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RETURN OF KINGS
SUZUKI SUZU / GoRA

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

CHAPTER 8: FLOWERS THAT BLOOM IN THE DESPAIR

Once upon a time there was a clan called "Cathedral".

The total number of clan members was actually several thousand. With an entire city in southern Kanto as its territory, the clan, which idealized mutual benefit and mutual aid, functioned as a semi-independent country under the reign of the "Golden King" Kokujoji Daikaku.

The ruler of that kingdom was Otori Seigo. The "Grey King" responsible for "Protection".

Otori, who was an anonymous official, took the fact that he was chosen as "King" as some sort of revelation. God gave him that power to reach out to the less fortunate and protect the persecuted.

That's how he interpreted it.

Nobody gets hurt, nobody suffers. A cathedral guarded by the "King" chosen by God.

The sanctuary collapsed in a single day.

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Looking towards the dark hole, Otori muttered in a hollow voice.

"Kagutsu... what the hell did you do...?"

There is no answer for that anymore. In that hypocenter, the place where the center of "Cathedral" once stood, that man lost his life, and more than that, he dropped something even more sinister.

The "Sword of Damocles".

As if following Kagutsu's bottomless destructive impulse, the sword pierced through the heart of "Cathedral". The largest recorded "Kingdom Burst" burned and killed everything within, turning it into a deep, dark pit.

Until just a day ago, there were countless people there. There were countless families. There were countless smiles, happiness, the warmth of snuggling and holding hands.

Now there is nothing.

Cold sea water began to flow into the huge hole. Someday this place will become a bay. Swallowing countless corpses and whole souls, sinking their pain of death and regret to the bottom.

Otori could only stare dumbfounded at the remains of his ideal.

He finally got to his feet and turned around.

The cities that stretched out at the foot of the Kanto plain had turned into piles of rubble.

When the "Sword of Damocles" fell, the hypocenter turned into a huge hole. However, the destruction caused by Kagutsu's death did not stop there. A deadly shock wave spread out and swept through the city on the edge. Very few civilians would have survived the furious explosion.

There must be some still alive, even if only a few.

Believing that, Otori began to walk.

There were many things that were people.

There was a girl who had her limbs torn off. There was a boy who lost his mind. There was a mother and baby who had miraculously retained their original form, but had died.

Otori could only walk through seemingly endless time, seemingly endless hell.

"If someone is alive, please answer! Is there anyone...? Is there no one here...?"

Otori's voice echoed in vain. He really knew.

What he wanted to save was not "someone", but himself.

"Please... someone answer...!"

Otori didn't notice that his desperate face was wet with tears. The "King", whose salvation was once sought by hundreds of thousands of people, is now seeking those who seek salvation. Because he knew that saving someone would be his own salvation.

At that time, if he could save even one person from now on, surely, his power would have meaning.

He suddenly came into view.

A lonely child lying in the cracks under the collapsed building.

"Hey, stay strong! Are you alive?"

Shouting, Otori ran down from the pile of rubble and clung to the building. As a "King" with supernatural powers, he put all of his strength into it and raised a building that seemed to weigh tens of tons. Above Otori's head, a shining "Sword of Damocles" appeared.

"Guh...!"

Gritting his teeth, Otori shook the rubble of the building with such force that his feet sank into the ground.

A boy appeared below.

A sharp piece of rock pierced his small back.

Otori knelt down on the spot.

"Not good... Even a child like this... Is this the ideal ending I was looking for? What is the meaning of the power of the "King" who can't save even a child?"

With trembling fingers, Otori touched the necklace. The symbol of the God he once prayed to.

But that feeling was not accompanied by any emotion. Faith, reverence, nothing. What he felt at his fingertips was nothing more than inorganic metal.

Otori realized that his faith had disappeared from within him. There is no God. Even if they are not interested in themselves. Neither God-given power nor God himself could save anyone.

Biting his lip, Otori looked down at the boy's tragic corpse.

The corpse suddenly began to glow.

".....?!"

Otori widened his eyes. The glow from him was green. So this boy is a survivor of the Green Clan?

That was what he thought, but he soon realized that this was not the case.

"Coronation". This is the phenomenon when a person becomes a "King".

He thoughtfully looked up. It was exactly what Otori expected.

"The green "Sword of Damocles"...?!"

Otori looked back at the boy. In the green glow, the dead boy was slowly opening his eyes.

He had no doubt. This boy is neither a member of the Green Clan nor a corpse.

A new "Green King" was about to be born.

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Five swords floated in the night sky.

Their presence, which seemed to press down on the white moon, was beyond majestic to the point of being comical. If all those swords fall, the world will probably end. Fushimi never imagined that he would witness something like a Hollywood movie called "World in Crisis".

Enomoto leaned out from the command car and muttered anxiously.

"What's wrong, Fushimi-san? A fifth "Sword of Damocles"... wasn't that four kings?"

It wasn't Enomoto he clucked at. This situation, by itself...

"This is not good. What is the result of the observation?"

"Compared to the beginning, it is more stable. However, there is still interference on the top floor..."

He looked inside the vehicle. Observations made by Anna's supernatural network were displayed as they were on the screen. The green glow that had dominated most of the building now seemed to give way to a gray mist.

Enomoto asked as he pointed to the last one to show up.

"What color is that...?"

"It's not gold or colorless, so there's only one left. I didn't expect it."

Silver. Golden. Red. Blue. Green. Colorless. The rest of the color is "Gray", as is the fog that surrounds the observation point.

"Oh, the green disappears!"

"Weismann's deviation from the Fifth King is rapidly declining!"

At the same time as Enomoto, the vehicle staff gave a report. A noise ran through the green Damocles, and disappeared like lightning that ran and disappeared for a moment. Looking at him, Fushimi asked a question inside the vehicle.

"What is the Weismann deviation of the new King?"

"He still maintains a high number! This... perhaps it can exceed the Captain's Weismann deviation...!"

Thinking of what he saw, Fushimi leaned over the command vehicle and took a deep breath.

The "newcomer" is full of energy, but the "Red Queen" has been exhausted from fighting Hisui Nagare, and the "Blue King" is cracked. Everything will depend on how long the last one, the "Silver King", can hold out.

"Damn. It's troublesome..."

Muttering, Fushimi began to simulate the future in his head.

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At first glance, he was a middle-aged man who was unkempt.

His hair was disheveled and stubbled, and his worn cassock was wrinkled, as if it hadn't been ironed. With a loose, sloppy mouth and carefree gaze, it's hard to imagine that he was ruling a single kingdom.

But still...

Munakata had accurately measured the strength of the man in front of him.

"The biggest and worst case of the overthrow of royal power that occurred at the end of the last century, the Kagutsu Incident. The Sixth King, the "Grey King", who was believed to have died as collateral damage..."

As he muttered, Munakata put strength into the hand that held the saber.

The ability of the "Grey King", which has been silent for many years, could possibly surpass itself.

"I have to say that I was very surprised that this man survived and became the mastermind behind the Green Clan."

Iwafune shrugged and smiled, as if he could see Munakata's heart.

"No, Munakata. The man named Otori Seigo certainly died at that time."

Even so, his eyes weren't smiling.

"What's in front of you now is Iwafune Tenkei, a flightless chicken who lives in "Jungle" and acts as the father of the "Green King" Hisui Nagare. It doesn't seem like much of a mastermind, I'm just an old man."

This time it was Munakata's turn to laugh.

Munakata certainly sensed this as he fixed his gaze on Iwafune.

"A misty Sanctum that possesses the attribute of "absolute protection"... while displaying your power like this, it's easy to tell that you're a simple man."

Mist rolled from under his feet.

Slowly, but at a certain speed, the mist thickened. Enveloping Hisui Nagare, who was lying on the ground, his figure gradually faded away. It would be useless to swing the saber. Fog cannot be cut or traversed.

When he muttered to himself that this was the "Green King's" trump card, he heard a laugh coming from somewhere.

"I win. Reisi Munakata."

Hisui Nagare, who should have been at Munakata's feet, suddenly found himself on Iwafune's shoulders.

Munakata's eyes narrowed. As he did so, the mist continued to thicken. The mysterious voices of Neko and Kuro echoed from somewhere.

"Nya? This feels a little weird!"

"This is...!"

Their voices were coming from different places, not from the direction they should have been.

Information about the "Grey King" was sparse even in the database. Munakata doesn't even know the details and principle of his "absolute protection" ability.

However, he was able to predict to some extent from Hisui Nagare's recovery move just now and the gap between the two's voices.

That is to say...

"Not good! Don't stop!"

Anna created wings of fire again. The flames that turned into spinning swords were shot towards Iwafune in quick succession.

All of that was blocked by a wall of mist.

".....!"

From the other side of the dense mist, a muzzle with a dull glow appeared. He is standing upright, facing Anna. Anna took a deep breath, stiffened.

"Anna!"

Shiro jumped in front of her.

He placed a special field on the closed Japanese umbrella, and the fired bullets were repelled one by one. The ricocheting bullet flew in another direction, brushing past Kuro and Neko. The bullet must have been imbued with supernatural power, and a huge hole was blown in the wall where the bullet landed, and he was able to see the night sky beyond.

From beyond the mist, Iwafune's voice echoed out.

"Haha, that's right, "Silver King". You must take care of the princess!"

Shiro didn't care. He looked up and yelled.

"Kuro! Take care of Neko! Get away from there!"

"Huh?! No, Shiro! Wagahai will be with you!"

Kuro held the body of Neko who was about to reach him. Despite his anguished expression, he remained loyal to his master's orders. He held onto Neko and flew away from the mist.

The fog thickened even more.

Neither Kuro nor Neko nor Munakata nor Iwafune could be seen. Shiro deployed his supernatural field and protected Anna from the mist.

"Anna. Are you okay?"

Anna nodded helplessly. However, her face had lost all blood and her breathing was shallow. It was too much force. It was only natural, since she single-handedly waged the battle with Hisui Nagare.

"More than me, Reisi..."

Shiro gritted his teeth and deployed the supernatural field at maximum output.

There was an answer. With all the power of the "Silver King" that governs "immutability", it seemed that that mist could be partially nullified.

However, if he did, the "Grey King" could target Anna.

Anna seemed like she could no longer move. If he hits him with his attack, he won't be able to stay still. He didn't want to think that Otori Seigo, who once professed compassion, would target the children, but is now Iwafune Tenkei. He had no idea what to do.

Besides, someone could die in front of him.

That alone was unacceptable.

"Yashiro...!"

Anna let out a guilty voice. However, Shiro slowly shook his head and began to deploy his supernatural field for defense.

"...Munakata-san."

Shiro couldn't do anything but whisper "I'm sorry" and pray for their safety.

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"Heavenly Wolf" absorbed the blue supernatural power and glowed brightly. Raising his saber, which glowed brightly even in the gray mist, Munakata swung his sword on top and slashed straight at Iwafune's head.

However, what was ahead was the steel Iwafune was holding, the barrel of a revolver. That itself must be a supernatural power control mechanism, the barrel glowed dully and stopped the blue blade.

Two lights, blue and gray, scattered like small sparks. Munakata frowned and Iwafune smiled and aimed his revolver without releasing the pressure.

The barrel was positioned perfectly against Munakata's forehead.

If he had slowed down for a second, there would be a hole in Munakata's forehead. Still in a low stance, Munakata had his saber at his side. Furthermore, if it had been a moment earlier, Iwafune's stomach would have been cut open.

At this time, Iwafune had already jumped into the distance.

A thick mist soon enveloped his body. Munakata fired a slashing attack with the supernatural power he put into his saber. The flying blue sword arrived where Iwafune should have been and was deflected.

As expected, Iwafune's voice rang out at the same time.

"Hey, where are you aiming?"

A shot rang out along with a mocking voice. Annoyingly, they came from different directions. Although the place he emitted from should be the same.

As he fired bullets, Munakata did not try to find Iwafune's location. He knew that it would be useless to do so.

Iwafune's "absolute protection" ability is shrouded in mystery.

It's probably a spatial warp ability.

In the gray mist, Iwafune twists the world itself. By distorting space, light, sound and all kinds of energy are transferred from where they should be to another.

Shiro, Anna, Kuro, Neko and Hisui Nagare. The person who should have been there is not there and the person who should not have been there is. Munakata's slash attack was deflected instead of being blocked. If they were doing it right, they would never make it to Iwafune.

It is possible to break through with such "absolute protection" and "order"!

As he pondered, Munakata opened his mouth to fire a sighting shot.

"Are you attacking by hiding in the mist? It's a petty way of fighting, befitting a man who lost his clan, changed his name, and survived only by hiding in the ground."

"I don't care what you say. I've already given up pride. It doesn't hurt or sting."

A voice came directly from above.

A voice resounding from a blatantly abnormal place, either because he knew his hands were exposed or because he didn't care that he knew.

"The Gray Clan "Cathedral", at its peak, was a powerful clan that wielded power second only to the Gold Clan "Tokijikuin". The one who led "Cathedral" was the "Grey King" Seigo Otori. Possessed of strength and virtue, it is said to be a masterpiece that was widely admired not only by clansmen, but also by the general public."

"Haha. That's why it's not such a splendid thing."

The voice came from right behind Munakata.

When he reflexively turned around, he could see a shadowy figure walking away. Despite that, the sound of footsteps could still be heard from behind.

Obviously, he was making fun of him.

Munakata raised his voice.

"Fourteen years ago, I led the clansmen in an attempt to prevent Genji Kagutsu's Sword of Damocles from falling, but I was unable to stop it and the clan was wiped out. It was an unprecedented catastrophe with 700,000 dead, including civilians."

The footsteps stopped.

Around the same time, Munakata fully expanded his supernatural field. In an instant, the randomly twisted world was reconfigured under "order", and Iwafune peered through the mist.

"So you left your old self back then with the people you couldn't save then!"

Missing no chance, Munakata fired a blue slash from his saber.

The straight cut, however, was distorted and deflected by the dense fog that had gathered in front of Iwafune. Leaving only a smile on his face, Iwafune hid behind the wall of mist again.

"Well, let's see. After all, it's an old story."

"Why did you decide to join Hisui Nagare and appear on stage at this time?"

A shot rang out instead of an answer. One shot from directly above, one from behind, and one from the side. Munakata blocked them all with his saber.

He didn't feel any hostility or killing intent. Everything lay beyond a vague mist.

It seems that only words can be delivered to each other.

"If the world proposed by Hisui Nagare were to come true, society would fall into chaos and there would undoubtedly be many victims. I don't think it's your idea to go along with such a barbaric act to save humanity and create an ideal paradise. Did the Kagutsu incident make you so depressed?"

"Ideal paradise, huh."

Iwafune's voice was mocking.

"The "King" does not have the power to create such a thing. Both you and I are being rolled on this stubborn "Slate". Except for "that guy" who is trying to "roll" the "Slate".

Iwafune was laughing beyond the thick gray mist.

Recklessly empty. As if to say that the gray world where nothing can arrive is the place where the "King" arrives.

As if he denied it, Munakata swung his saber again.

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Anna let out a shaky breath.

The battle between the two "Kings" airs like an earth-shaking clash. She was too weak to bear it. Shiro stretched out his arms to support the unsteady Anna.

"Anna, are you okay? Are you cold?"

Anna nodded slightly and closed her eyes.

"What a cold mist... is this the depth of this person's despair...?"

The responsiveness of her, the power to see through, which she further enhanced by becoming a "King", she could clearly see through him.

A man in a cassock grins hollowly beyond the mist. He has a hole in his chest. A big, wide, dark hole that swallows everything.

Unlike Hisui Nagare, there was nothing in the hole. He can't feel any pulse of energy, any longing for the future. However, he is filled with cold despair.

Hugging Anna's shoulders to keep her warm, Shiro muttered pitifully.

"The "Grey King", Seigo Otori. I heard from the lieutenant that he was a pacifist who hated conflict, but when it came time to fight, his force stood shoulder to shoulder with the "Blue King" Habari Jin and the "Red King" Genji Kagutsu. Munakata-san..."

"Yashiro. From now on, take care of Reisi..."

Anna pleaded. She didn't want to be a nuisance. She herself is a "King". She is no longer just an existence that leans on someone.

Suddenly, a stray bullet flew out from beyond the mist. Shattered debris fell on the two who avoided it at a dangerous point. Shiro quickly opened his umbrella to protect Anna from the pouring rain.

Shiro said in a reluctant but firm tone.

"No. I can't leave you alone now."

Anna clenched her fists in frustration. She hated her helplessness.

That person would surely rise up and face any situation. Seeing Munakata struggling, she must have laughed a bit and punched the mist with her fist.

After all, she couldn't be like Mikoto.

That was so frustrating and lonely.

And, beyond the mist, he saw something that glowed. It wasn't a supernatural power, it was an ultimate brilliance of matter. The heavy hanging cables gleamed in the light.

At the same time, a strange sound echoed in Shiro and Anna's ears. They soon realized it was the sound of approaching helicopter rotors, tearing through the air.

Shiro looked up and yelled.

"Damn! The rooftop!"

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Iwafune walked through the mist.

He fired a gun as he walked. The revolver's barrel, which has a long, hollow frame, was broken to expose the barrel, into which the bullets are loaded one by one.

Iwafune didn't even see Munakata's slashing attack. The mist that gathered semi-automatically distorted the supernatural energy and deflected it upwards. The "absolute protection" mist deflects almost all attacks and nothing can reach Iwafune.

After loading the bullets and folding the barrel, Iwafune smiled wryly.

Almost everything was ready.

Iwafune casually held his gun and pulled the trigger. Roar and shock. Munakata, who was beyond the mist, repelled the bullet. Before he could confirm that, Iwafune opened his mouth.

"Hundreds of thousands of ordinary people, unable to do anything, were shocked and died. If each of us has power, we can't just face death without resistance. You can resist with your own responsibility. That's the kind of world that Nagare It's about to explode."

The objection came back with a cutting attack.

"What nonsense! Humans who have suddenly acquired power beyond their control will simply show their power and kill each other, a foolish and chaotic world will come.

Society needs order and someone to run it. A world of order and intelligence is a beautiful ideal world."

Sweet precision. Not even covered by mist. Iwafune dodged it by tilting his face.

"Haha. It smells blue, absolutely. Wow, just the "Blue King"?"

Iwafune pulled the trigger while he smiled.

"Hey, Munakata. You've never seen hell, right?"

Another chance. Munakata took it.

"You've never walked through hell, right?"

One more shot. Munakata dodged.

"The reason you can't do that is because you have power. That's because you're a "King". If you were just a human being, and it fell on you or someone you care about, you'd think, "Why me?", "I want power"."

Iwafune walked as he fired his gun. A misty world with dark eyes.

The former Iwafune would have agreed with what Munakata said. That's because Iwafune was the "King". Because he believed himself to be omnipotent.

But no, the "King" is not omnipotent.

Iwafune, or rather, the "kings" who lived at that time, realized this. A monster named Kagutsu Genji taught them that they were nothing more than super-humans.

You cannot make wishes come true, you cannot protect anything, you cannot save anyone.

"The reason why you really believe that you can create an ideal world with your own power is because you are a young man, Munakata, and you haven't experienced any setbacks yet."

So, Iwafune walked slowly and appeared in front of Munakata.

Munakata's eyes widened in surprise, but before he could flash his saber, the hilt of the revolver he held in his inverted hand sank into his belly.

"Only for the "Blue King"?"

"What...?!"

Groaning, Munakata staggered back a few steps. It would have been easy to take him down by stabbing more, but Iwafune didn't do that and raised his hand.

"Ah, it's a bit crazy."

He folded the revolver up again and began to load the bullets.

Munakata was looking at that relaxed state of mind with frustration.

"Don't try too hard, young man. This is the advice of an old man. If you set your ideals too high, you'll also get frustrated, right?"

"I have no intention of engaging in useless talk!", Munakata shouted.

A full blow with a saber, but he was still blocked by a gray wall. Iwafune walked away from Munakata,

"Resuming hide and seek, I won't let you use that move so easily!"

He could feel Munakata's superpower swell.

He was surprised. The gray mist was neutralized by the supernatural field focused on Munakata. Correcting the twisted world to what it should be, it was as if "order" was glowing, but...

Iwafune prepared a revolver loaded with bullets.

"Don't overdo it. Are you feeling better?"

He was no longer going to hide in the mist. because there was no need for it.

"It's useless to use all your strength against a weak opponent. It's high tide here too."

The gray mist accumulated in the muzzle of the revolver. All the skills that were used only for defense until now were converted to attacks. Contradictions like attacking with "absolute protection" are nice, but if a shield is hit with full force, it can become a deadly weapon to beat people to death.

The exhausted Munakata did not have the strength to withstand all of Iwafune's might.

It was something they both knew. Both Iwafune and Munakata are a kind of "King". They could imagine what would happen from here on out.

Despite that, there was no despair in Munakata's eyes.

He looked calmly and intellectually at his impending defeat, his frustration, and Iwafune.

As if to say it would never break.

Iwafune smiled and pulled the trigger.

A bullet with a high output supernatural ability was fired in a straight line.

Munakata reacted to that. The saber, which also glowed with extraordinary power, turned around and caught it with his blade. But no bullets were fired. As he distorted the physical

phenomena around him, he continued to advance until all of his supernatural energy was used up.

Munakata's saber broke at the same time that supernatural power was exhausted.

Half of the saber and the spent bullet fell to the ground at the same time.

"....."

Iwafune shrugged and met Munakata's eyes.

What was floating in the night sky looking up from the hole was exactly what Hisui Nagare had planned. And beyond that, the shining blue "Sword of Damocles" loomed.

The sword of the "King", which was defeated in tatters and looked like it could break at any moment.

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He thought he was asleep for a while.

Beneath his closed eyelids, Nagare sensed several things. The sound of helicopter rotors hitting the air. The smell of gunpowder and dust that tickled his nose. The night wind blew through his hair and he felt the presence he had been yearning for all this time.

Source of eccentricity. An original miracle. God's pedestal that allows people to evolve to the next stage.

"The Dresden Slate."

A familiar voice sounded in his ear.

"Ok, Munakata! The fact that I went out with you and acted like a little chanbara was just to buy time to get this guy out."

Nagare slightly opened his eyes and looked to the side of him.

The familiar stubble looked down with a beaming smile.

It was thanks to him that he was able to sleep. Nagare thought so. Nagare's "trump card", the "Grey King", but also a member of the "Jungle" clan, the human Iwafune Tenkei, who is also like a father.

Nagare trusted Iwafune so much that he could leave everything else to him and go to sleep.

"...Iwa-san."

When he called out to Iwafune in a weak voice, he met Nagare's eyes. With a smile, he laid him down and lay back cross-legged.

"Oh, Nagare. You did it."

"Yes. I understand. Thank you."

As he felt the coldness of the "Dresden Slate" on his cheeks, Nagare certainly laughed as well.

They finally achieved "Jungle's" cherished wish to seize the "Dresden Slate" which had been kept secret by the "Golden King".

Beneath the helicopter's rotor in the sky, swaying on a "Slate" suspended from cables, Iwafune gazed out at the bright lights of the city. Taking a can of beer from his pocket in his cassock, he opened the lid and held it lightly.

"Merry Christmas. This is a present from Iwa-san to you who have been a good boy for nine years. It's too big to put in a sock."

As he said that happily, Iwafune took a sip of his beer.

Nagare, who was looking at him, said to Iwa.

"Iwa-san. I want to drink too. Give me a sip."

"Eh?"

Iwafune frowned curiously, but quickly smiled.

"Well, it's good that you remember the taste of sake, Nagare. Here you go."

He put beer on Nagare's lips and tilted him. The bursting carbonic acid touched Nagare's tongue.

"How is it? What do you think?"

"...Bitter and bad. It's incomprehensible."

Iwafune laughed again at Nagare's scowl.

"It's a boring impression if you use it as a reason for victory."

"Yes. After all, this one suits me better."

Nagare looked down at the "Dresden Slate". It could be seen that the energy consumed was quickly recovered. That was probably due to direct contact with the "Dresden Slate". If they manage to deepen their analysis and fully connect with the "Slate", there will be nothing on earth that can stop them.

The glorious future that he had glimpsed was instantly erased by Nagare.

"Besides, we haven't won yet. They will try to get it back. Now it's our turn to defend."

"Ha. Then leave it to me, it's my job to protect you."

Suddenly, Iwafune frowned as if he had bitten into something sour.

He raised the beer to his mouth to wash it down and smiled distantly.

"If it's about you, I can protect you."

Iwafune looked down. As if he was afraid that Nagare would see his eyes.

Nagare nodded. Iwafune is similar to Nagare, but he is actually a bit different. Nagare lost everything, but Iwafune lost something to protect.

But this is not a fight to recover what was lost.

It's a battle to grab a new dream.

Iwafune looked at Nagare. The light that shone in those eyes. Laughing, he raised the beer can again and looked at the helicopter hovering overhead.

"...By the way, how should I scale this?"

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"Communications restored! No fog effect in sight!"

"The Weismann deviation is rapidly decreasing! It's vertical below!"

Fushimi narrowed his eyes as he listened to the reports from the command car.

"...That kind of thing you can tell just by looking at it."

He muttered in a voice only he can hear and breathed out softly.

There was no sword in heaven anymore.

When the tide receded, the five "Swords of Damocles" disappeared one after another. First green, then blue, then gray, silver, and red, they all disappeared as if they were holding their spears.

The battle of the "Kings" was over.

He didn't even need to hear about the outcome of victory or loss. The helicopter that flew away was undoubtedly the "Dresden Slate". The sound of the receding helicopter rotor was like the triumphant voice of a conqueror.

They had lost.

Then Fushimi thought: "I have to find out how much we lost."

"Isn't the monitor recovered yet?! Make sure the Captain is safe!"

As he gave the order to the command vehicle, Enomoto's panicked voice returned.

"Yes! I will send staff to the "Slate Room" immediately!"

"The ban on electronic communication has been lifted! Contact the air traffic control room in Suzugaya and request that that helicopter, which flew away from Mihashira Tower, be tracked down!"

"I understand!"

At that time, a report from another member surfaced.

"We received a call from Vice Commander Awashima!"

"Contact me with her."

After telling him briefly, Awashima's voice echoed over the radio near his ear.

"This is Awashima speaking. We have now reached the "Slate Room", and have confirmed the safety of the Captain and the other "Kings". There is wear, but there is no threat to life."

"...Is that so."

It seems that the other side is also sweeter than he expected. If that was his intention, they could have taken Munakata's life. The reason why he didn't do that was to avoid the charge of Munakata's second dance, by killing the "King". Is it because he decided that he shouldn't take on that burden, even if it left him worrying about his future?

Or does it mean that now that they have obtained the "Slate", they don't even have to worry about it?

With a click of his tongue, Fushimi reported the situation to Awashima.

"I've done everything I can to fix it. I've restored electronic communication, so I'll leave the rest to the Vice Commander. I'll be in charge of tracking the helicopter."

"...Ah. I understand."

After saying that, Awashima hung up.

Awashima's voice was filled with equal parts relief and regret. She was relieved that Munakata was safe, but she had nothing to do with it. She regretted that.

He almost laughed. But he shouldn't have laughed. This is what a clansman should be, an ideal subject. Thinking of the "King", wishing for his safety and trying to grant that sentence.

He wondered if that was so.

He doesn't know. What he was about to do from now on was undoubtedly Munakata's orders, but he was not thinking of Munakata.

Because he worked. He will do it because it is worth doing.

"You should get insurance."

Fushimi snorted.

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Then dawn came.

Awashima returned to the ground floor and squinted into the dazzling morning sun. She was exhausted from running all night, but she didn't allow herself the luxury of sleep. She still she had to lead "Scepter 4".

"Prioritize getting the wounded out! Are there any wounded still inside the tower?"

"There are some people we can't get in touch with! Rescue teams are currently searching!"

"There is a risk of internal collapse. The rescue team must work with caution!"

There was a lot to do. It doesn't matter if it's a war or not, someone has to deal with the consequences, win or lose.

Awashima ordered herself to do it.

Busy on her feet and working, however, Awashima refused to look at that corner.

A man sat in a transport vehicle.

Reisi Munakata.

The "Blue King", the Boss of "Scepter 4". Originally, he should be the one standing in the front. Under his orders, Awashima rushed through the post-processing. This is how it should have been.

However, after the battle was over, Munakata didn't even try to say a single word.

Since he was able to stand on his own two feet and go down there, there shouldn't be any abnormalities in his body. First of all, she should feel relieved.

But what about his heart?

Doesn't that tattered blue sword mean Munakata's ideals have been shattered?

"Vice Commander. A report from Suzugaya."

Suddenly, Akiyama's voice rang out and Awashima snapped back to reality.

"What happened to that helicopter?"

"That said, the fog seems to interfere not only with visual observation but also with radar, making it impossible to track."

"I see... Anyway, continue the search with all your might."

"Yes."

With a wave, he left the scene. As expected, Akiyama and Benzai didn't show any problem even in that situation. Accepting the fact of defeat as it is, they began to move towards the next thing.

Awashima bit her lip and caught herself. She thought that she should do that too. Like a tireless precision machine, she has to do what she has to do.

"Information team, hurry up and analyze the footage! Consolidate the reports with Fushimi! The squad that suppressed the "Jungle" riots will continue to interrogate and investigate."

Awashima gave instructions one after another as she chided the withering feelings.

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Standing in the hallway, a sense of defeat filled Shiro's heart.

There is a huge hole in the center of the floor. What has been there for a long time no longer exists. A miraculous relic that he himself discovered and was protected by Kokujoji, the "Dresden Slate".

That was stolen.

(Sorry. Lieutenant.), Shiro thought.

He closed his eyes in silence and apologized in his heart to his old friend who was no longer in this world. He knew that no matter how much he apologized, he would not be forgiven, but he felt that if he didn't, he would shrink away from his apology.

Suddenly, he heard two voices behind him.

"Shiro... are you alright?"

"Shiro, what are you going to do now?"

Kuro and Neko, the only two members of Shiro's clan.

Shiro helplessly turned around and laughed. Or he pretended to laugh.

"Haha... I don't know what to do. Actually, I'm lost too. I didn't think I had a joker like that. It was my mistake."

The "Grey King" Iwafune Tenkei.

He even hoped that Nagare had a trump card. However, it was beyond Shiro and Munakata's imagination that the true identity was the "King" himself. Iwafune, who is believed to have been killed in the Kagutsu incident, was on Hisui Nagare's side. No,

judging from the relationship between the two, Iwafune himself may have been the one who raised Nagare.

With a soft smile, Shiro shrugged.

"I suppose one of Hisui Nagare's mysterious backgrounds has been revealed. The price was quite high, but..."

"Don't say unreliable things, Shiro."

Kuro encouraged him and stepped forward.

"There's no time to be depressed. Of course, you're going to get the "Slate" back, right?"

"Get it back, huh?"

Shiro's voice in response resembled a sigh.

"The Lieutenant risked his life for more than half a century to keep it under control, and after his death, Munakata took over and controlled the power of the "Slate". But now, it's only a matter of time before that power is released to the world."

"What will happen if he does? Will they all be naked?"

At Neko's simple question, Shiro involuntarily broke out. Kuro made his eyes triangular and he grabbed Neko's head.

"Idiot. We're serious."

"Boo. I was trying to cheer Shiro up."

Neko puffed out her cheeks and tried to resist. With a kind look, he watched the two of them playing like cat and dog.

Kusanagi and Anna approached Shiro.

"Shiro-san. Let's go out now. There are wounded here too."

"Ah... yes. Thanks for your hard work."

Somewhat awkwardly, Shiro bowed to Kusanagi. Kusanagi doesn't blame Shiro for his attitude, but he is the one who planned this strategy and led them. He was definitely responsible for them.

Then he realized that Anna was staring at him. The "King's" gaze, which possessed great reaction ability, seemed to see through the hesitation within him.

"It's not over yet. There must be more we can do. We're not giving up."

Facing Anna, who said that in a low voice, Shiro also gave her a small reply.

"Yes, that's right. There is still a way..."

Anna nodded and then turned on her heel. Kusanagi also lightly waved her hand and left the "Slate Room" with her.

After dismissing him, Shiro turned around and looked at Neko.

".....? What's wrong, Shiro?"

Neko blinked curiously. Her innocent expression felt painful at that moment. He thought about how to start it and how to avoid scaring Neko, but still he couldn't help but mention her name.

"Hey, Neko. That thing Hisui Nagare said about..."

Neko was surprised.

Neko's shoulders trembled. Fear appeared in her wide-open eyes, and her gaze gave Shiro pain.

But it was a pain he had to face. Until now, Shiro has never had the purpose of facing Neko. Regardless of her identity or her origins, he thought that Neko should just be Neko.

But he won't do that anymore.

If he doesn't face her properly, he probably can't face Hisui Nagare.

"He said your name, right? If I remember correctly..."

"No!!!"

With a bursting voice, Neko cried.

Kuro looked at Neko in surprise. Neko also flinched at her own loud voice.

Then Neko smiled awkwardly.

"W-Wagahai is a cat! I don't have a name!"

Perhaps those words are not true.

But she wasn't acting either. Shiro sensed in Neko's behavior something akin to an obsession, like, "It must be like this".

It's as if they've been imbued with the words, "It doesn't matter who it is."

"Neko."

As Shiro gently approached, Neko jumped back like a wounded animal and kept her distance from him.

It was unprecedented. For Neko, the place next to Shiro was supposed to be the safest place. But now she looks at him with fear as if she is looking at a monster.

"...No."

"Neko, tell me..."

"No way!!"

With a high pitched voice, Neko disappeared.

Ability to manipulate recognition. It would have been easy for Shiro, the "King", to nullify Neko's supernatural powers, but he didn't. It won't work if she doesn't come out of her own free will, instead of ripping off the lid.

"Neko. I'm on your side, so tell me what you're afraid of."

Unanswered. Or maybe she wasn't there anymore. Even so, Shiro continued to raise his voice.

"I'll never give up on you! So please let me talk! Anytime, I want to face it with you!"

Again, there was no response.

He breathed out silently and lowered his head, then Kuro called out to him.

"What's up, Shiro?"

Shiro looked up and shook his head weakly.

"Neko has always acted strangely. She was scared about something and she woke up in the middle of the night."

"...Oh."

"Maybe Neko is afraid of Hisui Nagare. To be more exact, "something", he knows who Neko really is, I guess."

"Oh, really...?"

Kuro frowned curiously.

Perhaps that feeling was beyond Kuro's understanding. Yatogami Kuro is Yatogami Kuro and has never been anything else. He wonders if she remembers exactly where she was born and how she spent her time.

But Neko is not like that.

"To us, Neko has always just been Neko. She's a mysterious girl who claims to be a cat. But that's not true. Neko must have a common name. She must have a proper first and last name. There must have been people who called her that way, and a home that was built for them."

"That's right."

"Do you think she remembers that?"

Shiro looked directly at Kuro and asked.

Kuro spent more time with Neko than with Shiro. For a year, Kuro and Neko had been looking for Shiro. During that time, Kuro should have been watching Neko in her way. Shiro wanted to know the results.

"...I don't understand."

Finally, Kuro shook his head.

"I never heard from her about her home or her family. I've heard about what she used to do, but only when she roamed around like a real wild cat."

"Yes. I thought the reason she didn't talk about her house was that she just didn't want to. But maybe Neko doesn't really remember who she is."

Kuro's doubts seemed to deepen.

"But that is..."

"Yes. Of course, if that's the case, Neko's attitude is strange. Normally, people who don't know about their past want to know about it. Just like me."

What came back vividly in his mind was that rainy day when he returned home with Kuro and Neko.

The family home that should have been, the family that should have been, no longer existed. There was a public facility, a dome-shaped playground.

Shiro still remembers the feeling of losing his feet at that time. The fear of being confronted with the fact that a person named Isana Yashiro does not exist anywhere.

That's why Shiro knows about Neko's abnormalities. There's no way someone who knows nothing about himself could behave so innocently.

"It's impossible if it's true, but we know the solution."

As if he realized something, Kuro took a deep breath.

"No way, is it the ability to manipulate recognition?"

"That's right. For some reason, Neko wanted to seal her past even from herself. She then applied her recognition manipulation ability to herself. She believes that she is a cat, and her past as a human doesn't exist."

"What a stupid thing..."

Shiro nodded without objection to Kuro's reluctant words.

"Of course, it's just speculation. I don't have any evidence to back it up, and I don't think I'll ever find anything like that. But that would explain why Neko freaked out at the name "Ameno Miyabi"."

Kuro pondered with a difficult expression and then looked at Shiro hesitantly.

"Shiro. Since this is about you, you're probably seriously thinking of Neko when you say that. But if that's the case, is it alright if we carelessly intervene?"

"....."

"If Neko sealed her past, there must be a reason for doing so. But would touching and exposing that past of hers really do her any good?"

He didn't know that.

But one thing was sure.

"Hisui Nagare will surely do that."

Why the "Green King" who is obsessed with Neko is also hiding in the darkness of lack of information. But sooner or later he will come into contact with Neko. This is how he would try to dig her up as "Ameno Miyabi".

He never doubts his purpose. Why did Neko want to seal her past?

"We also have a difficult decision to make. Either we face Neko's past, or if she's like this, I can't go with her in a fight with Hisui Nagare."

Kuro clenched his fist in frustration. Neko is Kuro's partner, no, Shiro's. That will never change.

But is it really right to take a wounded comrade to the battlefield? The decision had not yet been made.

"Anyway, I have to talk to Neko. And then everything will start."

Kuro also nodded slightly at Shiro, who spoke gravely.

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The voices of "Scepter 4" could be heard from far away.

Even under those circumstances, they were active. Or should it be say that it is precisely because of that situation? "Scepter 4" is a so-called "government office", and there is work to be done no matter what. Post-processing, contact with various places and the work to be done are varied.

Yata was a bit envious.

Yata cast a bored look towards his "Homura" comrades.

At the entrance to Mihashira Tower, some leaned against the wall, others sat on the ground, simply maintaining an oppressive silence without making eye contact.

It was exactly the atmosphere of the team when they lost in a fight.

Bando broke the silence with a careless voice.

"Ah. After being heavily used by the "Silver King", and in the end the strategy failed."

Akagi responded with a wry smile.

"If you say that, you'll lose your mind, San-chan."

"That's right. We are also responsible for not being able to stop the "Green King"."

"I wonder what will happen from now on..."

"Well, for now, aren't you glad you weren't badly hurt?"

Yata listened with a touch of irritation as each of them said what he wanted. However, it was not enough to stop them. Until now, they have been fighting "Jungle". However, if results were not forthcoming, one would be tempted to complain.

Kamamoto uttered a single question.

"If the green guys get their hands on the "Slate," what do you think will happen? Yata-san..."

Yata scratched his head and spoke in a dismissive tone.

"...Come on. Something terrible is going to happen."

The "Silver King". Isana Yashiro's explanation was not fully understood by Yata and the other members of "Homura". The Kusanagi area would be different, but in any case, all he knew was that an "evil thing" would happen.

All humans would become psychic. He could not imagine such a world. He has exchanged silly jokes about whether the lady who works at the fish shop he goes to will also become a supernatural being, or whether she will be able to keep the fish fresh by blowing cold air from her hands, but...

Of course, he knew that it wasn't that carefree. The whole world will fall into chaos. The number of psychic criminals will increase explosively and many people will die in unnecessary conflicts. He knew it in his head, but he couldn't imagine it.

Yata suddenly looked up.

In the morning glow, someone approached him.

Looking at that person's face, Yata noticed that his eyebrows were wrinkling.

"...Saru."

Fushimi Saruhiko looked at the crouching "Homura" members and his face did not show any emotion. It would have been a lie if he said that he didn't take offense at the stone look at the side of the road, but now Fushimi was in a joint fight. After hesitating over what to say, what came out of his mouth were boring words.

"Good job."

Fushimi laughed. It was his kind of smirk.

"If you make a big deal about an alliance and play a ridiculous matchup and then lose, you can't even look at it."

He was blown away by the way he said it. Yata looked at Fushimi,

"Don't put it that way. We all fight with all our might, right?"

"I'm going to do my best, huh? It's a loser's idea to be satisfied even if you don't get results if you work hard."

"That is...!"

The members of "Homura" became irritated and turned their eyes towards Fushimi with a thirst for blood. Yata also shook his fist and raised an angry voice.

"Don't say that, since you were only typing on your computer in the vehicle! By the way, wouldn't it be better if your "King" had won against the "Grey King"?"

Fushimi looked at Yata coldly.

He couldn't help but keep his mouth shut because he remembered Awashima's pained expression. It is true that he does not like the "Blue King", but what would the clansman think about it? If it was him, if Anna or Suoh were to be torn apart, he would beat them up without hesitation.

Such consideration for Yata, but Fushimi...

"Exactly. I'm disappointed too."

He politely ignored it.

Passing by Yata, who was surprised, Fushimi walked away. Yata unintentionally turned around and yelled at his back.

"Hey, it's your "King" we're talking about! Aren't you going to fight for him?!"

Fushimi ignored him and walked quickly, suddenly stopping.

"Hey."

From a distance, Fushimi turned his head and looked at Yata.

"Finally, it could get interesting. Come after me, okay?"

His slight smile seemed different from the nihilistic ones he used to have.

Yata recognized that face. A long time ago. when they were just kids.

It was the look on his face when he spoke of his ambition to turn the world upside down like no one had ever done before.

"Saruhiko...?"

Confused, he called out to him, but Fushimi doesn't answer. He looked ahead and kept going. As if to say that this is the correct path.

Turning his back, Yata felt a strange noise in his chest.

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A painful bandage was wrapped around Munakata's back.

It was a scar from the battle with the "Grey King". Hidaka Akira had never seen Munakata so hurt before or after. He thought that the "King" was invincible. Never bad, never hurt, never shaken... that's what Hidaka saw from Munakata, and also from the other members of the Special Forces.

But not.

The "King" is never invincible. If he fights another "King", he may get hurt or lose. Just like Munakata today.

Still, Munakata remained calm. At least that's how he appeared from the outside. He pulled the uniform over the bandages and muttered to himself.

"To think that the "Grey King" was still alive... Furthermore, it was unexpected that he was attached to Hisui Nagare."

Hidaka felt a sense of relief at his calm tone. It seemed as if the usual attitude or defeat had no effect on Munakata. Despite having the "Slate" stolen, he wondered if he would be able to return to his daily work without incident.

"Unexpected? Yes, I agree. It's a mistake that could have been avoided."

There was something that cut through Hidaka's naive expectations.

Fushimi.

With his back against the rear door of the transport vehicle, he nodded.

"It's clearly the fault of you and Isana Yashiro, the "Kings", who didn't suspect the shadow of the "Grey King". I can't believe that the "King" is completely oblivious to the existence of another "King" because he is simply obsessed with the struggles for the "Slate".

Hidaka looked at Fushimi with a frozen face. In a situation like that, what would he do? He wondered, but Fushimi Saruhiko was originally that kind of person. Exceptionally good, but nothing to wear you down. It seems that it does not change even if the "King" is the opponent.

"If you're only here to criticize something that can't be helped by saying it now, take a step back. I'm tired."

There was obvious irritation in his voice.

Hidaka was in shock inside. Because he was far from the Munakata that he knew. Always calm and motivated, no matter what difficulties come his way, he can blow them away without hesitation as much as a gentle breeze. That was Hidaka, no, it was the appearance of the "Blue King" that everyone imagined in "Scepter 4".

He collapsed.

Fushimi cast a disdainful look at Munakata.

"Aren't you going to give me any instructions from now on?"

"Isana Yashiro will think ahead. Follow his instructions. I'm a loser, so I'll refrain from doing it for a while."

It was a flirtatious comment. Fushimi pushed away from the back door, glared at Munakata with obvious anger, and said abusively.

"Why are you in a bad mood, why did you get beaten in a one-on-one fight? The "Golden King" is dead, all the bulges over your eyes are now out of sight, and the world is about to get away with it yours, but the troublesome old man is still alive. I'm sure you'll hate him too."

Munakata slowly turned to look at Fushimi.

There was a silent anger in his eyes.

Hidaka swallowed. Although the gaze was not directed at him, he couldn't help but want to prostrate himself and beg for forgiveness. What's more, the "King's" anger had a cold pressure.

"Do you feel better with this result? You must have been dissatisfied with this alliance in the first place. Were you going to wait and see if the strategy failed?"

But Saruhiko Fushimi was not an ordinary clansman like Akira Hidaka. Looking back at his anger, he slammed his hands against the rear bumper.

"By the way, I was thinking you were going to lose!"

Unable to remain silent, Hidaka raised a voice to stop him.

"Fushimi-san, you're saying too much...!"

Fushimi looked at Hidaka. Immediately, Hidaka was speechless and withdrew. Without even laughing at him, Fushimi turned to the inside of the vehicle and said in a rather calm voice.

"...If you say you'll leave me here, I'll quit."

"Then resign. If you have any complaints about me, just leave. You were originally a traitor, right?"

".....!"

Fushimi's expression froze. Munakata continued, as if to laugh at that reaction.

"If you don't like it, resign immediately. You've always been that kind of person. This is how you can't follow any "King" from the bottom of your heart, but you can't get out of the gears of the "Slate", and you're wandering in a narrow range. You're just a small object."

Fushimi drew his saber.

There was no chance of anyone stopping him. Fushimi slammed his saber against the back door in one smooth motion and ripped off his "Scepter 4" uniform jacket. Fushimi had already turned on his heel and started walking when the saber struck his fluttering jacket.

"Fushimi-san!"

Hidaka called out to him. But Fushimi's back spoke louder than his face. No one's words or intentions reached him, he only felt a firm rejection.

Giving up on trying to stop Fushimi from escaping, Hidaka insisted on Munakata instead.

"Captain, shouldn't we stop him?!"

"Leave him alone."

Hidaka felt an indescribable unease at Munakata's spitting tone.

Fushimi is certainly a person who converted from "Homura". He was also dissatisfied with the alliance this time, and his rhetoric to the defeated Munakata would never have been reasonable.

But still, was Munakata the type of person he would call others "traitors"?

Even Hidaka could have guessed that if he said that to Fushimi now, he would be furious. He didn't think Munakata didn't understand that. That could be because Munakata thinks that Fushimi should leave, or...

Was the wound Munakata received so deep that he couldn't even think of such a thing?

It was an irreverent idea. Hidaka shook his head and dismissed it. Still, he couldn't shake off the anxiety that rose like a black cloud.

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There was a languid atmosphere in the HOMRA bar.

The members of "Homura" who had returned to their base were speaking less than usual, and the voices of those they were arguing with were also low pitched. It could be that they were exhausted from fighting all night, but more than anything, the reality of defeat weighed heavily on them.

Yata, lying on the couch, felt bitterness in the environment.

But, at the same time, he was certainly there to accept it. In the past, Yata wouldn't have been able to bear the fact that he had "lost" and would have gone out and attacked something, but now he feels that it can't be helped.

Of course, he hadn't given up. The "Chabudai Alliance" lost to "Jungle". But that doesn't mean it's all over. There is always a "next". Even if he fell down once, he still had the strength to get up. Yata was convinced of that.

He thinks he's changed a bit.

Before, he did not think about the "next". Yata only had "now", and he was glad not to think about the future. He just ran and hit everything he could get his hands on. Or get hit. He will win or lose, in the end someone would have done something for him. Kusanagi, Totsuka or Suoh Mikoto.

There is no substitute for him now. Yata knows. Anna is the "Red King", but she is not the type to lead people. Similarly, Kusanagi can organize well, but he's not good at inspiring people.

It's his job to do that. Run ahead of others, and have everyone follow. That is the form of the current "Homura".

Yata's role has changed.

What has changed the most is that Yata himself understands that.

"...I wonder if it's always like this."

No one heard the leaked words. They were chatting quietly about the events of the day and the appearance of the "Grey King".

Like Yata, Fushimi was now an executive of "Scepter 4".

Yata knew exactly what role Fushimi had played in that operation. He ended up saying things like "You were just typing on your computer", but if it wasn't for that guy's support, the "Jungle" Clansman would have killed them in no time. Mishakuji Yukari and Gojou Sukuna are stronger than them.

Fushimi has established a strong position in "Scepter 4" to the extent that he can be entrusted with such an important role. Probably to the point that no other person can replace him.

The more he thought about it, the more he couldn't understand it.

What Fushimi said when he walked past him, just before leaving Mihashira Tower.

(Finally, it could get interesting. Come after me, okay?)

It was incomprehensible. they lost. Whatever happens from now on, he doesn't think it's going to be fun. Also, what does that "come after me" mean? So it's like...

At that moment, he heard an incoming call from behind the counter.

"Hi, Seri-chan. What's up? Are you calling to discuss our next moves?"

Kusanagi, who had answered the PDA, let out a calm voice. He was talking about cooperation with "Scepter 4"? Yata gave Kusanagi a vague look.

"Hmm? Fushimi? No, he's not here, but... what about Fushimi?"

The name that came up took his breath away.

Holding down the earpiece of the PDA, Kusanagi looked at Yata.

"Yata, you are not in contact with Fushimi, are you?"

Confused, Yata shook his head.

"Are you fucking with me? What did he do?"

"I don't like it... It seems they lost contact with him after he left after arguing with "Scepter 4"."

He stood up without thinking.

Kusanagi resumed their conversation on the PDA with a worried look on his face. Yata left the HOMRA bar without hesitation. Kamamoto was yelling Yata's name behind him, but he didn't hear it either. Feeling the winter chill on his cheeks, he frantically pulled his PDA and called Fushimi's contact number.

No matter how many times he called, there was no sign of Fushimi picking up.

"Saruhiko...!"

As he called out his name, Yata couldn't comprehend the emotions welling up inside him. A tingling fever that is neither impatience nor anxiety nor anger. He tried to get rid of his doubts, but it doesn't work. Fushimi's words held him back.

Come after me.

Is he not about to leave the place where he is now? So he's not trying to go somewhere deadlier? What if Fushimi, who was disappointed in his "King", Munakata, was able to escape from "Scepter 4"? So where will he go next?

"You cannot do that!"

Yata yelled at his own thoughts.

Fushimi left "Homura" because it was the right thing for him. Yata doesn't approve of this, but he doesn't doubt that Fushimi holds his own convictions. He believes that he is not the type of person who would switch affiliations over and over again just because he lost or was at a disadvantage.

Believe in him, he should have.

"It is not like this."

His soliloquy that fell on the asphalt while he lowered his gaze rang in Yata's ears.

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Fushimi walks the streets at night.

The breath exhaled from him is white, and there are a lot of people. Now that he thinks about it, today is December 25, Christmas day. Fushimi snorted sarcastically as he walked past lovers snuggling together and families laughing as they held hands with their children.

No one here knows that until recently a deadly battle for the fate of humanity was being waged. Or maybe it was just an illusion. The fate of more than 7 billion people was being contested by only a few dozen supernatural beings.

But it is true.

Before long, all 7 billion human beings will become psychic.

The greatest upheaval in human history will occur. Many people will die. Laughing here and now, children, fathers, mothers, lovers and friends, how many will survive?

Fushimi stopped thinking like that.

He couldn't help but think about it. Even at that very moment, somewhere in the world there is a war and people are dying in vain. The happiness of the "here and now" only exists in the "here and now". Even if it eventually breaks, it is what it is.

Fushimi turned his back on that happiness and headed to a deserted park.

At that moment he rang a bell in his chest.

He clucked asking if he was still there and pulled it out. Awashima and other members of "Scepter 4", blocking all incoming calls, but it seems something was missing.

Fushimi narrowed his eyes when he saw the person that was calling on the screen.

Yata Misaki.

Contorting a cheek, Fushimi cut the call short.

He would add him to his block list as well. As he did so, Fushimi started walking again. He left the hustle and bustle and wandered into a deserted park.

Munakata's voice echoed in his mind.

(You were originally a traitor, right?)

Fushimi laughed, thinking that it was normal to say such a thing.

Traitor. That must be true. He discarded "Homura" and ran to "Scepter 4". There are many within and without the clan who call him a traitor. However, he never thought that "King" himself would say that.

He didn't know if those words were Munakata's true feelings. Or he could say that he was just telling the truth. What if Munakata said that after properly understanding what it meant?

Fushimi stared at the PDA screen with stagnant eyes.

"Then I will become a traitor..."

A green glow reflected off his glasses. Fushimi logged into his account for the first time in several years by touching the "Jungle" mark on the PDA screen.