



K

RETURN OF KINGS  
SUZUKI SUZU / GoRA

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

### CHAPTER 11: MEETING

The students were the first to react to the column of light.

At that time, it was just after school in Gakuenjima. After a long class, several students begin to stretch their wings. Some people go to club activities, others start talking about playing, and others prepare to go home. How they enjoy their freedom varies from person to person.

Among them, Sota Mishina was forced to do housework.

"Why the hell should I do something like this...?"

While he muttered to himself, he carried the many materials that the teacher had given him and headed to the warehouse. It was on the way that he noticed a column of light.

"What's that?"

The students around the glowing green light pillar were also buzzing around, some holding their tan PDAs and trying to take pictures. Mishina would have done the same if he had free time, but unfortunately he was full of luggage. He then approached the window and tried to look closer.

At that moment, the window exploded.

"Wah?!"

He couldn't help but fall on my butt and the materials were scattered throughout the hallway. As if he was fleeing from danger, Mishina began to back away with his butt pressed to the ground. As the window suddenly burst, he thought something had been thrown from outside.

But it was different. The force that broke the window came from the inside, not the outside.

Mishina realized that that power resided in his own hands. He looked in horror at his hand, which was emitting a mysterious light.

"Mishina, are you okay?!"

His classmate Inaba ran towards him. Mishina tried to ask for help.

"Kyaaaah!"

Inaba's hands also emitted red light.

"What?!"

The red light burned Mishina's bangs and spread to the nearby curtains. As the curtains burst into flames, screams could be heard from the surrounding area. No, not only that. The surrounding students also emitted light, causing confusion everywhere.

"W-what is this?!"

"Oh, I don't know either!"

Mishina was screaming against the wall and Inaba was no longer trying to get closer. Mishina's hand and Inaba's hand were each enveloped in a different color of light. If that is a source of danger, approaching someone would put them and others at risk.

"What is happen...?!"

Mishina cautiously stood up and looked out the window; His eyes widened.

He could see the school building, the club building, and the playground from the window, and he saw flashes of light and columns of smoke rising.

Unsure of his feet, Mishina put his hand against the window. His hands were shining. Mishina swallowed, seeing that as proof that the world had changed forever.

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"That is...!"

Kukuri Yukizome ran out of the school building and gasped at the sight.

Gakuenjima was in an uproar. The students were running and the teachers were trying to guide them. However, the teachers were unable to control their power, which contributed to the chaos. Exposed to the red light, wooden benches caught fire and streetlights hit by green lightning short-circuited and exploded. An unbridled power attacked the people, making them flee in terror.

Kukuri recognized that scene.

"It's like that time a year ago..."

A year ago, the school occupation incident. The school was occupied by a mysterious group and the students, including Kukuri, were trapped by them. Kukuri remembered that the group at that time had certainly used similar powers.

However, Kukuri immediately denied it.

"No, it's different. Back then, those people were using strange powers. But now, it seems that everyone in the school has been taken over by strange powers..."

Kukuri tried to remember in detail what happened a year ago. Perhaps because of the shocking experience of being held hostage, her memories of him were only hazy.

What he remembers are his eyes.

Two wet, glaring eyes looked at Kikuri from the darkness. However, she felt as if dozens of people were staring at her. Exposed to that gaze, Kukuri was too scared to move. Like a pitiful rabbit thrown before a fox, she could only stare at him, trembling, as her eyes closed in...

The next thing she knew, Kuro was holding her back.

With his help, Kukuri evacuated to a safe place without knowing why. However, the fear and anxiety did not disappear. She was afraid of not knowing. Like a child afraid of the dark, Kukuri could only tremble along with her classmates.

That fear has returned for the first time in a year. Kukuri bit her lip and placed her hand on her swaying chest.

Her hand began to glow.

Like that time a mysterious force took over her.

An instinctive fear welled up from the depths of her memory. Kukuri closed her eyes and screamed, trying to push her hand away from him.

"No!"

"Kukuri!"

Someone screamed and grabbed Kukuri's hand.

The glow on her hands gradually weakened and disappeared. Kukuri watched, blinking. Her own hand and Shiro's hand holding her.

"Hey, good. We're on time."

"Shiro-kun...? Kuro-kun and Wagahai-chan too."

The person who was smiling gently was a boy named Isana Yashiro, whom she had met just a month ago. Kuro and Neko are there too. She didn't know how it worked, but she realized that he had stopped her from losing control and lowered her head in panic.

"Thank you, Shiro-kun."

"No, it's fine. I would prefer that..."

When he was about to say that, Shiro shook his head with a smile on his face.

Seeing that smile, Kukuri felt a strange feeling.

She has not had a long relationship with Shiro. She can't even count the number of conversations they've had.

However, she felt that something like this had happened before. Kukuri was attacked by "something", but Shiro rescued her. Even though it shouldn't have happened and even though she doesn't remember it, she felt that Shiro had always helped her.

When she was about to confirm that, Kuro opened his mouth.

"Kukuri. I have a favor to ask of you."

Kukuri asked again with wide eyes.

"Huh, me?"

"Ah. It's something only you can do."

Kuro's expression was very serious and Neko nodded her head. Kukuri looked around her. Although her own power has diminished, the chaos continues and it is unclear how much damage it has caused. She didn't think that she, a mere student, could do anything in this situation.

But...

She constantly received help from Kuro, Neko and Shiro. If there is anything Kukuri can do for them, she will do it.

Kukuri nodded and said resolutely.

"...Yes. Tell me what I can do!"

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And then the light went out.

The column of light that penetrated from the underground to the heavens suddenly disappeared without warning. In the blink of an eye, the light particles dissolved into the air, leaving only silence as if nothing had happened.

"It has disappeared...?"

"No."

Hisui Nagare leaned forward and responded to someone's murmur.

"This is the true form and true brilliance of the "Dresden Slate", the treasure that creates the "King". What a joy. I am moved."

His tone was calm, but it was obvious to everyone that Nagare was excited. His cheeks are cheerful and his eyes shine. It was a natural reaction since a lifelong wish had come true. Just as Nagare had said, the "Slate" was glowing.

In contrast to when the pillars of light roared, the current "Slate" shines with a calm light, like the surface of a lake reflecting moonlight. Although the intensity of the liberation is no longer present, the brilliance of it is imbued with an intangible divinity.

Mishakuji put his hand on his cheek and murmured dreamily.

"Light that transforms the world. How beautiful..."

"Hey, Nagare, will this become a new world from now on?"

Nagare shook his head at Sukuna's question.

"It's not going to change now. It's already changed."

"Already changed?"

Iwafune crossed his arms. The way he looks at the "Slate" is filled with an unchanging sense of resignation.

"The "Dresden Slate" is a device that allows all humans to evolve into kings like us. It was originally awakened by the "Silver King", but the stubborn elder of the "Golden King" suppressed its functions. Until now, this thing has been operating in safe mode."

"However, there is no longer anything that can stop the "Slate". With the "Slate" regaining its full power, all of humanity has evolved and the possibility of becoming a "King "has opened up."

"There is a possibility for all humanity..."

Sukuna gasped as he considered the meaning of those words.

"Okay, we're outside now."

Fushimi followed him and muttered to himself.

"...It's probably a disaster."

He has run the simulation many times. When people have power that cannot be regulated, they will fear it and use it because they are afraid. To protect himself, to satisfy his own desires. Unspeakable chaos and riots ensue. It is impossible for the powers that be to suppress it.

Countless people will die.

He recognizes it as the pain of childbirth.

"Yes. When previously powerless people gain supernatural powers, the existing order will be overturned and a new world will be born. A world where they can shape their own destiny."

"...A world where you can resist unreasonable death."

Iwafune's expression was dark. Only he knows Hisui Nagare's estimation. He realized that there is a world beyond the enormous sacrifices and mountain climbs.

Then, Nagare nodded silently.

"Affirmative."

Sukuna tilted his head, but immediately smiled confidently.

"Hmm... In other words, my future opponent is a king like Nagare. Great, my arms are ringing! The stronger the enemy, the more rewarding it will be to defeat him!"

Mishakuji suddenly laughed. He shifted his gaze towards the "Slate" and opened his arms as if to welcome it.

"A new world created by kings who compete with each other. A paradise will come for the fittest. We will become the flowers that bloom in that world."

Nagare stared at the Mishakuji. Iwafune and Nagare were not the only ones who suffered an unreasonable death. Does Mishakuji remember his past, or is he not the kind of person who gets caught up in those things? Even Nagare's brain could not measure it.

One thing was for sure, he was looking forward to that world.

That's good. It doesn't matter what dreams he has, as long as his goal is the same, there is no problem. The members there were like-minded people. At least, for now.

And Fushimi turned on his heel. Walking away in the opposite direction from the hiding place.

"...What a stupid thing."

Nagare didn't miss what he muttered. Nagare continued thinking as he watched Fushimi's back retreat.

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Prime Minister's Office.

It is said to be the most important place in the country, where the Prime Minister, the leader of Japan, holds office. For more than half a century since the end of the war, numerous management operations have been carried out in that room. Although there is a knot in the eye, the Cabinet Office still has the ultimate authority and has been able to deal with various situations.

However, all Prime Minister Kanichi Samukawa could do now was listen to the news on television.

"Now, I would like to inform you about the news regarding the increase in incidents related to unique abilities. Incidents related to unique abilities have been occurring

frequently since the beginning of this year, but the number of incidents has increased explosively since around noon today. Taking the situation seriously, the government asks citizens to refrain from going out. Similar phenomena are also occurring in countries around the world."

"Please change the channel."

While he was muttering, the secretary hurriedly operated the remote control. However, when she changed the channel, all the broadcast stations, even those that were broadcasting anime even during the state of emergency, were covering this incident in a big way, which only added to Samukawa's stress.

Samukawa asked, drumming his fingers on the desk impatiently.

"Have you heard from "Jungle"?"

"Not yet."

"That's strange! I never heard that such a big disaster would occur! If this continues, it will become a diplomatic matter!"

"Even if you ask me, I don't know."

The secretary frowned in confusion. She was a woman in her twenties with beautiful eyebrows, but her biggest flaw was that she couldn't respond flexibly. Samukawa regretted his mistake in choosing that person and said that he did not choose her because of her appearance.

At that moment, his feet trembled and a roar echoed from somewhere.

"What?! What's going on?!"

As Samukawa looked around in a panic, a corner of the wall surrounding his office disappeared, as if it had been cut away, and began to reflect the scenery outside.

"This...! I can see through the wall!"

"Eh?"

The secretary was increasingly confused. Of course, since the Prime Minister suddenly started mumbling something strange.

However, Samukawa himself understood what had happened to him. That's a phenomenon that has been happening frequently since "Jungle", who suddenly awakened to supernatural powers one day, stole the "Slate" for ordinary humans. That's what happened to Samukawa.

However, that is not an immediate problem. The real problem was the view beyond the transparent wall.



The Strains that were emitting an unearthly glow were arriving in droves. They are destroying the main gate, knocking down the SP, shouting angrily and raising their fists, and are about to rush towards the official residence.

"There's a disturbance at my official residence! Come on, gakk!"

Samukawa turned his bright golden eyes towards the secretary and growled involuntarily. Her clothes were transparent and the lines of the secretary's body were clearly visible.

The reason why he couldn't help but look away was not because Samukawa was a gentleman, but because he was shy. The disturbance is a much more serious problem than the female body in front of him.

"No, someone protect me! Please call Munakata-kun!"

"But Prime Minister, you fired Reisi Munakata..."

"Oh, it's true!"

At the same time, he put his head in his hands, there was a loud knock on the office door, causing him to tremble.

Samukawa crouched under the desk. Crouched and trembling, he cried out in regret.

"Munakata-kun! It was my fault! Please help me!"

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Iwafune, who was lying on the couch, asked Nagare while he was playing with his PDA.

"Somehow, we have received a request for help from the Prime Minister's Office. What are we going to do about it?"

Nagare didn't even turn around. He replied casually as he looked at the glowing "Slate".

"At this stage, the importance of the existing national power has become extremely low. There is no need for us to help. We will ignore them."

"I understand."

Iwafune turned off the PDA and threw it away. Then, he stared at Nagare's back, standing in front of the "Slate".

Hisui Nagare had already been released from the straitjacket.

By connecting to the "Slate", he was able to gain almost unlimited abilities. Even without the straitjacket that traps supernatural powers inside him, Nagare can continue to "alter" his own death.

He can live.

From Iwafune's point of view, Nagare was just doing the obvious. It is natural for a living being to fight to survive.

Iwafune took a deep breath and muttered.

"That was long."

Nagare also responded without turning around.

"Affirmative. We had to hide for a long time to escape the pursuit of the "Golden King"."

"At that time, it even gave me chills. I never thought you would fight with the golden old man. And you were beaten."

"Kokujoji Daikaku was immature to get so nervous just because a child was jumping, even though he was an old man. I thought I was going to die. I regret that."

Iwafune laughed again at Nagare's words, which seemed to hit him from the bottom of his heart. Actually, in terms of insanity, Hisui Nagare is by far the best. At that time, no King would have even imagined that he would "challenge the great enlightenment of the country".

"Well, that's over now. The "Golden King" is dead and the "Slate" is ours."

"This isn't over yet."

Nagare said, interrupting Iwafune. Iwafune frowned suspiciously and saw several holograms appear above Nagare's head. Among the images of the Red, Blue, and Silver clans, there was one image that caught his attention.

Reisi Munakata.

The "Blue King", dressed in civilian clothes, walked calmly with a single man on his back.

Nagare muttered.

"This time it's the opposite of what happened a month ago. It's our turn to defend and their turn to attack."

"Looks like that guy hasn't learned the lesson."

After laughing at the irony, Iwafune suddenly had an idea.

"Is that why they closed the connecting passages besides the Yomito Gate?"

"Yes. At the same time, we are removing the civilians from around Yomito Gate and gathering the U-Ranks into this "secret base". This is an exceptional process, but we will maintain this system until everything is finished."

The clan members probably won't be able to fight the "King" too much. Furthermore, he recognized the man Munakata brought with him. The "Zenjo Demon". It is the pocket sword of the previous "Blue King" Habari Jin, and is also the man who killed Habari. Although he is a member of a clan, he is supposed to have power comparable to that of a "King".

Iwafune opened his mouth as he thought.

"So, you're assuming they'll even infiltrate the "secret base"?"

"However, the possibility of them reaching me and the "Slate" is not zero. But..."

Before Iwafune's eyes, his power increased.

A visibly green aura overflowed from Nagare's body. With that, Nagare slowly stood up from his wheelchair. He looked at the image above his head and smiled fearlessly.

"As long as I am connected to the "Slate", there is no time limit for me. It is infinite. There is no chance they can defeat me. It is zero."

Then, Nagare looked at Iwafune again.

"Therefore, it makes no sense to place two "Kings" in this place. Iwa-san, please welcome the "Blue King"."

"Huh? Is that what you expected too?"

"Possibilities always exist."

Iwafune took a deep breath and stood up.

He was thinking that he had finished everything he had to do and was just waiting to see what was left, but it seems that won't be the case. Well, if he thinks about it, although the threat still exists, there is no way Nagare will allow the "King", who has the greatest strength, to be idle. Iwafune stopped suddenly as he turned on his heel, wondering if this was his last task.

"If you have the power of that "Slate", you can release your "alteration" power to its full potential, right?"

When he said it, he wanted it to be something happy. The power of Negare that is directly connected to the "Slate" is as powerful as has never been seen before. It will probably surpass even Kokujoji Daikaku in its heyday.

Iwafune said laughing.

"So, could it be possible to change things in the past? For example, Iwa-san's losing horse racing ticket quickly turns into a winning ticket, and other things..."

It was just supposed to be a casual comment.

However, at that moment, what flashed through Iwafune's mind was a scene of ruins.

Kagutsu Genji. The "King" of violence. Hundreds of thousands of deaths were born as a result of that rampage. There are no signs of life in the completely destroyed city, and Iwafune is the only one walking in its midst. No matter who he calls, there is no voice that comes back. The people who loved him, the people he protected, disappeared from this world.

The "Slate" awakened all humanity to turn them into "Kings". They have gained the power to transcend cause and effect and distort phenomena.

If he used that power, he wondered if he could make that never happen.

That tragedy. That destruction. Even now, from this moment on, he could start again.

"I'm sorry. Iwa-san."

Nagare's words cut off Iwafune's delusions.

"Why do you apologize?"

"I can't do that. Not even I can change the past."

"....."

Seeing Nagare's apologetic expression, Iwafune felt ashamed and mocked himself.

"Well, that's true. There's no way there could be a story that good."

He shrugged. Although it was a joke, Iwafune was still ashamed of himself. He was ashamed that Nagare had seen past his selfish dreams.

They can't change what happened before. And he remembered that it was because of that tragedy that they are there today.

"I believe that working constantly and diligently is the shortest path to happiness. I'm leaving."

"Yes, take care."

Iwafune thought silently as he walked towards the exit of the "secret base".

(That's right. Changing the past and starting over isn't convenient, right?)

Nagare is looking at the "Slate". However, what he is really seeing is not a relic of the past. That is the future they are about to enter.

He will make all humans "kings" and push humanity to the next stage. For that reason Nagare died and for that reason he was revived. The new world that is about to begin is one in which he deserves to breathe.

(Your power is the power to change the present and change the future. So go ahead and remake this world, this giant toy box, however you want, Nagare.)

Smiling slightly, Iwafune left the "secret base".

"Please calm down and try calmly! You will be surprised to see that strange power suddenly appear, but it can be controlled!"

Kukuri, who was standing on the stage, issued a loud loudspeaker.

At first, the voice was so low that she was easily drowned out by the confusion caused by the supernatural powers. The students became frightened and ran away from fear because of the anxiety that an unknown power was coming from none other than themselves.

Still, Kukuri was unfazed and continued to encourage the others.

"Remember what happened a year ago. When this school was attacked. Just like that person who saved us back then!"

Meanwhile, students began to appear and responded to Kukuri's voice.

Like burned disaster victims, they began to gather around Kukuri. Their bodies emitted a supernatural light of red, blue and green.

Kukuri jumped off the stage and touched the bright red arm of the student in front. The student covered in fear, but when Kukuri emitted a silver-white supernatural light, the red light was enveloped by her and disappeared.

"Uh... this..."

"It's okay. Calm down."

Kukuri smiled at the student, as if to reassure her. She was still confused for a moment, but then nodded slightly and crouched down, cradling her arms.

The surrounding students gasped when they saw that. They were scared and confused, but they found a ray of hope in what they had just seen.

Taking advantage of that opportunity, Kukuri once again turned on the speaker and raised her voice.

"This power is not to destroy anything! It is to protect ourselves! So please...!"

"A year ago..."

"Now that I think about it, there was someone who helped me back then..."

"What resides in us now is the same power that those people had! So please do not be afraid! You can control this yourselves! Once you have calmed down, tell the others that it is okay and they can control it!"

Little by little, people began to gather around Kukuri.

Although each of them emanated supernatural powers, they desperately tried to control it. Some crouched on the ground, while others held hands to prevent their powers from getting out of control.

The light of supernatural power was weakening. In proportion to that, their confusion decreased. The fear and anxiety had not completely disappeared. The students were still scared.

Even so, she could no longer find anything that was falling into chaotic chaos or reckless behavior. Reflecting the anxiety of disaster victims, they began to discover what they could do.

With a sigh of relief, Kukuri lowered the speaker.

(This is fine, Shiro-kun. Kuro-kun. Wagahai-chan.)

Supernatural powers have not disappeared. If another agitation occurs, their fear will return. If that happens, she will simply raise her voice again. She will share with everyone what she was taught and her willingness to face chaos.

(I do what I can only do. That's why...!)

With determination in her heart, Kukuri turned her eyes towards the sky.

In the distance, she could see an airship flying away from Gakuenjima.

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There was no one left around Yomito.

There was no one on the streets, neither in the offices nor in the shops. It was certainly a big problem for "Jungle" to be able to evacuate so quickly without resorting to public authority. Or perhaps he was already linked to public authority? Munakata thought so and denied it himself.

They are not interested in power. They can use it, but they will not consume it.

With that in mind, Munakata moved forward slowly.

Several members of the "Jungle" clan had already set up a blockade at the Yomito intersection. The words "KEEP OUT" written in large letters on the yellow tape made him laugh. It's like being a police officer.

The members of the Green Clan noticed Munakata's appearance and began to secretly whisper.

"Hey, in formation."

"Ah. Yes, according to the information."

Members of the "Jungle" clan emerge from the buildings around the intersection. All of them were armed with firearms. In normal times, that would be unlikely.

In that case, Munakata thought. It must be war time now. This is a war that "Jungle" wages against humanity.

Suddenly, a voice rang from behind.

"It seems that this is definitely the base of "Jungle"."

Munakata didn't look back. A sword demon following him like a shadow, Gouki Zenjo, responded as he looked ahead.

"Yes. That bright light was there for 15 minutes and 30 seconds. It's hard to miss."

"There are many enemies. Should I take the initiative?"

Zenjo, who belonged to the Blue Clan of the previous generation and waged a war against the demonic "Purgatory", would not be able to face an armed group of that caliber. If he was thinking about the future, he should have conserved his strength as much as possible.

Still, Munakata shook his head.

"No, it's okay. It's not your job to expose yourself."

"So, the boss himself?"

Munakata smiled calmly at those words.

"I'm not the boss anymore. I'm just a king."

Then, Munakata and Zenjo touched the "KEEP OUT" tape.

With just that, the tape was cut soundlessly and fell to the ground.

At the same time, the tension between the members of the "Jungle" clan suddenly increased. The muzzle of a gun pointed at Munakata and a cry of alarm rang out.

"They have crossed the blockade line. Activate Protocol A!"

"Shoot! You'll get points just by attacking!"

The flashes from the mouths flashed all at once, dyeing Munakata's vision white. Despite the countless killing attempts directed at him and the deadly white light, Munakata's smile never disappeared.

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The battlefield was not just outside. The information processing room inside the "Scepter 4" camp had also become a kind of battlefield.

Since the "Pillar of Light" was erected, the number of emergency calls to "Scepter 4" from various parties has increased dramatically. Supernatural crimes are under the jurisdiction of "Scepter 4", and they are probably simply following the rule of leaving all problems related to the supernatural to "Scepter 4", but as a result, their lines of communication with the outside world were about to explode.

"The number of incidents caused by supernatural powers is increasing dramatically! It's as if the entire nation has become Strains!"

"It seems that some cases have turned into riots! Although it is not confirmed, there is also information that the Prime Minister's official residence was attacked."

Enomoto and Kamo, who were in charge of information processing, gave a report that sounded almost like a shout. The only devices that were connected to the outside world, such as PDAs, received notifications as frequently as once every two seconds. Fuse, who was also in a hurry to process the report, shouted in frustration.

"Vice Commander! Does this mean we still have to wait?"

Awashima bit her lip. Fuse's words were reasonable. What is "Scepter 4" used for if they don't protect people from supernatural powers?

But...

"...We can't move now that we've been ordered to stay still."

The order was an order. "Scepter 4" is a security organization and is permitted by law to use force. If the law does not allow them to act, they cannot act.

"But! If things continue like this, there's no point in us being here!"

"Fuse. Right now, all we can do is gather information."

Benzai stopped Fuse as he clenched his fist in frustration. All members shared the regret of not being able to take necessary action when necessary.

Akiyama looked up from his computer and asked.

"You still can't contact the Captain?"

"...Yes."

Awashima frowned and shook her head.

After being removed from his position as chief, Munakata disappeared. In the absence of the boss, Awashima, the deputy boss, must take over. Similar situations have happened before, so there was no problem in itself.

The problem was that there was no "King".



Beyond the boundaries of their organization, they were a single clan. The "King" who was supposed to watch over the big picture and show them where to go is now nowhere to be found. That's the real problem.

Awashima must now decide her own actions. In the midst of this chaos, they must decide what to do or not do without depending on the King.

(Is it really possible for me to do something like that?)

When Awashima asked himself that question, Domyoji spoke.

"Vice Commander! Look at this."

"What's happen?"

"I was monitoring the area around the "pillar of light" that had risen in the direction of Yomito, and this image appeared...!"

The members, including Awashima, ran towards the PC. Everyone gasped when they saw the person reflected there.

"Captain?! And Zenjo-san too!"

Reisi Munakata and Gouki Zenjo.

They both wear unmistakable "Scepter 4" uniforms. With slow steps, they advanced forward without hesitation. In front of them was a group armed with firearms.

Enomoto said with a groan.

"These guys... they're the Green Clan! It's so unreasonable for just two of us to invade the enemy camp!"

"The Green Clan... I didn't expect Fushimi-san to be among them..."

"Call me an idiot! But why only Zenjo-san...?"

The members of "Scepter 4" began to make noise upon seeing the absent boss on the other side of the monitor. However, Awashima did not hear that. She closed her eyes tightly and muttered in a low voice.

"Captain...!"

Various emotions came and went in Awashima's chest. Most of it was painted a color called "repentance".

Munakata is probably risking his life by staying there. Waiting nearby was none other than Zenjo, a former member of "Scepter 4".

What that meant was that Awashima wasn't right for the role.

"Guh...!"

What she feels is not resentment, it is her own insufficiency.

Having lost their "King", they find themselves in a state of confusion. She doesn't know what to do and all she can do is gather information. That's why Munakata chose Zenjo. That man will not hesitate. He acts first, he decides what is needed and when it is needed.

Then...

Awashima opened her eyes. There was no longer any conflict there. She looked at the noisy members, exuding strong determination.

"I give up on "Scepter 4"."

The room fell silent as if it had been hit by water.

At that critical moment, no one could think that Awashima was upset. Awashima's eyes clearly reflected her determination.

"As long as I am a member of "Scepter 4", I cannot leave this camp. I cannot involve them in violating orders. I may be narrow-minded, but that is my limit. But..."

As she spoke calmly about her determination, Awashima took out her saber, complete with its sheath, and placed it on the desk. That's because now that she is a private citizen she can't use that saber that a public servant gave her.

"Even so, I want to be the right-hand man of the "Blue King", Reisi Munakata. Even if I am no longer a public figure, I will serve at his side and do whatever is necessary. That is my role."

"Vice Commander..."

Benzai murmured, and Awashima looked directly at Akiyama next to her.

"I'm sorry, Akiyama. From now on, you will take command of "Scepter 4". I'm leaving."

Akiyama, who is calm and collected and has military experience, is the coordinator of the "Special Task Force". If you leave it to him, he will be able to deal with any unexpected situation appropriately. It may seem irresponsible, but that was all Awashima could do at that moment.

"I understand."

Akiyama nodded silently and turned to look at the members of "Scepter 4".

"As you heard. From now on, I will be in charge of commanding "Scepter 4". As acting commander, I will give orders."

He then spoke with a cheerful voice.

"Now we will go to the headquarters of the Green "Jungle" clan, the culprit of all this, and try to calm this situation down!"

"What?!"

Looking at Awashima, who was upset, Akiyama gave orders one after another and finally looked at her.

"During operations, the protection of civilians must be given top priority and the greatest possible adaptations must be made."

"Yes!"

"I understand!"

It seems like Awashima is the only one panicking. The other members are all smiling and starting to move energetically. They contacted several locations and steadily moved forward with preparations for shipping. As if to alleviate the frustration of not being able to move, even if they wanted to.

Awashima slammed the desk and raised her voice.

"You idiots! Were you listening to me?! This is a violation of orders..."

"No, you are no longer Vice Commander... Awashima-san."

It was Benzai who interrupted her words. With a smile on his face, he took the saber that Awashima had just placed there and held it out to her.

"You are now a civilian. You are subject to our protection. Yes, that's it. In case of an emergency, we will lend you self-defense equipment under the authority of "Scepter 4". Okay, Akiyama?"

"Ah. As acting commander of "Scepter 4", I give permission."

A slight smile appeared on Akiyama's lips. When she looked around her, she saw that everyone (Kamo, Domyoji, Enomoto, Fuse, Goto and Hidaka) were laughing and looking at Awashima. Their eyes told the same story.

(We will not let you go alone. We are also members of the Blue Clan.)

"You guys..."

They murmured quietly, the same smile appearing on Awashima's lips.

The absence of the "King". The awakening of the "Slate". Despite the confusion occurring one after another, they were still able to find an answer. The "Blue King". Just like Reisi Munakata did, it is important to chart your own path and move forward without hesitation.

Even so...

They would control the sword with the sword, because their cause is pure.

"Okay, let's go."

Akiyama nodded and gave orders to his soldiers.

"Scepter 4, go ahead!"

"Yes!"

And then they started moving. To put an end to that chaos and see their King again. Grasping the saber in their hands, "Scepter 4" began to regain its meaning.

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The bullets flew like a storm.

Most of the bullets are 9mm Parabellum bullets fired from small-caliber submachine guns and their lethality is low. However, it is powerful enough to penetrate a person's skin and bite into their flesh, and if shot with dozens of muzzles, an average person would fall to the ground in seconds.

Munakata continued walking calmly under the bombardment.

Just before hitting Munakata, the bullet broke into pieces and scattered into the air. Upon touching the supernatural field developed by Munakata, it is decomposed and transmuted by the enormous Weismann deviation that the "King" possesses, and disperses into pieces of paper.

It was like confetti celebrating the royal path of Munakata.

Of course, that's already been included in "Jungle". The failure of "Emerald" has already made it clear that the "King" does not have normal firearms.

His salvo is nothing more than a blinding one. The real target was behind Munakata, on the roof of a 70-meter-high building.

"Jungle". The U-Rank "Hawk Eyes" was kneeling on the roof, patiently waiting for an opportunity. What he has is a plasma cannon that was specially lent to him by the "Green King". An electronic sight made with cutting-edge technology points at the top back of Munakata's head, distorting his "Hawk-Eyes" mouth.

"His movements are predictable...! This plasma bullet is a condensed version of the same power as "Raiko no Jutsu". If it hits directly, it will be able to take down even the "Blue King"!"

The reticles that had been shaking came together and turned green. The plasma cannon roared as it absorbed all the electricity in the building and "Hawk Eyes" pulled the trigger.

A straight line of lightning shot out from the rooftop.

Normally, even the "King" would not have been able to avoid the plasma bullets that were impossible to predict or see with the naked eye. His supernatural ability transcends physical phenomena, but he cannot see the future. You can't react to things you can't feel, that's a fact.

However, there was someone there who made it possible.

Gouki Zenjo.

The saber that was released by the super reaction waved at the same time as the plasma hit. The green arc discharge and blue aura collided, scattering sparks of ultra-high temperatures.

The plasma bullet was the first to lose energy.

With all its energy sublimated, the bullet disappeared, leaving only the smell of burning ions. Zenjo sheathed his saber and bowed as if nothing had happened.

"I did something shameful."

"I could have saved you a lot of trouble if you had done nothing."

"It's a joke."

As Munakata said, Zenjo's role was not that of a bodyguard. It is nothing more than a safety valve, an automatic device to prevent the worst from happening.

Decapitate Munakata before his "sword" falls. That is Zenjo's sole and absolute mission.

The members of the Green Clan were visibly uneasy as Munakata advanced without stopping in the slightest. Some of them began to retreat, fearful, with weapons in their hands.

"Fuck no! We can't even stop him!"

"Calm down! Anyway, the door can only be opened from the inside. No matter how big the "Blue King" is, he won't be able to break through on his own!"

Hearing that voice, Munakata smiled softly.

That's how it is. Even if Munakata knows the location, he can't open the door. There was no other option but to force a breakthrough, but if they used so much energy, they would have no energy left to fight the "Kings" who were waiting for them.

Munakata stopped at the intersection and pushed up his glasses. "Jungle" only threatened from afar, and his attacks had already ceased.

"Now, all that's left is..."

He already made his move. It only remains to be seen if it came into force. All Munakata could do now was wait.

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In the southwestern part of the outer "secret base" area, there is a bathroom for employees who once worked at that water storage facility. Only two days ago they discovered that place, which was cleverly hidden behind multiple barricades and protective sheets.

It is not known what they call that place. It doesn't seem like a necessary room for the "Green King", who controls everything electronically. However, at least that room is a control room that controls access to the "secret base", and the electronic map and surveillance camera that were called in reveal that Munakata is just around the corner.

At this moment, Fushimi Saruhiko's PDA is connected to the control panel of the control room with multiple cables. The process indicator is at 95%. He managed to evade Nagare's attention and pass through multiple layers of security to finally get there. The long work will soon be finished.

(Oh, really?)

Fushimi smiled sarcastically at the question that suddenly came to mind.

He remembered a dinosaur made of pixel art. He was also attacking a pixel art building. An animation he created himself suddenly showed behavior that should be impossible. A man made of pixel art that he didn't remember making appeared and chased away the dinosaur. He looked at him and warned him that he could see everything.

That was quite a horror. Although it wasn't exactly traumatic, he left a strong impression on Fushimi.

It's been a long time and he's grown. However, his opponent is the "Green King", who rules the network. He figured he could see that too. After knowing everything, he won't let them swim? Is he nothing more than a monkey dancing on Buddha's palm?

As he thought about those questions, "Process Completed" appeared on the screen with surprising ease.

Fushimi looked unimpressed. He simply touched confirm and that's it. All that's left now is to quickly escape from there.

"Hello, Saruhiko. As expected, you work quickly. I'm impressed."

".....!"

His eyes widened and he was surprised, but somewhere in his head he was still thinking, "I knew it." The chair creaked and he turned around.

Kotosaka stayed on the shelf. However, Fushimi knows that it is not Kotosaka. Hisui Nagare, who was on the other side, spoke to Fushimi with a voice that showed no emotion.

"I know your purpose. You intend to invite the "Blue King"."

"If you already know, kill me immediately."

Fushimi said that, but Kotosaka bowed his head.

"There's no need for that. There's no reason to do that."

"Eh...?"

"Until you complete that task, you are not a traitor. Rankers have the right to walk freely within the "secret base", and private battles between Rankers are not particularly restricted."

Nagare snorted and wrinkled one of his cheeks ironically.

"The moment I finish, I will become a traitor and they will kill me."

"It's helpful for you to understand quickly. If I may add, even if the door opens, the "Blue King" won't be able to get that far. You'll just die for no reason. It's the death of a dog."

"Are you threatening me?"

"It's an invitation. Saruhiko. I'm really inviting you right now. You've managed to sneak past me and get to the point of opening the door."

Fushimi looked at Kotosaka in silence, while Nagare spoke matter-of-factly.

"It was obvious to everyone that you were the informant of "Scepter 4". Of course, I knew it too. However, you left no evidence of that and even fought with your friends. You fought your way to Ranker."

"Using a loophole in the rules."

"That's wonderful. Congratulations, Saruhiko. I set up that loophole on purpose, but you're the first user to use it so successfully. You have the ability to see the essence of things and use them to your advantage."

"....."

Maybe he was expressing his true feelings.

Although he had many strategies, Hisui Nagare had a completely transparent personality. He doesn't lie and he always does what he says he's going to do. So what he said now is also true.

Nagare values Fushimi very much. If he changed his mind now, he would still be treated as a Ranker.

"Your nature is more compatible with "Jungle", which values free will, not with "Homura" or "Scepter 4". That's why I invite you. Please become a member of the "Jungle" clan."

Fushimi let out a long sigh.

At least he's grown since then. He had assumed they would see it, but besides that, he wouldn't let them grab his tail. No, the current situation was exactly what he meant by "being grabbed by the tail".

He threw away the knife and said in a low voice.

"It's true. If I stay here I won't have to mix with idiots or be carried away by my boss's unreasonable orders."

"Affirmative."

"The trend is towards "Jungle". Don't commit suicide by hanging on to a sinking ship."

"That's right."

Then, Fushimi said:

"Hey, "Green King". Are the clan members motivated by interests?"

Kotosaka blinked rapidly. Although Fushimi asked a question, he continued without waiting for a response.

"That's probably the case with the people who are playing hardball at the top. They go with those who are likely to win and stay away from those who are likely to lose. That's true. Nobody wants to be a loser."

With dull eyes, Fushimi looked at Kotosaka and Nagare beyond.

"But what about the people around you? Did they become members of your clan because they thought you were going to win?"

"....."

"You're smart, so you know what I'm trying to say. The answer has already been decided."

Fushimi touched the PDA and declared.

"I refuse."

The console flashed green and the four letters "OPEN" appeared. The hidden door at the Yomito intersection began to open with a loud sound.

Kotosaka, who was looking at that with an emotionless gaze, muttered to himself.

"What a pity."



With that, Kotosaka left the room, flapping his wings and shouting.

"Kuwah! You're dead! Dead!"

There was a figure entering the room, confusing Kotosaka. He is short in stature and holds a long cane. A green leaf resembling a crescent moon appeared at the tip.

With a cruel smile on his face, Sukuna brandished his sickle.

"If we're not friends anymore... then I can kill you!"

Fushimi threw the knife from his pocket at a speed that was invisible to Sukuna, who jumped and threw the crescent-shaped blade at him.

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The crossing opened with a heavy noise.

The pedestrian crossings extending in all directions began to slide diagonally and the steel doors below also opened. The members of the "Jungle" clan occupying the intersection fled in panic, and voices of confusion were heard among them, one after another.

"Who was the idiot?! The door is open! What's going on?!"

"Did something happen downstairs?! What are the executives doing?!"

"No, wait! That's it!"

One of them pointed to the corner of the open door, towards the stairs that led to the basement.

A man dressed in a cassock walked slowly towards the ground.

"Jungle". Senior J-Rank executive and "Gray King", Tenkei Iwafune.

Iwafune landed on the ground, looked around and muttered in shock.

"Wow, it really opened up. Nagare's ability to read ahead is really terrifying."

Zenjo was the first to react when Iwafune scratched his head. Munakata stopped Zenjo, who was about to take a step forward, grabbing the hilt of his saber with one hand.

"There is no need to interfere. Please concentrate on your work."

"Yes."

Iwafune then turned to the two of them. A slight smile appeared on his lips.

"Hello, Munakata. And there's a familiar face behind you. Habari Jin's right-hand man, Gouki Zenjo."

"...The "Gray King", Otori Seigo. It's been 14 years."

Gouki Zenjo and Tenkei Iwafune were old acquaintances. In the abominable "Kagutsu Incident" that occurred 14 years ago, they were from different clans, but they had the same goal. Stop the worst "King", Kagutsu Genji. To do this, both Zenjo and Iwafune risked their lives to fight.

And they failed.

Ironically, they did not lose their lives. But they lost something much more important than that.

Zenjo to his own "King".

Iwafune to his own ideals.

For a brief moment, the two exchanged glances. Were the feelings they had at that moment the same? There was probably no doubt that they could see at least a little bit of their current selves in each other's images.

Iwafune opened his mouth.

"You're getting old, man."

Zenjo responded calmly.

"You are withered."

"No difference."

Iwafune shook his shoulders and laughed, then his expression suddenly stiffened.

In an instant, the aura of a "King" was released from him.

The aura became a reality in the sky. A dull gray "Sword of Damocles." A thick fog appeared out of nowhere, enveloping the gate at the intersection and Munakata himself.

Iwafune, already obscured by fog and unable to see him clearly, declared in a low voice.

"No matter how many people come, we won't let them pass through here. This time, we won't stop, we won't take shortcuts, or we won't buy time."

Munakata narrowed his eyes and took a step forward.

A month ago, that night, Munakata was defeated by Iwafune.

Munakata's saber was shattered by Iwafune's bullets, which were fired freely from beyond the space-distorting defense created by the fog. Munakata's order could not correct the thick fog.

There is nothing different about Munakata today than back then.

In fact, you could say it has weakened. The defects of the "Sword of Damocles" have spread greatly, and "Scepter 4" who have always followed him are tied to the country and cannot move. Strategy, equipment, chances of winning. None of the items that Munakata had always possessed until now were present.

Still, he had to keep going.

The "Blue King" protects "order". He protects people from confusion and destruction caused by supernatural powers. That's why he carries a sword. No matter how things change, even if he has no allies and no chance of winning, Munakata will never waver from his current position.

Even so...

"We will fight with sword in hand, because our cause is pure."

At this moment, a roar echoed from behind.

Munakata did not look back. However, he had predicted their true identity. In a place unknown to him, it was in his imagination that they would be moving, and he had already realized that "that thing" that had been under the control of "Tokijikuin" had disappeared for several days.

"What...?!"

Iwafune's eyes widened and he braced himself. However, no matter which "King" is, he won't be able to do anything about it.

"Schattenreich".

A gigantic airship owned by Adolf K. Weismann that bears the name "Land of Shadows". It was rapidly approaching the intersection, overcoming all aviation laws and physical obstacles. Without slowing down, the "Schattenreich" landed upside down, bouncing several times. It drove over the intersection, scattering dust and chunks of asphalt, and stopped about 50 meters later.

Iwafune looked back at the gigantic airship that had just passed by him with a surprised expression, and then immediately smiled and turned to Munakata.

"...I see. If you concentrate the mist on yourself, you won't be able to avoid such a large mass. That's not fair, Munakata. Don't go out and buy a decoy yourself."

Munakata laughed and grabbed the hilt of his saber.

"It seems that you have misunderstood something. It has nothing to do with me. I am your main opponent."

"Ha, anyone is fine. My role is to greet you."

That's how it is. Either one was fine. The current Munakata is simply the "Blue King". He also didn't think about the "Alliance of the Three Kings". He exists for the sole purpose of adhering to his beliefs and defeating his enemies.

Munakata made a loud statement as he gently pulled out his saber from his waist.

"Munakata, ready."