



**"SIDE GOLD"**

**PROLOGUE B: THE SWORD IN THE SKY**

**TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD**

Daikaku Kokujoji was walking through the driving snow.

The blizzard half obscured the landscape, and there was nothing but flat ground, and he moved forward with only one thing in mind.

He suddenly realized it by the feel of his feet.

(This is not snow.)

The moment he realized it, the scenery in front of him completely changed.

To be precise, Kokujoji's own view of things changed.

What appeared to be snow turned into grains of silver, and the flat land turned into a field of silver.

Every time he took a step forward, a white glow began to dazzle his eyes.

(I remember this glow.)

The next morning after the hateful bombing.

In the sky over the city of Dresden, which had turned into a mountain of rubble, the proof of the "King" shone brightly in the form of a sword.

He had no idea why that was so bright.

Kokujoji was aiming for that place on his own account.

He thought of his friend that used that brightness as "power".

(Is this view your world?)

There was nothing there as far as he could see.

It was an empty world filled with a beautiful glow.

Still, Kokujoji didn't stop walking.

Because he decided to follow the path where his friend had stopped.

(It should be up there.)

His footsteps, by his own desire, inched closer and closer.

At the root of the "power" that he lurked in the depths of that silver world.

The mysterious holy relic, the heart of the "Slate".

Before long, Kokujoji...

(What?)

He felt that he saw a faint "color" that wasn't silver in the glow.

Looking into the distance, the jet blackness that separated silver and the world, in other words, at the sky ahead,

(.....!)

Little stars were shining.

(Different colored glitters... I remember this too.)

In the midst of so many commotions and incidents, and the struggle to survive, the scene that he had been buried in the depths of his memory was vividly recalled.

The silver sword-shaped glow was not entirely one color.

A number of brilliance was woven into each part.

(Was it the same color and number as that star?)

Now that he thought about it, in an experiment at the research institute, there were blue eyebrows and red funnels among the colors inhabiting individual EX- $\alpha$  mice.

(What colors and how many are there?)

Kokujoji sensed that he had gotten some kind of clue and quickened his steps.

With a racing heart, he stretched out his hand to reach for the heavens.

(What does this mean?)

The moment his outstretched hand broke through the silver snowstorm and almost touched the stars...

June 1945.

Kokujoji woke up at the bottom of the dense forest.

The smell of vegetation that makes you cry even at night filled his lungs and, incidentally, his empty stomach.

A stern face was barely visible in the dim moonlight filtering from the treetop. A sergeant who seemed to have woken him up with a light jolt to his shoulder. He moved his lips as little as possible and said quietly.

"Lieutenant Kokujoji."

"What's up, sergeant?"

Kokujoji recovered as a lieutenant in the Imperial Japanese Army without leaking the slightest bit of dreams from him.

The sergeant dropped to one knee and reported so his voice wouldn't echo.

"The scout has returned. As expected, Lieutenant, British troops are deployed to the front."

"As expected."

Kokujoji sat up and looked at the container he had leaned against. He seemed to have inadvertently fallen asleep while he was meditating to explore the "Slate" was lurking within. Or maybe he was drawn to the "Slate", he immediately dismissed it as an excuse to let his guard down.

He quietly got up and then said.

"Let's listen directly."

"Yes."

With the sergeant in the lead, he proceeded with his immediate mission.

For the important mission of returning to the homeland.

In early April, a submarine secretly set sail from the naval port of Kiel in northern Germany.

The destination was the Empire of Japan, 30,000 kilometers away.

The cargo consisted of military attachés and military engineers sent from Germany, technical officers, including Kokujoji, who was returning to Japan, a small number of Japanese soldiers, and various weapons and supplies from the German army.

That trip ended in failure.

Because the war situation deteriorated while waiting for the "Slate" brought by the authority of the Office of the President, the ship crossed the Indian Ocean from the Cape

of Good Hope instead of taking the shortest route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arctic Ocean. He had no choice but to take all routes.

It took them a month and a half to follow the route, which was not easy because it was long, but when they reached the eastern part of the Indian Ocean, they received a radio signal sent all over the world.

It was the unconditional surrender of the German Third Reich and an order to stop fighting and surrender.

A few days after debating whether the information was false by the Allied Forces, the Japanese engineers decided to commit suicide amid growing expectations of the ship's surrender (everyone was already fed up with the war). They worried that the surrender argument would be confused because they had high-ranking officers on board.

Lieutenant Daikaku Kokujoji was appointed to coordinate the remaining Japanese soldiers on board.

The main reason was that he was the highest ranking lieutenant, excluding self-determined technical officers (both field officers), and that he was in charge of transporting something important on a special mission from the Presidential Office.

Although the captain of the submarine decided to surrender, as a last resort for the Allied nations still at war, Kokujoji and other Japanese soldiers and most of the cargo were delivered to a remote port in Malaya.

The port was barely occupied by the Japanese army, but the rear was already blocked by the British army, and the local garrison was cut off. They were few and they offered to accompany Kokujoji, who was determined to return home. It was evident that the garrison would be wiped out once the British offensive began. In that case, at least a thicker straw, they bet on Kokujoji's advance.

More precisely, Kokujoji bet on the latest German equipment received from the submarine.

It all consisted of five transport vehicles, a reasonable number of infantry rifles, and some heavy weapons. Supplies such as fuel, food and ammunition that the submarine left at the limit.

And a sturdy container that contained the "Slate".

Kokujoji was in the sphere of influence of the Allied Forces, and together with a group of about fifty people, it was presumptuous to call it a random mixed force, and they were forced to chase the retreating front lines of the allied forces.

Then he wandered through the jungle for over a month.

They evaded the British and continued south in search of friendly forces. Once he reached the southern tip of the peninsula, he could even hope to return to his homeland from Shonan Island, Singapore.

A faint but lonely hope kept them going.

Meanwhile, Kokujoji strictly forbade any engagement.

He made sure to explore in secrecy and proceed carefully.

Against a small unit scattered in a remote jungle like that, if he made full use of the latest German Army equipment, he should be able to win once or twice. However, the victory rallied the surrounding enemy forces like a mothlight. They should crush them while fighting that enemy army, and the next enemy army, and so on.

Kokujoji's strict order was precisely because he was aware of the overwhelming number of Allied Forces in Germany.

Even the soldiers accompanying him did not want to die unnecessarily, now that they had found hope of returning home. In other words, they didn't want to fight. They endured a march through the jungle, exhausting from exhaustion and hunger, and obeyed the orders of the first lieutenant, who was young but dignified.

However, the time had finally come for such a frenzied stealth to hit a wall.

Kokujoji frowned after hearing the scout's report.

"You were building an outpost with a number that could be called a troop, instead of just patrol sentries, right?"

"Ha, that's right."

An upright scout replied. There was a clear hint of anxiety in his expression. It was natural that he had seen with his own eyes that dark clouds hung over his feeble hope.

Instead, the sergeant, who showed no sign of agitation, speculated quietly.

"In that case, even if you underestimate the size of the enemy army, it will be the size of a battalion. Will we deviate as usual?"

"No, there are no other roads on this isthmus that only allow vehicles to pass. That is probably why the British are stationed there. Alternatively, it may be a key point where the division is based."

Saying that, Kokujoji noticed that the scout's expression had turned even darker. Although ashamed of his own mistake, he spoke words of gratitude.

"Don't worry, I'll do something about it. It was hard work."

"Yes!"

After confirming that the soldiers had withdrawn, he looked back at the sergeant, who had an unusually bitter smile on his face.

"That I have to do?"

"I know you're restless."

With the same bitter smile, Kokujoji put his hand to his chin.

"If I'm really careful, I'll take a detour next time, no matter how long the detour lasts, but... what about the rest of the food?"

"Reduce it further to five days."

Food delivered from the submarine was also low after a month of marching. As long as they keep their feet in mind, they won't be able to accelerate and it will take days. It was an unavoidable situation, with no other option.

The smile disappeared from Kokujoji's face, leaving only bitterness.

"The only way to reach friendly lines is to defeat the enemy and take their food. At least a battalion-sized enemy force, with fifty starving men here... no matter how modern the equipment of the German army, would be hard to kill 10 people."

"If you can catch the enemy off guard and defeat them twice, you'll be fine."

The smile faded from the sergeant's face.

Kokujoji thought for a few more seconds before saying.

"Just let me get ready for the dawn raid. I'll think about it for a bit."

"Yes."

After the sergeant quietly left, he sat cross-legged on the container that contained the "Slate". He stiffened his posture as if he were sitting in Zen meditation, but his inner mind was intensely anguished.

(Finally, I'm in a bind... what should I do?)

It's not like he was thinking about how to efficiently use the latest equipment of the German army. Like other cornered Japanese forces, they were unwilling to recklessly charge into enemy positions. Since they landed in Malaya, or even before, since they left the Kiel Naval Port, they had hesitated for a long time. Namely...

(Is this the time and place to launch the "Slate"?)

Within the container, the "Slate", which had most of its functions sealed, possessed the power to awaken the "transcendent ruling race" in the König Project. There was already a precedent.

Despite that, he hesitated to let go of the "Slate" until he was cornered at the last minute.

The reason was simple and serious.

(What criteria does this "Slate" use to choose a "King"?)

It was a concern.

It is said that one of the precedents woke up at some point during the bombing.

On the other hand, a woman who should have faced a similar situation did not wake up.

Even the "transcendent ruling race" could not explain why such a difference arose. Of course, the fact that he had half stopped thinking due to that woman's death was probably also an important factor.

(I still don't understand anything about the "Slate".)

Kokujoji planned to carefully unravel the mechanism after he returned to Japan. However, since the return to Japan by submarine had been thwarted halfway, there was no more room for maneuver.

(That being said, is it okay to carelessly release it out of desperation?)

Assuming that a battle with the British Army was about to take place,

What would happen if an unrelated soldier woke up?

What would happen if someone in the enemy British army woke up?

All plans will fail.

He didn't want to rush things and risk someone with different intentions awakening as the "King". He didn't want to take possession of his power, but he absolutely couldn't stand the fact that the dream the three of them had was ignored.

(Definitely...)

Suddenly, his thoughts hit on the reason.

(That's right... I have something I can't give up.)

He still didn't understand anything, he didn't want to rush things and take risks... those things that came to his mind were clever excuses to stop.

(I will... I'll do my duty... I swore, right?)

With the tenacity of his vows, Kokujoji coldly probed into his own heart and mercilessly confirmed the existence of reason. To witness without shame before the dead and the living everything that "Slate" did.

And then he understood.

(This is not "hesitation" but "fear" of taking a step.)

Once he figured it out, it was easy to handle.

(Don't be afraid to continue, that's enough.)

Kokujoji slowly opened his eyelids.

One look without hesitation shot the world.

Then came the moment of choice.

Dawn was near.

Kokujoji Daikaku sat quietly and waited for the meeting.

First, a sergeant who was ready for battle climbed under the container.

Before long, all the soldiers who had even learned their faces during the march arrived.

Under the fading stars, looking at the white horizon, Kokujoji spoke with determination.

"If you have to, do it."

He put the "Slate" under his feet and stood up determinedly.

"I will cast away my life as a human and reign as one and only. I will rule over all and condemn the foolish. I will harness power beyond human knowledge to bring about equality and prosperity. Yes, that's right."

A secret "power" worked in front of the soldiers who did not understand the meaning of the words and only kept an eye on him.

The seal that bound the "Slate" inside the container was slowly coming undone.

The seal mechanism was a type of curse linked to the five elements that capture the earth and atmosphere through the circulation of the four seasons of wood, fire, metal, and water. The resulting "spirit slowdown", "function suspension", was different from the original operating principle of the "Slate", and in fact did not suppress the power of the "Slate". The essence was the creation of a "field" that blocked the forces that acted on the "Slate" from the outside.

In other words, if the "field" was disturbed, the seal would lose its effect.

In the past, Kokujoji willingly undertook that act, which he had previously avoided out of amazement at the mysteries that could be touched by human hands. It seemed quite and charmingly easy.

He was standing in a scene that was different from the one he was concentrating on.

The moment he realized that, something echoed from afar.

The sound of his heart, the rumble of the earth, or... the movement of the world.

That would belong to him.

It would make it his own strength.

(That I have to do?)

Power was not simply given. He felt that he was assuming some kind of intentionality.

Mission, function, role, characteristics, temperament, true meaning... various concepts permeated his consciousness.

(So what?)

The vow he made to become "King" was more than just words.

The intentionality of the acquired power did not change at all. Whether or not that happened would be up to him.

(It's what you want, come!)

Kokujoji yelled at the "Slate" that appeared before him.

He called the "Slate" and came

He was chosen.

Then, it was his turn to grab it.

At the request, something spilled over from the depths of the "Slate".

The movement of the world increased, the expansive land divided, and a glow gushed forth as if were blowing from the heart. A dazzling brilliance erupted as if it had come to life, filling the heavens and the earth.

Kokujoji controlled all that shine.

The power to nurture that makes life.

The dazzling and precious power of "Golden".

However, Kokujoji did not get drunk on that rule.

He knew that that golden was the "power beyond human wisdom" that he had decided to accept with determination.

Experiencing it firsthand, his determination was even stronger.

(We must begin this long journey... at least to generate a desirable mystery.)

Kokujoji voluntarily regained his consciousness from that world.

The familiar appearance of the soldiers returned.

They were all looking up with dumbfounded faces.

It wasn't Kokujoji, who was on top of a container.

Above that, they were looking up at the sky at dawn.

Kokujoji also followed theirs gazes.

Something that he had already understood was floating there.

The energy crystal that was generated with the birth of the EX- $\alpha$  individuals... It was similar to the one he had seen in Dresden, but it was different... It was a gigantic golden sword that boasted tremendous extravagance.

Kokujoji muttered as if confirming its existence.

"Power manifests as a sword, huh?"

His faintly glowing body was filled with golden "power".

Kokujoji gave an order that sounded like a scolding, which was not encouraging at all.

"Come with me! Live and return to your homeland!"

Without relinquishing his responsibility to anyone, he called the soldiers.

The soldiers did not respond enthusiastically either.

"Yes!"

Over fifty people were sucked into the causal law deviation feedback loop by greeting in perfect order. They became  $\beta$  individuals and became "vassals" led by the "King". Suddenly, they all felt "power" overflowing within them. For most, it was not a weapon to fight.

The sergeant had an irresistible desire to paint.

The explorer wanted to wield a hoe in the fields of his hometown.

The other soldiers also treasured the "golden" they felt inside.

Kokujoji looked at them, took them in his heart and gave them orders.

"Follow me!"

They began to advance with determination and strength.

The British Army was hit by a miraculous storm.

A golden wave passed through the center of the camp where the two divisions had settled, forming a single path.

A group of what appeared to be Japanese soldiers ran through the terrified camp at terrifying speed. Despite sporadic artillery fire, they continued their advance. Either they continued on their neighbors, who had come under fire, or they crushed the shelling tank head-on.

It happened in just a few minutes.

Only after the golden sword floating in the sky at dawn disappeared, did the British army wake up from a beautiful nightmare.

After waking up, they were stunned to realize that the scars from their nightmares remained in reality.

This battle was not recorded in official records and the United States confiscated all materials. Britain and the dubious Soviet Union protested vigorously, but in the end there was no further progress.

Contrary to the shock of the people involved, that so-called "Golden March" was buried in numerous anecdotes as laughable battlefield tales.

Lieutenant Daikaku Kokujoji and the remaining 40 soldiers were summoned to the mainland for their achievements in breaking through the Malaya front and bringing in valuable supplies from Germany.

The following month, the Empire of Japan announced its acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, ending the war.