



MISSING KINGS
RAIRAKU REI / GoRA

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

CHAPTER 1: RAID

October 12, 20:11. The outpost of "Scepter 4" sounded the alarms.

At this time, Akiyama and other members of the special forces were in the bathroom of the camp. It was a relaxing time after the regular meeting ended, and many of the members broke free from their work mode and spent their time in their own way.

"Emergency dispatch. Emergency dispatch. There is an intruder at Mihashira Tower. Each member, please join the board as soon as you receive your department's lineup."

The members of the Special Forces, who reflexively stood up at the alarm, stopped moving in confusion after hearing the content of the broadcast.

"Eh? Mihashira Tower?"

Domyoji, the youngest, twisted his face into a half smile as if he had heard a joke that was hard to react to.

Mihashira Tower is the residence of Daikaku Kokujoji, the biggest and strongest "King" who controls this country behind the scenes. Normally, it would be unthinkable for them to attack that place, and even if he appeared such a foolish terrorist, he would have been quickly dealt with within the "Tokijikuin" Golden Clan before the release of "Scepter 4".

Akiyama took his PDA and connected it to the operating room. A female member who responded immediately reported in a tense voice that they were making emergency arrangements for a helicopter to surround Mihashira Tower, and that the Special Forces should immediately rush to the scene in an armored vehicle.

"It's not a false alarm after all. The place is Mihashira Tower!"

Akiyama raised his voice and ran out of the room with the members of the Special Forces. From other rooms, the members ran out in a panic.

"Are you saying that the Gold Clan is under attack? That's stupid!"

Someone's confused voice hit his ear. They all had the same confusion.

When he came out of the building, the torrential rain hit his body. Splashing puddles and running, he climbed into an armored vehicle that prepared to leave in front of the front gate. A car full of spy agents immediately took off.

The forecast was for rain tonight into the morning. The sound of raindrops hitting the roof of the armored vehicle that Akiyama and the others were riding in echoed. There was also occasional thunder.

The armored vehicle blared its emergency siren and sped down the street. Benzai, who was sitting next to Akiyama in the spacious car with his arms folded and a difficult expression on his face, whispered softly.

"I never thought there would be someone so ignorant to challenge them..."

The members of the Special Forces have various backgrounds, but Benzai is a man who used to be in the National Defense Force along with Akiyama, and because he is more used to such roles than the other members, he is a leader alongside Akiyama. Usually, he doesn't show much confusion, but it seemed like he couldn't keep his cool in this situation.

Akiyama's brows also tightened.

"More importantly, it is a domain of the Golden Clan. Is it alright for us to get involved?"

Basically, people from other clans are not allowed to enter the king's territories without permission. In the first place, it should not have been possible for "Scepter 4", the guardian of order, to invade the territories of Daikaku Kokujoji, the leader of Agreement 120, the agreement between the royal powers.

Even so, if it's a situation where it can't be left alone as "Scepter 4"... At Akiyama's worried words, Benzai simply lowered his gaze without replying.

The vehicle soon arrived in front of the Mihashira Tower. The number 3 of "Scepter 4", Saruhiko Fushimi, who had arrived a little earlier than the others, gave instructions and began to move the members.

"Special ops members, use the main gate, and the rest, secure the other areas and set up a security line. Keep the press out! I'm waiting for the boss's order to enter. Don't act without permission!"

Akiyama and his colleagues immediately blocked off the front of Mihashira Tower and set up a siege net.

Several "Scepter 4" helicopters were flying in the sky. At the top of the Mihashira Tower, a skyscraper that seemed to pierce the sky, were the searchlights of the helicopters that cast many bands of light that split the darkness of the night.

As the rain intensified, the uniform quickly became wet and heavy.

The voices of the members' instructions and reports flew wildly. Apparently, they have not been able to contact the Mihashira Tower security headquarters. If they needed help, there should be a request, and if they didn't, there should be a notice about it, but neither of those things happened.

The intention of the "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji, the owner of Mihashira Tower, was also unknown. Why did he allow such situations? Was he in the tower and dealing with something, or was he absent?

The police also seemed confused about how to get involved in this unusual situation and were struggling to cooperate.

Akiyama and the others quickly formed a formation and prepared for the race.

While he was tense from the stress of an unprecedented battle, he moved his fingers that seemed to be frozen in the night air and cold rain, and braced himself to be able to grab the sword at any moment.

At that moment, a new vehicle arrived. The door opened and a bespectacled man appeared, dressed in a blue uniform with a slightly different design than the general members.

Reisi Munakata, the head of "Scepter 4" and the fourth sovereign, the "Blue King". He is the boss of Akiyama and the others, and is the person who is the "King".

Seri Awashima, the lieutenant of "Scepter 4", snuggled up to Munakata, who was about to step out into the rain. She opened her umbrella and went to Munakata to give a brief report.

"Captain. Preparations are complete. Of the order."

Munakata walked directly between the members. When he stopped just before the entrance, he looked up at Mihashira Tower with the black clouds roaring with thunder behind him.

All the members held their breath and waited for Munakata's instructions.

Munakata looked up at the tower with a face that did not express his thoughts and spoke in a calm but clear voice that reached the members.

"Wait as you are."

All the members held their breath.

They still couldn't act.

They could understand the decision, but frustration filled the members. Akiyama had the same thoughts, and even Awashima and Fushimi, who were at Munakata's side, showed a bit of surprise and frustration.

Looking towards the Mihashira Tower, Munakata's muttering voice faintly reached Akiyama's ears through the sound of rain.

"Has he finally surfaced?"

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He didn't hate the rain. Getting your clothes wet is a bit annoying, but the rain moistens the ground and favors the growth of vegetation. The rain accompanied by thunder was a suitable color for that day's operation.

Humming the children's song "Amefuri" (A Rainy Day), Mishakuji Yukari walked lightly through the entrance hall of Mihashira Tower. Stepping over the body of the fallen guard, he kicked hard at the marble floor.

The surroundings resounded with battlefield sounds such as roars, gunshots, the clash of weapons, beatings, and breaking glass. A large number of Mishakuji's companions wearing full-face helmets with green light running around the place (people who do not reveal their real names or faces, just participating in the same mission) dyed themselves in green light, which unleashed supernatural power and challenged the enemy with a weapon of their choice.

Among the enemies, the people of the "Tokijikuin" Golden Clan, who were under this attack, were humans wearing rabbit masks and clothing similar to oriental obi. They are the bodyguards of the "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji, and are called "Rabbits" who exist to quickly fulfill Kokujoji's wishes, abandoning their name and individuality.

The response of the "Rabbits" to the attack was quick. While the clansmen who were in charge of security counterattacked, the non-combatants were evacuated and the "Rabbit" specialized in combat skills went to the front to stop the invasion of the tower, replacing the security clansmen.

The entrance hall was an atrium that ran through to the fourth floor, and battles were even being fought in the sky corridor that ran through the atrium.

The "Rabbit", who was trying to block the thief's invasion in the corridor, swung the club in his hand, and several helmeted men were knocked down, and two or three of them climbed over the railing to the first floor where Mishakuji was. crashed to the floor of the entrance hall. There was also a person wearing a helmet who broke the glass on the third floor and fell.

A rustle was heard from behind, and a parrot with green feathers flew past. The parrot skillfully flew at low speed next to Mishakuji, it was much closer to Mishakuji than the army of helmets. His name is Kotosaka.

"Yukari! Yukari! Are you alright? Are you alright?"

Unlike ordinary parrots that only repeat words as sounds, Kotosaka speaks intentionally. Mishakuji gave Kotosaka a charming smile.

"Hey. Are you full of energy, Mishakuji-chan? It's scattered everywhere."

It was good until they sent the invasion force to the basement of the Mihashira Tower, but after the "Rabbit" appeared in front, the loss of the helmeted army corps was severe.

Even though they had mobilized a lot of people, they were unilaterally invaded by a few "Rabbits", reducing the number to less than half in a short period of time.

However, in proportion to that, Mishakuji's mood rose. His heart raced as he felt that the time was drawing near to take out his beloved sword "Ayamachi" that he carried on his back.

Looking ahead, Mishakuji smiled. At that moment, five "Rabbits" jumped down from the sky corridor and landed, blocking Mishakuji's path.

Kotosaka, who was flying next to Mishakuji, sensed the danger and evacuated to the sky with a "Quaw!".

Mishakuji raised the edge of his glossy lips and looked at the five "Rabbits". He guessed that it was an elite unit among the "Rabbits".

The characteristic of the Golden Clan is flourishing and prosperity, and it is said that the installation of the "Golden King" will bring out that person's talent. In other words, the abilities of the Clansman are not uniform, but vary greatly depending on the potential of the person.

However, Mishakuji verified that the five "Rabbits" in front of him had a power similar to that of the "Golden King" Kokujoji Daikaku. If Mishakuji is a swordsman, would they be magicians? They are probably people from the Kokujoji family. Kokujoji was an Onmyodo family lineage that has continued since ancient times.

One of the "Rabbits" standing in front of Mishakuji quickly made a sign. Magic from ancient times, the supernatural powers brought to the "Slate" swelled with a synergistic effect, and energy surged in the "Rabbit's" hands.

Seeing that golden glowing energy, Mishakuji wanted to prove what it was.

Power emanated from the hands of the "Rabbit". Mishakuji didn't avoid it on purpose and wrapped himself in his own supernatural power, a supernatural power bestowed by the former "King", not a supernatural power belonging to the current Mishakuji "King". As it was, he received the power of the "Rabbit" head-on.

It was quite a shock. Manipulating space and attacking with the supernatural ability to make the environment follow him as he wished, or sending golden energy to slide backwards on the surface of his body, he flew off without holding on.

Mishakuji danced in the air, twisted and landed gracefully.

"As expected of the "Rabbit" that heard the sound."

Pleased with the "Rabbit's" power, Mishakuji smiled.

A fusion of techniques accumulated over a long period of time and the glorious power of gold. He didn't hurt Mishakuji, but it was quite a beautiful blow.

It wasn't enough to pull out his beloved sword "Ayamachi".

The "rabbits" looked a little scared, but they didn't back down, they grabbed the sticks on their backs and got ready.

Mishakuji also placed his hand on the hilt of the sword he carried on his back. The sword is over a meter long, but the scabbard is specially designed with notches that allow it to be easily removed while being carried on the back. It's a great sword that was once given to him by a person whom he respected and loved. He has always used it and has continued to hone his skills to match that sword.

The blade "Ayamachi" blade reflected the light from the illumination and shined beautifully. Mishakuji smiled. He put his power on top of the sword, and the blade flashed as if were dancing.

Mishakuji stepped forward. The "Rabbits" braced themselves, but Mishakuji ran up and swung his sword faster than they could take an intercepting position.

The battle was decided in an instant.

The "Rabbits" were unable to move from the movement of trying to attack, and fell all at once while being hit by Yukari's slashes. The stick he was holding was also smashed and scattered on the ground.

The pressure of the wind from the street and the attack of Mishakuji came late, and the wind blew.

In the inside pocket of Mishakuji's coat, his PDA announced an incoming call. Without looking back at the "Rabbit" he defeated, Mishakuji took his PDA and put it to his ear.

"Douhan-chan?"

"This is the detachment. We have reached the underground data bank. Work started."

It was a message from Douhan Hirasaka, the leader of the unit that was sent into hiding before the "Rabbit" arrived. Hirasaka, who was dressed in a special ninja-like body suit and hid his face with a ninja hood-like shield that was different from a mass-produced helmet, always spoke politely through a voice changer. The voice had artificial effects.

Hirasaka was the only one among the participants in that mission with whom Mishakuji was familiar. He had been involved in the same mission several times before. Unlike the gaming-oriented people who make up the majority, he was a highly professional person who took the mission as a "business".

"It will take some time to remove the protection. Please don't let the "Rabbit" pass through here."

Listening to Hirasaka's voice, Mishukaji moved to the other end of the first-floor entrance and stood in front of the large elevator door. It didn't have buttons like a normal elevator

and probably wouldn't activate without a special key. Mishakuji stretched out his finger and sent an otherworldly current through his fingers. Due to the power of alteration, the elevator began to move.

The lights came on and the elevator dinged. Even before the door had opened, Mishakuji had noticed multiple strong presences inside.

As soon as the door opened, he jumped in and slashed at one of the "Rabbits" he had been preparing for without hesitation. As he dodged the club-wielding "Rabbit"'s attacks, he pressed the open/close button and the floor number button on the control panel with the butt of the sword handle. Before the door closed completely, he sliced another "Rabbit" with the tip of his knife and kicked the last one to the ground.

"Really? It's our specialty, but it takes time. The Golden clan where talented people gather is not a show. Thanks to that, I'm having a lot of fun."

"What's your objective?"

"It is a mistake. The "King" seems to be absent and there is a feeling of intimidation over their heads."

As he spoke, Mishakuji looked out the window. Raindrops washed the surface of the glass. The night view of Tokyo from the high-speed elevator was beautiful. The city overlooked from the tower, which can be said to be the center of the country, is a sea of golden light. It is a sight that can be said to be a symbol of the prosperity that the "Golden King" has built and accumulated since the end of the war. In every grain of that light, there was a human activity that enjoyed a rich life.

Mishakuji honestly showed respect for the "Golden King" who created that scenario. However, the "King" of Mishakuji dreamed of a different scenario. Instead of receiving the uniform light that others give us, a world full of colorful colors where each grain emits its own brightness.

Mishakuji superimposed the scene of his teacher's dream with the scene in front of him, to fulfill his role as the first step, he gave instructions to Hirasaka.

"I'll take care of the "Rabbits", so Douhan-chan, when you're ready for work, will you be the princess's escort?"

"I understand."

There was a short, clear answer, and he hung up with Hirasaka. Hirasaka doesn't share ideas or a sense of camaraderie, but he's a person who has a place of trust, and he'll get the job done once he takes it on as a business. He could leave them alone.

With a ding, the elevator reached the top floor. The moment the door opened a little, a golden light that burned the eyes entered. Mishakuji didn't panic, just like when he was

attacked by the "Rabbit" earlier, he covered his body with a transparent supernatural membrane.

The power that he attacked like a waterfall, however, slipped over Mishakuji's supernatural film and flowed towards the moon, flying behind Mishakuji. A violent explosion occurred inside the elevator, and the glass shattered and fell to the floor along with the debris.

"It worked?!" He heard an exasperated voice. A "Rabbit", which should have been a mysterious existence, was making such vulgar comments that Mishakuji laughed to himself.

There was no picture, but he couldn't bear to swallow the smoke. Dust stained his hair and skin.

"Smoked."

When he grumbled a bit and got out of the elevator, the "Rabbit" who was waiting for him shuddered.

A considerable number of "Rabbits" was gathered. That was the last line of defense that protected the "Slate".

"Well then, let's finish it."

Mishakuji gave a sly smile, and uttered the sentence that his former master composed.

"The way forward is beyond cut and stretch."

He grabbed "Ayamachi" and kicked the ground hard.

One, two, ran while he cut "Rabbits".

Three, four, beautifully dancing and swinging his sword.

Five people, six people, playing in the gap between emotion and calm, and finding the way.

Mishakuji also began to sing the children's song "Amefuri", moving his body with the song. He stopped counting how many "Rabbits" he had defeated and just enjoyed the journey to his destination.

Ahead, he saw something that looked like a huge and beautiful fusuma.

Unlike the wood and paper fusuma, however, it was a massive door that brought together the best of technology.

Mishakuji blew that door away with the pressure of his sword like it was just a sliding door. Beyond the door was a great expanse of space. The floor was covered with glass on

one side and nothing was placed there. All that was left was a huge stone block under the transparent floor.

Mishakuji entered the hallway and slowly approached the mass of stone as he stomped on the thick tempered glass floor. Kotosaka, who seemed to have waited until the enemies left and it was safe, came up again and landed on Mishakuji's shoulder.

Mishakuji stopped, looked at his feet, and said as a continuation of the song.

"Nice to meet you."

The Dresden Slate.

A mysterious relic found in Dresden, Germany, brought to Japan by Daikaku Kokujoji after the war.

An object that is the source of power that creates the "King" with supernatural powers.

Change the way the world works.

Mishakuji narrowed his eyes at the beauty of that existence.

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He had an old dream.

Kuro's childhood dream. A dream of living happily under the tutelage of Ichigen Miwa, who was a respected teacher, a "King" to serve, and a father-like existence.

Kuro was still 10 years old, had not fully manifested his abilities as a clansman, and was an immature boy with a sword.

Kuro back then, he had a person whom he admired and who was like his target, and he wanted to be like that person one day.

That person had been studying with Ichigen Miwa before Ichigen picked up Kuro. He was like Kuro's older brother. Kuro respectfully called him "big brother".

He was about ten years older than Kuro, and to Kuro he was more of an adult standing by his side rather than another disciple. He was slim and tall, had a graceful bearing, had the dexterity to handle anything with ease, had a sharp head and terrifying swordsmanship. Possessed of a mysterious sense of beauty, he had an elusive personality, but was trusted by Ichigen, and whenever Ichigen went somewhere to fulfill his role as "King", he accompanied him.

"Brother! Please help me!"

Kuro said it often. He often laughed at him, said that he was not suitable for working with children, but sometimes, when he felt like it, he taught him lessons as if it were a game.

However, he didn't teach him how to swing the sword or how to move, and even when he said training, he just hit Kuro who was coming at him. Kneeling on the ground, looking at him, he was very big and frustrating, but Kuro took that unforgiving attitude for sincerity.

Kuro had decided in his heart that one day he would be as strong as him and support him with Ichigen Miwa.

However, Kuro's yearning was suddenly shattered one day.

"Why, big brother?!"

Kuro yelled at the top of his lungs. But that didn't help. In his eyes, there was no image of Kuro.

His sword grazed Miwa's shoulder and blood splattered. His sword, which cut and tore those he was to serve, shimmered in the moonlight.

Kuro's heart froze at the thought of a stranger to him, whom he should have longed for.

Why? Why?

Reliving the thoughts of that time in a dream, questions, fear, and anger swirled, and Kuro...

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When he opened his eyes, there were big eyes with different colors on the left and right in a close distance.

Surprised, Kuro unintentionally let out a stupid voice and leaned back.

"Ne, Ne, Neko!"

Looking down at Kuro from a distance where the tip of her nose seemed to touch him, was Neko, his partner as a member of the Silver clan, and his partner in searching for Shiro together.

"You, when did you do it?!"

"Somehow I thought Kurosuke was around here, so I went looking for you and found you sitting and sleeping in a place like this, moaning."

"That's why there are people who are silently watching from such a close distance! It's been a while since you've been..."

For the past month, Kuro and Neko have been acting separately.

In search of Shiro, the two sometimes perform together, sometimes split up and travel all over Japan. The last time they worked together, Neko stated that "Shiro was swept away

by the sea, so he must be drifting somewhere in the sea!". Kuro, who was frustrated that he couldn't find a single clue, inadvertently jumped on a search plan for Neko and set sail from Tokyo Bay on a motorboat. While traversing the North Pacific, he was overthrown by a typhoon and washed ashore on a remote island. For a time, he proposed to go back to acting differently and they disbanded.

"Hehehe, Kurosuke, long time no see!"

"Oh. When did you come back here?"

"Yesterday! Nya, I sensed that Kurosuke was around, so I was looking for you!"

The reason why they didn't decide exactly what day and where they would meet again is because Neko, who is too free, doesn't keep her promises, or rather forgets them.

He couldn't get Neko to get into the habit of carrying a mobile phone with her, and even if he gave her a note with Kuro's PDA number, she would still lose it. The reason Kuro gave up was because the two of them said that they could go back there in an emergency, Shiro's room on Gakuenjima, where they could return when the time came. Maybe it's some kind of supernatural ability, but thanks to Neko's power, she can somehow find where Kuro is. Kuro has also gotten used to Neko's rhythm and they get along quite well now.

"I see. I also vaguely felt that if I was around here, I might find you again. I thought about going back to the room in Gakuenjima, but I think it would be better if the two of us went back together."

For the past two days, Kuro has been using an abandoned building in Shizume City as his base. That town is where he first met Shiro, and that abandoned building was the place where he used to sleep when he searched for the evil "King", the "Colorless King". He's been long neglected and rough, but he could use it as a place to sleep without worrying about rain and wind.

The whitish light of morning streamed in through the broken windows. He looks like he dozed off a bit last night, probably because he had a hard time falling asleep due to the storm.

"Kurosuke, did you have a scary dream just now? There were some wrinkles between your eyebrows."

Saying this, Neko seemed to imitate Kuro's face, showing an inappropriate scowl.

"A terrifying dream... or rather, it was a dream that brought back inexplicable and painful memories."

"Inexplicable and painful, huh?"

Neko repeated in a tone that she must not have understood, she crossed her arms with a knowing look and nodded.

Contrary to his earlier dream, Kuro lowered his gaze.

One day, Kuro's older brother suddenly pointed his sword at Miwa and defected from the clan.

When he thought about that day, a chill ran down his spine.

He, who should have been no more than a mere clansman, fought evenly with "King" Ichigen Miwa and threw a profound sword over Ichigen's shoulder. He knew that he was a strong person, but he was horrified when he saw Ichigen's blood splattered, since that person could harm even Ichigen.

In the end, Ichigen won the match, but the scar on his shoulder remained until the moment of his death.

He smiled at the young Kuro who was crying angrily and said: "This is fine. This is not the place where that boy can be like he is."

Although he was betrayed and wounded, he handed over his beloved sword to his departing disciple. It is a sword that can be combined with Kuro's "Kotowari".

"More than that, Kurosuke! Was there anything that looked like Shiro?"

Neko seemed to get tired of talking about the dream early on, so she changed the subject and leaned forward. Kuro shook his head bitterly.

"No, and you?"

"He wasn't there. Shiro likes rice, so I thought maybe he went to eat delicious rice, so I went to a place where you can get a lot of rice, but I couldn't find it!"

"You are..."

Kuro weakened by Neko's optimistic idea. If Shiro was in a position to be able to take such peaceful action, he should be the first to contact them.

Thinking about it, Kuro realized that his feelings were heavy and sinking.

No, there was no communication from Shiro. As time passed, the hope they had at first became more and more fleeting. Neko didn't have an ounce of anxiety and kept trying hard to look for "Shiro, who should be somewhere", but Kuro couldn't be that optimistic.

In December of last year, Isana Yashiro, the "Silver King", was attacked by the "Red King" Suoh Mikoto with all of his might while he was still holding the soul of the evil "Colorless King" within himself, and disappeared.

If it was an ordinary person, it was definitely a blow that would have burned all the corpses and disappeared from this world. The reason why Kuro and Neko hope that Shiro is still alive is because Shiro is a "King" who possesses immutable attributes and is almost immortal.

However...

Just as Kuro's thoughts were about to drift in the wrong direction, Kuro's PDA beeped announcing the arrival of an email.

"Uh..."

Looking at the PDA, Kuro softened his expression, which was about to darken.

"Who is~?"

Neko's eyes lit up and she brought her face closer to Kuro's.

"It's Kukuri."

Kuro tilted the PDA's screen so that Neko could see it. She wanted to know if Kuro and Neko were alright, since they hadn't been to Gakuenjima's room for a long time, but it was time to see their faces.

"Kukuri! Wagahai is fine!"

Neko happily waved at the mail screen.

Kuro replied in a concise and polite sentence that they were both fine and they were now at Shizume. There was an immediate response.

"You came back here?! I have something to do in Shizume City this afternoon, so I want to see you!"

"See you!"

Reading the mail, Neko immediately raised her voice.

Kukuri is a friend that she met through Shiro. However, the fact that Kukuri and Shiro were classmates was a false memory created by Neko with her cognitive manipulation ability. Kukuri no longer remembers Shiro. Inevitably, it was only natural for Kuro and Neko's memories to fade and disappear, but Kukuri remembers Kuro and Neko, though memories of their meeting are vague, and she still cares for them as friends.

The friendship with Kukuri was important to both Kuro and Neko.

"Okay, let's meet Kukuri in Shizume City today and then go home to Gakuenjima."

That room in Gakuenjima is not just a base, but a place to return to. It once exploded and was blown up during that incident, but was repaired under the direction of the "Tokijikuin" Golden Clan, and is now officially renamed as belonging to Shiro. The room key had been given to Kuro by a courier from "Tokijikuin".

He must have been courtesy of Daikaku Kokujoji, an old friend of Adolf K. Weismann.

Perhaps Neko was happy with the sound of "home" and she nodded with a big smile.

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After meeting Kukuri in front of the station, Kuro and the others entered a coffee shop in Shizume City. Kuro ordered coffee, Kukuri ordered tea and Neko ordered orange juice and they sat on the terrace.

"If you both came back; you should have contacted me."

Kukuri made a face as if she pouted a little, then smiled with a face that she was genuinely happy to meet with them.

That day was a holiday and Kukuri did not wear the family uniform. She had on a pink knit skirt and a white hat with a little ribbon.

"Sorry, it took me too long to meet this girl."

"Hehehe, Kukuri, long time no see!"

"Long time no see, Wagahai-chan!"

Neko and Kukuri happily high-fived each other. Instead of being close friends, they were more like a playful little sister and a doting older sister, Kuro watched the scene with a smile.

"Is the reconstruction of Gakuenjima progressing?"

"Yes. The last time Kuro-kun and the others came to Gakuenjima was last month, right? It's been a while since then. It's almost back to normal! Oh, but the clock tower and that big crater are still there."

Kuro remembered the huge crater that Suoh opened when he slaughtered the "Colorless King" along with Shiro's body.

After it was all over, when Neko and Kuro returned to Gakuenjima to search for Shiro, they saw a large crater where the heat emitted by the "Red King" was still cool, and they felt a sense of despair. There, Kuro and Neko found a red umbrella sticking out of the ground like a tombstone, proving that Shiro was there.

That umbrella is now in Shiro's room, to be sure to return it to Shiro one day. Neko wanted to take it with her, but she knew she would cry if she lost it somewhere, so she left it there.

"How do you feel about Kuro-kun and the others? They were looking for someone, right? Uh, if I remember correctly, his name is Shiro-kun, right?"

Kuro felt a little pain in his heart because Kukuri didn't remember anything about Shiro, but Neko didn't care and spoke happily.

"Shiro, I can't find him! I don't know how far he's flown!"

"Wait, how did he fly out?!"

Giving a wry smile to the exchange between the two, Kuro once again sank into thought.

(Has it been almost a year since then?)

For the last year or so, Kuro has traveled all over the place looking for Shiro.

He approached "Homura" and "Scepter 4" to see if he could find anything related to Shiro, he traveled across the country looking for sightings of Shiro, visited hospitals and asked if a child with amnesia was admitted. He continued along the coast asking if there were castaways. Kuro looked away, following along the shoreline and asking if there were people who had come ashore, or sailing to search for him at sea and in danger. Clouds swam across the sky in swift currents.

Even if he and Neko split up and searched, they couldn't find Shiro. Where is Shiro? No, in the first place, is he really alive?

Anxiety and shyness ached inside Kuro again.

At this time, Neko who was playing with the juice straw with her mouth suddenly widened her eyes, raised her voice, "Ah!", and stood up on the chair.

"Neko, what's up?"

"The girl of the reds!"

She stared at a dot with round cat eyes and pointed at her. She leaned across the table and stuck her butt out like a cat when finds prey.

When he looked in the direction Neko was pointing, he saw a girl in a red cloak running hand in hand with a blond youth.

She was a long way off, but she certainly resembled Anna Kushina of the Red Clan. He didn't recognize the blonde, but he wondered if he was a member of "Homura". The way they were running was different from just rushing, it seemed like they were running from something.

Anna Kushina was not a stranger to him. In that incident that led to Shiro's loss, he had a relationship with "Homura", but it is said that Anna was the first to say that Shiro was not an enemy. After that, it seems that there was a lot of "Homura", and he was involved with Rikio Kamamoto, a member of the red clan who lives in his parents' house.

If something was happening to her, he couldn't leave her alone.

"Sorry, Kukuri. Could you go back to Gakuenjima first?"

"Hey. Aren't you going with me?"

"I will definitely come back later."

When he smiled at Kukuri, who seemed concerned, and nodded reassuringly, Kukuri was a bit confused and then smiled back.

"Ok, I understand."

Kuro and Neko stood up, looked at each other and nodded. Together they ran in the direction in which Anna and the others had disappeared.

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It has been over half a year since Anna moved into the Kamamoto family home, Kamamoto Liquor Store.

Not only Kamamoto, but also Kamamoto's parents were very kind and gentle, treating Anna like family.

Still, Anna just felt like a freeloader there. It was different from the HOMRA bar that she used to feel like she belonged to.

(We'll be leaving here in the not too distant future. Who will I be and where will I go?)
Not a day went by that Anna didn't think about it.

Anna was sitting in front of the Kamamoto Liquor Store, tending the store. She learned the bare minimum about how to serve customers in half a year of taking advantage. Anna wanted to repay Kamamoto's parents for letting her stay there, even it was just a little.

At that time, the store was idle, and people walking on the street in front were passing by, pointing to somewhere other than there.

Anna lowered her eyes and faced the fire within her.

She felt the flames flickering inside her body. She has been like this for a long time. The fire left by Suoh inside Anna, continued to flicker as if blown away by the wind. She had gotten used to that uneasy feeling.

Anna said that she would not allow herself to be devastated anymore, she closed off her ability to perceive, turned into a shell and sealed herself with a hard shell so no one could interfere with her.

She did not let the small flames left behind by Suoh go out due to the strong wind that was blowing. Or she let the wind prevent the small flames from spreading.

Anna put her hands to her chest and breathed in slowly.

"Anna, are you okay?"

Before she was aware, Kamamoto was standing next to Anna, leaning in as if he was looking at her.

Anna looked at him and smiled back.

"I'm fine."

The current Kamamoto is not the familiar handsome figure, he is a slim and handsome man with the appearance of a surfer. Kamamoto, who usually eats ramen in 30 seconds, suddenly loses his appetite in the summer and loses weight. Maybe he was cursed, or maybe the source of Kamamoto's power was lost due to the weakening of "Homura's" power, and even in the fall, he still couldn't recover his round body.

"Really? You look sick. The shop is fine, so go rest in the back."

"I'm fine. Rikio, you still don't feel well."

"No, I'm just dragging myself out of summer fatigue..."

Just as Kamamoto was about to say that, a figure appeared in front of the store. Anna thought she had a visitor and was about to say "Welcome", but her mouth froze.

The person standing in front of the store was dressed in such a way that no matter how you looked at him, you wouldn't think he was an ordinary customer.

He wore a powered suit designed like a ninja costume and a mask like a ninja hood. His back was equipped with giant shuriken-shaped crossed blades.

"You are Anna Kushina."

That ninja-like person said. The voice was processed and resounded eerily.

"What the hell are you doing?!"

Kamamoto braced himself and raised a barking voice.

"I have a request for you, who is extremely responsive."

"Request?"

Anna whispered softly and withdrew.

He was dressed as a ninja, but the visor that covered his eyes emitted an electronic green light, contrary to his ninja appearance. Looking at Anna from the back of the visor, that person said...

"I want you to look for the "Silver King"."

The "Silver King". Adolf K. Weismann. Yashiro Isana. In order for Suoh to kill the "Colorless King", everyone was left without blood, bones, or even ashes.

"First of all, if you live in the judgment of life and death, find out where he is."

The ninja spoke nonchalantly. It was an order rather than a request.

Anna shook her head.

"I can't."

The ninja drew a kunai from a band wrapped around his thigh.

"If it means you don't have the will to do it, I'll try to "persuade" you to do it. Even if it's difficult in terms of skill, you must try first. Let's create a situation where you can demonstrate your power. Either way I'll make you come with me."

"Don't be silly!"

Kamamoto shot flames from his fist and attacked. The ninja dodged slightly.

"Rikio? Why are you making such a fuss?"

From the back of the family's living room, the relaxed voice of Kamamoto's mother could be heard.

"Don't go out!"

Anna immediately yelled towards the back of the store. She left the store so as not to involve Kamamoto's family.

"Rikio!"

Kamamoto must have realized that fighting there would endanger his family. With a little click of his tongue, he kicked out a flame similar to a soccer ball, causing the ninja to back up some distance, away from him.

He ran to Anna, took her hand and started to run.

Kamamoto grabbed her hand tightly and ran to Anna's feet, but the difference in speed was hard to handle. Anna kept moving her feet desperately, almost falling over and over again.

"Anna, this way!"

He managed to get away from the store and into a less popular alley.

At that moment, his legs suddenly stopped.

The ninja was standing in the path when he turned around. He was holding a weapon that had blades on both sides of the handle that he carried.

"That's it. Give me that girl."

The ninja said in an emotionless tone. It wasn't because the voice was processed that it didn't convey emotion, but rather that the ninja had no real feelings for the act of kidnapping Anna.

He was probably someone else who needed Anna, not that ninja.

"Who the hell are you?!"

Kamamoto yelled and rushed forward. He took off in front of the ninja, jump up, shoot flames from his body and unleash a roundhouse kick.

The flame engulfed spinning kick turned into a small red tornado and attacked the ninja, but immediately after, the ninja disappeared.

He disappeared as if an invisible pit suddenly opened up under his feet and he fell into it. Kamamoto gasped in surprise and looked around him.

Anna saw part of the bright green street behind Kamamoto and the ninja rose up as if he had grown out of the ground.

"There is no need to answer."

The ninja said, brandishing his weapon.

It was a moment too late for Anna to raise her voice and for Kamamoto to turn around.

Just when he thought he was going to get slashed, a huge black bird-like thing flew up and landed between the ninja and Kamamoto.

He had black fur and long black hair that looked like the wings of a bird. His owner had stopped the ninja weapon that was going to cut Kamamoto by squeezing the blade with his bare hands.

"What...?!"

For the first time, the ninja let out an annoyed voice.

The one who stopped the ninja attack was Yatogami Kuro, a young swordsman known as Kuro. The ninja took a huge leap back and kept his distance from Kuro. Because of the ninja's stance, the leeway he had up until now was gone.

"You must be from the Green Clan, "Jungle". I have a connection with this girl. If you want to continue, I will be your opponent."

The ninja's judgment was swift. He put the gun back from him and placed his left hand on the wall.

Then the walls and his hands were dyed with green light, and the tips of his hands sank into the walls as if they were sinking into water.

"Fighting you is not part of my business."

Leaving those words behind, the ninja completely disappeared into the wall.

"Is that the rumored Green Clan's mod ability?"

Kuro muttered a little with a gloomy expression.

"It's been a long time, Black Dog. Hehe, I owe you one."

Kamamoto, who had escaped the threat for now and relaxed his shoulders, called out to Kuro. Kuro looked at Kamamoto and raised his eyebrows suspiciously.

"Do we know each other from somewhere?"

"Uh... That's not..."

Kamamoto dropped his shoulders, but Anna understood.

"It's Kamamoto! Rikio Kamamoto! The Unsung Hero of 'Homura'! He is second only to the Yata-san, the leader of the attack! The eldest son of the Kamamoto Liquor Store!"

"Kamamoto Rikio...?"

The figure of Kamamoto in his memory and the slender youth standing in front of Kuro could not match. Kuro frowned suspiciously and traced Kamamoto's figure up and down many times.

Kamamoto let out a deep sigh of resignation.

"If so, it can't be helped that people won't remember me. Ever since Mikoto-san left, I haven't had an appetite, and even after the summer passed, I still haven't recovered from this poor figure."

Kamamoto said with crepuscular eyes.

"Rikio..."

"No, but don't worry, Anna! Even if I lose weight, I won't lose horsepower!"

Kuro still had a look of disbelief on his face, but he seemed to have decided to focus his thoughts on a more pressing problem than that, so he turned to Kamamoto as if he had regained his composure.

"Why were you being chased by the Green Clan?"

Anna didn't know why and she ran away, but after seeing his ability to slip through walls and paths, Kuro seemed to be able to tell that this person belonged to the Green Clan. Anna, who had blocked her ability to perceive things, was no different than a child who knew nothing.

"We don't know the situation at all, but that ninja bastard suddenly came to my house and said that he wanted to ask Anna for something."

As Kamamoto was explaining the situation, Kuro's partner, Neko, caught up with him and appeared behind Kuro. Kuro slightly raised his eyebrows.

"An requested?"

"That's using Anna's ability to sense..."

"He told me to look for the "Silver King"."

Taking control of Kamamoto's words, Anna said that.

Kuro and Neko's eyes widened and they got excited.

"What?! Can you do that?"

"Nya! Can you find Shiro?!"

The two of them leaned forward and raised their voices.

Anna shook her head as she apologized for giving them false hope.

"I can't do it now."

"Really..."

Kuro said with a voice that couldn't hide his disappointment, and Neko lowered her head sadly. Kamamoto opened his mouth as if to intercede.

"Anna's sentient ability has been unstable for a long time. Right now, she can't search for people."

"But... if they told you to look for him, does that mean he's still alive?"

As if he wanted at least some hope, Kuro stepped forward and said that. Anna shook her head slightly again.

"I don't know."

Kuro nodded regretfully.

"Why is the Green Clan looking for Shiro?"

Kamamoto also lowered his head as if he was lost and let out a sigh.

"What should I do next...?"

"It would be nice to join the other comrades."

A dry smile appeared on Kamamoto's face at Kuro's suspicious voice.

"Homura" is almost disbanded now."

"Who is in charge of "Homura" now?"

"I can't talk about the details, but Kusanagi-san entrusted Anna to me."

"So what happened to the vanguard captain? He's the type to hold his body higher at times like this."

"No, Yata-san..."

Kamamoto muffled his words and fell silent. Kamamoto admires Yata more than anyone, so he must be more upset and frustrated by the current situation.

Anna, who was one of the reasons why Yata became like this, couldn't say anything and lowered her gaze.

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Emptying his mind, he simply ran aimlessly through the city on his skateboard.

The landscape of Shizume City flowed from front to back. Even that felt pointless. Everything around Yata flowed and disappeared next to Yata. All the things he held dear, even Yata's struggles, vanished in vain.

Yata's stomach was filled with rotten anger. Yata is the type of person who let's anger out of him quickly and doesn't drag it down, which is why he's never had anger with nowhere to go rotting inside of him for so long. At that rate, the decomposition would progress and he felt that even the internal organs would rot.

After skateboarding around the city, Yata came to the HOMRA bar. It didn't make sense to go back there, but like inertia, like clinging to something, he always went back there.

When he opened the door where the sign remained CLOSED and entered the bar, there was no one inside and he could see the unkempt dirt. If Kusanagi were there, he would never forgive him. Empty pizza delivery boxes, ramen containers with disposable chopsticks stuck in leftover soup, and empty PET bottles lying around. There was also some trash on the floor that had just been thrown into a plastic bag and tied up.

Even in such a state, no one cared. Because no one came there. The reason why Yata continued in that place was partly because of his attachments, but if he left too, that HOMRA bar, once loved by everyone, would truly die.

Yata went up the stairs. In the room on the second floor, various films left behind by Totsuka were scattered around. In order to escape from the past, he took one of the things that he had seen over and over again and put it on the projector.

Yata sat on the couch and looked at the images projected on the wall from the projector.

The sound of many voices echoed through the video.

"Eh?! What's up?!"

"Yata, Happy Birthday!"

He couldn't see it on the video, but he could hear Totsuka's voice. While he was recording with the camera, he congratulated Yata. "Hooray! Congratulations!" And the comrades of "Homura" sang in a harmonious voice.

The footage was taken on Yata's 18th birthday. Unlike his 20th birthday four months ago, when he was alone and empty-handed, Yata in the video was celebrating surrounded by everyone. With Totsuka at the top of the list, those in "Homura" who loved festivals, liked to make a fuss by throwing parties under the guise of people's birthdays.

"Ah! Is it today? I'm not old enough to celebrate my birthday anymore. Well, it's been a long time... Oh, my God!"

Yata felt that everyone was trying to celebrate his birthday, so he had been restless since morning. He was trying to pretend that he had forgotten his birthday, his face was white, but he also looked happy.

A faint smile appeared on Yata's face as he saw himself in a happy moment.

Amid applause, cheers, and whistles, Totsuka in the video greeted Suoh.

"King, today is Yata's birthday. Celebrate it."

Suoh reflected. Lately, he had been watching it many times, so it was already strange to feel nostalgic for that video, but Yata's heart clenched when he saw the red-haired man, whose sharp eyes had softened a bit.

Yata, who was watching the video, heard the incoming call from the PDA in the form of a watch on his wrist. He looked at it, and as soon as he realized it was Kamamoto's, he immediately looked back at Suoh in the video.

Anyway, it will be another message without content. Things like, what are you doing now? Or, you can't just lock yourself in the bar. Or please call me soon.

What could he do? There was no one there anymore and nothing to do.

As if he was trying to forget reality, Yata focused his gaze on Suoh in the video. Suoh looked at Yata and raised the corners of his mouth.

"Uh. Is it time for Shichi-Go-San?"

"Wait... M-Mikoto-san? I'm eighteen years old!"

"Mikoto. You're making fun of Yata-chan. The Shichi-go-san should have ended five years ago."

"It wasn't even five years ago!"

Now that he thought about it, it was very rare for Suoh to throw a mocking word at him. Suoh was in a good mood that day. Yata was enjoying the day when he was one year older.

"Come on, please clear the way! The cake has arrived!"

Kamamoto's voice was heard and a giant cake appeared. Apparently getting hit by Kamamoto, who was distracted by the cake, Totsuka nearly dropped the camera and the video stopped. In the still image, Kamamoto could be seen holding a cake, Totsuka smiling, Yata wearing a pointy hat, and Suoh smiling a little.

(Mikoto-san...Totsuka-san...)

As if he had cut a thread, he rolled onto his side on the couch and Yata's gaze flickered blankly.

"Everyone threw "Homura" into the trash... even Kusanagi-san..."

When he mentioned Kusanagi's name, he felt a different kind of pain than when he heard Suoh's or Totsuka's name.

Yata is tormented by the pain of abandonment, which is different from the pain of loss. That pain, that irrepressible anger, slowly rotted inside Yata.

For a time after Suoh's death, Yata never showed a lethargic appearance. Rather, it would have seemed like he was fine. Yata was desperate to ensure that "Homura's" ties and place of belonging would continue even after Suoh's pillar had disappeared. That's why, instead of being depressed by Suoh's death, he acted cheerfully and tried to inspire everyone.

Even if it wasn't the same as when Suoh and Totsuka were there, he would still cheer on the "Homura" members that they left behind. That was partly due to his sense of mission, as he was in a position second only to Kusanagi, who had been left as the top of "Homura", and deep down in his heart, he feared that "Homura" to disappear.

He insisted that they should get together more. He was deliberately hilarious, trying to excite everyone's hearts. He didn't notice that everyone was looking at Yata as if they were looking at something painful.

And then Kusanagi said...

"This bar will be temporarily closed from today. The reopening is undecided."

Kusanagi, who had summoned the main members of "Homura", said it nonchalantly.

For Yata, the statement came as a surprise. Kusanagi didn't show any hesitation, even though Anna kept asking what to do. Yata was devastated to learn that Kusanagi and Kamamoto had already discussed Anna's future without Yata's knowledge.

"Wait! What's wrong, Kusanagi-san? In that case, what will you do, Kusanagi-san?"

"I'm out of here."

Those words resounded within Yata like words close to betrayal.

He didn't remember much after that. His blood rushed to his head, he was so frustrated and sad, and he was sorry that he was raising his voice on his own. No matter how much

he screamed or choked, unable to shake Kusanagi's feelings even a bit, not wanting to hear anything, Yata left miserably.

Shortly after that, Kusanagi actually closed the HOMRA bar.

Anna was entrusted to Kamamoto's parents' house, the companions returned to their respective lives, "Homura" disintegrated in midair, and Yata was left alone.

He no longer cared.

Yata closed her eyes and curled up on the big couch like a fetus.

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Immediately after landing at the Ukita airport, Kusanagi called Awashima to report.

"Oh, I just got here. There's a lot of media blackout and there's no such thing as an armed occupation."

He sat on the couch in the lobby and looked at the monitors lined up in the airport. All the monitors were broadcasting peaceful news and commercials. The Mihashira Tower, which can be said to be the center of this country's economy, has been attacked and occupied.

"Thanks for letting me know, Seri-chan."

Upon receiving news from Awashima that Mihashira Tower had been attacked by the Green Clan, Kusanagi immediately flew from Dresden to Frankfurt International Airport and took a direct flight to Japan. Thanks to Awashima's quick news, he was able to return in the shortest possible time.

"More importantly, did you get any results from the comfort you got from us? I won't let you go home empty-handed."

He laughed bitterly at the harsh comments. Kusanagi held up the stack of papers with the image of the "Slate" drawn on top of the files that had been placed on his lap.

Kusanagi's efforts, the support of Awashima and "Scepter 4" and a mysterious coincidence that seemed to be fate had led to that.

Claudia Weisman. It was the material left by a woman who was a researcher for the "Slate" and older sister of the first sovereign, the "Silver King".

Kusanagi, who found that in the underground storage room of the State Library, immediately flew to the elderly doctor who had been involved in the "Slate" investigation with a set of documents that seemed to be related. The nearly 100-year-old doctor's wrinkled eyes widened and he slowly read the document Kusanagi handed him, assuring him that it was indeed written by Dr. Claudia.

"Don't worry, I've done my job. Well, I'm not sure this is helpful. I wanted to take a slightly more technical terminology class from the scholar over there, but I couldn't."

Narrowing his eyes, Kusanagi put the documents away and stood up as he took out a cigarette case.

"Even if..."

"What?"

"Even if you put aside the invincible "Golden King", I don't think the Green Clan will fight head-on."

"Jungle", the Green Clan has always made moves that can be described as "behind the scenes".

The current "Green King" has been on the throne much longer than Suoh and Munakata, and it is said that he awoke during the Kagutsu Incident.

But for a long time, the "Green King" did not appear. It would be appropriate to call him the king of cyber-brain, observing the world through the network without showing himself, and occasionally playing with others as if he were playing a game.

"Homura" also had experience of being manipulated by "Jungle". The year after Suoh became the "Red King", the HOMRA bar was surrounded by middle and high school students who were forced to dance for "Jungle", and there was an incident where modified rocket fireworks they broke the windows and doors of the bar.

Middle and high school students at that time could not be called members of the "Jungle" clan. "Jungle" is disguised as a simple game application, installed by ordinary people who do not know anything about clans or "kings", and actually carry out orders issued in the form of "quests" in the game. It is a system that gives points and rewards. Middle and high school students who surrounded Bar HOMRA were attracted by rumors that if they participated in the mission, which was dubbed a "surprise party", they might receive information that would help them pass the exam.

It was a frustrating and ridiculous affair. "Jungle" was meant to anger "Homura" and hurt minors in the general public, to put them in a bad position. The impression he had of the "King" was something like a "mischievous child".

After that, "Jungle" seemed to have evolved and spread, but the basic form of the clan should not have changed. Those who collect points and rank up in "Jungle" gain supernatural powers and appear to be members of the clan, but in the end they are just participants in a game launched by an evil child.

The clan, who had been playing and joking with each other for a while, challenged them to a head-on confrontation, such as attacking Mihashira Tower.

(Are you saying that my impression of the "Green King" is wrong in the first place? Is there something more tangible than the simple evil that drives the "Green King"?)

What if "Jungle's" move, which until now seemed to be nothing more than malice, was a test of that ambition or a strategic move?

"After occupying the tower, any special moves?"

"It seems that they are tampering with the data bank, but other than that, there are no statements or demands. It is a deadlock."

A slight sigh came from the other side of the PDA.

"No counterattack from the "Golden King". Rather, it seems like it's absent for some reason."

"They knew and attacked?"

"I wonder. Anyway, in the current situation where the influence on the "Slate" cannot be confirmed, it is the captain's policy to keep it under siege without entering other kings' territories."

"The captain... how is the "Blue King"?"

There was a heartbeat before there was an answer.

"...In great shape. He's coordinating the relevant ministries and agencies to deal with the incident on behalf of the unseen "Golden King". He went with Fushimi-kun."

While taking a break in the smoking area, Kusanagi recalled the appearance of the "Blue King".

After the incident, they met once in connection with paperwork related to the "King's" death. Even from Kusanagi's point of view, Munakata didn't seem to have changed in any particular way.

But he couldn't know what was in his heart.

"If it's hard to bear the burden of killing the "King", it doesn't get any better than that."

Last winter, the "Blue King" Reisi Munakata faced off against the "Red King" Suoh Mikoto. It was an action to prevent Suoh's fall of Damocles.

Kusanagi also wants to prevent incidents from happening in Munakata as a result.

Kusanagi softened his voice as if to apologize to Awashima, who was speechless.

"Well, that's not the point right now. See you later."

Kusanagi hung up the phone and his expression hardened, which was a bit loose when he was talking to Awashima.

Things were moving in an unexpected direction. Perhaps no one could sit still anymore.

(You must run from what you really want to run from.)

He remembered the words that Totsuka once said.

He was the type of person who would enjoy even the toughest situations, but, on the other hand, he would never agree to anything he didn't want to do. It was good for giving Kusanagi a break, who tends to overthink things and keep things to himself.

This time, Kusanagi wanted to escape and he wanted to let go of that. That's why he even threw away Suoh and Totsuka's memories, "Homura", and went all the way to Germany.

However, even as he struggled to find a way to "escape" from what was about to happen, Kusanagi couldn't believe it.

Shaking his head away from the wet thoughts of that, Kusanagi stepped forward.

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The storm from the night before was fine until the afternoon, but it rained again in the afternoon.

The wind in the sky was strong and the clouds moved fast, the weather was changeable.

Mishakuji leaned lightly against the glass window on the top floor of Mihashira Tower, looking down at the scenery from above. Kotosaka perched on his shoulder, looking through the rain washed glass with Mishakuji.

The Golden Clansmen inside Mihashira Tower were already under control, and "Scepter 4" surrounding the outside still showed no sign of breaking in.

It seemed that an expert team in that area was working hard to remove the protection of the data bank in the basement of the Mihashira Tower, where the information of "Tokijikuin" was collected. It was a job for mid to high ranks who were better than lower rank combatants who wielded weapons and had little talent. It was only a matter of time before the information was available.

Parallel to their clan work of extracting information from the data bank, another information acquisition operation was also underway from the supernatural direction. It was an information acquisition strategy that would utilize the power of Anna Kushina, who possessed a powerful perception ability. Seeing with a child's clairvoyance, that sounded like something hidden, but her power was the same as theirs, an ultimate synergy. Perhaps, she could obtain more valuable information than the "Tokijikuin" data bank.

However, Hirasaka, who was supposed to pick her up, never returned. For Hirasaka, who worked fast, that was unusual. Has something gone wrong?

Looking out over the rain-soaked city, Mishakuji was humming "Amefuri" again. When he sang a chorus, a sign finally appeared behind him.

"You're late, Douhan-chan. Did you come home empty-handed?"

Mishakuji said without looking back. Hirasaka appeared from under the ground and said what Mishakuji had imagined: "There's been a problem."

"A saboteur appeared and blocked the mission to acquire Anna Kushina."

"Oh, my God, is that why you came home? Douhan-chan, you weren't that good at your job, right?"

Hirasaka was silent. Hirasaka is a highly professional worker, but at the same time he is a realist who does not take unnecessary risks.

Mishakuji stopped spouting any more innocent spite and turned around.

"Isn't the senior staff member of 'Homura' absent? You're not the one who can't outwit the other 'Homura' guys. What kind of interference did you find?"

Without saying a word, Hirasaka took out a PDA from his chest and pointed it up. An image floated in the air.

It was an image of a wild teenage girl and a young man with long black hair and a sword at his waist.

Mishakuji stared at the young man in the image for a moment.

There was something welling up in his chest and Mishakuji smiled softly.

"Ok. I'll go too."

Mishakuji spun on his heel, feeling a slight euphoria from the memory and anticipation.

+++++

Kuro went to Shizume Station to bring Kamamoto and Anna to Gakuenjima.

It had started to rain a while ago, and Neko, who doesn't like to get wet, rushed into the station and beckoned to Kuro, "Hurry up!".

"I'm sorry. Is it really okay for us to hide there?"

Kamamoto apologized.

"There is a room on Gakuenjima Island that we use as our base of operations. It is very convenient for us to ask various questions there."

It seemed that Kamamoto was going to go to the HOMRA bar, but the members had dispersed, and the hot-blooded "Homura" vanguard captain seemed to be collapsing, and he didn't even answer Kamamoto's calls.

Naturally, the enemy established a base, his fortress, and it didn't seem like a good idea to return there under the current circumstances. Also, Kuro and the others are no strangers to the Green Clan searching for Shiro. Kuro thought that it would be better for them to protect them for now.

As they walked through the spacious hall of the station, Anna suddenly stopped. She tilted her head and muttered under her breath.

"I'm sorry."

"What?"

Surprised by the serious tone of her voice, Kuro also stopped. Anna lowered her eyes to look at the tips of her shoes.

"About your "King"... he didn't kill Tatara."

Kuro was at a loss for an answer. Neko cocked her head as if she didn't know what she was talking about, but in reality, the relationship between Kuro and the Red Clan was complicated.

Shiro was chased by "Homura" for a crime he didn't commit, and in the end Suoh Mikoto left them speechless. However, it should have been an action based on the agreement between Shiro and Suoh to defeat the "Colorless King".

But, unable to grow old enough to tell her not to worry about it, Kuro gently changed the subject of the conversation.

"You said that your ability was unstable, but is that because you lost the "Red King"?"

Anna squeezed her hand painfully against her chest.

"This is different."

Anna's eyes sparkled with anxiety. As she raised her eyebrows suspiciously at the situation, a noise went through the station's electrical bulletin board, and the green light burst and the screen disappeared.

"What?"

Kamamoto let out a confused voice.

Right after that, he felt an unusual presence.

The air was filled with tension and the numb sensation hit his skin. Just being there, the pressure was suffocating.

Kamamoto immediately hugged Anna, and Kuro and Neko turned around at the same time.

"Protect that girl."

Kuro spoke quietly and braced himself.

He could hear the rattle and the sound of the fire shutter in the hallway going down. Was it to lock Kuro away, or was it to keep outsiders away?

"I'm nervous... something's coming!"

Neko, who is sensitive to signals, raised her voice. In fact, the air seemed to be electrified and she felt a small painful numbness on her skin.

The sound of slow footsteps echoed. As the sound of footsteps got closer, the pressure on her body increased to the point of her feeling physical pressure.

"Going round and round, we found ourselves."

The voice of a brilliant man rang out. Kuro's body trembled at the words spun by that voice.

"That haiku is like Ichigen-sama's... No way?!"

He saw a man walking down the esplanade. A tall, slender silhouette with a long sword on his back.

Neko hiding behind a pillar raised a threatening voice, "Shhh!".

Every time the man stepped on the ground, green electricity ran through his feet and discharged into the air.

"Fufu, I wonder why that person's poem touches my heart so much."

After muttering to himself, the man smiled at Kuro.

"Hello, Kuro-chan. It's been a while. How have you been?"

Kuro was speechless.

About ten years have passed since he saw this man. But his demeanor hadn't changed much. Kuro clenched his teeth and growled his name.

"Mishakuji Yukari."

Flexible body. Lean, but not just skinny, he has the perfect physique to wield a sword. His lustrous hair curled beautifully, and his facial features were handsome and androgynous to the point of shocking the beholder. His eyes, framed by long lashes, were sharp even when he smiled, and there was a greedy light that kept searching for something.

A memory of the dream he had that morning appeared in Kuro's mind.

Innocent childhood thoughts. A blade addressed to a loved one. Splattered blood.

"Hey, who's he?!"

Seeing Kuro and Mishakuji, Kamamoto raised his voice.

"Mishakuji Yukari. A former member of the clan of the previous Seventh King, Ichigen Miwa, and a disciple of the sword... the man I used to call my older brother."

"Oh, brothers?"

The puzzled Kamamoto didn't look back, and Kuro stared at Mishakuji. Kuro roared at the man he had once admired, yearned for, and been betrayed.

"Why are you here?!"

"Hey, you seem scared. Can't you just honestly rejoice in the meeting with your big brother?"

"Are you the one who pointed the sword at Ichigen-sama? Don't play dumb!"

Kuro lowered his waist, gripped the hilt of his sword and prepared to draw his sword from its scabbard. Mishakuji laughed out loud.

"That's the kind of confirmation other people's souls have. It's a strong bond between me and that person. Still don't get it?"

"Don't joke!"

Mishakuji, who smiled without the slightest sway at Kuro's angry voice, suddenly lowered his eyes sadly.

"When I found out that he had passed away, I cried for the first time in a long time. Faced with such a sad me, I can't believe that my little brother and apprentice would stand in my way."

Kuro noticed that his own hand, which was holding the "Kotowari" handle, was trembling.

The anger towards the man in front of him was strong enough to shake Kuro, but that tremor was not due to anger. It was out of fear.

(The glow of your soul that you see in the exchange of life. Please show me the beauty of it, Ichigen-sama.)

As Mishakuji uttered those words and pointed his sword at him, the still young Kuro stood in front of him, trying to stop the senseless combat. He begged him to stop.

(Stand away. You must not stand before a serious sword without being prepared to risk your life.)

Mishakuji looked at Kuro with cold eyes. The edge of the blade did not budge one bit.

(O Kuro-chan, do you think I will never kill you?)

Mishakuji couldn't feel any kindness or mercy towards Kuro at that moment. Looking at the drawn sword and Mishakuji's eyes in front of him, Kuro realized that "death" was standing in front of him.

Childhood fears came alive again.

Now that he is stronger than he was when he was a child, just by looking at Mishakuji's flawless standing figure, he understood the difference in power between them.

Even though Kuro had challenged the "King" before, perhaps because he could feel the opponent's power so realistically, his body was filled with more tension than at that moment.

"You, you can't go to the Green Clan..."

Kuro didn't know how Mishakuji had been since he left Ichigen Miwa. However, with the green light emitted by Mishakuji, the response was to stand in front of them at that moment.

Mishakuji nodded lightly.

"Yes. That's why I'll take that girl."

When Mishakuji looked at Anna, who was being embraced by Kamamoto, with a beautiful gesture, he took out the famous sword "Ayamachi" given to him by Ichigen Miwa. A green stream clung to what was once the sword of the "Colorless King".

Kuro unknowingly drew his own sword as if it had been drawn by Mishakuji.

"So, as expected, Shiro... Adolf K. Weismann is still alive?"

As if to reflect Kuro's fear and anxiety, the tip of Kuro's sword swung. Mishakuji looked at him, frowned as if he had seen something ugly, and let out a cold voice.

"Come on, I want to make sure the biggest threat to us, the Green Clan, is dead if he's dead."

The word "death" bothered Kuro again. The uneasiness that had been sinking in his heart for a long time suddenly textured him as he got clear words and his eyes wavered.

"Kurosuke!"

Neko's voice hit his ears.

Kuro suddenly turned to face forward. He was approaching Mishakuji's sword that closed the gap in an instant. Kuro immediately accepted it. He turned, and the sound of metal colliding with each other resounded.

"When I found out that you and I were divided into enemies and allies, my heart fluttered, didn't it? I thought that I would carve out a path for this sad fate. But if it's Kuro-chan..."

"Run quickly!"

Kuro suddenly yelled at Kamamoto behind him.

At that moment, as they faced each other, the only thing Kuro could do was block out Mishakuji's relaxed expression. He didn't feel like he could do more than stop it.

Kamamoto exclaimed, "I understand!" Immediately, he heard the footsteps of two people running.

Mishakuji didn't seem to care that Anna and the others ran away, he just watched Kuro closely.

"What? This sword..."

With a snort, Mishakuji brushed Kuro's sword away slightly, undoing the sword fight. Kuro took a few steps back on a leash, gritted his teeth, and counterattacked.

He wielded the sword with a spirit voice. Mishakuji was slightly avoided. The second and third attacks were already dangerous.

All the swords had been read. Contrary to Kuro's despair, Mishakuji's movements seemed to be part of child's play.

"I thought of teaching you a lesson, but I'm not."

"You have nothing to teach me now!"

Kuro swung his sword recklessly. The sword kept cutting through the sky to no avail. The image of reaching even the tip of the sword did not come out, and only impatience built up.

From behind, he heard the low cry of Kamamoto, who should have escaped.

When he looked at him for a moment, he saw the ninja from earlier attacking Kamamoto from behind.

The ninja's blade pierced through Kamamoto's back, and Kamamoto fell with the force of being hit to the ground without being able to recover. He could hear Anna's screaming voice calling for Kamamoto.

"Oh, looking back?"

Mishakuji became aggressive as if he was scolding him the moment he stopped his hand while he looked away from him. Kuro quickly readied his sword and withstood Mishakuji's attack. Little by little, his legs lowered and pushed.

"Hey, are you going to call yourself a disciple of that person?"

"Hey...!"

Kuro groaned and stepped forward with great force on his legs that were about to recede.

Mishakuji danced around and dodged Kuro's strong sword. He aimed at the torso with the returned sword, but it was turned slightly and he couldn't reach it. Impulsing to turn around, Mishakuji's sword attacked Kuro's head. Kuro barely caught it, but it was heavy. He put his hand on the tip and managed to hold it, pushing him back with all his strength.

He was driven by a tingling sense of urgency that if he let his guard down, even for a moment, he would lose his life.

Finding a small space under his feet, Kuro swung his sword at his feet. However, Mishakuji jumped in without showing the slightest impatience. High body dances, somersaults and landings. The blade of the chase was also carried out with a playful backflip. Mishakuji seemed to be dancing gracefully against Kuro, who was facing a desperate battle.

Mishakuji's atmosphere, which was fluttering elegantly with Kuro's attacks, suddenly changed.

His smiling eyes turned terrifying and electricity ran through the air. With a slight flick of his sword, Mishakuji turned to attack.

A fierce attack that seemed to lose sight of the sword if he blinked. Swallowed up and thrown by the attacks that flowed like a torrent, Kuro barely caught them.

Sword against sword, powers clashing violently, and small sparks and lights that repelled each other's supernatural powers exploded over and over again.

"You can't defeat me if you're empty."

Helplessly pushed by the speed and weight of the ferocious blow, Kuro's body fell.

For a moment of fear, the hilt of Mishakuji's sword sank into his chest. Breathing hard, Kuro shot backwards. He hit the wall and fell, rolling on the floor.

"Right now, you are no match for me. Your swordsmanship, your attitude, and most of all, your beauty."

Under a singing voice. Still unable to recover from his ragged breath, Kuro managed to lift half of his body. Mishakuji slowly approached Kuro, who still couldn't get up, sword ready for him.

When he sensed that death was near, the ground just behind Mishakuji glowed green and a ninja appeared below. On his shoulders he carried an unconscious Anna.

"Oh, mission complete? Practice time is over. Too bad."

Silently, the ninja sank back to the ground along with Anna.

"Anna!"

Neko, who was watching from the shadows, rushed over with a shout.

Kuro also tried to rush after them, but Mishakuji pointed his sword at the ground and split it in two, as if he cut Kuro and the rest of them apart.

A straight line crossed the ground of the esplanade, and the ground was cut as if it had been cut by a machine and fell.

Neko cringed and stopped at the pressure of the wind and dust. Kuro also closed his eyes involuntarily.

"Let's meet again, Kuro-chan."

Mishakuji's voice echoed from beyond the dust. When he opened his eyes, Mishakuji and the ninja with Anna were nowhere to be seen.

He couldn't do anything and they reluctantly took Anna away. Kuro gritted his teeth and sheathed his sword, his hand shaking from the numbness of the fight with Mishakuji.

Staggering, he scrambled to his feet and ran towards Kamamoto, who had been slashed by the ninja.

Kamamoto, still lying on the ground, could not get up and was moaning. The back of his clothing was torn and his exposed skin was stained red with blood.

"You are ok?!"

Kuro lifted Kamamoto's body. Kamamoto's hand gripped Kuro's arm tightly, even though he was too limp to get up on his own.

"Oh, I'm fine, Anna, go after them...!"

Kamamoto's face was filled with impatience and anxiety, much stronger than pain.

Kuro hesitated for a moment. However, the wound on his back was large, but not deep enough to endanger his life. Also, Kuro could understand his feelings at that moment, quite painfully.

Kuro nodded deeply at Kamamoto's request.

"Ok, leave it to me. Neko, can you chase them?"

As he turned to Neko, Neko placed her hand over her ear as if she were concentrating her nerves and assumed a stance of looking around her.

"Nya... there!"

Neko pointed in a direction as if he picked up a signal.

Kuro nodded, leaned Kamamoto's body against the pillar and ran in the direction Neko pointed.

Get Anna Kushina back. There was no wavering in that determination, but fear and uneasiness had settled at the bottom of Kuro's heart and could not be erased.

(Even if I catch them, will I be able to beat Mishakuji Yukari?)

Kuro wondered as he ran to Neko's side.

He should have been proud of himself for getting stronger, but he couldn't take on Mishakuji.

Kuro was covered by a feeling of helplessness, as if he had returned to being a child who only looked at his elders.

And Shiro also created a mist in Kuro's heart.

(Shiro, Adolf K. Weismann, is he alive?)

(Come on, I want to make sure the biggest threat to us, the Green Clan, is dead if he's dead.)

Kuro clenched his fist tightly.

His feet were shaking and he felt that he was not standing correctly.