



MISSING KINGS
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TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

EPILOGUE: IN THE SCHATTENREICH

"Recently, my sister has often been working alone on the investigation of the "Slate" from a different angle."

When Kokujoji appeared in the lab, he asked Weismann, who was alone in front of the research materials, about Claudia.

"What is the other angle of investigation?"

"I don't know. I haven't heard it yet."

Kokujoji cast a stunned look from under his military cap.

"Brothers, research chief and deputy chief. Why don't you share the information correctly?"

"Well, these kinds of things happen to us a lot as brother and sister. We are both loyal to our own interests. When I want to investigate something, I investigate it only until I am satisfied, and when I get a certain number of results, I listen to the opinion of the another person."

They are brothers who have been working as researchers since their teens. They were used to that area. Kokujoji also seemed somewhat convinced and said, "Is that so?"

"She doesn't hesitate to involve me in researching her hobby. Things like testing the toxicity of a "new dish" my sister has researched and developed..."

"Ah..."

Kokujoji became somewhat distant.

Kokujoji, who inadvertently shared the ingredients sent from his hometown, sparked Claudia's sudden interest in fermented foods, which can be found in many Japanese dishes, and she began researching them. She would often invite Kokujoji to perform a demonstration experiment called a dinner where she would serve "new dishes".

It was Weismann's job to verify the safety of the "new cuisine", that is, the various fermented foods produced by Claudia's reasoning and experiments, using numerous reagents.

By the way, he only guaranteed safety, not taste.

"That kind of thing, when my sister rushes into her hobby, I follow her or help her, or rather, I am forced to act as an assistant or a slave."

A younger brother is no match for an older sister. Weismann spread his hands and shook his head, saying, "I'm here."

"But she will always be thinking of following you as you go."

Having said that as if it were natural, Weismann suddenly widened his eyes and then distorted his face to him.

"As expected of the Lieutenant. You are sharp."

When Weismann tends to get so caught up in something that his field of vision tends to be narrow, Claudia presents a different perspective, or she devises a way to get back when he gets stuck.

"The reason I can fully immerse myself in my research is that my sister is with me, which gives me a great sense of security."

Kokujoji had a half admiring, half exasperated expression on his face.

"Speaking of a complementary relationship, it sounds good, but you seem to be very spoiled. If Doctor Claudia is still investigating the "Slate" from a different angle, she may be worried about you who tend to dream. Don't give your sister too much trouble."

"Eh?"

Weismann pursed his lips.

"Oh, what are you talking about?"

In good time, Claudia stuck her face into the room. Kokujoji, who had always had good posture, stretched out his spine.

Weismann smiled and waved his hand.

"It's the Lieutenant's scolding. I tend to dream. The same thing happens to my sister who entrusts her dreams to the "Slate", right?"

"But surely Addy is too optimistic, right?"

"Your sister will soon become a Lieutenant."

Claudia turned to Kokujoji with an artificially serious look on her face.

"Thank you for your help, but please continue to take care of my dreamy little brother."

"Ah, yes. I'll do my best even if I'm weak."

"Heh~"

Claudia chuckled as Weismann puffed out his cheeks. Kokujoji slightly relaxed his cheeks.

"Lieutenant Kokujoji, can you take it easy today?"

"No. I have to go to Berlin again."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Then when you get back, let's have dinner together again."

Claudia smiled and Kokujoji bowed his head and replied, "With pleasure."

It was February 1945, two days before the Dresden bombing.

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The airship designed and built by Weismann was not the "Himmelreich", but a second airship of the same type.

Complementing "Himmelreich", the airship named "Schattenreich" was requisitioned by the United States after the war, but recovered by Daikaku Kokujoji and secretly transported to Japan.

After that, Kokujoji continued to hold the "Schattenreich" for a long time so that he could take off at any time. As a preparation in case of a problem with the "Himmelreich", in which Weismann was traveling. After the danger of the "Green King" became apparent, he took special care to hide its existence and never stopped maintaining it so that it could one day be used by Weismann.

Weismann/Isana Yashiro was in the "Schattenreich". In the "Schattenreich" communication room, he received a report from a "Rabbit" in Japan.

With a sigh mixed with frustration, relief, and regret, he raised his head. Outside the window, he was nearing the end of the night and had turned white.

Shiro left the communication room and walked down the corridor towards the bridge where Kokujoji was.

After being pierced by Suoh Mikoto along with the soul of the "Colorless King" that was trapped in his body on Gakuenjima, Shiro awoke inside the "Schattenreich".

Burnt in the flames of Suoh's destruction, the shrine collapsed and sank into the sea, leaving no trace of its existence, let alone its original form.

However, even though it was burned to pieces, Shiro was still thinking.

An existence that remained even after becoming only the soul of the dead body. If it had been Weismann, who had been afflicted by the despair of the past, surely the remaining soul would have turned into a murky sea, and would have eventually scattered and disappeared.

But Shiro had decided not to be a bystander anymore.

—Older sister.

The end of the dream he saw with his sister remained.

—Lieutenant.

There was a responsibility that he let his friend carry on his shoulders.

—Neko.

There was a girl who innocently adored him and needed him.

—Kuro.

He was the Immortal "King", he promised to return without saying anything.

Thinking about the people important to him and thinking about what he had to do, Shiro's soul struggled for the first time to live.

In response to Shiro's will, the unchanging power of the "Silver King", which once overlapped with the destruction of the "Red King", worked, and the body of the shrine reconfigured itself while floating in the sea.

However, Shiro's body, which was floating in the open sea in a state of suspended animation, just as he was, would have turned into algae in the sea.

It was Kokujoji who was convinced of Shiro's survival, he found him in the vast sea by detecting a slight deviation from Weismann and took him to the "Schattenreich".

(You're still spoiled.)

After a long sleep, Kokujoji called for Shiro, who woke up in the "Schattenreich's" bed.

(It's been a long time. We haven't seen each other like this in seventy years.)

Shiro looked at the deeply wrinkled face of Daikaku Kokujoji, who was in his late nineties, with a strange sense of calm.

(Lieutenant, you're still the same.)

Those words naturally came out of Shiro's mouth.

It shouldn't have changed. Kokujoji, who was a fearless youth, had turned into an old man with white hair and beard. But Shiro certainly felt that way.

(No matter how old you are, you are stubborn and direct... Your sweet eyes haven't changed at all.)

His eye sockets had sunk in over time. But those eyes had the same light as those eyes that once scolded Weismann, looked in the same direction as Weismann, and never left him.

Shiro opened the door that led to the "Schattenreich" bridge, while he reflected on the memory of the day he met an old friend.

A wide bridge, similar to a corridor. The walls were carved by Dresden artisans and adorned with statues of goddesses.

A bed was placed in the center of the bridge. Multiple hologram screens hovered in the air above the head of the bed, and the vital signs of the owner of the bed were always displayed.

The owner of the bed was Daikaku Kokujoji himself.

After rescuing Shiro in that airship, he had become even weaker than when he met the awakened Shiro after 70 years.

The body, which was healthy even in old age, was becoming thinner, and the functions of the organs gradually declined. It was already difficult to speak.

The "Golden King", who had long reigned as the biggest and strongest "King", he was about to exhaust his life.

The reason why Kokujoji was in "Schattenreich" is not to rekindle his old friendship with Shiro. Feeling that his life was coming to an end, he chose that airship as his final destination.

Kokujoji Daikaku is a very large presence in this country and in the balance of power between the "Kings". As long as there are discomfort factors, it was decided that in the end he could not be found helpless on the ground.

Shiro looked at Kokujoji's face. He seemed to be sleeping peacefully now. He got out of bed quietly and stood in front of the window. The sky was whiter than before, and the clouds were tinged with dim light.

"What's up, Weismann?"

Kokujoji's voice echoed directly in his head.

Shiro was not surprised. Kokujoji, whose throat and lungs were already weak, used his supernatural powers to speak as usual in those days.

Shiro turned to Kokujoji and began to walk slowly.

"I think the dawn is near. This is a special seat."

Dawn a little earlier in the airship than on land.

"Isn't this a familiar sight to you?"

"Not really. No matter how many times I watched the sunset and sunrise, my world remained frozen."

He escaped and stopped time alone in the airship. Not only his body, which is changeless because he is changeless, but also his mind had become stagnant and days passed when nothing changed whether he slept or was awake.

Shiro narrowed his eyes and stared at the sky, which was gradually becoming clearer.

"But now I can feel the light start to move again."

"Sunrise... the beginning of a new world, huh?"

Shiro lowered his eyes and gave a slight self-mocking smile.

"I'm relieved that my friends also managed to meet the same sunrise."

The attack on Mihashira Tower. The Green Clan, who seemed to be searching for the whereabouts of the "Silver King", caused an incident involving "Homura", Kuro and Neko. According to the previous report from "Rabbit", the Green Clan withdrew, but "Tokijikuin" suffered a lot of damage and it seems that they took away the confidential information that was handled in Mihashira Tower.

While such an incident was taking place, Shiro could only be in the sky away from Japan.

"If I can't go save them because I'm hiding, I'm disqualified as "King"."

"After I picked you up with a reconfigured body, it was my instruction not to return to Japan. Don't worry about it."

Shiro walked over to the bed Kokujoji was lying on and sat on the edge.

"You've kept me away from the "Green King", right? Don't worry about me, Lieutenant. It seems he found out about this airship through the Mihashira Tower, and the time for recreation is over."

The sky was getting brighter. Fate turned around.

"Everyone is on the move again."

Shiro looked at his hand.

It wasn't his real hand; it was the hand of a teenager. From the moment he became that hand, Shiro's time, which had stopped, began to move again.

"Ever since I saw your dead body, I had a feeling that this would happen. I understood because I am the "Golden King" who controls fate. The things that exist now will change... no."

"Will finish?"

When he said that predicting Kokujoji's thoughts, he felt a hint of a wry smile from Kokujoji.

"I think you will be forced to take care of the rest."

"Is different!"

He unintentionally raised his voice and looked at the lying Kokujoji again.

"Lieutenant, you shaped the dream that my sister and I had. Using that "Slate", I couldn't have done anything scandalous, trivial, good or bad... You made my dream come true."

"That is also different."

A withered, hoarse voice shook the air. Shiro widened his eyes.

Although it should have been difficult for him to speak, Kokujoji spoke softly, but his throat trembled as he explained his thoughts.

"It's the dream of the three of us. That's why I made it come true."

He had an impossible dream.

In the midst of a cruel war, his goal was to create a world where everyone could be happy by researching the "Slate", which had enormous potential.

He was often scolded by Kokujoji for being too optimistic.

Claudia must have been worried about her younger brother, who tended to have narrow vision due to his obsession.

Still, the scenery that the three of them dreamed of was surely the same.

A world where bright light would shine beyond the dark ages.

"Weismann... What a beautiful new world."

The sun was beginning to peek beyond the sea of clouds. Pure white light shone from the golden sun.

Kokujoji watched the dazzling spectacle.

"Yes."

Shiro nodded silently.

"I once dreamed of a view like this."

Kokujoji's sweet eyes, which have never changed, shone in the sunlight.

"Yes."

Suppressing his trembling voice, Shiro gently nodded once more.

"It's a shame to close your eyes..."

Kokujoji's eyelids trembled.

With a slight smile, the spectacle of dawn burned into his eyes until the end. Slowly, his eyelids lowered.

"Yes."

There was silence.

Then the electrocardiogram went parallel and there was a sound that indicated cardiac arrest.

The screens monitoring Kokujoji's vital signs closed automatically.

Kokujoji Daikaku lived most of his life as a "King".

He rebuilt the devastated country, made it prosperous, was always at the center of the seven kings that appeared and disappeared, and continued to manage only that "Slate".

For a while, Shiro sat next to his friend, who had survived as a "King" until the last drop of his life.

Before long, Shiro slowly stood up and walked out onto the balcony overlooking the outside of the bridge.

A strong wind was blowing, making Shiro's hair and clothes flutter.

The morning sun was revealing itself, making the clouds shine beautifully.

Standing at the edge of the balcony, Shiro gazed up at the dawn sky, illuminating the world in a new light.

"Lieutenant. As you have walked, I will walk forward."

He opened his arms to face the world he had been ignoring for so long.

"I won't run this time. I'll face him."

Beyond the dream that his friend fulfilled.