and his friends. But at a glance he knew what was happening.

He could feel that the Totsuka flame delivered by Suoh, was about to go out, as he was always by his side as Kusanagi's partner.

Yata seems to be trying to hold the wound and puts his palm around Totsuka soaked with blood on his belly. The coat sucked up most of the blood, which was now coming out with a slight noise.

"It's okay, Totsuka-san. We are calling a doctor right now, you can get rid of this kind of injury right away..."

Yata, desperately trying to cheer him up, had his face close to tears. Totsuka's face, which was supported by Yata's arm, could have looked good. He looked at Yata with a concerned face and managed to lift his weak arm and reach Yata's face.

"I'm going to get rid of that..."

Totsuka touched Yata's cheek to comfort him, but his hand was exhausted and he fell, leaving a trail of blood.

"...I'm sorry."

Somehow, it will be fixed.

It was a Totsuka habit. He always laughed and said it, and his unique optimistic ease made him feel like he could really handle it.

But now the power of that word is gone, with Totsuka's life.

Totsuka opened his eyes and stopped breathing with a worried look.

"Totsuka-san...?"

Yata's hand shook a little.

"Totsuka-san... Hey... Don't be sleeping... Wake up... Hey!"

Many tears welled up in Yata's eyes. Holding Totsuka's cold body, he hugs him and cries.

Kusanagi silently turned his back on Totsuka's body. He walked slowly towards the ancient chamber that Totsuka used to carry, and that it was lying on the concrete of the rooftop. Totsuka's blood was also on the surface of the camera.

Passion did not bother Kusanagi. The sadness, anger and intense emotions that seemed to slow down his thoughts were suppressed and he decided what he should do now.

He grabs his PDA and call the person he had to report to.

On rare occasions, the other party answered with a call.

"Mikoto, I have bad news."

Kusanagi remembers that night many times.

Kusanagi, who had told Awashima about Totsuka that night, silently lowered his gaze.

It was getting dark outside and it was starting to rain. A whispering rain envelops Kusanagi's lonely bar.

Kusanagi walked over to the shelf where the Totsuka relics were placed, placed the palm of his hand on the Totsuka camera at the end, and patted it lightly.

Totsuka, who had many hobbies and changed his interest to various things, had the most enduring hobby, the camera. There are many images of friends that Totsuka left behind. Everyone in the video used to laugh.

They also seemed to be a sign of Totsuka's love and attachment to "Homura". Since Totsuka was always handling the camera, there were few images that showed Totsuka himself.

(Hey, hey, somehow...)

Relive his laughing expression after saying that.

"Just say irresponsible things and go your own way."

He put his hand on the camera in his fist and squeezed it hard.

"Fool."

Kusanagi closed his eyes, muttering resentment against his deceased friend of his.

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The boy was standing in the stadium on a downpour night.

He was terribly shocked, but not surprised. He somehow he had felt that way since the phone call to his parents' house failed to connect.

"This is your house?"

"It was here, it should be. I left the station and went straight down the street... here was a house with a little garden..."

What spread out in front of the boy was a large stadium and empty audience seats.

There is no such thing as "Isana Yashiro's mediocre happy house" in memory of him.

Kuro looked at the boy with calm eyes.

"You don't seem like the type of person you think you are."

"...Yes."

He has been raining a lot. The raindrops falling on the stadium lawn made a flapping noise. Both the boy and Kuro were drenched. There is no point in putting an umbrella on now, but the boy slowly opens the red umbrella that he was still hanging in his hand.

An umbrella that his sister told him to carry in his dream, when he was afraid.

But in reality, the boy may not have had an older sister.

No, on the contrary.

"It may not be Isana Yashiro in the first place. I mean, maybe there was no person named Isana Yashiro."

"Oh."

"I felt like something was wrong. When I tried to remember the details, sometimes it didn't work."

He tilted the umbrella to hide his face and spun it like a rusty hand.

He hears Kuro's voice from the other side of the umbrella.

"Who are you?"

"A murderer?"

When he answered that, the words made the boy hurt more than he expected. He stopped the spinning umbrella and squeezed the handle hard.

"I can't say there is absolutely no chance. I can't believe in myself anymore."

From under the umbrella, the boy gave Kuro a weak smile.

"You want to kill me?"

Kuro looked at the boy and was silent for a while.

Eventually, however, he takes up the sword stance and touches the sword's handle.

The boy closes its eyes when he sees it.

He didn't know anything, but the boy no longer thought he was an innocent person. He also thought that if he killed him for something he was guilty of, he should accept it.

Kuro's breathing changed. The boy was ready to give up closing his eyes tighter at the sound of his breathing.

The next moment, he hit the boy.

"The final curtain falls the moment a person enters."

It was a haiku, not a hit.

The boy opens his eyes, surprised.

What Kuro had in his right hand was not the handle of his sword, but the "recorder with the haikus recited by Miwa Ichigen" that he appreciates.

At that moment, he picked up the recorder with a satisfied face.

"What beautiful words."

"Were you listening to me...?"

"Is it a story you can't believe? It's weird, I don't believe you either, long before you can't believe yourself."

The rain hits the umbrella. Kuro, who had no umbrella, was soaked in the rain, but he stood up straight without shrugging his shoulders.

"I believe in only one thing, the words of my late master. Ichigen-sama told me to find out. I have not yet given up. Therefore, I will not close the curtain."

Kuro looked directly at the boy.

"What about you, Shiro?"

For the first time, he called him Shiro.

It was not out of trust or affection, but he showed that he was not an enemy, but that he had reached the position of a neighbor who was seeking the truth together.

Kuro's righteousness gradually permeates the heart of the desperately fleeing boy.

"Don't give up? Yes. That word is correct."

Kuro perhaps thought the boy was praising Miwa's words, and his cheeks flushed like a child. He had a rough nose.

"In any case, I can allow you to repeat this sentence. When you say Ichigen-sama's words, your heart will clear."

As usual, words of revulsion rippled in the boy's mouth. With a smile, the tense thing loosened, and his eyes were about to get wet with water that wasn't rain, and the boy covered his face with the umbrella.

"Rare."

The whispered voice was loose and a little wet.