



RED CASE FILES: HOMRA IN LAS VEGAS

CHAPTER 6: NO DIED

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD

A funeral procession was marching through the desert.

It was an unknown wasteland, wide, whitish. A group of people dressed in black suits walked in a long line. Everyone's head was lowered and not a single voice could be heard. Silently, solemnly, they walked on.

Ed stared at the show.

—— Wait, me too...!

Ed called them. He should have called them, but no voice came out. Even if he tried to chase after them, his legs didn't move. As if only his awareness was floating there, Ed was numb and just watched the show.

A man with his right ear burned was walking.

A giant with a burned back was walking away.

A man with only the tip of his little finger missing was walking.

And the one who marked the way was...

—— Boss! King!

Frustration and loneliness burned Ed, who was only bound by conscience. He desperately stretched out his non-existent arm, tears overflowing from his non-existent eyes.

—— I refuse! Do not leave me! Me! I also!

Ed was screaming. In a voiceless voice, so voiceless that it would rip his throat out.

Still, the funeral procession did not stop. They walked away. Towards the end of the desert under the scorching sun.

Before long, the funeral procession was sucked past the wavering horizon and disappeared.

Ed was left alone in the place. He no longer spoke, but he was conscious, he crouched in place and began to let out a silent sob.

He looked like a child who had been abandoned by his parents.

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When he woke up, the first thing that jumped into his field of vision was his charred right hand.

"....."

It seems that he was still stretching out his right arm while he slept. A ceiling fan stirred warm air behind the four missing fingers.

With a pop, his right hand fell onto the bed.

"Ed, are you okay?"

He heard a voice right next to him. When he tilted his head, Maria looked at Ed's face with concern. She was a brunette with wavy black hair, her teary eyes looking at Ed.

Maria was Ed's lover. She and Ed were from the same place, so they decided to go out together. He liked the fragrant black hair and the modesty that did not intervene more than necessary.

Still, this time, he was annoyed by the sticky look.

"Noisy."

With a murmur, Ed sat up. Maria leaned over his bare shoulders.

"But, Ed, you were crying."

"....."

When he caressed his cheek with his right thumb, he could definitely feel the dry tears.

"Haha..."

Ed laughed only with his lips and his voice.

"Blood and Flame." - The strongest gang in Las Vegas. The leader of the outlaws who ruled the center of the city with violence, giving a bloodbath to all the Mexican gang killers. A Clansman from "Purgatory", crying over an old dream?

"I'm here. If Takao finds out, he'll laugh at me."

"Eh?"

"Any way at all."

There was no way Maria could understand what he was muttering in Japanese. Ed got out of bed, pulled on jeans and boots, and a biker jacket over his bare upper body.

Maria's restless voice was heard from behind him.

"How about today? Are you coming home?"

"It's work. I won't be home for a while. Do it properly."

The voice that returned without turning around was so harsh that even he could tell. It was an effect of the dream. He hadn't had that dream in a long time, it was clearly the aftermath of yesterday's events.

He was irritated. If he stayed there, he would take out his frustration on Maria. So Ed quickly opened the door and walked out. The Nevada summer sun shone down on Ed as he walked down the stairs of his apartment with a frown on his face.

As he did, he was thinking about yesterday.

—— Mizuchi. That bastard.

Just remembering it made him angry. A bastard snake who investigates people's pasts and tries to use them as he pleases. If it was up to Ed, he would have killed him the second he thought about it. He should have turned that fake scientist to ashes with his supernatural arm on fire.

What kept him from doing it was the word he spoke.

"...\"King Red\"..."

Just by muttering that, an irresistible sense of nostalgia hit Ed.

Kagutsu took Ed to "Purgatory" when he came to Japan at the age of 20 and desperately spent his days as a gunslinger in the underworld. The memories of those days with them still shone brightly inside Ed.

"It was fun, really."

A quiet smile suddenly appeared on Ed's lips.

In the days spent with "Purgatory", Ed lived as he wished. He killed, drank, ate, sang and danced. The number of times he was attacked by "Scepter 4" was countless, and the number of people who died in fights between his friends was endless. Still, those days were definitely fun. People die someday. In that case, do what you want with the people you like and then die. Above all, he was happy that he had the power to do so.

Together with his friends from "Purgatory", he burned his heart, burned his body, raised his fists and turned to ashes as he sang triumphantly. That's all Ed believed.

And in the end, Ed didn't die.

July 11, 1999.

That day the sword of the "King" fell, and the topography of Japan changed. Ed couldn't be on that final battlefield.

Finally running late, Ed ran frantically around the rim of the crater that had nothing on it. Calling out the name of the "King", he called out the names of his allies as far as he knew. If he could do it, he wouldn't mind having faced "Scepter 4" at that time. He was sure they wouldn't mind if he was a little late. Whoever he was, he wanted to fight. Fight, burn his heart and die!

And, as expected, he found no one.

Only death and ruin existed on the rim of the crater. "Scepter 4" seemed to have retired a long time ago, and the Self-Defense Forces and the police were on a business trip to rescue civilians. They mistook Ed as a victim and called him out, so he didn't feel like lighting the flames on them. He knew that such death meant nothing. Still dazed, he turned his back on the crater and began to walk.

More than 10 years have passed since then.

Japan used to be Ed's second hometown, but at the time it was difficult. Leaving Japan, entering the United States illegally, and wandering the country, Ed dabbled in all kinds of wild things. Killing local gangsters and stealing money, he eventually settled in Las Vegas.

No matter how ruthless the gang was, it didn't bring death to Ed. His supernatural abilities solved most of the problems and elevated Ed to a certain position in the underworld.

Still, Ed's heart is still burning.

Ed knew that he didn't survive. He missed out on death.

A miserable man who doesn't die when he should, makes false friends and lovers, and continues to live lazily. Edward The Red, feared throughout Las Vegas, was his true identity.

But...

Ed found out about the existence of Mikoto Suoh.

A new "Red King". Kagutsu's successor.

When Ed found out, he felt a fire running through his burning heart.

There was only one "Red King". Kagutsu Genji was the only "King", and an existence worthy of the name. It was an unforgivable pretense and an insult to call someone else that. At least that's how it was for Ed.

That's why he wanted to kill him. Delete his existence.

The smile that floated on his lips took on a sinister color.

Thinking of that made his heart burn. "Assassinate the King". He couldn't think about that. He didn't know how strong Suoh was, but he knew that the "King" was above the clansmen. Kagutsu Genji, Habari Jin.

—— If Suoh is like them, I would probably be evaporated without even being able to touch him.

It's okay. There is no such thing as attachment to life. The only thing that matters is how you die, and if it's against a "King", you will be able to burn your body and mind to fight him.

A dazzling brilliance for a life that is only burning and waning.

"Haha!"

Ed clapped his hands, laughed, and looked up at the sky. For the first time in 10 years, it was a genuine laugh. His bright blue eyes looked up at the sun and he ran off with a big smile like a child.

"The sun is already high in the sky. It looks like it will be hot again today."

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"Hm, can you start?"

VIP room of the "Pyramid Hotel", Kusanagi's voice had a tense tone that was not suitable for a comfortable room.

To be precise, this company-rented room was so luxurious that it couldn't be compared to the room at the Maroon Hotel where Totsuka and the others had stayed. It is about 50 square meters, has 3 bedrooms and a large LDK, and is fully equipped with a wall to wall screen TV, pool table, slots and even roulette.

Still, no one was excited or grateful. They were all directing a stern look at the person in charge, Tanaka.

"Yes. Now, let me explain."

Tanaka began to speak without hesitation. Totsuka and Kusanagi knew most of the information, but they didn't necessarily share it with everyone.

In particular, their "King" who had just joined them, Suoh Mikoto, should have known almost nothing.

The foreign intelligence department involved in Mizuchi's prison break that happened half a year ago. A trip to Las Vegas was the bait that lured Suoh and the others, and in

order to stop him, "Tokijikuin" and "Scepter 4" work together to pick up the "Homura" members left behind in Japan and join them.

Suoh's expression did not change as Tanaka spoke. It was a cold look, like listening to the weather forecast.

"That's the story so far. From now on, I will explain Mizuchi's purpose, which I have analyzed and deduced from his actions so far."

"He's going to kill me."

Suoh's muttered words increased the tension in the room.

Totsuka sighed silently.

Putting the others aside, Anna's body had hardened to the point of pity. It must have been because of Mizuchi, and maybe there was a sense of responsibility that it was a trip she made. Totsuka thought there was no need to feel such a thing, but Anna was not Totsuka.

For the time being, Totsuka shrugged and complained to Suoh.

"King, no matter how many words you say, it's too short. Why do you think that?"

"That's right, so it can't be helped."

Suoh said that bluntly, Tanaka raised a hand.

"Yes. That is consistent with our speculation. The goal of Koushi Mizuchi and the US Intelligence Service is to kill Mikoto Suoh."

"Kill him...?!"

Yata's eyes took on a dangerous tint. Knowing that the other clansmen were also being targeted for their own "King's" life, there was no way they could keep their cool. Totsuka and Kusanagi were no different.

But at least Kusanagi had the responsibility of coordinating the event.

Kusanagi asked, hiding his cold gaze with his sunglasses.

"What is the base?"

"It's his actions. Mizuchi attacked us when we were escaping on the road, with Suoh-san's clansmen. If Mizuchi's purpose was the same as before, to make Anna Kushina "King", he would have done no such thing. The introduction of new weapons and the indiscriminate firing of machine guns, it would not have been surprising if Anna-san lost her life."

Anna's shoulder twitched. Totsuka placed his hand there.

"Why does that mean he's targeting Mikoto?"

"First of all, it is practically impossible to kill the "King" without using supernatural powers. In addition to Weissmann's powerful deviation, he is protected by the clansmen. Still, if we were to plan a "Royal Assassination", we would have to start for eliminating clan members. Reducing the enemy's strength is the basis of good tactics."

The clansmen exchanged glances. As expected, there was no one who was not uneasy. Anger and animosity, they displayed typical "Homura" brutality, showing no mercy towards those who would harm them.

Fujishima raised his hand and asked.

"Are we still being attacked?"

"It's not clear. Although the enemy is the intelligence department, its size and capabilities are unclear. It's not like they can monitor all of Las Vegas. At this stage, this place hasn't been caught, though, it's also a matter of time."

Tanaka then looked at everyone and then looked directly at Suoh.

"Now. With that in mind, I'd like to make another suggestion."

"You mean run away?"

Suoh was ahead of the game again.

The masked smile on Tanaka's face changed slightly. Totsuka didn't know what kind of emotional change it represented.

"Simply put, that is what it means. Even the US Intelligence Service would not be so reckless as to attack you who have returned to Japan. We will remain in this country and do our best to capture Mizuchi. I would like the "Red King" to make a wise decision."

"...Don't be kidding me."

Yata muttered under his breath. He glared at Tanaka with a look of anger and stamped his foot on the ground.

"It's the other side that attacked us. Why do we have to turn around and run after they ruined our trip? It doesn't make sense!"

Kusanagi smiled gently.

"I see. Fushimi-san said the same thing."

"That's right! Hey, listen, Tanaka! We "Homura" have never turned our backs on the enemy! It doesn't matter who the opponent is or where the venue is!"

Tanaka calmly determined Yata's temper. He looked around the room and saw that the other members, including Anna, had the same opinion.

He then fixed his gaze on Suoh.

"Are you sure you're okay with that, "Red King"?"

Suoh had a blank expression on his face. He was looking at Tanaka with the kind of sleepy look he usually gets when he's lying on the couch at the HOMRA bar.

Before long, he said quietly,

"If he comes at me, I'll just crush him."

That's all he replied.

"Ugh," Tanaka let out a sigh. The reason why he can't see the slightest hint of disappointment is probably because he expected that answer from the start.

"Understood. Furthermore, this incident is entirely our fault. We have a duty to ensure your safety. I am arrogant in front of the "King", but please allow us to protect you."

Suoh shrugged and stood up.

"Do what you want. We'll like it too."

After saying that, he headed for the exit of the room. Totsuka asked without thinking.

"King, where are you going?"

"Sake. There was a bar on the top floor."

Without stopping his footsteps, Suoh said that and walked quickly. Totsuka exchanged glances with Kusanagi, who shook his head slightly and followed Suoh.

Thus began the "hidden life" of "Homura".

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"Now for the next news."

The TV was playing a series of images. She had already seen so many images of the road that she was sick of it. Shattered guardrails, bullet holes in the road and "Glass Hopper II" in flames and black smoke.

"Police have confirmed that the shooting on the Great Basin Highway last night was the result of a dispute between local mob groups. According to the Las Vegas Metro Police, the conflict between the local mob and the Mexican mob has escalated in the past few years, and this incident is the result of that."

Jane let out a deep breath and flung herself onto the bed.

It was the first time since the shooting that she could take it easy. Covering up the incident itself, explaining the progress to upper management, appeasing the local police... Cleaning up what happened was Jane's main job at the time.

"Damn that crazy man!"

In helpless rage, Jane slammed a clenched fist on the bed. The bed screeched and Jane took another deep breath.

What was more irritating being the fact that the upper management placed some trust in Mizuchi.

To Jane, who was watching closely, she couldn't believe that he was crazy. Mizuchi is clearly insane. He does not hesitate to provoke firefights in the city, anticipating the consequences that he would bring, and still calmly tries to kill "Homura". If she had the right to do so, she would have held back or eliminated Mizuchi right then and there.

Nevertheless...

It was also true that Mizuchi's purpose was in line with what the higher-ups saw.

Currently, Japan is an ally of the United States. If the espionage activity is about "technology theft", even if it is exposed, it will be "a debt". Jane thought so, and even when she secured custody of Mizuchi half a year ago, she never imagined that it would become so big.

"So that's the "King Killer"?"

If the matter is exposed, it will undoubtedly become a serious international problem. Jane could never understand top management's idea of taking the risk and still giving the go-ahead. Maybe there was something she didn't know. She had thought that way more than once, but she didn't have the courage to go deeper into the upper steps. Spies are information eaters, but Jane knew very well that certain types of information are poisonous.

No.

If that's the case, wouldn't it spit out information if it was closed?

Just as she was thinking about that, she heard that "guy's" voice from above.

"Hello, Jane! Great news! "Fireworks Master II" has finally been released!"

"Kyaah?!"

With a scream, Jane rolled off the bed. When she directed her confused gaze towards the ceiling of the room, there was a disc floating there. It was an extraordinary new weapon with two rapidly spinning rotors and an eye chamber that blinked red.

"Pyrotechnician II". Mizuchi, who was there, happily began to speak as he met Jane's gaze as silently descended to the ground.

"It took longer than expected to mass-produce allyl purified steel. Although it's an alloy with a different philosophy than 'Glass Hopper II', the engineers here are quite stubborn. Well, basically it's not reasonable to ask people who don't even know what supernatural powers are, that they understand."

"Mizuchi! Don't enter someone's room without permission!"

As Jane yelled with her face flushed with anger, Mizuchi let out a voice as if he had noticed, "Oh!"

"This is rude! It is unacceptable for a gentleman to enter a lady's room without her permission. No, I am so happy that I want to share it with you. Well then, here I am."

"Wait. Sit down, no, stop."

Jane pointed to the desk and sat back on the edge of the bed. Mizuchi said, "Hmm?" As she expressed doubts, he landed "Fireworks Master II" on the desk.

After inhaling and exhaling silently, Jane began.

"You. Are you seriously going to kill Suoh Mikoto?"

She had a feeling that she could see Mizuchi tilting his head in a strange way on the other side of "Fireworks Master II".

"What are you talking about, Jane? Isn't that what was decided as the purpose of the operation from the beginning? A simulation of the "King Killer" and the experiments on it, that's why I called them here in the first place."

"Until stealing supernatural technology, that's fine. It has long been the desire of the military to create supernatural weapons and set up tactics that can be used by those with the probability deviation field of clansmen."

Mizuchi chuckled.

"Fufufufu, that man must be very happy to know that they are so feared by the United States. Fruit of the occultism he devoted himself to in his later years, the superhuman army has become a real threat. They couldn't taste its fruit."

According to the calculations of a group of experts, if a military action against "Tokijikuin" were to take place, it would not be enough to attack a division. Even if there are only a few hundred psychics, more than 10,000 armed soldiers, combat vehicles, and air guns are needed.

"But is it really necessary to go that far? Japan isn't even an imaginary enemy country, it's a friendly country. Summoning an important person in that country to assassinate him,

and if it leads to the worst possible outcome... There's even the possibility of a "sovereignty outburst"! For that reason, the entire city may be destroyed! You're trying to repeat the Kagutsu Incident here in Las Vegas!"

At Jane, who yelled pointing her finger, Mizuchi shrugged his shoulders.

"No, Jane. You explained that too. That's why... Las Vegas, the shining jewel of Nevada! Gleaming neon lights, numerous casinos, delicious food and fun attractions. The most amazing thing is that it is surrounded by a desert. Even if the worst outcome you mentioned happens, it will end with minimal damage."

"Still, there will be 10,000 deaths!"

"It would be much better than falling in Los Angeles or Chicago or New York. If you ask me, Kagutsu Genji's mistake was not making Tokyo or Osaka the hypocenter. If you wanted maximum destruction, you could do that... well, I don't want to know what a madman thinks."

A madman said that and laughed. A cold sweat ran down Jane's back.

That guy was serious.

He was really trying to kill Suoh, trying to bring down his sword. The death of the "King" does not amount to an "outburst of royal authority", but there is a high possibility that it is.

So, what she still didn't understand was the top management's thinking. Why were they trying to carry out a plan equivalent to dropping a hydrogen bomb on their own country? She really didn't understand that.

Mizuchi suddenly said.

"Sure, it's an exaggeration. I don't know what you guys are thinking. After all, that sort of thing happened shortly after the war. Even after half a century, it seems that the memory of pouring cold water on my head, which raised in battle, it has not disappeared yet."

".....?"

"What do you mean by that kind of thing?"

Shortly after the war, that would mean that GHQ was still in control of Japan. At that time, she wondered if there was a history of "pouring cold water on him".

Even after mobilizing all the knowledge that she had cultivated in the intelligence department, she still couldn't think of anything. What was Mizuchi talking about?

Faced with that doubt that was conveyed, Mizuchi said with a smile.

"If that's the case, did you know about Yokohama?"

"....."

"Fufufu. I see. Don't you know, you too? Well, there's nothing you can do about it. Isn't that a stain on the history of the Japanese occupation, a shameful part of the United States that no one wants to touch? No matter how many people there are in the organization, it's natural that there are people who don't know about it."

Jane had never hated Mizuchi as much as she did at that moment.

Information staff are creatures that eat information. Being singled out for ignorance is the same as doubting one's own abilities. With a look of anger, Jane stared at "Fireworks Master II", but what came out of her mouth was the exact opposite of what she thought.

"Ah. If you don't mind, please tell me."

Ignorance is a shame, but letting ignorance go beyond shame is self-denial. Jane should have known. Even if it was poison, if she didn't understand the higher-ups' intentions, she wouldn't be able to protect herself.

"Hmm... The fact that you haven't been informed of that must be because the higher-ups have ulterior motives. Is it okay for me to show you that?"

Unusually, Mizuchi was crisp. It was a matter of routine. Teaching "information you don't need to know" leads to a security clearance violation.

Still, Jane leaned forward and raised a pleading voice.

"Hey, please, Mizuchi. I swore to dedicate myself to my country. But if you don't know what you're really fighting for, you can't risk your life, right?"

It was a line that made her teeth float on their own, but she didn't mean to lie. You get into the dirty work of espionage and all that because you know someone has to. In a world where conspiracies and betrayals run rampant, but what is required of a spy is a loyalty stronger than anyone else.

Does her own justice and the justice of the organization really coincide? Jane had to make sure of that.

"Actually, it's fine. Well then, let me show you. The hidden history of us and your country."

Saying that, Mizuchi began to speak in a low voice.

Finally, even after Mizuchi finished speaking, the room fell into a heavy silence.

"Now you get it, right? Why is "killing the King" so important? Why is top management looking for a way to do it?"

"I see."

The words that came from Jane's lips sounded like someone else's, not hers. He could see that her face was stiff. The fact that she had just been told didn't seem to be true at all, but even so, there was no reason for Mizuchi to lie.

"Fireworks Master II" emerged. He walked past Jane who was sitting on the bed and headed for the exit. Mizumi's cheerful voice resounded from there.

"Fufufufu. I'm glad you were convinced as well. The threat of his "royal authority" is difficult to explain in words. I have no choice but to do so with facts."

Jane called out to the "Fireworks Master II" who was about to leave the room.

"Wait. Mizuchi."

"Hmm? What, are you still asking questions? You need to think for yourself a bit..."

"I understand the thoughts of the upper echelons. The following are your thoughts."

Jane's blue eyes glared sharply. In response, Mizuchi hovered and looked at her with his eye camera.

"You said intellectual curiosity. You didn't hold a grudge against Suoh, you just wanted to know. Is that true?"

"....."

Mizuchi didn't say anything for a while.

From the moment they met until now, it must have been the longest silence. Mizuchi, who had undergone a manic transformation of his personality due to brain damage, never kept quiet.

That's why she was able to put her trust in what he said next.

"Oh, it's true."

Short and heavy, Mizuchi muttered.

"Once upon a time, I tried to create a "King" with my own hands. To advance human evolution, but that proved impossible. Only "Slate" can produce a "King". It is not something that can be wielded by hands human."

The tone sounded like he was talking to someone far away. "Fireworks Master II" couldn't tell her what Mizuchi was looking at the moment.

"Then we must get a countermeasure. If the "King" shows his fangs against a man, the power to crush him. I think it's worth it, no matter the cost."

Mizuchi said that with a smile.

"Leaving those monsters unattended is dangerous and scary, and I can't sleep at night."

And then "Fireworks Master II" suddenly disappeared.

A stealth weapon that uses supernatural power, as she remembered what Mizuchi once said, Jane looked out the window with a gloomy expression.

The night view of Las Vegas stretches on forever and hundreds of thousands of people go about their business under the twinkling lights. They go through their lives with mixed feelings of joy and sadness.

For people to gain the power to resist the "King", is it really permissible to blow up the lives of hundreds of thousands of them?

Jane clenched her fists, she could never find an answer to that question.