



**RED CASE FILES: HOMRA IN LAS VEGAS**

**CHAPTER 2: NIGHTLESS CASTLE IN THE DESERT**

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

Two men were looking at each other in the dry desert.

One was stripped to the waist, and though his woolen hat had fallen off, his eyes still held uncontrollable anger.

One person was leaning against the seat of the white truck, wearing an annoyed smile that seemed to enjoy his anger rather than anything else.

Misaki Yata and Saruhiko Fushimi. The two men looked at each other in the brilliant heat.

"Yata-san! I'm glad I finally found you!"

Suddenly, a voice echoed from behind the vehicle.

Yata opened his eyes and looked over there. There was a familiar face in the back seat of the boxcar. Akagi, Dewa, Fujishima, the people who were supposed to be in Japan leaned forward with joy.

Bando muttered in astonishment.

"Shohei? Why are you here...?"

"Ah, San-chan! No, actually there are several things."

"Hey."

Fushimi coldly interrupted the conversation. With a knife look at the backseat, as if he was throwing it.

"This story comes first. Don't get in the way, San-chan."

Akagi was full of words, and Yata felt anger rise from his temples.

"There's no reason for me to tell the traitor. Bastard. What did you come for, Saru?"

A teasing smile appeared on Fushimi's mouth.

"It's a job. Unlike you, who have free time, I'm a civil servant here. I have to go on a business trip abroad."

"Because you are a dog in blue, will you come to America if a bone is thrown at you? It is not like a monkey. There is no such possibility that you pass through here, what is the purpose?"

Fushimi's smile deepened. With his elbows on the window, he brought his face closer to Yata's.

"Is it a situation where you can say that? Think about your position with me now and say it properly."

"....."

Yata clenched his fist tightly.

The California sun was burning his neck. The dry wind evaporated the sweat in the blink of an eye and mercilessly deprived the body of water. In fact, Eric was dehydrated and fell. If he was left as he was, there was no doubt that he would fall into a serious situation.

"I'll say it again, Misaki. If you ask someone for something, there's a way to say it, right?"

Yata is the captain of "Homura". It was definitely himself who intervened in this situation. So he had to be the one to take responsibility.

Yata bowed his head as he bit his lip.

"...Saru. Ask. I'm begging you. At this rate, Eric will die if you don't help him."

"....."

Fushimi's facial expression had changed to something that looked bored.

5 seconds or 10 seconds. Fushimi lightly squeezed his chin after a choked silence.

"Get him in the back. There's water in the car."

Yata looked back and nodded. Bando and Chitose carried Eric, and Kamamoto, who had come to his senses, hurriedly opened the back seat door. Fujishima, who was inside, laid Eric down in the car and doused his lips with water from a plastic bottle.

After seeing Kamamoto board, Yata returned to Fushimi. Fushimi looked at him suspiciously.

"What are you doing? Get in quick."

"I won't go up."

A voice hard as steel bounced off the words.

"The reason I bowed down was for you to help them. I won't go up. I'll stay here."

Surprised, Kamamoto and the others stuck their faces out the window and shouted.

"What are you talking about, Yata-san?!"

"You're going to stay here; do you really want to die?!"

Yata didn't reply to that, but looked at Fushimi. He held the "Homura" mark that was on his left collarbone as if he was scratching it.

"I still can't forgive you for desecrating this pride, Saruhiko. It's better to hang out here than lay my head on a traitor and survive."

Fushimi narrowed his eyes and muttered coldly.

"...So is."

He turns forward and lift the window. The engine roared and the vehicle began to move slowly. A member in the car yelled to stop Fushimi, but he silently continued to press the accelerator. In the blink of an eye, the vehicle sped up and sped off, finally disappearing beyond the horizon.

Yata wiped away the sweat and started walking again.

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How much time had passed since then?

The bright sunlight did not weaken, and the heat and dryness gradually drained Yata of his physical strength. As Yata walked down the road, he turned his grudge against the sky. The sky in California was as blue as black, and no clouds could be found anywhere.

At that time, he was about to lose the strength of his body and wanted to lie down on the road. Each time, Yata shook his head and berated himself. He couldn't die in a place like that. Anyway, he had to join the "Homura" members and play hard in Las Vegas. Good rice. Overflowing money. By the way, he would punch Fushimi in the face...

Yata stabbed his knee on the spot.

"Damn."

Consciousness was stunned. The field of vision was blurred. Desperately shaking off the thoughts that seemed to arise so far, Yata looked past the road that swayed in the heat.

Something was shining on the road.

At first, Yata paid no attention to him. He thought the bumpers and empty cans that had slipped were just reflecting light. Instead, he had to move to survive.

As he got closer, it became clear what was glowing.

It was a PET bottle.

Yata opened his eyes and approached with an unbelievable expression. When he picked up the PET bottle, he could feel the heavy weight in his hand.

As he held his breath, he opened the lid, placed it to his lips, and tilted.

Viscous water flowed into the dry mouth.

Even if he became slimy, it seemed to Yata like the finest sweet dew. He stopped thinking and swallowed hard, snorting. As the water level dropped by half, Yata suddenly returned to sanity. He couldn't drink it all. He didn't know when he could rehydrate next time. He had to save it in order to survive.

Yata hit his cheek with both hands.

"Ok!"

The relief of surviving restored vitality to the withered legs. Yata started walking down the road again as he carefully grabbed the plastic bottle with both hands.

Suddenly, he turned his gaze forward.

The road was flooded with strong sunlight. The water in the plastic bottle he bathed in was lukewarm but not rotten. That means it hadn't been long since it hit the ground.

Until now, there hadn't been any cars that had passed on that road other than that white van.

That's what he believed.

So who dropped that plastic bottle?

As the color of the sky changed from purple to ultramarine and the stars began to flutter in the sky, Yata heard the sound.

Sound of an engine. A car was running.

With the expression that he was finally saved, Yata raised his hands and tried to stop the car with his whole body. It was not necessary. The truck slowed down and stopped well in front of Yata. The driver jumped.

Not that he didn't expect this situation. Still, his English did not come out. Yata desperately spoke, moving his tangled tongue and his head forcefully.

"Ah, uh...hell! Help, too! Aim...um...um, come on, Las Vegas!"

"Las Vegas?"

"Oh, yeah! Las Vegas! Las Vegas!"

The driver blinked. He had a deeply carved face and dark skin. He shook his head and asked questions.

"Chinese? Japanese?"

The word Japanese was barely audible. Yata nodded many times,

"Ah, yes! So, Japanese!"

"Oh!"

The driver smiled and gave a thumbs up with his right hand out.

"Japanese! Nostalgic! Well, get on!"

Yata stared in astonishment at his right hand wrapped in black gloves. However, he immediately grasped the situation and quickly made his way to the passenger seat. As he sat down on the seat, he was thankful for his unexpected luck.

"Ah, thanks! Thanks, man! You really saved me!"

"Hahaha! No problem! It's a bit tight in here though!"

With a cheerful smile, the driver hit the steering wheel and immediately started the car. Yata hurriedly closed the door and fastened his seat belt. The driver looked at Yata out of the corner of his eye and smiled.

"Boy, what's your name?"

The usual Yata would have been angry at being treated like a child, but of course that kind of anger had not increased now. He answers honestly.

"It's Yata. Misaki Yata. What about you?"

"Edward! Call me Ed!"

"Well, Ed. No, thank you very much. If I had stayed like this, I would have been really dry or frozen."

Shaking himself off, Yata turned his gaze out the window. That heat was like a lie, and it was cold at night. Even if he managed to escape dry death, he might have frozen to death if Ed hadn't passed by.

"You walked through Death Valley, the Japanese have guts."

Yata smiled bitterly at the familiar word "guts" coming from foreigners.

"Ed is incredibly good at Japanese. Have you been there?"

"Yes! I lived there! It's nostalgic, my young days, it was more than 10 years ago."

"Hey... is it work?"

"Hmm, well, that kind of kanji? What about Misaki? Why are you going to Las Vegas?"

"That's a long story! Listen!"

Yata began to speak as if he had cut a dam. He desperately works part-time to save money and try to travel abroad for the first time with all his friends, but the destination was Los Cabos, and the van they got in to cross the border cheaply was actually from an illegal immigrant. That's it, and Yata suddenly stopped talking.

"Really?"

Ed's eyes widened as if he was surprised. Yata believed that he was in trouble. He talks too much, maybe they'll take him to the police, he wondered if he should cheat, but when he thought so much, Ed burst out laughing.

"Hahahahaha! Misaki, you! The Japanese have guts, I love them!"

"Well... really?"

"Yes! And I'm a friend too! Because I'm a foreigner too, it's okay!"

He said something out of the ordinary. Ed shrugged happily at Yata, who was scared.

"I was not born in the United States in the first place. Mexico! From Mexico to Nihon to Fuhonukoku, then from Nihon to the United States to Fuhonukoku. Ok! You rarely see a Japanese! Ordinary Japanese is not that crazy!"

Apparently, this guy named Ed seemed to be pretty tough. Perhaps he noticed Yata's confusion when he replied, "Uh, oh...". Ed casually got back on topic.

"And then, did you go to Las Vegas? You're not having such a bad time; can you go home on your way?"

"Well, that is..."

Then Yata suddenly stopped talking.

"Why did you want to go to Las Vegas?"

Anna won the ticket for the tour and everyone decided to go. Aside from Anna and Suoh, Kusanagi and Totsuka weren't dissatisfied with the fact that they were going. Since there were only four tickets, it was only natural that there were only four people in the end.

What he was really unsatisfied with was that they couldn't go together.

Therefore, Yata was burned. He tried to go to Las Vegas with all the instructions so that everyone could go. Those who didn't want to go couldn't be helped, but at least

Kamamoto, Bando and Chitose agreed with Yata's philosophy. Doing a black part-time job, suffering all kinds of problems, the passion to go beyond the desert was born there.

Where he got stuck.

"I think because I have friends."

That was it.

Ed looked at Yata. Embarrassed, Yata scratched his cheek. But Ed didn't make fun of him or make a fool of him. With a bitter smile on his mouth, he nodded deeply.

"I see. Friends are important. I get it."

Yata was a bit surprised and looked at Ed. Ed smiled, but his gaze seemed to be somewhere far away. Yata stopped talking, thinking that he might be remembering his "friends". Everyone has memories they want to treasure.

Looking out the window again, Yata noted the change.

Before he knew it, the desolate desert was over. The two-lane highway had changed to four lanes, and beyond that, it was even wider. The volume of traffic was also different from before, and SUVs and sports cars were beginning to be seen here and there, mixed with large trucks and wagons.

In the distance, the night sky lit up brilliantly.

Ed walked over laughing to Yata, who opened his mouth halfway and looked at him.

"About time to arrive. The proud jewels of America's Nevada. Welcome to Las Vegas!"

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This city is full of colors and light.

No matter where you look, neon lights and lightning will be reflected in your field of vision. Bright reds, poisonous purples, luxurious whites, and golds shimmer throughout, and it's a bit of a flicker for the eyes after a long plane ride.

If you look into the distance, the sky lights up brightly. Perhaps looking down from space, the city must appear to be a dome of light that drives out the darkness. Simply "City without night". Kusanagi and his friends have landed in Las Vegas, a city without night.

"Anna. Isn't it cold?"

Kusanagi called out to Anna's back as she walked out of the airport and stopped. Anna didn't react. She opened her mouth and looked at the city that was still shining.

For a moment, Kusanagi felt sorry for Anna.

What they see is different from what Anna sees. Due to a congenital disease, her eyes can only see red. The avalanche of colors that was spreading at that moment seemed vague to him.

Still, Anna seemed amused.

The life she has led until now is very different from that of a normal child. As a Strain, under the patronage of the Red Clan, she doesn't even go to school. To her, who has lived in the warm, cramped world of Bar HOMRA, the colors of Las Vegas may seem magnificent, if at all.

"Yes, Anna. Take this."

Totsuka handed Anna a steaming paper cup. It was hot chocolate. Anna grabbed it and took a sip as she looked at the sight in front of her. Her face was smiling.

"Delicious."

"Yes? Good! It's a souvenir of my first victory, so feel free to drink!"

Kusanagi was surprised at the word "first victory".

"Well, Totsuka. Have you already done that?"

"Because there are already slots at the airport? If so, I have no choice but to do it!"

Totsuka made a peace sign and Kusanagi showed a bitter smile on his face.

Surely, as Totsuka says, there are a lot of slot machines installed in the airport baggage claim. Tourists are sucked in like bugs jumping into a moth lantern by a cluster of machines that emit fluffy blue and purple light. It was a suitable setting for the entrance of the casino city.

Totsuka said with a smile as he waved the withdrawal coupon.

"I bet \$100 and win \$110. Well, the first game goes like this."

"Was it moderate? No, how did you feel?"

"Looks like I was finally able to quit smoking on the plane, so I said I'd smoke somewhere. Uh..."

Totsuka looked around and solidified. His smile was just as stiff. Seeing that, Kusanagi was caught in an unpleasant premonition.

It quickly came true.

"Kusanagi-san, maybe it's bad."

Kusanagi followed Totsuka's line of sight and also stiffened in the same way.



Suoh was surrounded by security guards.

Even in such a situation, he was truly a personality to calmly smoke cigarettes. However, in a foreign country where words cannot be understood, Suoh's personality only had the opposite effect. He could see from a distance that the guards were frustrated by that attitude. If Suoh was touched, Suoh would not hesitate: Kusanagi knew too much about the character of the Red King.

"Wait, wait, wait! Mikoto, hold still!"

As he yelled, Kusanagi ran towards them. Anna mysteriously watched his back as she tilted the cup of chocolate.

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The truck stopped and Yata landed on the ground from the passenger seat.

"Uh, oh...this is Las Vegas!"

What he saw was a scene that he had only seen in movies and photographs. Heavy stones that make you feel history pile up endlessly towards the sky. Yes, this was the world-famous quadrangular pyramid, the Great Pyramid of Giza, which contained the sublime pharaoh's coffin.

Why is it in Las Vegas, it shouldn't be in Egypt of course? Why is the Sphinx sitting instead of the front door? He had many doubts and Yata was amazed. It was decided that this pyramid-shaped hotel would be the inn for Yata and his group during their stay in Las Vegas.

"Over there. It's famous, the pyramid! I know it too!"

As Ed said, the "pyramid" only seems to reach the locals. If so, this way can be quite useful on its own.

Yata looked back at the truck and gave a thumbs up with a big grin.

"Seriously, thanks, Ed! Thanks to you, I think I can finally join my friends!"

"Hahaha! No problem, Misaki! Say hello to your friends!"

Ed laughed happily too and gave a thumbs up and started the truck. Yata took off his beanie to a friend he met during the trip, he was shaking it until he couldn't see the truck.

A sudden call came from behind him.

"Yata-san! You're safe!"

Looking back, Akagi and Bando were about to jump out of the hotel like they were rolling. Yata smiled and opened his arms.

"Oh! Have you guys arrived yet?"

"I arrived at night and then I ran to help Yata-san! Kamamoto-san, Chitose and Dewa are now looking for a rental car or a taxi."

"Then, it's alright for you to come back, please contact them! My PDA can't be used here yet."

"I understand!"

Bando took out his PDA and began to make a phone call. As he glanced sideways, Yata asked Akagi.

"How's Eric?"

"He's sleeping in the room right now. I've seen a doctor, but it seems his life isn't in danger since it's mild heat stroke, and if he gets a night's rest, he'll recover soon. Fujishima is taking care of him, so I think he'll be fine."

"Oh! I'm glad..."

Yata exhaled deeply. If you get injured or sick due to your own poor driving, you can't really enjoy traveling. After deciding to check on the situation later, Yata looked up at the top of the pyramid.

For a while, after looking at this, Yata opened his mouth.

"What happened to that guy?"

It seems that he just came up with it. Akagi shook his head, looking up.

"When he brought us here, he left early. He had a job to do."

"I work...? Well, why did you come to this place in the first place? Also, with you?"

At that question, Akagi scratched his head as if he was weakened.

"I don't really get that either. When he was out, he suddenly came over and asked me where King was."

"Mikoto-san...?"

Yata's facial expression turned steep. "Scepter 4", where Fushimi belongs, is an organization that has a skirmish with "Homura". If such a person was looking for a "King" at work, he could not have been calm.

Akagi continued to explain in a traceable manner.

"When I said he was going to Las Vegas, he started contacting somewhere. So, we were on the sidelines too, so he told me to follow him and they put me in the car, and by the time I knew it, I was on a plane."

"Huh?! Guys, the Blues are our enemies! They told those guys where Mikoto-san is, and that's why you guys got trapped?!"

When Yata got angry, Akagi shrugged and Bando, who had ended the call, said something.

"It's different, Yata-san. Fushimi said that Mikoto-san is in danger. If he tells them that, Shohei and his friends can't just hold his fingers and look at him, right?"

Agitation spread in his chest.

Mikoto Suoh is in danger. If he had heard it, he would have laughed with his nose. He does not believe that there are so many things in the world that can harm the Red King.

However, on the other hand, Yata trusted Fushimi in a way. He is a traitor, dark, cunning, sarcastic, disgusting, and extremely capable. If such a man says "dangerous", it is definitely "yes".

"What is that danger?"

"Yata-san, do you remember Mizuchi?"

Mizuchi's name didn't immediately stick in his head. He tilted his head, he thought for a moment and said, "Oh."

"Mizuchi, I'm sure he was the bad guy who kidnapped Anna and locked her up in a place called "downtown", and Mikoto-san finally beat him up. What happened to that guy?"

Bando's cheeks tightened with tension and he answered the question.

"He looks like he broke out of prison a while ago. He flew overseas, so he's here in Las Vegas now."