



"SIDE GOLD"

PROLOGUE A: FLYING GHOST SHIP

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD

May 1945.

A corner of the Atlantic Ocean where the sky and the sea occupy all the view.

From that endless blue sky, a barrage formation of SBD Dauntless began to descend in several rows. It was a sudden sortie, and it was a rough formation with only 20 bombers, but no problem.

A target, or a single ship.

According to the reconnaissance plane report, the weapons could not be seen.

It was a gigantic rigid airship that moved slowly close to the glistening surface of the sea.

The leader of the formation, who descended a bit ahead of the others, couldn't believe that it was a real existence as he approached in the blink of an eye. The strange way to connect the flat air sacs was like a bivalve with a displaced shell.

(Or the clunky pancakes my daughter made.)

After the Third Reich's surrender of Germany the other day, the formation commander pressed the bombardment button at just the right time, shaking the sight of home from him that had come to mind frequently.

In response, the suspended armor-piercing bombs left the aircraft and fell on the airship.

He could feel that his companions were also throwing bombs one after another behind him as they began to ascend.

After a few seconds, the explosions occurred in rapid succession far below.

The roar was surprisingly far away, the flames blurred by the sunlight, and only black smoke billowed from near the surface of the sea.

The formation leader tilted the aircraft so that the situation could be clearly seen and began to circle around the column of black smoke. That was not for his own viewing. It was for his partner who was looking at the camera in the back seat sitting back to back. The sound of the shutter opening and the film rolling up continued uninterrupted from the beginning.

"What do you think, David? Is the ghost ship a piece of wood?"

"No, Captain. It's still burning, but it will explode soon."

The two experienced pilots recalled once again the mysterious mission entrusted to the United States Atlantic Fleet. All the formations that were flying together must have felt the same way as them.

Mobilize the entire fleet to locate and sink an airship that has been sighted in the Atlantic Ocean for the last month or so.

It wandered around doing nothing, wandering aimlessly, and before long the sailors coming and going called it the "ghost ship".

In that nickname, there was no fear involved.

At the time, it was a common name mixed with a lot of ridiculousness. The level of ridicule among military personnel increased when it was bluntly identified by references to intelligence.

This is because the true identity of the suspected ghost ship (anyone who sees the text can't help but burst out laughing) was the "secret weapon" of the German Third Reich, which surrendered to the Allies last week.

(If I remember correctly, it was an aerial gunship for anti-barrier balloons? That German bastard... How many Messers could be built with the time and materials required to assemble such a large and thin target?)

The formation leader shrugged at the tragic ending.

"Well... why did Fleet HQ order a mission like this to be "recorded in detail"? If they were found during the day, they would know there would be no such thing."

"Yes, Captain. I was also concerned about the phrase "Beware of the silver light". It may have been loaded with a new type of bomb."

Even while he was conversing, his quiet companion kept pressing the shutter while he kept his eyes on the camera.

"A new type of bomb, huh. I heard rumors..."

The leader of the formation finished checking if his companions failed in the bombardment and reduced the number. He couldn't even see the plane that landed in the

water around the black smoke. There was no accident report of the following plane. The mission was completed.

Involuntarily, he let out a faint impression.

"Anyway, the rumored ghost ship has finally returned to the bottom of the sea."

"Yes, Captain. It is difficult to understand why the remnants of the German army still roamed the waters so far from the defection route to South America."

"We'll never know, right?"

Behind the mutter, the captain regretted completing the easy mission.

(Thanks to him, I was not sent to the Pacific front and I was able to kill time until the end of the war... but that's all.)

He continued the conversation until the confirmation of the bombardment with the feeling that he was watching the final moments of the benefactor.

"That name... Did you say "Heaven" or something?"

"No, Captain. The meaning is the same, but "Himmelreich".

"I remember well. Well, in that case, the crew was in hell instead of heaven."

"Ah?!"

The half-stunned banter was interrupted by a startled cry.

The captain, who immediately turned his attention to the control stick, asked sharply.

"What happened?!"

What he was wary of was the attack by German Air Force planes supporting the "ghost ship", but his partner's response was completely different... or rather, it was impossible.

"That's stupid... the target is alive and well! Can't recognize the damage!"

"What?! That's stupid!"

The captain, who shouted the same lines as his partner, saw the same scene as his partner when he dropped his line of sight to the surface of the sea.

From the fading black smoke, a "ghost ship" with the same speed and shape as before the shelling was slowly coming out. The upper deck, which should have been shelled, was completely unscathed, not to mention stained with soot.

Did they all miss the target in the formation barrage?

It looked like a light alloy, but is it heavy armor?

A secret function hidden in a secret weapon?

From the common sense check to the absurd delusions running through his mind, the captain shook his head slightly.

"Impossible."

He immediately changed his mind. As a veteran pilot, he took the following measures against the real "enemy aircraft" that roamed below.

"If the shelling doesn't work... let's put a machine gun on deck and see the reason for its solidity with our own eyes."

However, he was stopped by his partner.

"No, Captain. Wait a minute."

"What's up, David?"

"Should have been in the order. Did you skip the second half again?"

Having regained his composure, he accurately repeated the details.

"If the bombardment fails to hit the intended attack, report to headquarters and await the next order."

"I didn't understand the meaning, so I skipped it."

The captain's defense was justified.

There's no way a single airship couldn't be sunk by a formation bombing attack.

It would be a mistake to assume that the intended attack would not be achieved.

That should be there, but reality kicked in the obvious and was there beyond assumptions.

"This is Emmmental 1, Fleet Command, please respond."

With his friend in the background, who began to communicate with the command center with a high-performance communication device that was adapted, the formation leader at least launched a verbal attack on the impossible existence.

"... "Ghost ship", huh?"

The silvery-white aircraft continued to fly over the sea, where the black smoke had already disappeared.

A tall man looked up at the sky from the wheelhouse of the Himmelreich airship.

There was no gleam of joy or longing in his eyes that reflected the dazzling blue. The white silk beauty with long silver hair falling down his back lacked vitality. Only resignation and boredom enveloped him in a stagnant way.

His expression moved slightly.

In front of the frontal airbag that protruded far forward, the barrage formation that was flying in the sky began to move backwards in a somewhat chaotic manner. He could see the frustrated and suspiciously distorted expressions of the pilots.

"Good work."

The man murmured softly and slowly turned on his heel. Only the dull sound of the engine accompanied the steps towards the bench placed in the center of the wheelhouse, which seemed to be an annoying step.

And then a new assistant joined.

"It should work with that, answer me! Hey, let it go!"

It was a communication mixed with a terrible noise. It even picked up the noise of people colliding.

"The presidential decree should have given me priority in the negotiations! Get off!"

He was familiar with his voice, which was the exact opposite of him, full of lust for life and power.

If he remembered correctly, an acquaintance from the Ordnance Bureau... why would he hear that voice over the Pacific Ocean?

As he vaguely guessed the reason, still longing for the broken past, the man next to the couch turned his feet towards the console of the communication device. The noise disappeared when the communication frequency was adjusted.

"Werner, is that you?"

The man named Werner reacted violently to his weak speech.

"Weismann... Adolf K. Weismann!"

The man's mouth, Adolf K. Weismann, slightly dropped as he was struck by his unchanging vigor. He responded with harmless sarcasm.

"Even if you don't yell, the communication is clear. It's been a long time since we parted at Peenemünde."

"Oh, that's right... yes."

Werner's voice, who understood that there was no problem with the conversation, dropped suddenly. Expressing his feelings clearly, he squeezed out a heavy voice.

"It was too bad about your sister."

"....."

"It was a loss to humanity."

It was conveyed that the exaggerated assessment of him was not entirely false, but because of that, a wind of loneliness blew on Weismann's chest. It was true that he was happy with the assessment, but more than that, there was much more that only he and the other person could understand... A lot had been lost along with his sister.

He wanted to scream and complain, but he couldn't scream anymore, and even if he complained, people wouldn't understand.

"Everyone I meet after that... will say that first. Did you really like my sister, or do I look dangerous without my sister?"

"Both."

Werner stated briefly.

"That's why I'm going to mourn my sister first and then I'll invite you."

He began to speak with his characteristic directness.

"I turned myself over to the United States, to continue my research."

"Is it an invitation to do the same?"

Having already roughly grasped the situation, Weismann still confirmed the other party's intentions.

"What does that have to do with the recent rain?"

"I'm sorry."

First of all, Werner apologized. He continued with a bitter voice.

"It wasn't my order; it was the military commander's priority order. I visibly made him see if you were worthy enough to accept the surrender."

"The result was a success."

"Ah, the people here seem to have decided."

He felt an annoyed look around him. After that, his voice became brighter.

"I received only fragmentary information, so I don't know much about it, but... if you provide the "power" you have acquired, the United States will welcome you with perfect preparation for the investigation."

"The ending is unreliable."

At his happy words,

"At least that's what the presidential decree says. I, who just surrendered, cannot judge how seriously the politicians and military personnel of this country take it."

The sarcasm from the surroundings returned.

Recalling the conversation, they once had in the Ordnance Office, Weismann smiled... and soon realized that he had lost the mental strain to do so. The laughter disappeared before turning into an expression.

Only affection led to advice.

"Werner, I cannot offer my "power". There is no such thing."

Exactly, he could do it.

The way is to place the target human under his influence.

However, Weismann secretly refused to teach or practice it. Being locked in that airship was originally such a thing. That conversation could be an act of detachment from himself that it hadn't been long since he locked himself away, and an act of repentance to the world.

Thinking of that, his voice hardened.

"I'm sorry, but... I don't think you have any feelings; I will politely decline the matter of giving up. My request is that you leave me alone. That's all. Tell that to the great people around you."

"Wait, Weismann!"

Perhaps because of the danger of the communication being cut off, Werner held back.

"Do you intend to continue roaming with the airship from now on, a man like you?! It's true that I'm sorry about your sister, but you're still alive."

"Let's dispel the real concerns of great people."

This time, Weismann interrupted his voice and said.

"From now on, I will not side with any country, and I will not give this "power" to anyone."

For a moment, there were various noises on the other side of the communication device.

"Is it believable?"

"We have to secure it now."

"We cannot give that power to the communist camp."

Several tens of seconds after the fragment of suspicion was spilled, Werner sadly said again.

"The people here are afraid of you and the power you hold. That's why I want to know their true identity, and I don't want someone else to steal it."

"....."

Weismann barely swallowed the resentment as he was about to make a sound: "I know, it's deep in my bones.". Unbeknownst to Werner, that fear led to the bombing that tried to end it all, and the kidnapping of the researcher himself.

The human pain, anger, hesitation, and fear that swirled there collapsed in despair.

Now, all that's left in the empty burned fields is a little secret clinging to a good relationship... only expectations.

Instead of cursing, Weismann said it.

As an impulse for a friend he had parted with.

"It won't be stolen, I'm sure."

"What do you mean?"

He didn't give the puzzled Werner a straight answer.

"You'll find out eventually. No, it glows so anyone can see it clearly."

Weismann prophesied as one of the "Kings" who were first seen by the "Slate", the owner of the "power" that was there. He looked at the empty blue sky and longed.

"I'm sure the sword will rise up in the sky with just my thoughts."

He called lightly to the other end of the communication device that had been silent for some time.

"I want the people who are there now to talk to the most important people."

"What?"

Werner and the "people around" realized that it was a message for the president.

Weismann issued a clear and direct warning that benefited them.

"Don't touch the sword."

There was no objection to his comments that sounded like an order.

"That's it. Werner, I pray that your dreams reach the moon."

It was completely natural, as if to lower the curtain at the end of the performance,

"Viel Glück." (Good luck.)

Adolf K. Weismann said goodbye and hung up.

A few days later.

On behalf of the President, the United States declared that the crew of the airship "Himmelreich" would be placed under shelter as refugees. It is not known whether Adolf K. Weismann laughed or was astonished at the blatant one-sided "don't mess with anyone else" threat that had no effect or binding force.

However, the airship continued to wander the Atlantic as a "ghost ship".

Many people, in many positions, lamented his inaction.

However, that idle action was exactly what he wanted.