



K

RETURN OF KINGS
SUZUKI SUZU / GoRA

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

CHAPTER 4: CHABUDAI ALLIANCE

"Haha!"

Sukuna jumped as he let out a light laugh.

A sickle wrapped in green electricity tore through the air and intersected with Yata's skateboard. The green and red auras collided violently and annihilated each other. Sukuna used that as a reference point to do somersaults and then launched a heel over Yata's head.

"Gah!"

Yata looked for him in a dangerous place, accelerated the skateboard and left. Just as he was about to chase after him, Fushimi cut him down as if to replace him.

"This time you? Ok, let's play!"

"Tsk...!"

As he violently fought Fushimi, Sukuna flicked his tongue in.

Yata is a skater who repeatedly approaches and backs up quickly as he lands powerful punches, while Fushimi possesses a method of attack with little chance to open up at both short and long range. No matter how many N-Ranks gather, it will be hard to stop these two.

But... Gojou Sukuna was a J-Rank, a top-peak player in "Jungle".

The extraordinary application "Grassroot Ver. 3.0" even controls the security cameras of the school. Even behind him, which was originally supposed to be a blind spot, he was in full view of Sukuna. Information is the weapon of "Jungle". And not having it is the weakness of these two.

Sukuna matched Fushimi's saber with his sickle blade. Almost at the same time, Yata ran in with his skateboard. Not knowing that he was a hole that Sukuna created on purpose.

"Sweet!"

Shouting, Sukuna swung his scythe around and jabbed the blade into the ground.

At the same time, he started the extraordinary application "Thunder Wave". Fushimi, who noticed a moment before, withdrew, but Yata, who started a sudden approach, couldn't stop himself. A "wave of thunder" that came from Sukuna passed through Yata's entire body.

"What?!"

"Thunder Wave" doesn't have much attack power, but it does cause considerable pain and paralysis. Sukuna slashed at Yata, who had stopped moving. Staff in hand, Yata barely parried the attack.

"Bastard!"

"Ahaha, your attacks are very weak!"

He easily blocked Yata's counterattack, and just as he was about to corner him, Fushimi's knife reflected into his electronically shielded field of view.

"These guys who have been secretly hiding up until now, they are not in high spirits!"

Roaring, Fushimi threw several throwing knives at him. Sukuna laughed out loud as he dodged and jumped to evade the attack that was precisely aimed at his vital points.

"Huh, you guys are red and blue number three, right? Is this all you have? It's not my hobby to score points with null games!"

As soon as he landed, Sukuna approached Fushimi in a single leap and raised his scythe.

"What?!"

"First of all, I'll go for the 4000 points!"

"Saru!"

However, the blade that was supposed to pierce through his heart was blocked by a skateboard that he sliced from the side.

A slight surprise ran through Sukuna's heart. Fushimi and Yata jumped back to keep their distance, while Sukuna also renewed his vigilance and readied his weapon.

Right now it was a blow that was sure to be caught. Yata, who should have taken damage from "Thunder Wave", should never have been able to support him at that distance and time.

Does that mean they have "something" to fill it? Sukuna noticed a smile on his lips as he studied it.

(It's cute. A game has to be like that.), Sukuna thought.

Sukuna takes no pleasure in oppressing weaker enemies. There is meaning and joy in overcoming strong and growing enemies.

Sukuna again took an offensive stance. To fully enjoy the pleasure, he lowered himself and put his strength into his legs.

".....?!"

He realized something.

He raised his face as if repelled by him and widened his eyes.

"That, no way..."

Fushimi and Yata were also looking up at the eastern sky with surprised expressions just like Sukuna. A giant sword of the "King" hanging in the distant sky.

"I know this sword... a year ago, at that time..."

"Silver... No, it's the "Silver King"."

The "Silver Damocles Sword". What his appearance means is that...

"He's the last boss, come on."

Mumbling a bit, Sukuna laughed again.

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Kuro was dumbfounded and looked up at the red Japanese umbrella spread out in front of him.

(Is this a dream, an illusion?), Kuro thought.

It was a spectacle that he had seen in his dreams. One day, the man they have been looking for will return. How long have they waited for the day when they would greet each other with the same attitude, the same smile and return home together?

At that moment, Kuro couldn't accept the fact that that figure was right in front of him.

The back of Isana Yashiro, the man Kuro and Neko have been waiting for, is close at hand.

However, Shiro had a different appearance than before. Instead of a soft smile, with a determined look in his eyes, he surely is looking at the enemy.

At such a shrine, Mishakuji Yukari smiled charmingly and bowed respectfully.

"Nice to meet you. The first king, the "Silver King" Adolf K. Weismann. I am a J-Rank of the Green Clan "Jungle", Mishakuji Yukari."

A parrot flew from the connecting bridge pillar and landed on Mishakuji's shoulder. He spread his wings and let out a cry of affirmation.

Mishakuji's smile deepened as he stroked the parrot's chin.

"Please excuse my rudeness as a clansman. This here is my lord."

In an instant, his mood changed.

The parrot emitted a strong pressure that could be clearly seen even from a distance. Kuro crouched down clearing his throat.

He remembered that feeling.

Reisi Munakata. Suoh Mikoto. The same kind of aura they gave off.

That means...

"Nice to meet you, "Silver King". I am Nagare Hisui, the fifth king, the "Green King".

The parrot's beak opened, and graceful human speech flowed from it.

Shiro narrowed his eyes and replied in a low voice.

"I guess you did this just to attract me, "Green King".

"Yes. Now I can confirm that you are not a bystander like you used to be. It is a great strategic victory."

Mishakuji shrugged and looked at the parrot in wonder.

"So my little brother was used as bait? What a cruel king."

"That is also affirmative. It is a ruthless change of order. Please withdraw immediately."

"Oh, you should get rid of that big fish you caught, right?"

Mishakuji's smile was mixed with something cold.

He was still holding the drawn "Ayamachi" in his hand. If he felt like it, Mishakuji would probably attack Shiro right then and there. Fighting against the strong is his joy. Whether he is a "King" or not, Mishakuji does not hesitate to enjoy that joy.

(Let me...!), Kuro thought.

Gritting his teeth, Kuro grabbed the "Kotowari" handle again. He mainly he wouldn't use his sword. That is Kuro's pride and reason for existing.

However, the parrot's voice interrupted that determination.

"Withdraw immediately."

Kuro was distracted for only a moment. Meanwhile, however, Mishakuji was resheathing his sword. After looking at the sky with a theatrical gesture, he bowed deeply.

"Unfortunate. It is a pity, but if it is an order from my lord, there is nothing I can do about it. I apologize for this, "Silver King".

Then, Mishakuji turned his eyes towards Kuro.

"Kurou-chan, I will entrust your life to the beautiful "Silver King" who ran for you, but next time, please entertain me more."

Narrowing his eyes, he said quietly.

"Otherwise, I'll cut you down like a dead branch."

"Guh..."

The next moment, his face was distorted with humiliation.

The parrot flapped its wings and rose into the air.

By the time the feather landed on the bridge, Mishakuji was nowhere to be seen.

"Phew..."

Power fell from Shiro's shoulders. Almost at the same time, the silver "Sword of Damocles" that he hung above his head vanished like smoke. With the removal of the Sanctum created by supernatural power, the "Sword of Damocles", the embodiment of that power, also disappeared.

The battle was over.

He couldn't do anything in front of him. He couldn't beat Mishakuji or protect his friends. Far from protecting his master from him, he was a loser who could only be protected by his master, so was Kuro now.

As he bitterly held that thought, Kuro looked down.

"Can you get up, Kuro?"

Shiro softly called out to Kuro.

A soft and warm gaze that was completely different from the one he was looking at the enemy before. It was exactly the same as Shiro's face in Kuro's memory.

The humiliation and remorse were gone in a moment. How long have you longed for a reunion with his teacher and friend? With that joy, Kuro squeezed his face as he tried to smile.

He is, after all, a member of the Silver Clan. There was a courtesy that had to be practiced before a friendly smile.

Kuro raised his head and dropped to one knee on the ground. He deeply bows his head at Shiro who is approaching him.

"Welcome home, my... Guwah?!"

Neko stepped on his back with all her might.

"Shiro!"

Involuntarily leaning forward, Neko stepped on the back of the neck and charged towards Shiro. It was a hard force to describe. Just as she was, Neko clung to Shiro's neck and rubbed his head.

"Shiro, Shiro, Shiro, Shiro! I missed you! Where have you been? What have you been doing? Why didn't you come back?"

Kuro heard Neko's words in rapid succession as he knelt on the ground. He jerked to his feet and clenched his fist in anger.

"Idiot, that's what I'm going to ask you now."

Still, Neko didn't stop talking. As if the feelings she had been suppressing until now had broken the dam and spilled over, Neko held Shiro's face in her hands and continued speaking.

"I've been looking for you, Shiro! I've been looking for you for a long time! We went to many places, and then the green ones came after us and defeated Kurosuke, they even kidnapped Anna and it was all on fire..."

"Yes."

"Even after that, I've been looking for you for a long time, so..."

Kuro's hands lost their strength.

Neko was also waiting impatiently for Shiro. No, just because Neko is purer, that feeling must have been stronger than Kuro's. They would meet one day, she was sure they would. Never before had Neko lost hope.

So Neko had the right to do it.

"Am at home."

"Welcome back."

As if relieved by Shiro's soft embrace, Neko buried her face in his chest and murmured.

Then, as she calmed Neko down, Shiro's eyes turned to Kuro. Feeling embarrassed by his sweet gaze, Kuro turned his face away from him.

"That's how it is."

"You're not being honest. This is a scene where it's okay to cry like you're hugging me like Neko. I missed you, Shiro!"

"Who would do that!"

The reason why he involuntarily retorted out loud was because he felt that he was being mocked for his anguish and conflict. Just as he was about to tell him how he felt while he waited, he suddenly put on a serious expression and bowed his head.

"I'm sorry."

"No..."

If he apologizes honestly like that, it would somehow become a bad atmosphere. Neko was looking at Kuro with a downcast look. Kuro cleared his throat.

"No, I'm glad you're alive."

Saying that, Shiro smiled again.

"I say the same."

"What about the current situation?"

"I know most of it. Otherwise, I couldn't come at such a good time, right?"

Kuro's eyebrows twitched. In fact, it was the perfect timing. Too good, he would even say. That means...

"Did you mean it was all intentional?"

"Well, what do you think?"

Shiro said that as a nonsense, but maybe it was true. From somewhere, Shiro was watching them, and he inadvertently jumped into danger.

Kuro relaxed his shoulders and smiled.

"You have not changed anything."

"Hahaha... I was wondering if I could do something on my own without involving everyone, but the Green Clan was moving faster than I expected. They pushed me and brought me out into the open. In the end, I guess I gave them all a bad experience..."

"That's right, idiot."

To put it bluntly, Shiro unexpectedly widened his eyebrows.

"If you only witnessed and shared both joy and pain with us, we wouldn't be having this conversation. We, Adolf K. Weismann, no, Isana Yashiro... are members of your clan, don't forget that."

"Shiro, you are our king!"

With a big nod, Neko placed both hands on Shiro's chest. Seeing Neko's genuinely happy smile and Kuro's smile mixed with wonder and relief, Shiro's expression gradually collapsed.

"Neko, Kuro..."

It wasn't just Kuro's imagination that made his eyes look wet. But he didn't want to follow him. Patting Shiro and Neko on the shoulder, Kuro said in a low but clear voice.

"Now we're back to normal."

"Yes."

Shiro nodded with a smile in his moist eyes. Seeing that face, Kuro finally felt a sense of reality. He really felt that Isana Yashiro had returned to them again.

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"Huh?! What the hell are we going to do in this place from now on?!"

Fushimi Saruhiko clicked his tongue as he saw Sukuna suddenly take out his PDA and start talking on the phone during the battle.

The same thing happened with Yata next door. Being disrespected until now, he couldn't just finish. They split from left to right, with Fushimi grabbing a throwing knife and Yata grabbing a staff.

At that moment, Sukuna took his sickle out.

".....!"

Yata and Fushimi stopped moving at the same time. But Sukuna didn't even look at them. While holding his glowing green scythe, he said terribly bored.

"Hey, I'm tired of withdrawing from null games."

Saying that, tucking the PDA into his chest, Sukuna turned his back on the two of them.

"This...!"

Fushimi grabbed Yata's arm when he was furious and tried to chase after him.

"It's useless. Don't do it."

When Sukuna found out that Fushimi and Yata were visiting Gakuenjima, he launched a surprise attack. Naturally, he had secured multiple routes to retreat. There was no way they could catch up with him, even if they chased after him with blood rushing to their heads, and if they did it wrong, they might end up isolated and get hit.

At that time, they had no chance of winning from the start.

However, it seems that such a thing was beyond Yata's understanding. Yata violently shook Fushimi's hand and looked at him from the front.

"Saru, damn, are you scared?! Isn't it frustrating that a kid like that has bothered you?"

Tsu, he heard a sound around his temple. His anger turned colder, and Fushimi spat it out.

"Don't let that fool roar in front of you. That's why the greens make you dance like that."

"Yes, damn it!"

This time, Yata's face distorted with anger. Yata's wrist that was trying to grab his collar flap was grabbed in an instant, Fushimi looked at Yata coldly.

"Sorry, you're busy. Can I have a moment?"

Hearing that calm voice, the two of them turned around at the same time.

Standing there were Yatogami Kuro and Neko. And also, the "Silver King", Adolf K. Weismann... Isana Yashiro.

"You..."

"May I ask you to take a message to your kings?"

At that request, Fushimi and Yata looked at each other for a moment. They then moved away from each other and turned towards Shiro.

"What do you want to tell Anna?"

Yata's expression had the same amount of embarrassment mixed with wariness. A year ago, the person seeking his life was right in front of him, so it was only natural.

However, Shiro simply replied with a smile that didn't seem to matter at all.

"Hey, there's something I'd like to suggest. I thought there might be something we could do together with the "Red King" and the "Blue King"."

"What I can do?"

Almost at the same time that Yata bowed his head, Fushimi's PDA sounded a ringtone.

He pulled it out and saw the name of the person that was calling. Shiro guessed the name.

"Is it Munakata-san?"

Fushimi directed his gaze towards Shiro, who was smiling. Before Fushimi's eyes, it looked like Munakata's mysterious smile.

He received the call without answering, and when he put the PDA to his ear, he heard Munakata's smiling voice.

"Please connect me to the "Silver King"."

He clicked his tongue instead of answering. As it was, he tossed his PDA towards Shiro.

The sudden release of the PDA made him panic, and he received it after several juggling. Shiro greeted Fushimi with a big smile.

"Thank you!"

Fushimi felt even more irritated by his innocent attitude.

In the macroscopic worldview of the "Kings", he was nothing more than a piece. He should have known, but it wasn't nice to see someone so above him.

With both hands in his pockets, Fushimi muttered as if he was vomiting.

"That is why he is called the "King"."

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Three "Kings" were gathered in that room.

"Third King, "Red Queen", Anna Kushina."

The girl closed her eyes quietly and sat quietly on the tatami.

"Fourth King, "Blue King", Reisi Munakata."

The young man observed the situation with a cold smile.

"And I, the First King, "Silver King", Adolf K. Weismann, Isana Yashiro."

The boy looked at the two of them alternately and nodded calmly.

"A group of prominent people gather around the same table... it's like a round-table conference."

And at that moment, Yata, who was right behind Anna, stomped down as if he couldn't take it anymore.

"A round table is a chabudai! This one is square!"

Receiving a reasonable remark, Shiro scratched his head and laughed.

"Sorry. But this was the only table we had."

"That's not the problem! We can't gather so many people, so there must be a better place! Why is the room so small!"

Yata's point was also valid, and it was stifling to have a total of 9 people, 3 people from each faction, in one room. The reason why Kuro suddenly stood up and opened the window was probably to change the air, even a little. It would be no laughing matter if the "King" collapsed from lack of oxygen.

Fushimi, who was standing behind Munakata, let out a sigh.

"It's like stuffed sushi. Don't make a fuss, it's hot."

"This is the formality, sloppy blue clothes!"

"I guess it's the same for you guys. Just like last year, it would be a nuisance if the thugs came in disorderly, so I purposely came to fix it."

"What?!"

Yata leaned forward in a fight, and Kusanagi grabbed his arm.

"Yata-chan, it's a place for VIP attendance. Can you hold it back for a bit?"

Almost at the same time, Awashima looked at Fushimi.

"Fushimi, please refrain from pointless provocations."

"I'm sorry."

Fushimi's apology lacked sincerity, but Yata remained silent. They weren't there to fight. At least, that was the common understanding of all.

At that moment, a timid voice entered from outside the room.

"Um... I'm sorry..."

A girl appeared who is a friend of Kuro and Neko, and a former friend of Shiro, Kukuri Yukizome. She was holding a large tray filled with tea for the number of people. Shiro smiled and thanked her.

"Thank you very much, Kukuri. I'm sorry you're doing all the work."

Originally, Shiro as the host should have entertained them. Kukuri, who appeared there by chance, said, "Is there anything I can do for you?", so Shiro could focus on the meeting.

Kukuri laughed happily and started arranging the tea on the table.

"Okay. Kuro-kun and Wagahai-chan finally got to see Shiro. It seems they don't want to leave."

Kuro cleared his throat awkwardly.

"This isn't that kind of thing, it's like a three-on-three form of conversation..."

"That's right, I can't leave you anymore!"

Without hesitation, Neko hugged Shiro and rubbed his cheek. Shiro and Kukuri let out a wry smile.

At that moment, Munakata moved.

He slowly raised his glasses and silently looked at Shiro. With just that gesture, the air in the place that was about to be released tightened with a crack.

"It's about time for the round table... no, shall we start the "Chabudai Conference", "Silver King", Adolf K. Weismann?"

Perhaps reading the atmosphere, Kukuri slowly slipped out of the room. Shiro turned to Munakata with a smile on his face as Kukuri gave a small wave and left.

"As for me, just call me Isana Yashiro, "Blue King" Reisi Munakata. "Red Queen" Anna Kushina, thank you very much for answering my sudden call."

Anna opened her eyes and smiled softly.

"I don't care. I wanted to repay your clan for their help."

"Nyahaha, Anna, thank you!"

Neko waved at Anna who also waved back. However, Munakata cut off the communication between the pretty girls.

"In that line of reasoning, I think we are forced to deal with the consequences... Well, let's put that aside for now."

Munakata turned her thoughtful gaze towards Shiro and asked a question.

"What is the purpose of setting up this meeting?"

On the other hand, Shiro simply smiled.

"I can't believe someone like you wouldn't have expected that."

"....."

Munakata's eyes narrowed. However, the one who answered his question was another "King".

"Countermeasures against the Green Clan. Nothing more."

Shiro nodded his head at the words that Anna leaked out.

"Good answer. It's an item on the agenda, but we have a reason to discuss it again here now."

Saying "reason" was discouraging in every sense of the word.

But Shiro had to say that. Unless everyone clearly recognizes that they are in a different setting, such a meeting would be pointless.

Saying that, Shiro breathed in and breathed out calmly.

"The second king, the "Golden King", Daikaku Kokujoji, is dead."

Shiro watched intently as the weight of those words slowly permeated the room.

Of course, the "Kings", Awashima, Fushimi, Kusanagi and Kuro seemed to have a clear understanding of the meaning and consequences of that fact. The only ones who didn't understand well were Neko and Yata, but they didn't say anything.

What Shiro paid attention to the most was Munakata's reaction.

"I see."

Looking slightly down, Munakata muttered a bit.

"Japan... no, the "Dresden Slate", which has hidden influence throughout the world, and the loss of the strongest "King" who is the pillar of the ruling system."

Munakata currently manages the "Dresden Slate". That means that all the responsibilities of the society fall on his shoulders.

The current social system was created by none other than the "Golden King", and the only way to act as his representative is by exercising royal authority. The "Blue King", the symbol of order, would be suitable for that, but Shiro could only imagine how strong the pressure would be.

Awashima muttered with a strong sense of concern.

"After all, the recent activation of the Green Clan..."

"Lieutenant... without the "Golden King", the "Green King" has nothing to fear. Ambitions and power no longer need to be suppressed."

Kusanagi raised his hand slightly and asked a question.

"But they were looking for you, did you hear that? Isn't that different from being afraid of you too?"

"I'm not a direct threat like the "Golden King", I guess. It's probably because I have the power to influence the "Slate" which is the core of its ambition, and the power of "immutability" which contradicts its "change"."

"We don't know when, where, or how it will be used, so are you saying you're a wild card?"

"Yes. The "Golden King" knew about it, so he hid me until he passed away..."

The "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji. For half a century, he was the only man he could call a friend.

Kokujoji tried to use the power awakened by Shiro for good to save that country. To save many people from suffering. He was carrying a load too great for one person to carry.

At the end of his life, he also tried to save Shiro. He truly cared for the man who had shunned his responsibility and placed it on him.

Daikaku Kokujoji was a strong, big and kind man.

With a slight shake of her head, Shiro dismissed the momentary feeling towards his friend.

"And now they have brought me out. From now on, the Green Clan will not hesitate to play while calculating how the joker will be used."

"To counter that, will the remaining three kings go against the Green Clan?"

"Yes."

Munakata muttered with a thoughtful face.

"Because there is no longer an absolutely strong "Golden King"... is that so?"

"What are you saying?"

Fushimi and Awashima, standing behind him, looked at Munakata with questioning eyes. Munakata answered clearly without looking back.

"Ok. Protecting order is the cause of our Blue Clan, "Scepter 4"."

"Captain! But are you sure?"

It was Awashima who quickly raised her voice.

The reaction is natural. "Homura", including Anna, were the opponents of "Scepter 4" in a large-scale conflict. At that moment, Munakata had the former "Red King" Suoh Mikoto in his hand. The "Homura" side couldn't understand how they were taking it.

Still, there was no hesitation in Munakata's expression.

"Awashima-kun, we were also busy dealing with the Green Clan. If we can get powerful reinforcements, then let's dare to accept some friction."

"Reisi."

The one who called out to him was Anna, sitting right in front of Munakata.

"I told you, I don't want to say thank you."

"....."

"But I also said that it was what Mikoto wanted, so I don't hate you. The Red Clan will fight alongside the Silver Clan and the Blue Clan. In the name of the Red King."

"I understand."

Faced with Anna's gaze filled with sincere determination, Munakata only replied that.

In response to that, the two Red Clan executives raised their voices in agreement.

"Three clans fighting together. Well, under the current circumstances, there is no reason to object."

"So let's beat all the green guys! We'll make it!"

Kusanagi muttered calmly and Yata raised his fist. Seeing that, Shiro breathed a sigh of relief.

If there is no resentment on "Homura's" side, the three-clan alliance will work out well. If the clan of "Scepter 4", "Homura" and as yet unnamed Shiro move under the same control, they should be able to keep up with the unseen "Jungle" clan.

However, Shiro had another concern.

He silently observed the state of Reisi Munakata, the "Blue King".

He could only guess what kind of thoughts were lurking behind that intelligent expression. Still, considering what had happened so far, he was definitely the key person in that alliance.

Reisi Munakata is the "king" of regicide.

Shiro knows all too well what triggers a regicide charge. In addition, Munakata also manages the "Dresden Slate". Being exposed to "Jungle" attacks, all clues of the events so far have been concentrated on Reisi Munakata.

What is he thinking and how is he trying to handle the situation? Shiro had to confirm that.

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He never thought that would happen.

Kusanagi couldn't contain those thoughts as he slowly walked down the stairs of the bedroom with Anna.

Fighting together with "Scepter 4". A year ago it would have been unimaginable, and after that it would have been abominable to even imagine. If "Jungle" hadn't made such a provocation, he doesn't think it would have been an option even now.

After all, the "King" who rules the Blue Clan is the man who killed Suoh Mikoto.

He understands that it was inevitable fate. But understanding and feeling are often separate creatures. The "Homura" guys are more or less unhappy about being associated with the blues. The reason he didn't reveal it was because Anna was the one who made the decision and Kusanagi was the one who complied.

If Kusanagi agrees, no one can object. Because Kusanagi is the last of the top three.

Suddenly, a feeling of nostalgia rose in Kusanagi's chest.

(Me, Mikoto and Totsuka. "Homura" was a clan of only those three.), Kusanagi thought.

People gradually gathered in the small place they created. Some were drawn to Suoh Mikoto's overwhelming strength, others were touched by Totsuka Tatara's warm kindness and decided that "Homura" was their place. In doing so, "Homura" took shape.

Then Totsuka Tatara died.

As if he was chasing after him, Suoh Mikoto also passed away.

People disappeared from "Homura", like a comb with a missing tooth. He can't blame them. The clansmen swear allegiance to the King. But if there is no "King", there will be no meaning or reason to belong to the clan.

The "Homura" of today is not the "Homura" of the past. Kusanagi was the only one left from the start. He would be lying if he said he didn't feel sad about it.

But...

"Counterattack! I'll make those green bugs fly!"

"No Blood! No Bone! No Ash!"

Outside the dormitory, Yata and the clansmen were raising their spirits with their fists. Kusanagi let out a wry smile at the sight that hadn't changed since the old days.

He wondered what Suoh and Totsuka would say if they saw them now.

Mikoto could just smile slightly and not say anything.

Totsuka could happily blend in with them and raise their fists together.

Both are nothing more than Kusanagi's imagination. But even if they were there, they wouldn't deny the current "Homura". That's all he could say for sure.

What they did is still there.

While he was thinking about such things, Kusanagi separated from his companions and slowly walked away.

"As soon as the special mission returns to the garrison, check the alert posture."

"By the time the person in charge of the Red Clan arrives, prepare a reception system on this side."

"Yes!"

Under the command, the members of "Scepter 4" began preparations for withdrawal with rapid movements.

It is a well-controlled movement. Now that he thought about it, it was the first time he had watched their movements so closely. "Homura", who solves all problems with their spirit and drive, is unmatched in terms of control.

(And so on...), Kusanagi thought as he puffed on purple smoke.

"Well, I'm the only person in charge, but well, Seri-chan."

Kusanagi called out to Seri Awashima, the person in charge of "Scepter 4", who was next to him. Awashima responded to Kusanagi with a thoughtful look, as she was nicknamed "Woman of the Tundra".

"I look forward to your work. More importantly, what are you going to do with those documents?"

He immediately had an idea of what Awashima was referring to.

"Ah, I was on the fence about that, but I decided to give it to the "Silver King"."

Awashima's eyes shifted to Kusanagi.

"Yes."

After saying that, Awashima kept her mouth shut.

(Hm...), Kusanagi thought.

He was sure that he would listen to even a single complaint. Those documents, the research materials for the "Dresden Slate", would not have been possible without Awashima's cooperation. It was not an exaggeration to say that half of the property belongs to Awashima and by extension "Scepter 4". He did not think that the puritanical Awashima would consent to give it to a third party.

Kusanagi stared at Awashima's profile.

Hard and cold, but somewhere inside, hesitation lurked. Her silent and unspoken gaze seemed to be fixed on Munakata, who had yet to appear at the entrance to Gakuenjima's dormitory.

Kusanagi also directed his attention to the bedroom.

Reisi Munakata. The man who killed Suoh Mikoto.

Every time he sees that man, his heart trembles, not for reason, but for emotion. However, Munakata is also a "King", and there are many who worship him. Awashima's gaze, looking at Munakata now, was probably the same one he had towards Suoh a year ago.

That's why Kusanagi muttered as he looked ahead.

The "Silver King" is the first "King". If you leave it to me, it won't look bad."

Awashima also muttered without meeting Kusanagi's eyes.

"I hope so."

Kusanagi inhaled the cigarette smoke and exhaled again.

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"Munakata-san."

Shiro prevented Munakata from leaving the entrance where the setting sun was shining.

He looked back. There was no expression on his face. Narrowing his eyes behind his glasses, Munakata opened his mouth nonchalantly.

"Do you still need something, Isana Yashiro?"

"Are you now managing the "Slate" instead of the "Golden King"?"

It was more of a confirmation than a question. The information that "Scepter 4" was going in and out of Mihashira Tower, where the "Dresden Slate" was kept, was also heard by Shiro through the rabbit.

Munakata naturally affirmed that.

"What about that? Since there are no other suitable candidates, I think it's a natural role."

"How far did you go with the "Slate"...?"

"Not as far as you, the "King" of the Beginning, but that's something."

Shiro didn't know how far that "something" was.

Even Shiro hadn't caught the full picture of Reisi Munakata, the "Blue King". It was clear to him that just because someone was a "King" didn't necessarily mean they were good, even without recalling the examples of the "Fox Mask" and Kagutsu Genji.

The "Slate", the source of supernatural powers, is accompanied by great power.

The problem is how those who manage the "Slate" will handle it.

"Are you going to be the second... Daikaku Kokujoji?"

"....."

Munakata remained expressionless and did not reply.

It seemed to Shiro that it was both affirmation and denial.

Shiro who found it knows the weight of "Slate" better. How painful it would be to bear it alone. If so, he might be able to help.

Shiro stepped forward and withdrew.

"If you don't mind, I'll help run the "Slate" as well."

"You who ran away once, do you want me to count on you?"

Without even hearing the ending, Munakata said that to him to push him away.

".....!"

Shiro held his breath.

There are innumerable mistakes he has made, and two things weigh heavily on his mind.

Waking up the "Slate".

And then, he irresponsibly left the "Slate" that he had awakened.

He still wanted to right the irreparable mistake. That is why Shiro has once again returned to this land.

But... Munakata didn't seem to allow even that.

"If it is a countermeasure against the Green Clan, I would greatly appreciate your cooperation. Well then, excuse me."

Munakata looked ahead and left. His back was stiff and cold, and it seemed he would never speak to him again.

A while after Munakata disappeared, Shiro asked with a big sigh.

"I wonder if this is also cause and effect... isn't it, Kuro?"

He looked behind him. From behind the wall, he could see the worried faces of Kuro and Neko.

"You realized?"

"Shiro!"

Neko hugged Shiro and looked up with wet eyes.

"Were you bullied by that bespectacled boss?"

Shiro smiled and answered.

"I'm fine, it's nothing."

"Really? Hey, is it really nothing?"

Shiro gently stroked Neko's hair who persistently asked him. After that, he turned to Kuro and reluctantly shook his head.

"In fact, I ran away. Even at that time, I didn't do what I could have done, and I was drifting in the sky the whole time."

"....."

Kuro couldn't answer that question. All he knows is Isana Yashiro, not Adolf K. Weismann.

"That's why I decided not to run away this time, but to face him."

Shiro's decision is known only to Shiro. Hearing those words that sounded like he was talking to himself, Kuro hardened his expression and placed his hand on his chest.

What he took out of there was a tape recorder.

Both Shiro and Neko had a blank expression on their faces. He had a bad feeling about it. In the affirmative, Kuro nodded once and pressed the switch on the recorder.

"One step at a time, jumping towards the path you chose, that's all you need."

What is recorded there is a series of haikus composed by Ichigen Miwa, who was Kuro's teacher and the previous "Colorless King". Kuro closed his eyes as if he gritted his teeth and spoke with a serious tone.

"Every time I hear it, it's a wonderful phrase...! Listen, Shiro. In other words, people have no choice but to follow the path they believe in, one step at a time, but never forget the fun and the fantasy of skipping at any time."

"Spooky!"

"What?!"

In response to Shiro's sincere reaction, Kuro's eyes widened in anger, but he breathed out his anger and pointed to the bedroom stairs.

"Go back to your room. There's horse mackerel and miso soup today."

"Hurrah!"

Neko raised her hands in joy and jumped down the stairs. Shiro said in a low voice as he walked with Kuro.

"...Thank you, Kuro."

"Hm."

"Both of us, let's go quickly! I'm hungry!"

"Yes."

With a wry smile, Shiro caught up with Neko.

"Oh, now that I think about it, my old room, did they even make repairs and a transfer contract to you guys?"

"I have to thank them for creating a place for you to return to."

"It was all thanks to the Lieutenant."

"Thank you, Lieutenant!"

Such a casual conversation made Shiro very happy. It was because he felt that he had finally returned to the place where he should return.