



K

RETURN OF KINGS  
SUZUKI SUZU / GoRA

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

### **CHAPTER 7: STILLE NACHT (SILENT NIGHT)**

Inside the command car, there was a heavy and superheated atmosphere.

"Entrapment 16-F, -4, -3, +6, +7, simultaneous development."

"Deployment successful, destroyed!"

"You don't have to report the destruction one by one. Send the intended route."

"Yes!"

If the combat units deployed inside Mihashira Tower were fighting using their bodies, they were fighting using their brains. Furthermore, due to the company's policy of not being able to reduce the number of combat personnel, only a small number of members remain. It wasn't a joke. Without Fushimi's support, they would have overcome the siege long ago, allowing them to invade the "Slate".

But, no matter how few resources they have, they cannot give up.

Not for justice or cause, but for their own pride.

"Forecasted routes are out! Route 1-G and Route 6-S."

"Are you already on Route S?! Leave this floor! Deploy all traps simultaneously!"

"Got it! Simultaneous deployment of all traps!"

While typing quickly, Fushimi shifted his gaze to the side. That is the floor plan of Mihashira Tower displayed on the monitor using 3D modeling. The top 30% of them are blue and the bottom 70% are green.

"The enemy's invasion rate is 70%. This delay strategy is about to reach its limit."

"It's progressing much faster than planned..."

"Yes. Mishakuji Yukari and Gojou Sukuna. Their actions are simple and based on brute force; that's how confident they are in their individual abilities. Tsk, they're just playing with us."

Two points of light move on the 3D map of Mihashira Tower while being interrupted. To avoid interference or eavesdropping from "Jungle", the electronic network was limited to use inside the command car. It was based on the judgment that information leaks could be minimized by using it in conjunction with the power grid, but there was never any interference from "Jungle".

Fushimi seems to be the only one trying to control this battlefield. The enemy side has no strategy or anything. They just show's up and messes it up. Fushimi's job is to prevent it, delay it and, if possible, eliminate it. It's like using a piece called a combatant to deal with a rising tsunami.

Sweat ran down Fushimi's cheeks.

"...In other words, it's all my job."

It was cold sweat. The pressure that the victory or defeat of this battle rests entirely on his shoulders. What forces should be distributed where, whether or not predetermined operational objectives can be achieved, and how compensation will be provided if they cannot be achieved.

If it fails, then...

"Route S has been violated!"

Hearing Enomoto's voice, Fushimi thought for a while, and then in a solemn voice said:

"Go to Phase 2."

"Eh?!"

Enomoto takes a deep breath. He explained to her what the sign meant. Enomoto, who has the second highest information processing ability after Fushimi, should be asked to act as an assistant, but unfortunately, he doesn't have the psychological ability to oversee the entire operation.

"But, is it 30 minutes earlier than expected?!"

"It's already unexpected! If we don't deal with Mishakuji now, we won't be able to deal with it in the future. It's a waste of time to talk like that, so hurry up and wave your hands!"

"Yes!"

Straightening his back, Enomoto began to operate. Fushimi, for his part, gives instructions to the entire organization through an electronic network.

"Jungle repulsion plan, second phase. Concentrate your forces in the Cloud Hall on the 75th floor and defeat the Green Clan members one by one."

Without waiting for an answer, Fushimi hung up. As long as he was aware of the situation, there was no need to wait for the report from others. Fushimi muttered as he looked at the map of Mihashira Tower.

"The Silver Clan is at war with Gojou Sukuna. "Scepter 4" and "Homura" will attack Mishakuji Yukari from both sides. We have misunderstood our opponents, but so far it's almost as planned..."

At this time, the car's electronic equipment issued a warning sound.

Fushimi turned towards him, and Enomoto, who was measuring the data, let out a shouting voice.

"Large-scale Weismann anomalies confirmed near ground floor! It's moving!"

"Here you come, "Green King"."

"Well, we've just moved into the second phase! What should we do?!"

Fushimi clicked his tongue again. The originally assumed time no longer made sense. (If they don't respond flexibly and adapt to the situation, why would I have to do the foolish thing that they'll line up?!) As he suppressed the feeling of wanting to yell, Fushimi quickly gave instructions.

"Notify everyone in the hall that the "Green King" has appeared, and then proceed to the third phase."

"Eh, then, but the second phase is still..."

Watched by Fushimi intently, Enomoto quickly turned back to his screen. Hearing the voice of Enomoto, who began to contact each member, Fushimi began to prepare for the activation of Phase 3, the "Lockdown Protocol".

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Mishakuji Yukari was starting to get bored.

No matter how fast he runs, what awaits him is a blind, a trap, and then another blind. It does very little as a barrier. That's because the slash attack that runs at the same time goes through them.

Despite that, the other side is repeating that tactic like an idiot. It sounds good when you say it's a strategy to clutter up the amount of material, but ultimately, it's probably because there's nothing else to do. After breaking through the dozens of shutters, Mishakuji muttered in amazement.

"Oh, are you buying time again? As expected, I'm getting a little bored."

So far both are as expected. It is the joseki in shogi and chess. They want to exhaust Mishakuji and Sukuna while leaving traps to interfere with Nagare who comes later. He wants to reduce the number of opponents while they wait for Hisui Nagare. The outcome of the intertwined speculation is 50/50 at the moment, and neither has taken a decisive step.

He was fed up with the situation.

"For the sake of our king, we must smash the traps as much as possible. I know it's part of my job, but..."

"Kwah! Boring! Boring!"

Looking at Kotosaka, who raised his voice in agreement, Mishakuji began to run.

"That's how it is!"

A blunt charge that completely destroys attacking traps. A fierce charge far removed from his previous elegance, anticipating the presence of the enemy's main force. In the tug of war up to that point, he was able to comprehend the location of most of the enemies. If he plunges into the center of it, some kind of change should happen.

Repeating the same thing over and over again is not Mishakuji Yukari's way of life.

"I want to fight with more style!"

"Let's do what you want!"

A reply came from the space that had been shattered, and Mishakuji inadvertently stopped his feet.

A spacious hall that is clearly different from the past. The group in the center waited for Mishakuji with a fighting spirit on his face.

"Here, let's spread flowers!"

The young man in the knit cap who had turned his back on him earlier, the executive of "Homura" Misaki Yata, now headed straight for him. The skateboard, accelerated by the red supernatural ability, approached at such speed that even Mishakuji's eyes were blinded. He sliced through the passing staves with his sword, and just as he was about to counterattack, a shower of flames began to fall.

".....!"

He immediately kicked the ground to avoid it, and there was an explosion where the rain of fire hit. After that heat wave passed, he turned his attention to "Homura".

The man who caused the explosion was smoking purple smoke while he was standing.

"Customer-san. Just like Yata-chan said, this is the end point. I can't let you go anywhere anymore."

Contrary to his calm voice, the eyes behind the sunglasses weren't smiling. Mishakuji, on the other hand, pointed his sword at them with a charming smile.

"I think so. But I'm not going anywhere either."

Mishakuji's gaze was fixed on one of them, a girl.

The "Red Queen", Anna Kushina.

With strained red eyes, she stared at Mishukaji.

"Long time no see, "Red Queen"."

When Mishakuji casually called out to Anna, her shoulders contracted.

"At that time, you were just a helpless child. I haven't seen you for a long time, and you've grown into a splendid king. I misunderstood you."

"Bastard! Why are you talking to Anna without permission? I'm going to kill you!"

Mishakuji bowed respectfully, ignoring Yata, who was shouting from the side.

"Right now, you are undeniably the "King". You may be the youngest in this place, but you are undoubtedly the strongest. Therefore, Anna Kushina... I will take your life."

And then, Mishakuji unleashed a surprise punch.

A slash that glowed green split the air and flew. At almost the same time, Kusanagi released a barrage of flames that rained down like hail. The barrage and the slashes annihilated each other, and this time Mishakuji himself charged into the void that was created. The mysteriously bright tip of "Ayamachi" pointed directly at Anna.

Wings of flame blocked Mishakuji's vision.

".....!"

Mishakuji reflexively rolled to dodge. A few millimeters above his head, a hot, deadly wind swept through. Facing Mishakuji, who kept his distance from her, Anna spread her flame wings and said resolutely.

"Yes. It's different from that time."

A crimson aura rose from her entire body. That's the look of the one ahead of his class, chosen by the "Dresden Slate."

"I'm the "Red Queen". I will not hesitate to use this power to protect everyone!"

That figure reminded Mishakuji of the men he once saw.

The "King", like the infinitely clear blue sky.

The "King," like a red, swirling purgatory.

They were fierce, short-lived, and beautiful as they scattered violently, involving many lives.

Now, an existence with the same power as them, stands in front of him.

Enough opponents to make life glow and burn!

As Mishakuji smiled slightly, multiple footsteps were heard behind him.

"Hey, "Homura", are you alright?!"

"You're late, Blues!"

The members of "Scepter 4" appeared from below. All of them were exhausted, but they still had enthusiasm. They all took out their sabers and began to surround Mishakuji from afar.

Holding the staff, Yata laughed belligerently.

"Heh, there's finally no place to escape. Get ready this time, you bastard!"

"I see."

Two clans and the "Red Queen". The difference in strength is too much to deal with alone.

But Mishakuji did not despair.

An indescribable emotion welled up from the depths of his chest. He couldn't help but hope how much brighter his life could make in that utter dead end. Going into the battle to the death with euphoria instead of fear. After all, Mishakuji is probably just a swordsman.

He sincerely apologized to his two former teachers for that, but the next moment, he was gone.

"On guard."

Declaring war lowly, Mishakuji sank.

At that moment, he felt "it".

"....."

He widened his eyes and looked down at his feet.

Similarly, the only one who noticed "it" seemed to be the enemy, Anna. With her red eyes trembling and her small fist clenched, she whispered:

"...He already came."

The moment he heard that voice, a momentary hesitation was born in Mishukaji.

His exaltation, his desire to know how much he can shine in this dead land. The temptation to launch into a life-and-death battle with the King had an irresistible appeal. Yes. "Jungle" is irrelevant. This moment is the reason he is alive.

Right now. Here... kill the King.

Those whispers tickled his ears, but with just one deep breath, he could no longer hear them. Only the gaze of Hisui Nagare remained, who conveyed his passion for the ideal of the "New World".

Surrender everything to your boiling blood and let your life shine to the limit. That's fine too.

But in the end, Mishakuji didn't choose that option.

Because breaking a promise is not beautiful.

"I cannot do anything about it."

Mishakuji shrugged his regrets aside and gave a small smile.

At that moment, a roar shook the hall.

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Hisui Nagare jumped up and down. Like a puppy running through the garden. Like a kid after school.

Nagare climbed up the building while he jumped around the uninhabited Mihashira Tower. He broke traps, he broke blinds, he turned into green lightning and moved forward with nothing to block him.

His appearance was beautiful, wild and joyful.

Freed from everything that bound him and breathing the air of the earth with "freedom". How long has it taken so many people to get that right that is taken for granted.

Iwafune, standing at the entrance of the first floor, couldn't have seen that scene. Still, in Iwafune's mind, the scene certainly appeared.

The "Green King" was unleashed and devastated at his whim.

"Haha... quite well, good health!"

Looking at him, Iwafune drank from a bottle that held whiskey.

"It's been 9 years since he fought the "Golden King" Kokujoji Daikaku, and if you count the case of Kagutsu, it's been 10 years... If you think about it, it's been a long time in the shadows, right? I hope he lives a long time."

Nagare, who was defeated by Kokujoji, had to hide underground to escape the "Tokijikuin" pursuers. He secretly formed his own hands and feet, "Jungle", and slowly spread the branches of conspiracy and espionage.

"However, the elder Kokujoji is no longer in this world. In other words, there is no one on this earth who can stop you with all your might, Nagare."

Nagare's straitjacket not only seals his supernatural powers and his freedom, but also serves as a maintenance device that prolongs his life. That straitjacket is a device through



which an enormous amount of supernatural power circulates that is consumed to continue "modifying" death itself.

Now that he has been unleashed, Hisui Nagare will continue to unleash his full power as the "Green King". As the price of freedom, the countdown to death has already begun.

Even so, Iwafune cast an unwavering gaze upwards. With a smile on his lips.

"Ok, Nagare! Run as hard as you can! This Iwa-san is watching, so let go ahead and play with all your might! Haha!"

Iwafune raised the bottle as if he were toasting the floor above, which was shaking with destruction and shock.

A large piece of debris fell right next to it, and he flinched and cringed.

"Wow! What the hell is this?"

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The repeated blows jarred his feet and Yata accidentally nearly fell off his skateboard. With one foot on the ground, a new impact hit all of "Homura". Mishakuji Yukari still held his sword and did not waver in the slightest.

Yata clicked his tongue and looked at the ground.

"Is this sound new...? Hey, Blues, hurry up and go to their location!"

"Scepter 4" responded to the voice and blocked Mishakuji's escape route. Seeing him, he chuckled.

"Oh, he left early."

The one who reacted to those words was Awashima Seri.

"Go out? No way."

"Yes, he's coming."

Even Yata could understand who he was pointing at.

The "Green King", Hisui Nagare from "Jungle", who has the greatest strength. Even Mishakuji Yukari, who wields the power of two clans, is but a billboard compared to Nagare.

Mishakuji released his stance and shrugged as he still held his sword.

"Oh, sorry. It's too bad. It's starting to get fun, but it's over."

"It's over! It's over!"

The parrot perched on his shoulder let out an ominous cry. Kusanagi looked at him with a shudder.

"It's over..."

"The 'Green King'! It's faster than I expected, but..."

Awashima and Kusanagi, the agitation of the two executives spread like ripples between both clans. Yata was not good at understanding the details of the situation and the strategy of the war, but he was able to clearly understand the spread. He felt resentment and trembling for the arrival of the enemy "King".

Unable to allow it, he raised his voice.

"Oh, don't be scared, everyone! Whether it's the king or a servant, it doesn't matter who comes. It's okay to just blow them up one after another! Cheer up!"

Now it doesn't matter who the opponent is. Whether it's Sukuna Gojou, Mishakuji Yukari, or even the "Green King", all they have to do is face them and fight until they run out of strength. That was Misaki Yata's creed.

Faced with such a Yata, Mishakuji looked at him mockingly.

"Oh, that's great, Opponent-kun. But the reason I'm saying 'sorry' is..."

Mishakuji's sword flashed with a speed that even the eye could not catch.

As Yata reflexively raised his staff, Mishakuji shook his sword.

"Huh?! You!"

"My turn is over."

As he gracefully waved his hand at him, Mishakuji fell down the stairs along with the severed floor.

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The shock and roar were also transmitted to Sukuna.

Of course he knows what that means. The arrival of the "Green King". Hisui Nagare has finally started to move. At the same time that he felt excited about it, impatience was also born.

He still hadn't done anything. If he doesn't catch even a single Silver Clan in front of him, he won't be able to follow Nagare...

"Shiro!"

"Yes, it looks like they've gotten into the game too. It's faster than I thought."

"What are you going to do, Shiro?"

The three met and whispered something. nobody paid attention to him. That fueled the fire of anger.

"What are they talking about so casually?!"

With an angry voice, Sukuna waved the scythe at him. He activated the extraordinary application "Great Raiha" and a powerful wave of thunder contained in the tip of the sickle captured the three people of the Silver Clan at once.

The figure disappeared like a bubble.

"Tsu...!"

Each one of the bubbles that broke into a thousand pieces swelled up and closed in on Sukuna. Sukuna clucked and jumped back.

At that moment, Yatogami jumped from the other side of the bubble and hit Sukuna with a strong kick.

Sukuna barely blocked the kick with the handle of his scythe. However, he couldn't kill the pressure. Little Sukuna immediately flew out, crashed to the ground from his back and immediately rolled backwards and readied his scythe.

The chase he had been wary of did not come. Isana, Yatogami, and Neko were watching from a distance. More than anything, that made Sukuna yell in anger.

"Dammit! Since a while ago, I started a serious match with you guys!"

Yatogami frowned and in a persuasive tone said:

"Gojou Sukuna. This battle is not to determine an individual's ability."

"Oh? There's nothing more important than winning or losing a game!"

Sukuna understands his mission better than anyone. Eliminate all those who stand in the way of Nagare. He understands that winning that game means winning Nagare's game. That is why he is seriously trying to kill them. If he can get one of the "Kings", his plans will be that much closer to success.

Despite that, he doesn't feel that much resolve from the opponent. They're just trying to buy time. In his head, he understands that this is the purpose of their strategy, but he felt that they were trampling on his pride as a player when they were doing everything they could to go easy on him.

"Bet your life! I'm betting my life!"

Sukuna activated the extraordinary application "Raijin Korin". Sukuna's hand transmits extraordinary supernatural power to the hilt and blade of the scythe. It is a large-scale

ranged attack that is second only in power to the "Raiko no Jutsu". If true, he wanted to use it in a way that would involve more enemies, but it can't be helped. At this point, Sukuna decided that annihilating these guys would lead to victory.

The expressions of Shiro and the others tightened as expected due to the enormous power. Yatogami stood in front as he held his sword, and Shiro stood behind him as he twirled his umbrella.

"So you're trying to sell your life... then there's no way around it!"

"Big Move Coming! Counterattack on Swing Time!"

"I understand!"

Isana Yashiro is a "King" in every way. It is doubtful that this psychic ability can pass through the Sanctum. However, taking shortcuts even if there is no match goes against Gojou Sukuna's human creed.

This is because high difficulty bosses are the only opponents worth defeating.

"I'll crush them all together!"

As he roared, Sukuna kicked the ground. He swung the scythe with all his soul. Yatogami looked at him and held his sword on his hips.

At that moment, something fell from above.

"The sun is setting..."

That guy easily deflected Sukuna's scythe, letting <Raijin Korin>'s attack escape up the stairs.

"...those who chose to leave their home..."

As he was, he swiped his sword and caught Yatogami's surprise strike.

"...and those who returned."

He gracefully landed on the spot.

The looks that Sukuna and Yatogami gave him were strangely of the same type.

"Mishakuji Yukari!"

"Yukari! What are you doing interrupting?!"

Mishakuji, who appeared from above cutting through the floor, shrugged off the insults thrown at him with a cold face. Kotosaka took off from his shoulder and began to fly noisily.

"Interrupt! Interrupt!"

"Fufu, Kuro-chan. After meeting the "Silver King" again, you look even better. After all, the selfless sword you wield for your master is what makes you who you are."

Standing on a circular concrete slab, Mishakuji turned like an idol under the spotlight and pointed his sword at Yatogami. Yatogami also raised his sword without lowering his guard, and with a tight voice, he said:

"Did you come to help your partner, Mishakuji Yukari?"

"That's foul play!", Neko yelled.

That line reignited Sukuna's anger. It's the most frustrating when you get stuck in a battle with a formidable enemy. Sukuna let out an angry voice as he stabbed into the ground with the handle of his scythe.

"I don't need help! Get out!"

But Mishakuji shrugged in amazement.

"Help? Save? There's no way I'd do something like that. I just came to find our boy. It's time to go, Sukuna-chan."

"Kwah! Go! Go!"

"I won't! I'm still fighting!"

At Sukuna's throat, which he insisted on, he shot a cold spike at him.

He couldn't see it or react. When he came to, Mishukaji was touching Sukuna's throat with his inverted sword. The hand that held the scythe was full of strength. When Mishakuji did something, he really did it, that fact made Sukuna nervous.

Mishakuji said with a voice as cold as that sword.

"Listen to me, Sukuna. It's not pretty to see a child not following orders. Also, Kuro-chan, I have decided that when the time is right, I will eat you deliciously."

Sukuna's teeth gnashed. Anger and frustration still swirled in his chest.

But at the same time, a calm calculation that surpassed that was beginning to spin in his head.

Mishakuji is there. That means "Homura" and "Scepter 4" are free. If Sukuna continues to fight there without hesitation, he will only become a liability.

Retiring with a loss is frustrating, but letting your team lose to your own record is an unforgivable war crime.

"Gezz. You're much more selfish, aren't you?"

Sukuna changed. If so, the sooner he acts, the better. When he carelessly wielded a scythe imbued with supernatural powers, the side windows shattered and the night wind blew into the building.

"Wait, Mishakuji Yukari!"

Perhaps understanding what the two were thinking, Yatogami hurried over. Sukuna stuck out his tongue in response, while Mishukaji waved his hand gently and muttered happily.

"Kuro-chan, it seems I wasn't meant to fight you tonight. But I'm sure we'll meet again soon. On the fateful day that will bring us to a conclusion."

And so, the two danced in the night breeze.

As he ran through the walls of the building, Sukuna snarled at Mishakuji who was next to him.

"Damn. You got in a good place."

"I've put up with it, so don't complain. Besides..."

Mishakuji looked down and smiled sweetly.

"Today's protagonist is that girl."

Looking beyond Mishakuji's line of sight, he saw green thunder rushing toward the building, spreading thunder, shock, and destruction. His "King", the figure of Hisui Nagare running.

"Well, that's correct."

Sukuna chuckled softly. He finally got to play outside with his friends who have been cooped up for so long. When he thought about it, it seemed that he would be able to forget the momentary defeat in the blink of an eye.

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"Fushimi, the third phase has started. Are you ready?"

"It's done. From now on, we will shut down the entire Mihashira Tower along with the information and power systems, and isolate the "Green King". Please note that further communication will be limited through the detection ability of the "King Red"."

"I understand."

Mihashira Tower, in the "Slate Room".

Reisi Munakata listened to Fushimi and Awashima's communication with his eyes closed.

This strategy is divided into three phases. It was conceived, discussed and concluded mainly by Shiro and Munakata. They spent all their resources to crush the minority with the majority.

First phase. Attract the members of "Jungle", divide them and exhaust them.

Second stage. The three clans... Red, Blue and Silver will destroy or exhaust the "Jungle" members who will be divided.

And then the third phase. Activate the "Lockdown Protocol" when the appearance of the "Green King" is confirmed. All combat personnel except the "King" will come to their support.

The "Blocking Protocol" is literally the main purpose of the blocking. All the traps in the building are activated without hesitation, and the communication network is physically and electronically isolated by physically destroying the communication network with explosives placed in various locations.

With slightly wide eyes, Munakata muttered to himself.

"There are no lights to illuminate the path, no voices to reach your ears, and many thick walls block your way. This entire Mihashira Tower is a prison for you."

Now, in Munakata's mind, the figure of Nagare running inside the building was vividly projected.

All kinds of barriers stand in front of Nagare, who has the will and runs like thunder. Anti-personnel traps, including reinforced shutters, anti-psychic barricades, mines, turrets, and traps, for that purpose. Various weapons requisitioned from the army by maximizing the authority of "Scepter 4" bared their fangs against the "King".

"Of course, there's no way we can hold off a king with a trick like this, but every trick will definitely take away your limited time and physical strength."

And those traps are not the biggest barriers for Nagare.

The "Silver King" and the "Red Queen". They are on the same level as Nagare, and it is the highest class of strength.

"Can you get here after clearing 100 walls and two kings? "Green King" Hisui Nagare."

The moment he muttered that, he felt something twist under his feet.

It wasn't the impact of the destruction that Nagare was spreading. It was faint, but someone's heartbeat, as if resonating with the very soul.

Looking down, the "Dresden Slate" embedded in the glass floor pulsed with a faint glow.

"Four kings meet in one place. You seem to understand what that means."

The biggest "sin" a king can commit. The "Damocles Down".

When Weismann's maximum deviation from the "King" reaches a critical point, the "Sword of Damocles" hanging over his head falls. The impact of the fall of the "King" would burn a radius of tens of kilometers and take the lives of hundreds of thousands of humans.

And above all, the most terrifying fact is that the power of the "Damocles Down" increases multiplicatively.

If both swords were to fall, the nation of Japan, or perhaps the land itself, would be wiped out. And if there are three? When it reaches four, it may bring a fate to the surface that threatens human civilization.

If a "Sword of Damocles" falls, other swords will fall in a chain reaction. It is not an exaggeration to say that the four kings who meet in this small building have the fate of humanity on their shoulders.

"But it won't happen."

Munakata muttered towards the "Slate" as if he was talking to a person with a will.

"I won't let you do that."

As the "Blue King" who is in charge of "order", he must never bring about its downfall. Preparations have already been made to prevent that from happening.

Just like the old "Blue King", Habari Jin.

The "Slate Room" where Munakata was was the final line. He seals the "Slate" that encourages human innovation and prevents the sword that causes humanity's destruction. Reisi Munakata's pride was to bear the fate of the human race, never to be confused, never waver, and never falter.

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The remnants of the melted round shutter continued endlessly.

The "Green King" is like a ray of light that runs freely. The powerful electrical heat that it radiates itself burns and melts everything from velvet rugs and marble floors to steel barriers. Even without using Anna's web of supernatural power, it was easy to track Nagare by following the "footprints".

Kuro growled as he stared at the edge of the melted shutter.

"Is this how it all looked after Hisui Nagare passed through here?"

Shiro nodded his head.



"Yes. He's using his power like crazy. He's also much faster than expected. But there's no way he can stand up to this."

"Isn't that what you expected?"

"No, it's more than he expected, or rather, it doesn't seem like it's going to work. What is he thinking? Something doesn't feel right."

Or, Shiro believes that "it" is the normal functioning of Nagare. It's been 9 years since he took it seriously, and from the measurement records of that time, Shiro had predicted Nagare's activity limit time. Also keeping in mind that Nagare will grow and accumulate strength.

But the current situation goes far beyond those expectations.

With that much power, no matter how you look at it, Nagare's active time is less than 30 minutes. It's already been ten minutes since he broke in. Shiro, Anna, and Munakata should hold out for the remaining 20 minutes. If he was alone, he wouldn't know what to do, but if the three "Kings" worked together to deal with it, he could easily buy that amount of time.

There's no way Nagare didn't know. Despite that, he heads straight for the "Slate". It's like he thinks he'll be fine even if he's exhausted.

"Shiro! Shiro! Hurry up!"

Neko's voice suddenly brought Shiro back to his senses.

"Hisui Nagare has removed the limiter. I will use my power without thinking of limits."

"So you mean..."

"Anna is in danger!"

At the same time as he yelled, Shiro and Kuro began to run next to each other. Leaping over the rows of melted blinds and heading towards the battlefield with Anna, below was Hisui Nagare still advancing. Neko, who was left alone, also ran after them.

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"Vice Commander. Everyone is ready."

Awashima nodded to Akiyama, who whispered softly.

The members of the Special Forces behind her did not escape unscathed. They played an important role in luring and separating the two "Jungle" members who rushed in at the beginning of the operation. Serious injuries such as sword wounds, burns, abrasions, and even broken bones were ordered to stay in the rear, but they all refused.

Because they know that this battle will determine their future destiny.

A little further away, Kusanagi also sent a notice to the "Homura" members.

"Well, the main character is Anna. Even if small things wander into the battle between the "Kings", they will only be an obstacle. Soon, Isana Yashiro, the "Silver King" will join us. Shiro-san will be defending, Anna attack, and we'll all be acting as a distraction and support."

"Oh, got it?!"

"Yes!"

Just like "Scepter 4", "Homura" was in a good mood even after taking a hit. They do not know the details or the depth of the situation. Still, the passion to devote himself to his "King" with his companions is exactly the same as "Scepter 4".

Kusanagi teased Yata.

"Yata-chan, you don't know what you're doing, right?"

"It's all about setting up a diversion and not going too far!"

"If you rush like the other day, you'll get burned. Be careful."

"Hey, what happened the other day has nothing to do with it! I got it!"

In the exchange between Yata and Kusanagi, a small laugh leaked out between "Homura". Awashima muttered in amazement.

"Even at a time like this, "Homura" has a lot of energy..."

She felt a look on her cheek. When she looked over there, Anna was looking at her.

Although she is a girl, she is a respected "King". Awashima turned to Anna and bowed her head respectfully.

"Excuse me, "Red Queen"."

"Because we are connected."

"Eh?"

"We are all deeply connected. That is why."

Saying so, she rolled a red marble in her palm.

"Our fire will never go out."

The red glow that illuminates the marbles is the eldritch web node that is the cornerstone of this operation. However, the "connection" Anna is talking about is probably not referring to that. They share something bigger without even going through the network.

Maybe it's the time they spent together.

It can be the place where they live together.

It may be someone's memory.

They are strongly connected by such things. Awashima is dazzled by that. She doesn't think "Scepter 4" is inferior to "Homura", but is it really as deep a bond as theirs?

"Still, the one that doesn't convince me is the "Blue King"."

Awashima gasped at the sudden voice.

"He's making Anna, the queen of "Homura" risk his life, while he retires to rest. What the hell is that bastard doing? Does he think he's superior?"

Yata crossed his arms with a disgusted expression and complained to Kusanagi. The reason they were speaking loud enough to make it to "Scepter 4" was not to make themselves heard. Awashima also acknowledges that Yata is not that kind of person. He is just sincere.

Kusanagi looked at Awashima. His face said "be tolerant." So, as if he admonished Yata...

"Yata, that was decided at the meeting. We can't let the "Green King" get to the "Slate Room", and if we all get in here and break through, it will be even worse. From now on, Anna and Shiro-san will reduce the enemy's strength, and even if they happen to reach that place, the "Blue King" behind them will surely stop them. That's how it should be."

"No, I'm not talking about strategy or anything like that. What I'm talking about is more of a feeling, an attitude."

Yata lowered his eyes a bit and muttered to himself.

"Kuh, I don't get why anyone would want to follow him."

Awashima felt anger rise among her subordinates behind her.

At the same time, Kusanagi patted Yata on the head.

"Idiot, you're talking too much about something else. I'm sorry, Seri-chan."

With those words, Yata seemed to finally realize that his voice was reaching "Scepter 4". He awkwardly looked at Awashima and said impatiently.

"Ah, it's not about you..."

"...No."

Awashima gently shook her head.

She knew who Yata was talking about. Fushimi Saruhiko. A man who once left "Homura" and later joined "Scepter 4". Yata and Fushimi had a relationship that could be called friends, but Fushimi broke off that relationship.

Their enmity still exists. Most of Yata's anger and frustration towards "Scepter 4" probably stems from Fushimi's affiliation with them. Therefore, Awashima did not take Yata's mistake at face value.

And in a sense, Yata's words are correct.

Everyone in "Scepter 4" would agree that their "King", Reisi Munakata, was a bottomless man. Like Anna Kushina, he is not a "King" who lives with Clansman. This was Munakata's way of being as the "King" who could see everything from a high place and order the clansmen around as he wished.

What is Munakata thinking about in the final line of the "Alliance of the Three Kings", the "Slate Room"? What is he looking at? What is he feeling? Even Awashima, who is his confidante, isn't sure.

At that moment, Anna turned her head and muttered.

"Everyone, back off."

"What?"

Almost at the same time Kusanagi asked, an impact unlike anything before that, shook his feet.

"...He's coming."

Before Anna's gaze, the last of the many layers of shutters suddenly changed shape.

The shutter, which is strong enough to withstand a single hit from a tank gun, crushed and spun inward. As if a wild giant was smashing with all its might, various dents were born on the surface, and it finally became unbearable and exploded.

"Kuh?!"

Mixed with the dust and debris, an extraordinary amount of energy overflowed. A big storm breaking out in the green. The man standing in the center of it all, the "Green King" Hisui Nagare, bared his fangs and laughed.

He waved his right hand carelessly.

The lightning formed the claws of a beast and attacked Awashima and the others. In the blink of an eye, they were unable to react at all.

Flame wings engulfed "Scepter 4" and "Homura".

The "Red Queen". Anna Kushina's supernatural ability. Her supernatural ability, manifested as a flame with will, acted as a shield and repelled the fatal blow. The lightning claws flew in various directions, carving long claw marks on the walls and ceiling of the hall.

Nagare laughed even deeper on the other side of the flickering flames.

"Special Forces. Defensive formation."

Before she could say it out loud, Nagare had disappeared.

All Awashima could perceive was the diffusely reflected green glow and the intense pain that tore through her body. Her awareness flickered with pain as if struck by lightning, and when she came to, she was sprawled on the ground. The reason why she barely fainted was probably thanks to the supernatural field she had developed.

Yata, who had fallen nearby, staggered back, showing his resistance.

"Tch... Damn, I let my guard down!"

When she looked around, most of "Scepter 4" and "Homura" were knocked out. In less than a split second, Nagare had nearly destroyed the two clans.

"That's the "Green King" ...!"

The vaguely filtered murmur contained a sound close to despair.

It's a different level from the "Kings" they've seen so far. At least, so it seemed to Awashima. Without a "Golden King", there is no doubt that Nagare is the strongest "King". Clansman etc. are not a problem for him at all.

Awashima probably wasn't the only one who felt helpless. There were a few clansmen who didn't faint, but they were visibly demoralized. Awashima bit her lip and tried to scold them.

But before that, a girl stood up and walked forward.

"Anna! Are you hurt?!"

"I'm fine."

Among the clansmen standing side by side, only the "Red Queen" was unharmed. There is no shyness in her eyes, there is only determination and a sense of mission.

"Here I go. I must stop him."

Wings of flame spread and flutter. Kusanagi yelled as he covered his face from the hot wind.

"Anna!"

Anna didn't hear him. As that small body floated to the surface, she flew towards the hallway, chasing after Nagare as she scattered her otherworldly red feathers.

"Vice Commander..."

A moan came from nearby. When she turned around, the members of the Special Forces, who had injuries all over their body's, were looking at her anxiously.

Their hearts are not broken. At least not yet.

However, their body's, which had been damaged in battles with Mishakuji Yukari and Gojou Sukuna, had already reached their limit. Awashima couldn't lead them to chase the "Green King".

"...Akiyama. Sort the injured into levels and transfer them to the rear. Take the severely injured to the hospital."

Akiyama gasped at the de facto retreat order. Without looking back, Awashima turned on her heel and started walking.

"Ah, where are you going, Vice Commander?!"

"To the "Slate Room". The Captain is in danger."

The power of the "Green King" far exceeded Awashima's expectations. Isana Yashiro predicted that the energy consumed by Hisui Nagare is inversely proportional to the hours of operation. What if the current Munakata was directly hit by a kamikaze-like destruction that he didn't even think of what would come next?

The worst damage was found to be a stiff neck. That alone should be avoided at all costs. Her own life would be nothing more than a paper against the total power of the "King", but still, it is better than doing nothing.

"It's unreasonable! Dealing with a monster like that alone...!"

"Please take us with you!"

Voices were raised one after another among the Special Forces. But Awashima stared at them and shook her head. Some squad members are already injured to the point of not being able to fight.

Letting them accompany her there is the same as ordering them to die. Even Awashima was not prepared to go that far.

At that moment, a voice came from another direction.

"You're not alone. We're going too."

Awashima's eyes widened and she turned her attention to him.

It was "Homura". They are the same ones who received the damage. There are also some clan members who can't stand up.

Even so, Yata and Kusanagi had yet to see despair in their eyes.

When Kusanagi's eyes met, he smiled.

"If you have to protect the "King", we are with you."

Awashima didn't answer, just nodded.

"Homura" and "Scepter 4" used to go head to head and collided many times. But now they share a purpose.

It is to support their "King".

They began to run, with Awashima leading the way. To the "Slate Room". To the battlefield of the "Kings".

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A bolt of lightning tore through the interior of the building.

At first glance, it might have seemed like a natural phenomenon. A magnificent spectacle of the gods created by the difference in voltage between the atmosphere and the earth. It is a harbinger of calamity that runs carelessly and haphazardly, destroying everything it touches. The thunder, however, had a certain intention.

The path where the thunder rushed was not random, but was repelled by precise calculation. Before the blockade of Mihashira Tower, he accurately traced the route sent by Mishakuji Yukari and Gojou Sukuna. If Fushimi Saruhiko had watched him, he would have clucked and cursed. Ultimately, until the third phase, the "Alliance of Three Kings" had been unable to capture "Jungle".

But even that is trivial on the battlefield of the "Kings".

There was a bird chasing the rushing thunder. A young bird that flies with flaming wings and spreading fiery feathers. Each of the fluttering feathers in the air changed direction according to their will, and was shot by lightning like a missile chasing an enemy aircraft.

The lightning spun around and dodged its wings, turned around, laughed, and slowed down.

Flying in parallel, the thunder greeted the bird.

"Hello, "Red Queen" Anna Kushina. I was in a rush earlier, I'm sorry. I apologize."

Nagare's tone did not sound like she was in combat. He is as calm as if he is talking to an acquaintance. Anna clenched her back teeth and let out a tense voice.

"Listen, "Green King" Hisui Nagare. Stop it. I can't give you that. That "Slate" is not your toy."

Nagare easily stated that.

"Of course, that's not my toy. I agree. Players who have awakened powers that surpass humans compete to rise to the top. The "Dresden Slate" is a system for that purpose. In other words, no It's just me, it's everyone's toy."

Anna's expression turned serious. Clenching her small fist, she said:

"Stop."

Nagare laughed again, rose, fell, and rose. While he did it, he danced. He spread his hands in the air, turned and said as if he were singing.

"I won't stop, I can't stop. Anna Kushina, I will fulfill my purpose."

"Stop!"

The attack was not intentional. If possible, she wanted to end it with dialogues.

But Anna knew. As Isana Yashiro once pointed out. She knew that through intuition rather than reason.

They can't stop Hisui Nagare with words.

In response to her will, another pair of flames erupted from Anna's back. They are not wings. It was her sword that took the form of a blade to stop the heart of a group of supernatural energy, Nagare.

Nagare looked at Anna and smiled even deeper. Thunder's body stopped suddenly and he turned to Anna. Anna gritted her teeth and fired her own sword.

A pair of flaming swords flew up in a double helix, landed, and exploded.

"....."

Anna also stopped flying and landed. Looking across the flickering explosion, Nagare was unscathed.

"Hmm. Even though you just woke up, you are quite mastering the power of the King. I am impressed."

Conscious of the cold sweat running down her back, Anna returned the words.

"You do not understand the meaning of this power."

"Power itself has no meaning. Every holder of power gives it meaning."

"That's not all...!"

Anna clenched her fists. There, she gathered a crimson aura.

Seeing that, Nagare said as if he was warning.



"I see. In other words, you want to find meaning in it. Suoh Mikoto. Does the will of the previous "Red King" reside there?"

"....."

"I'm sorry, but that's an assumption. Suoh Mikoto and his will no longer exist anywhere in this world. He disappeared with his body. You're free to assume you've inherited it, but it's gone."

"No!"

Screaming, Anna kicked the ground.

The flame wings produced an explosive acceleration. Without hesitation, Anna hurled at Nagare the destructive supernatural energy that she had put into her small fist.

The fist was easily caught by Nagare's palm.

"No doubt."

Nagare laughed even more as he gently wrapped around Anna's fist.

"Because I am the same. I follow their ideas. The wishes of 700.000 people sleeping in that crater. Correct this world where the "King" randomly takes lives. I think they are still screaming from the bottom of the sea."

Using the fist that Nagare clenched as a pivot, Anna turned her body around and kicked him in the stomach with all her strength. Her small body flew back, and Nagare also took a few steps.

"Good."

Facing Anna, who landed and raised her fists, Nagare calmly spread his arms.

"We have confirmed our disagreements. Now let the game begin."

He unleashed his talent.

The supernatural energy that had been radiated indiscriminately began to take on a certain pattern. A mane of thunder wrapped around his head and claws of sparks covered his limbs. In the center of it is his heart, already lost in the hole in Nagare's chest. The mass of supernatural energy pulsing in the depths of his open chest continues to alter his "death".

Nagare is now trying to channel that energy into battle. He is trying to cut the "life" from her and fight according to his own will.

The situation reminded Anna of a word. That is to say...

"The... Thunder beast!"

Anna once again generated multiple flame swords and fired them in quick succession.

However, she did not hit Nagare. Leaning forward like a beast, he rushed forward and zigzagged through the rain. Glowing green claws thrust out to pull out Anna's heart.

"Ah...!"

Anna closed her wings of fire, barely blocking the attack. "Red" and "Green", two supernatural energies collided and annihilated each other creating a shock wave. In the wave of deadly energy that would have killed an ordinary person instantly, the two "Kings" cut and knotted, and flew while knotting.

It is not the life or death of each one that decides this party. The whereabouts of the "Dresden Slate", that relic that decides the fate of mankind, is what leads to victory or defeat. The "Kings" understood that accurately.

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Isana Yashiro's Sanctum floated in the air with its umbrella open in the cold air of the December night.

The interior of Mihashira Tower has been turned into a half-labyrinth due to the invasion of two "Jungle" members and the physical blockade of the "Chabudai Alliance". Unlike Nagare and Anna, Shiro who doesn't have an explosive exit was chasing them from the outer wall of the building.

The battle had already begun. Flashes of fire and lightning were reflected in the windows of the building.

"Anna and Hisui Nagare are fighting..."

"Shiro, look!"

It was Kuro who pointed above his head. He clung to the wall of a building with his Colorless ability, and Neko clung to his neck. At the point where he was pointing, in the sky above Mihashira Tower, two swords appeared as if they were fighting each other.

A red sword that looks like a burning flame and a cool green sword that looks like a roaring forest.

The two "Swords of Damocles" meant that the "Kings" collided with each other with all their might.

"Shiro! Let's hurry up and save Anna!"

Neko let out a hasty voice and Kuro nodded loudly. Nagare, who claims to be the strongest, is too heavy a burden for Anna. As soon as possible, Shiro must also participate in the war.

But...

"Wait a minute."

The reason why he muttered under his breath was because no matter how he looked at it, the calculation didn't add up.

Shiro understands better than anyone the conditions in which the "Sword of Damocles" appears. After all, he was the one who brought that formula into the world.

The nostalgic Konig plan. Sword-shaped Kouki that appears when an EX- $\alpha$  individual's W Deflection exceeds the threshold. Therefore, it is also a barometer that shows how serious the "King" is.

The point is that the "Sword of Damocles" appears only when the Weismann deviation from the "King" exceeds a certain percentage.

Nagare is fighting seriously. In fact, he possessed powers beyond Shiro's imagination, and the possibility that he was fighting while he suppressed energy from him disappeared with that.

By best estimate, Nagare's battery drains in less than five minutes. The inside of his head made a noise.

He doesn't know what Nagare is aiming for. After expending so much unrestrained energy, he hasn't been able to defeat even one of the "Kings". If Shiro was Nagare, they would have withdrawn by now. At this rate, it was obvious that he would be surrounded by three "Kings" and stopped.

Or is this also part of the plan?

Even if he runs out of energy and collapses, is there still "something" that leads him to victory?

"Shiro! Anna!"

Neko's voice crying brought Shiro out of the sea of thoughts.

The expressions of the countless people who once lost their lives in front of him flashed through his mind for a moment and disappeared. He wouldn't add Anna to one of them. He has the power to protect someone. This time, he decided to handle it completely.

"Come on!"

Shouting, Shiro kicked into the air. Kuro and Neko did the same.

It's good to think. It's okay to get lost. But don't just run away. Regardless of Hisui Nagare's intentions, Shiro decided so. So he just followed his heart.

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It's strict.

Nagare definitely thought so as he ran through the halls of Mihashira Tower like a meteor.

Of course, he was happy until now. For the first time in a long time, Nagare, who had been straitjacketed underground, was able to enjoy freedom. Just jumping and jumping and fully breathing was pretty fun.

But now he had a "playmate."

Anna Kushina, the flaming bird, the "Red Queen" was chasing Nagare who was running.

Despite her young age, her determination and disposition were exactly the vessel of a "King". With only a thought to protect her comrades, she challenged Nagare, who is far more powerful than her. You might laugh at her for being reckless due to her youth, but Nagare was familiar with that figure.

That night. It was like him, who challenged the "Golden King" even though he knew he couldn't win.

He was happy. So it was fun. The reason was that even though he knew that obtaining the "Dresden Slate" was a priority, he couldn't leave Anna alone.

As he ran, Nagare kicked the ground and danced in the air. With a movement that ignores the laws of physics, he twisted his body in the air and swing his arms at Anna.

The sparks emitted from both claws attacked Anna like a slash.

".....!"

Anna flapped her fiery wings and turned her body to dodge the attack. At the same time, she created a flaming sword and fire it. A direct hit would definitely result in a fatal injury. That was definitely "nice" for Nagare.

If he doesn't risk his life, he won't get true innovation.

Before long, at the end of the long corridor, the door of the "Slate Room" came into view.

Nagare narrowed his eyes. It's a hopeful, unlucky, mixed feeling. There is no doubt that therein lies his most sincere longing. Still, it was a shame that "moment" ended.

Looking back at Anna, who had caught up with him, Nagare confessed honestly.

"Sorry, Kushina Anna. Looks like my game with you ends here."

Anna's expression turned tense as if she sensed something with her sensitive ability.

The supernatural lightning energy that covered Nagare's entire body began to emit an abnormal glow. The pounding pulse abruptly increased his pace, and the electrical charge in the air created an unpleasant sizzle. Anna spread her flame wings and slammed to a halt, taking a great distance from Nagare.

And then, Nagare released his power.

Thunder several times more powerful than the "Raiko no Jutsu" exploded around Nagare. A storm of coffers that burns and destroys everything it touches. Driven back by a torrent of power that resembled the wrath of a god, Nagare opened the door with his own body.

And Nagare saw it.

The circular "Slate" embedded in the thick floor glass. The last hidden treasure that brings innovation to humanity.

The "Dresden Slate".

Nagare smiled involuntarily as he climbed to the top of his dream.

"I have finally arrived. It is the goal."

"No, there is no target."

A voice reached his ears.

When he looked at him, their eyes met. Eyes as if rationality and reason were condensed and hardened. While he is bathed in destructive energy, his expression is calm as if blown by a gentle breeze.

The "Blue King" Reisi Munakata.

His saber was stopping Nagare's body. Blue and green, two energies that push and cancel each other. Even with all of Nagare's power, he still couldn't defeat Munakata's saber.

No. It's different.

It was no longer "full power." His energy, his life, is rapidly losing his luster. Nagare knew that through his senses.

In an instant, the energy membrane that had covered Nagare's entire body was broken. Like light snow melting in the sunlight, he crumbled, and vanished from the surface at the contact of Munakata's blade.

The weight of "death" weighs on both shoulders.

Nagare suddenly changed the direction of his energy. He tried to direct all the energy that had gone haywire out, in, and expend all of his strength to survive.

Munakata did not miss that opportunity.

The saber gave off an intense glow, and the power formed by the blue supernatural ability acted as a "thrust force" instead of a "cutting force". Munakata then tossed Nagare's body, which had become defenseless, over his head like a baseball player hitting a home run ball.

Breaking through the multiple layers of the ceiling, Nagare's body rose up into the night sky.

Looking up at the brilliant pure white moon, Nagare smiled quietly.

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Isana Yashiro was the first to notice.

Above the Mihashira Tower, where multiple "Swords of Damocles"... "Red" and "Green" floating in the night sky were fighting each other, a new sword "Blue" appeared. Directly receiving that glow, the "Green" sword distorted, wavered, and finally disappeared.

"Finally... your battery is dead!"

Shiro kicked into the air and rose up. Running along the wall of the building, Kuro and Neko also followed.

Hisui Nagare's power has been exhausted. So far it was predictable.

No, he supposed that could be said to be too predictable. It was too self-explanatory, like throwing an object and it will fall over.

That's why Shiro couldn't stop the excitement.

If all of that is according to Hisui Nagare's plot.

Even if he desperately thinks, he can't read the plot. Maybe they were misinterpreting something in some ridiculous way. He couldn't control his anxiety.

Shiro thought so. He thought as he ran through the air. Through the gaping hole in the top floor of Mihashira Tower, they broke into the "Slate Room".

"Anna! Munakata-san!"

In the "Slate Room", things were already changing.

From the entrance, he could see Anna walking slowly inside. Her body seemed to be damaged and exhausted, but she still hadn't run out of energy. She looked up at Shiro, nodded slightly, and returned her eyes to the center of the room.

There were two "Kings" there.

"Blue King" and "Green King". Reisi Munakata and Hisui Nagare.

It was already resolved. Nagare had his exhausted body stretched out, and Munakata plunged a saber into his neck.

Looking towards Nagare, Munakata asked quietly.

"How was it, Hisui Nagare? Did you have as much fun as you wanted? You were like a beast, without intelligence or order."

While looking at Munakata, Nagare responded with a bright voice.

"Yes, it was a lot of fun, Reisi Munakata. And all humans are beasts. We are just individual creatures that are different from each other."

Then, Nagare shook his head and fixed his gaze on her.

"I'm sure you are too, Ameno Miyabi."

Everyone present saw Neko.

Neko shrugged. Gold and blue, two eyes wide open and blood pouring from her face. The expression on her face only expressed a feeling.

That means, fear.

"Wa-Wagahai is a cat!"

Saying that to cut him off, Neko hid on Kuro's back. As if by doing so she could cease to exist.

"Neko...?"

Even when Kuro asked worriedly, Neko just shook her head. Shiro observed the situation from within the Japanese umbrella.

On the other hand, Munakata looked back at Nagare.

"Ameno Miyabi, is that the real name of the girl that I couldn't find even with the investigation of "Scepter 4"? But isn't she too special to be an example for humans in general?"

"I think so because you're stupid. She's my compatriot. We redefine ourselves without being bound by our preconceived humanity. The way free spirit should be is the potential of being human. And now, me, who's closest to that ideal, I have come to receive the "Slate"."

A sarcastic smile appeared on Munakata's lips.

"Are you going to say that you are the one who deserves to be the administrator of the "Slate"? That is really arrogant."

Nagare also gave Munakata a quizzical look.

"That is a misunderstanding, Munakata Reisi. There can be no such thing as a "proper manager" for the "Dresden Slate". Arbitrarily trying to handle "it", the source of possibility, itself shows a lack of understanding of its essence. It's absurd."

"I see. Are you saying that the raison d'être of the "Slate" is not to administer power, but to invite chaos that simply unleashes it?"

"There is no such thing as "meaning". Only powerful people wield that power at will."

"Like Kagutsu Genji?"

That question stopped time in the "Slate Room".

Genji Kagutsu. The treacherous "King" who caused the worst burst of royal power in history.

Like Kagutsu, Hisui Nagare's origin is shrouded in mystery. No one knows how he came to be "King" before he suddenly appeared before the "Golden King" nine years ago.

However, due to his abnormal build, the hole in his chest, and the powerful energy he constantly radiates, Shiro speculated that Nagare was a victim of the Kagutsu Incident. During the great destruction caused by Kagutsu, wasn't Nagare chosen as the "King"?

If so, Munakata's question is too cruel.

And then, Nagare answered that question head on.

"Affirmative. I will give all humans the power to protect themselves from a "King" like Kagutsu Genji. Therefore, I don't care if I become Kagutsu himself."

His commanding and unwavering response showed that this was his true intention.

There is no change in the fact that Nagare is the "King" of the conspiracy that lurks in the depths of the Web. Many lives were lost by getting caught in the web.

But at its core, perhaps, it was an ideal that was as pure as a child.

For the first time, Munakata felt the true feelings of the hostile "King", but, even so, Munakata did not hesitate.

"But you're running out of power now. How do you view this situation?"

A brilliant blue blade touched Hisui Nagare's throat. If Munakata wanted to, he would be able to take Nagare's life right now.

"Hisui Nagare, you are already dead. According to the information from the "Silver King", your physical vitality is barely maintained thanks to the Green Clan's special ability. This is probably the reason why they can freely adjust their own athletic abilities."

Even so, Nagare did not show the slightest agitation. As if everything was going according to plan.



"However, if you run out of power, it's like this, a toy with a dead battery... No, it's supposed to be like a corpse. I don't think you're qualified to compete with me for ownership of the "Slate"."

Nagare looked at Munakata and smiled gently.

"That's right. But I'm not the one to fight you."

Saying that, Nagare added.

"Now... "He" will come the way that I made. He's my trump card."

"He?"

No one could understand who he was referring to. Hisui Nagare's trump card. It's neither Mishakuji Yukari, Gojou Sukuna, or Kotosaka. The final piece, probably known only to Nagare.

Isana Yashiro was the closest to an answer. The response to Nagare's plan was moving forward so they wouldn't get distracted. However, even if they knew there was "something", they didn't know what it was.

However, the footsteps of "him" had already begun to be heard.

Drifting, turning into a "gray" mist.

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"Come on! Anna's in danger! Show your guts on her!"

"Yes!"

Yata raised his fist and cheered them on as he raced down the hall on his skateboard. In response, the members of "Homura" let out a voice. The figure of them rushing towards the "Slate Room" together, towards the battlefield of the "Kings", was like a meteor shower of fireballs.

Slightly behind them, Kusanagi, Awashima, and the members of "Scepter 4" were running as well. Awashima muttered in amazement as he stared at "Homura" and the others.

"I'm really fine, even in this situation..."

Kusanagi responded with a smile.

"Since this is the situation, let's do it. At times like this, it's good to have Yata-chan."

"Vice Commander."

Akiyama, who was catching up, briefed Awashima.

"It seems that a problem has occurred in the supernatural network of the "Red King". We are having trouble communicating with the command vehicle."

Kusanagi's expression hardened and exchanged glances with Awashima. He didn't want to think that something happened to Anna.

(I can't imagine what kind of situation she will be in in the battle with Hisui Nagare. As soon as possible, we must arrive on the battlefield and support them.)

As soon as he thought that, Yata yelled and stopped.

"Gah!"

Kusanagi also stopped and looked at him.

A cloud of gray smoke.

No, that was...

"What is this... fog...? Watch out everyone!"

As he shouted a warning, Kusanagi turned his gaze to Awashima. If it can't be natural, then they have to think of it as interference from the enemy's supernatural powers. They had to work on corrective action immediately.

However, Awashima was not there.

Kusanagi widened his eyes and looked around. Yata, Kamamoto, and the "Homura" members, who had been in a good mood until a while ago, were nowhere to be seen.

"Yata! Kamamoto! Seri-chan!"

In the vague world of mist, Kusanagi raised his voice alone. But what returned was silence.

No.

There was only one thing that rang in his ears.

Katsun, katsun, the sound of someone's footsteps.

Behind the misty veil, the figures flickered. Someone was walking. He took a leisurely step, as if he were taking a walk, and he didn't seem to mind Kusanagi.

"Who the hell are you?!"

Kusanagi made a quick decision. He saw the figure as the source of the situation, the enemy. He created countless fireballs with his lighter and shot them out like a shotgun.

All those fireballs hit the figure.

And everything slipped.

"What?!"

He felt a figure laugh from beyond the mist.

But that was it. "It" did not stop, it went into the misty world and went back.

"What the hell is that guy?! Damn it, Anna!"

Kusanagi began to run in the direction where the shadow had disappeared. At the same time, he took out a marble from his pocket and looked at it.

The red glow, flickering faintly, was still on. Kusanagi spoke to him.

"Fushimi! Can you hear me?! What's going on now?!"

The marble flickered and Enomoto's voice echoed in his mind. It was imperfect, like a noisy radio transmission.

"There's an unknown Sanctum inside the tower...! It's a "King"!"

Only those words were clearly audible.

"What?!"

"Vertical Over... The "Sword of Damocles"!"

"Impossible! A fifth "King"!"

Kusanagi ground her teeth. All kinds of questions were resolved immediately. But he didn't have time to analyze it. Through the misty hallway he ran forward.

If Kusanagi had had time to look at the sky at that moment, he would have been in awe of its majesty.

Like when Fushimi jumped out of the command vehicle on the ground floor and looked up at the sky.

There was a "Sword of Damocles" floating in the "gray".

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The mist enveloped Shiro as if it had a will. As if to isolate each individual, entering the gaps between humans and trying to separate their existence.

"Shiro!"

With a weak voice, Neko came closer. Kuro also drew his sword and stood in front of Shiro. So that no matter what kind of person attacks, he will be cut down immediately.

"Ok. I'll be by your side."

Whispering softly, Shiro grabbed Neko's hand. Her cold, trembling hands meant that she was completely scared.

Regret stabbed into his chest. He wishes he had taken better care of her. Neko has always been afraid. She acts stubborn so they wouldn't understand her. He was distracted by Hisui Nagare's mysterious behavior and didn't see the signal.

He had to listen to Neko's story.

But before that, the situation itself must be dealt with.

"Munakata-san."

He called him as a warning. From that mist he could feel the signs of "blocking" and "rejection". But, the "Kings" are too big to hide. Just as no wall can hide mountains, Munakata's presence was firmly there.

Munakata spoke in a calm tone.

"I see, so you were behind Hisui Nagare's reckless actions and inexplicable self-confidence..."

At that moment, Munakata swung his saber to the side with imperceptible speed.

The blue phosphorescence dispersed, and his glow pierced through the mist itself.

A bored middle-aged man in a cassock appeared from the other side.

Shiro, however, recognized that face. He looks very tired and unshaven, but he's seen him.

That is to say...

"The Sixth King, the "Grey King", who is said to have died during the Kagutsu Incident..."

"Ah, wait a minute, Munakata. Human relations come first. I have something to tell you."

As if to interrupt Munakata, who was about to speak, he raised a hand.

"If it's about me, call me "Iwa-san"."

Saying that, he smiled.