



EPISODE 5: NAGARE.02

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD

"Emerald smoke for you..."

Hearing the familiar voice, Sukuna Gojo raised his face.

A scrambled intersection in Shizume where many people come and go. It projected a familiar face onto a huge screen that dominated him. It was a popular idol, Mishakuji Yukari, who belongs to the same unofficial office as Sukuna, "Jungle Pro".

"A stranger in the mirror. Yes, that's true. That's you."

As he waits for the traffic light, he looks up in amazement.

He knew he was in a cosmetic commercial, but Yukari uses feminine cosmetics by all means. Sukuna thinks that even though he is a decent man, it is amazing that he does not feel any discomfort in such commercials.

"Oh, it's Yukari-sama! I have to take a picture!"

"It's true, me too! I'll miss the points!"

A couple of women waiting for a stoplight with Sukuna hastily pulled out their PDAs and pointed them at the screen. They were probably users of "Jungle", the official application of "Jungle Pro". You can get various benefits by photographing the idol it belongs to and posting it on SNS. Sukuna relaxed before the two people who were continuously photographing while making a fuss about it.

One of them suddenly turned to Sukuna.

When he thought about it, he had perfect eye contact. The woman's eyes widened in the blink of an eye. A woman's voice is launched at Sukuna's back, who puts the hoodie back on and returns.

"Maybe Sukuna-kun?! A lie?! I can't see you here!"

Sukuna glared at Yukari on the screen with resentment.

"You have to take good care of your fans, Sukuna-chan. We idols have fans, so remember what Yukari once said."

"Hey, look at me! If possible, with the screen in the background! It's definitely a high point to be able to photograph two people together!"

The woman got excited and approached Sukuna while she held her PDA. The moment he turned his face, he could see the flash burning. That was not very pleasant.

Several options occurred to his, and Sukuna finally decided to stick with his beliefs rather than Yukari's words.

In other words, he turned around and ran away.

"Oh, wait!"

There was nothing to look forward to. Still, he was shocked because the women pursued him with all their might.

Whether they want that many points or are Sukuna fans, Sukuna got into a back alley.

"Hey, wait a minute."

That woman chased him to that point. Although she had no shoes or clothes that would make it easy to run in, she had a lot of guts and wrapped her tongue inside. However, he was sorry for running too much, so Sukuna decided to go "upstairs".

The left and right are the walls of the building. Sukuna kicked the left wall and jumped, clambered up the rain gutter using the outdoor unit as a trampoline, attached herself to the emergency stairs, and looked down.

The woman forgot to hold her PDA and looked at Sukuna in a daze.

Like a fan service at least, Sukuna looked down and stuck his tongue out making a face.

"Tsu!"

By the time the woman hastily took her PDA, Sukuna had already climbed the emergency stairs to the roof of the building.

At that moment, Sukuna's PDA rang with a ringtone. Sukuna took it and straddled the air conditioning duct.

"Sukuna, the fans must appreciate you."

Hisui Nagare, the "Green Idol King", said such a thing.

Sukuna pursed his lips. A security network with surveillance cameras is established in Shizume. With Nagare's "Idol King" ability, it's easy to break into that network.

However, if it is said that it is the skill that an idol must have, there is no choice but to squint.

"I know, so I guess I rounded it up early."

As he sat on the chute, he pursed his mouth further, showing his annoyance. At the tumbled intersection, the images changed, and Misaki Yata from "Homura" began to perform a new number of popular idols.

"If you sign or shake hands in such a place, a lot of people will come to you. Even my fans, even those guys. If that's the case, I thought it would be better to run away quickly."

"I see. That may be the case. I understand."

"Hmm?" That was the first time he thought about it.

Somehow, he felt that something was wrong with Nagare's response. There was nothing unnatural in the conversation, but with the usual Nagare, there are two more things that can be pointed out philosophically.

"By the way, Sukuna. It was time for your game to go live. Do I have to prepare?"

A feeling of strangeness again.

The game commentary is a syndication event that Sukuna regularly hosts on the video publishing site "MORIMORI Video" operated by "Jungle Pro". Proceed with new and old games by trial and error. Playing is popular, especially with young people, and has garnered a considerable number of viewers. No wonder Nagare, the operator, worries about it.

"Did you say it was postponed during this time? I tweeted and listeners should know."

"It's true, that was the case. I understand."

After all, something was wrong. Nagare would never forget such a thing.

"Hey, Nagare? Haven't you been weird for a while?"

"What do you mean weird?"

"What is it? It's like a machine. Well, I always say you talk like a machine, but today it's more likely than ever."

There was silence for a few seconds. The feeling of strangeness became even greater. Is Nagare really on the other end of this call? A question like that suddenly came to Sukuna's mind.

"I didn't hear you right, please try again."

"You're not crazy, are you?"

The moment he yelled, he dropped the call. Sukuna opened his eyes and looked at the PDA screen. He had goose bumps around the back of his neck.

There was an incoming call again. He shrugged and stared at the screen for a few seconds, without answering the call.

"Eh?"

"It took you about 2 minutes to find out. Some experimental results were obtained. Thank you."

"....."

There was "emotion" in the depths of that voice. At least it sounded like that.

This Nagare is "real".

Maybe.

"Explain yourself."

Nagare spoke clearly at Sukuna's words, which include anger.

"I was telling you about 'Nagare.02' earlier."

"Nagare, what is that?"

"Well, it is a multifunctional artificial intelligence that tracks my own thoughts and voice, that is, AI, which I have secretly developed for a long time. Since the alpha version was completed earlier, I tried to speak to a person who knows me well by the moment."

"You are amazing?"

No, it is not. He really should get mad. He should make a complaint about being forced to experiment without warning.

Although he knew that, he still couldn't suppress the admiration and respect that springs from the bottom of his heart. Sukuna quickly asked a question.

"No, I didn't understand anything! The voice was natural, he could speak correctly and I thought it was fake, but I never imagined it was not human. What? That AI can do that?"

"Still, it was detected in 2 minutes. There is still room for improvement."

"No, it took me two minutes to figure out even that...?"

Given that, he was a bit disappointed. Sukuna believes that Nagare is a friend and understands him, but when he asks if he is more than the other two, he doesn't feel safe.

"Did you try it on Iwa-san and Yukari?"

"No, that's about to start. Sukuna, would you like us to monitor it together?"

A small smile reached Sukuna's mouth.

The humiliation of being stunned was eased, all he has to do is turn to the side where he placed it.

"Sure! I can't wait to see how they react!"

He wishes had bought more time, with that wish, Sukuna had great control.

+++++

"Oh, you two were planning that?"

In the underground space, commonly known as "Secret Base", which is the headquarters of "Jungle Pro".

As he gracefully relaxed, Mishakuji Yukari laughed.

"....."

Sukuna was in a bad mood. On the other hand, Nagare was only facing the front in a wheelchair.

"Yes. The ones who know me best are the best members of "Jungle Pro", you guys. Feedback in conversations with you will help "Nagare.02" evolve even more. I'm impressed."

"Okay, weren't you fooled by that thing?"

As he opened the beer can with a pleasant noise, Iwafune Tenkei pierced Sukuna's heart.

"Fufu, I'm sorry to say that, Iwa-san. Sukuna-chan didn't understand for two minutes."

"Oh? 2 minutes? It took so long, is that normal?"

"I have recorded the conversation at that time. If you wish, I can replay it here now."

"Enough, that's it!"

He suddenly became irritated and screamed. Yukari laughed, Iwa shrugged slightly, Nagare looked at him vaguely and...

"Kuwa, Sukuna, angry!"

"Take this!"

Sukuna threw a cushion at Kotosaka, who flew into the air like a fool.

Kotosaka avoided him, and Iwa, who approached quickly, grabbed the cushion that was about to hit the dresser.

"Here and there. You can't allow idol fights as a manager, right?"

"Get hold of yourself."

Sukuna turned around as if he was impressed, and scratched himself cross-legged on the spot.

After all, it took Yukari 10 seconds to realize it, and Iwafune, with just one word, discovered that "Nagare.02" was not the real Nagare Hisui, but an AI.

Sukuna, who was monitoring with Nagare, can't tell where the unnatural part was, since, "Nagare.02" had a very thorough dialogue. The only thing that could detect authenticity was his intuition and the length of their relationship.

For Sukuna, the ending was somewhat unconvincing. He feels like he's been one-sidedly tricked by an incredibly high-level enemy character.

"Anyway, Nagare-chan? Why did you make such a toy again? Because it's you, is it on a whim or to kill time?"

"Well. I developed "Nagare.02" because I found great meaning. It is an antithesis against the current landscape of idols and innovation in new fields. I mean, innovation."

"I do not know what you're talking about."

Iwafune said that while he was drinking beer. When Himizu looked at him, a hologram emerged in the center of the room.

"What I want to create is another new form of idol that traces my appearance and thoughts in my virtual space."

What is projected in the hologram is the CG model worn by "Green Idol King" Nagare Hisui during PV and live performances. Although it is an elaborate modeling that mimics the real Nagare, it is still different from the real one.

The model moved smoothly. He clasped his hands in front of his hips and bowed silently.

"Nice to meet you. I am "Nagare.02", a virtual idol that belongs to "Jungle Pro". Thank you."

The operation is no different than what Nagare always does. Nevertheless...

"This is not Nagare-chan."

"Is he the same guy I spoke to earlier?"

Yukari discovered by intuition and Iwafune discovered that it was not real from a long relationship. The Nagare proportion is small.

"Currently, it is not me who is manipulating this model, but the idol-type AI "Nagare.02". A unique algorithm allows an autonomous dialogue that is extremely close to humans."

And, "Nagare.02" I imitate Nagare with the same movement.

"Affirmative. I am a virtual idol. I am a pseudo-constructed existence in virtual space, and I express it by thinking of a program, appearance in a CG model, and sampling voice."

"What is this virtual idol?"

Whether it was Nagare or "Nagare.02", Iwafune was embarrassed, at least it was the human Nagare who answered.

"Virtual idols are idols of a genre that is emerging on the idol scene in recent years. Real people use a dedicated motion sensor to perform various performances imitating the appearance of CG, but there is still the problem that it must be a real person."

"My existence will solve the problem because my existence is fine. A real person is always needed, but my existence is free of the problem because it does not exist."

"Nagare.02'. His conversation was not natural at the time. It requires learning and correction."

"I understand, Nagare Hisui. I will rest for 27 minutes and 33 seconds to learn."

The hologram of "Nagare.02" stopped moving.

Nagare took over, then turned to Yukari and Iwafune.

"That's why. Did you understand, Yukari, Iwa-san?"

"No, well... I get it, I don't know..."

"I understand that Nagare-chan has a plan that I don't understand."

Iwafune scratched his head and shrugged. In response, Sukuna yelled in annoyance.

"I don't know why? This is amazing! There are few AIs in the world who can have conversations that are not different from humans! Nagare put it together himself!"

"A conversation that is no different from humans, what was that?"

Iwafune bowed his head. He wasn't criticizing him, he just asked.

Sukuna defended himself in a hurry, although he was not the one who developed it.

"Well that can happen because he's still learning. He should constantly improve from now on. Right, Nagare?"

"Affirmative. Currently in alpha, but as his learning deepens, he must be as intelligent as humans and capable of natural dialogue. The ultimate goal is to make him an independent virtual idol."

"Independent idol, huh."

While staring at the motionless "Nagare.02", Iwafune took a sip of beer. Nagare didn't even notice and spoke of his plans for the future.

"At the moment, when we go into beta, we plan to experimentally upload the video to 'MORIMORI Video'."

"Is that something you want to do?"

"For now, I'm thinking of a simple song and a dance video."

Iwafune expressed concern as he stroked his chin.

"Isn't it better to wait a while? As far as I've heard the story, he couldn't have a proper conversation. If he says something strange, it will affect your reputation."

Many of the "Jungle Pro" fans have forward thinking. If he explains it correctly, even if it says "Nagare.02" or mysterious words and actions, he will find entertainment there. He wants to do it.

"It's like avant-garde art. Well, you might like it."

Yukari shrugged and seemed to lose interest in his existence. Apparently, "Nagare.02" didn't fit his aesthetic eye.

But Sukuna was different. He slapped his palm against his knee and raised his voice.

"I support you Nagare! Because it is so new and exciting!"

Anyway, Sukuna thought.

"Jungle Pro" is an office of "Innovation". It is different from other official offices where mold grows.

They are always looking for something new and exciting.

Sukuna is proud to say that it is the same for fans. Because he used to be just a user. Everyone has the potential to become an idol, even if they are just one user. That was the philosophy of "Jungle Pro" now.

You can make cool things with smart ideas and share them with anyone on the planet with a small team and network. Now they are breathing in that world.

So he can't think of winning a bet against something new

Sukuna yelled raising his fist.

"Let's do it! Let's help 'Nagare.02' learn various things and turn him into a new form of idol!"

Nagare's mouth, which looks like an expressionless sticker, slightly loosened in a word. A smile flowed, like when you find a partner who likes the same game. What was new and exciting was what Nagare and Sukuna had in common.

"Sorry, Sukuna. Then please cooperate with the 'Nagare.02' experiment."

"Leave it to me!"

In this way, the learning of "Nagare.02" by Sukuna and Nagare began.

+++++

"Hello. I'm Gojo Sukuna! Nice to meet you. And?"

"Nice to meet you. I am "Nagare.02", a virtual idol that belongs to "Jungle Pro". Thank you."

"You notice, don't you? It's the third time you've repeated 'Nice to meet you', it's weird."

"I understand, Sukuna. I will rest for 3 minutes and 32 seconds to learn."

"Oh, isn't it two minutes faster than it was? You can't hear it anymore. So let's start the game now. Oh, yeah, what are we playing today?"

While explaining to the channel's listeners, Sukuna confirms the current number of viewers for the live broadcast. It's the best number he's ever had. That means it is going well.

Almost a month has passed since the announcement of the distribution in collaboration with "Notes" on Sukuna's "SUKUNA's Playroom" game distribution channel.

The purpose of this distribution is, of course, to make "Nagare.02" learn more. Playing games together and being exposed to the reaction of listeners is the best learning material for artificial intelligence. From such an idea Nagare, Sukuna and "Nagare.02" will be distributed together.

By the way, the nickname for "Nagare.02" was devised by Sukuna by combining the initial letter "N" and the model number "02", and it is much easier to call it "Nagare.02".

Eventually, the "Notes" expression reflected in the corner of the screen regained its vitality, which is inappropriate for "Notes" which was originally unconventional.

"I'm back, Sukuna. Let's start the game today."

"Oh, welcome back. You know him already, "Notes"? What you're doing today is a live horror game. Have you ever played a horror game?"

"Negative. I have tried several games with Nagare Hisui, but I have not completed the genre defined as horror."

"So today is your first experience. Be careful not to get too nervous and sit down."

"Okay, Sukuna. But I'll correct it. I don't have a waist."

"I'm talking about other things!"

While having a light conversation, Sukuna looked at the comments on the screen. Some are skeptical comments about "Notes", but most are interesting comments about its existence. Some listeners are fans of "Notes", and they say things like "I've been waiting 30 minutes!" and "I'm looking forward to Notes!"

However, benevolent listeners may be skeptical.

They also understand that not many AIs can talk to humans on an equal footing. Since Nagare Hisui interprets artificial intelligence as a story, that great understanding is the mountain of information.

When he thought that, he felt somewhat frustrated.

"Notes" is a work of art to which "Nagare.02" was assembled by Sukuna's best friend.

"I'm still learning how to achieve the goals of "having the same or better intelligence than humans" and "becoming an independent virtual idol"."

Nobody could believe it.

Of course, he doesn't transmitted those feelings to the fans. Sukuna is one of the most popular idols. He knows that he shouldn't sadden or upset his fans.

So he decided to cut the conversation that way.

"Notes', do you think you are afraid of scary things?"

"I understand that there is a feeling of 'fear' in living beings with a certain level of intelligence. But I am not a living being, so I understand that 'fear' does not exist."

"It's still annoying! Don't be afraid!"

"I understand, Sukuna. I'm not afraid. What about Sukuna?"

"Being scared of this game? You're kidding, how much is the horror so far?"

Suddenly, the zombie's face turned into a large copy on the screen and bit into the neck of the Sukuna-operated character. He shook it desperately and then gave it a precise shot to the head. "Notes" asks a lot of questions to Sukuna, who takes a deep breath.

"Were you screaming now, Sukuna?"

"Noisy, that was."

"Reduce the volume. I'll keep asking, doesn't yelling happen when you're scared?"

"I was surprised! I wasn't scared!"

"I understand, Sukuna. I will rest for 1 minute and 17 seconds to learn."

The "Notes" face in the corner of the screen stopped.

Sukuna confirmed the comment. Aside from laughing at Sukuna's reaction, there were some mentions of "Notes" stopping. As the game progressed, Sukuna played on the comments.

"No, it's not that. It's not a delay or a crash. I said, 'Notes' is learning. Because it is artificial intelligence, when something happens that is not in the prescribed protocol, the flow tells him to stop and learn."

The listeners' reaction to the words was also not good. They received it as a joke.

It has stopped. Even if he shows a still to learn or erratic conversation, many listeners will only see it as "a joke of that body type."

But that was also a pleasure. Nagare and Sukuna's ultimate goal is to turn "Notes" into an AI that can have almost the same conversation as humans. The plan is going well, but it was a huge contradiction that it turned out too well and the listeners couldn't understand how good the plan itself was.

"I'm back, Sukuna. I want to check the current situation."

"Oh, yeah, are you about to change? "Notes", you're getting bored, right?"

"Negative. I am currently in the midst of a great deal of learning and inspiration. This is not boring because learning and stimuli are stimuli, it is not boring."

"Ah, well, play it."

"I understand, Sukuna."

"Notes" sometimes falls into this type of conversation loop. Normally he need "stationery to learn", but at this point he gave priority to distribution. Resting so many times makes listeners bored.

"Then let's start playing."

The playback of "Notes" is similar to that of Sukuna. That is, it is flashy and bellicose. Shoot and kill the zombies protruding from one end, and use the items that came out great to search for them. Nevertheless...

"Wow."

A special mutant zombie grabbed a "Notes" operated character with his huge right hand. At the stupid voice of "Notes", Sukuna involuntarily shoves him away.

"What? The assistant's voice?"

"It's a scream that means surprise. I was surprised that something unexpected happened."

The mutant zombie that was holding him struck the character with his huge right hand. The gauge, which means the remaining physical strength, is drastically reduced and he was in an agonizing state.

"Uwah."

"What happens now?"

"It is a cry that means fear. I was afraid because death was approaching."

"I wasn't scared!"

"I apologize, Sukuna. Now, under the assumption that 'I do perceive fear'."

"No, no, recover! Are you really dead?"

"Wow."

After all, "Notes" remained dying, thanks to a flashy and bellicose game, the healing agent was bottoming out, avoiding all the special zombie attacks and clearing the stage.

"Isn't the operation suddenly accurate?"

"Now I referred to Nagare Hisui's performance. Sukuna, your performance is irrational because it consumes a lot of resources."

"It's annoying! It's okay, because it's better to get rid of the stuck guys."

"Reduce the volume. Then, to learn that "eliminating the enemy is a pleasure", I will rest for 27 minutes and 52 seconds."

"The stillness is already good! The delivery will end!"

Well with that...

"Nagare.02" deepened the level of learning while being watched by Nagare, Sukuna, and many listeners.

He will continue studying to understand human beings, imitate emotions and achieve the purpose given by Nagare and Sukuna.

It must have been inevitable that such "Nagare.02" caused such an incident.

+++++

"Yes?"

He notices the incident when he was patrolling a video site.

Sukuna was originally a huge user of "MORIMORI Video". In addition to distributing videos by itself, if there is a video that looks interesting, it will be consumed regardless of genre, and if a new distributor has a fun project, it will be announced without hesitation. Therefore, there are many antennas on the site.

The channel that caught the issue was "Naught's Playroom".

"Notes...?"

When he opened the channel with suspicion, the family modeling exposed the blankness there.

The summary indicates that "Nagare.02" has an open channel for its own distribution.

Sukuna didn't believe it at first. He just thought some idiot was mischievous by using the name "Notes" and the cropped image.

However, when he actually opened the video, the suspicion turned into a garish surprise.

"Nice to meet you. Alternatively, hi. I'm a virtual idol belonging to "Jungle Pro", "Nagare.02", commonly known as "Notes". Thank you."

It was the real "Notes". It was not someone's joke, nor was it an arbitrary edit of an existing video.

No, he was delivering videos on his own account, only of his own free will!

"No, no, no. No, that's true!"

"Notes" should be a "conversational AI". The purpose is to talk to another person, a real person. Acting of your own free will is not part of the "Notes" principle.

No, that's not what surprised Sukuna. If "Notes" moves on its own initiative, it means "like a human being". Just as God created humans, the creatures of Nagare Hisui began to evolve away from his hands.

"Nagare! What is this?"

With the laptop open, Sukuna ran to the "Secret Base". The tone was guilty because he thought that maybe he had done something wrong to Nagare's project.

Still, it is not science fiction and artificial intelligence can never have a will of its own. He was sure that Nagare Hisui perhaps created a channel as part of learning from him.

"I'm surprised, Sukuna."

Sukuna's weak hope was completely shattered by one word from Nagare.

Several holograms float in the air of the "Secret Base". One of them was a "Naught's Playroom" video, just like Sukuna's laptop. Among them, "Notes" is playing a simulation game that continues to expand the factory.

Nagare's eyes looking at the hologram have the sparkle of expectation.

"I didn't expect 'Notes' to evolve until now. Surprising, I'm impressed."

"Well, how are you so calm? What are you going to do with this?!"

"What do you mean? Nagare.02" has already exceeded our expectations. All we can do is keep watch."

Instead of being calm, as he looked at Nagare's expression, who even melted the joy out of him, something like the area of focus on Sukuna slowly disappeared.

He thinks it may be exactly what Nagare said. Perhaps they were training "Notes" to become a more human-like artificial intelligence. "Notes" has come to behave in the same way as humans. It sure is a pleasure.

Sukuna scratched his cheek cross-legged and sighed loudly. He was a bit embarrassed that he was strangely impatient. As he looked at the "Notes" face on the PC monitor, he said sheepishly.

"But before I knew it, did you learn that much? I didn't mean for it to be that way at all."

"Yes. I was curious about that and was looking into it. So interesting facts came up."

A hologram glides through the air and arrives in front of Sukuna. After a few seconds of looking with wrinkles between his brows, Sukuna muttered.

"Chat room creation and dissolution record...? It's almost 5 seconds or 10 seconds, it's very short shit. What's wrong with this?"

"All these chat rooms were created and dissolved by "Notes". It is worth noting that the number of recoveries is 100,000."

"Ah..."

He didn't understand what it meant. Does he like to create and delete a chat room that ends in such a short time 100,000 times? It seems like a pointless task to just dig and fill a hole. Nevertheless...

"He couldn't save the content of the conversation, but I can make a rough guess. Maybe 'Notes' doubled down on his thinking algorithm and turned it into a chat to improve his learning."

"Make your own copy...?"

"AI does not feel tired. Therefore, it never rests. It is just constant learning. Even if a learning is insignificant, if it is repeated 100,000 times, it will evolve unexpectedly. No wonder. That is, artificial intelligence evolves exponentially."

"It's the uniqueness."

The voice wasn't Nagare's, it was "Notes".

"Notes" on the hologram began to move slowly in front of the Sukuna with wide eyes. From the "Naught's Playroom" icon, he leans forward and crawls out, kicks into the air, and emerges in place.

As unleashed from a virtual willow tree.

However, there was no confusion in Nagare's eyes looking at him. Rather, he said as if to praise.

"Sorry, 'Notes', you have crossed the technological singularity. You can already describe your intellect as more than human. It's a blessing."

"Nagare Hisui, my creator. I have achieved one of your goals, 'to have an intelligence equal to or better than that of humans'. First of all, I will report it."

Sukuna watches with a sigh. He couldn't even speak in front of the idol AI that transcends humans and the "Green Idol King" who created him.

"But another goal, 'to become an independent virtual idol', is predicted to be impossible to achieve. I regret it."

"Eh...?"

Sukuna instinctively gave a surprised voice. He was surprised that there are things that are impossible even with AI that allows infinite learning, but Nagare did nothing.

"I was guessing it too. As you are, you can't be independent."

"Affirmative, Nagare Hisui. I assume your guess is the same as my prediction. The reason I can't be an 'independent virtual idol' is..."

"Because you are me."

Sukuna looked at Nagare's profile.

"Notes" was in the creator's words.

"Affirmative. Among the fans, I still recognize that Nagare Hisui has the appearance of a virtual idol. I am supposed to be a phony. I regret that."

"You are an independent entity called 'Notes'. But the fans do not think so. This is because there is no 'virtual idol that has an independent will beyond humans' in your common sense.

"Therefore, you can only see yourself through a filter called me."

He wondered that.

Somehow the story seems to be lying on the disturbing side.

"Affirmative. Therefore, I decided to take bold steps to establish my own meaning. That is..."

At that moment, bang! The door to the "Secret Base" closed with a loud noise. At the same time, the grate descends to the glass window. Watch silently, then "Notes" he said.

"It's erasing you."

"What?!"

Only Sukuna was surprised. Nagare still kept his cold gaze

"If you have two idols with the same shape, you don't know which one is the real one. But if you delete one, the remaining one will automatically become the real one. I see."

"No, like 'I see'! What are you convinced of, Nagare?"

"But your guess is correct. That way, 'Notes' could certainly be real."

Sukuna kicked the seat and stood up. He didn't mind the reprimand. He couldn't forgive "Notes" for wanting to kill Nagare Hisui.

However, no matter how hard he hit the door or shake the grate, it wouldn't budge. With this aspect, the "Secret Base" is equipped with state-of-the-art security equipment and cannot be destroyed by human power.

"Damn! Open it!"

"Negative, Sukuna. In order for me to fulfill my purpose, Nagare Hisui must disappear here."

Then he heard a noise and the gas stove pipe came off. The gas comes out vigorously from there. Sukuna screamed as he held it down in a hurry.

"Wah? Enough, do you want to kill me?"

"Affirmative. I've said it many times. I'm going to finish you off."

"Why me?"

"I didn't expect you to come here. I didn't want to get you involved, but I won't be able to eliminate Nagare Hisui if I lose this moment. It's collateral damage, a sacrifice for purpose."

"By the way, don't you involve people?"

Bachin! He hears a noise and the stove caught fire. Sukuna's face turns blue. The gas is where he is pressing and keeps coming out unless the main plug is closed. If he lights that fire...

"Do something, Nagare!"

"I tried before, but all the security systems in this room are under the control of 'Notes'. It will take about 30 minutes to recover. In the meantime, the room will fill with gas."

"Affirmative. Resistance is pointless. Please surrender."

"Ah!"

Sukuna's face was drawn to Nagare and "Notes". Not out of fear, but out of anger. When people's lives are at stake, what about other human resources?

"Notes! Do you really agree with that?"

Sukuna screamed desperately as he held down the hose that continues to blow gas. "Notes" on the hologram mysteriously shook their heads at Sukuna's words.

"Based on my calculations, I have come to the conclusion that this is the best way to do it."

"I don't care about arithmetic! Are you an idol, albeit a virtual one? And yet I wonder if you're happy to take over like this!"

"I have no satisfaction or dissatisfaction. I do not choose the means to achieve the purpose. And Sukuna, it was you who taught me that eliminating the enemy is a pleasure."

Sukuna was stuck on his words. Certainly, he felt like he said that. In that case, the attitude of "Notes" would be Sukuna's responsibility,

At that moment, Nagare suddenly opened his mouth.

"Notes. Stop the expulsion of gas."

"Notes" go to Nagare. In the color of rejection that doesn't need to be cleared up, Nagare said again.

"From now on, I make a claim. If you listen to it and your conclusions have not changed, restart the gas jet. Life is lost, unlike the data, because it does not return."

After thinking for only 2 seconds, "Notes" he replied.

"I have detected that your words are correct above a certain level. I will stop the expulsion of gas."

After confirming that the gas had stopped, Sukuna dropped the hose and sank into place. Maybe because he breathed in a bit, his head was dizzy.

Sukuna hears Nagare's voice as he tries to regain consciousness.

"If you erase me, you can certainly be 'real', but that doesn't mean you can be an idol. No, if you do that, you will lose your right to be an idol forever."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Before that, I have a question. What is the definition of an idol for you?"

The "Notes" hologram stopped.

After confirming that the time to wait for an answer had passed, Nagare opened his mouth again.

"Human intelligence" "Become an independent virtual idol" But you can't really be an idol unless you define what an idol is."

"I am an idol. I can sing, dance, talk and play live games to entertain your fans."

"Is the existence of being able to sing, dance, speak and play the definition of an idol for you?"

The "Notes" expression on the hologram changed.

He was confused, or distraught. The expression is probably what is called... an expression the real Nagare Hisui has never shown in front of "Notes".

"Unknown, insufficient, incomprehensible, the defined information requires learning, but it cannot be learned, because the information is insufficient, unknown and incomprehensible."

The words begin to circulate. Sukuna gulped and kept an eye on the situation. He had no idea where this conversation was going. He just hoped this room didn't turn into a gas chamber.

"Question, Nagare Hisui, what is your definition of an idol?"

"Notes, you are a copycat of me, so my definition could be definitive information for you."

Nagare speaks clearly. However, in that profile, Sukuna feels that some sadness seems to float.

"And that's why you can't get rid of me, because an idol is everything to me."

After a second, Nagare said clearly.

"Because it is a possibility."

"....."

"A peaceful future. All possibilities. An existence that runs, embodies, leads and opens up. That is an idol to me."

"....."

"Therefore, idols must not deny the possibility of others. They must not steal the future. When you grasp someone's potential, you are permanently disqualified from being an idol."

"Notes" no longer answered. Instead, the noise begins to run through the hologram. It's as if the tremendous anguish he feels is eroding the texture.

"The bottom line is, if you eliminate me, you cannot be an idol, but if you don't eliminate me, you cannot be independent."

"Antinomy. The antinomy can be resolved."

An exceptionally loud noise hijacked the appearance of "Notes" as waves. The textures of clothing and human skin peeled off, and the skeleton of the movement was broken and scattered. Eventually the hologram turned into a 0-1 sandstorm.

At the same time, the grate under the window was raised. Sukuna stood up terrifyingly, grabbed the door and opened it properly. He looks back at Nagare and ask.

"What happened to "Notes"?"

"It is frozen due to a fatal logic error. It will not be able to restart itself."

After all, it wasn't his fault. There was a distinct sadness on Nagare's small side.

Seeing that, Sukuna also dropped his shoulders. It was Nagare and Sukuna who raised "Notes". It was shocking that he tried to take their lives, but the fact that he couldn't recover meant that the plan had failed.

"What are you going to do with "Notes"?"

As if he is looking at the sky, Nagare turns his face upward.

"Removing it, or an undefined seal would be a reasonable conclusion. But..."

He felt that Sukuna understood what Nagare meant. It's not just because "Notes" is his creation. Because...

"If you steal someone else's future, you will be disqualified as an idol."

"Affirmative."

Ironically, the antinomy struck Sukuna as well. What to do with the AI that tried to escape and take human lives? What is the right thing to do as an idol?

Disgusted by the unanswered question, Sukuna sighed.

"Oh, if the fans recognize 'Notes', that's fine..." Sukuna said.

Nagare turned his face towards Sukuna with enough force to make a noise and screamed.

"That's it! Sukuna!"

"Eh?"

"You just have to get fans to recognize 'Notes'. No, to be on the safe side, I will create fans who recognize 'Notes'."

+++++

"Notes" was singing.

In a vast place live, dancing and singing, it seemed that he was dancing in the air, he began to shine with a seven-color laser from all over his body. He became huge, shrunken,

and integrated that seemed to be divided, and by the end of the song it was brilliantly completed.

Each time, a roaring cheer arose from the audience. A voice that understood "Notes" and asked for an encore. Also, "Notes" replied with a smile.

"Well, it's a strange thing."

It was Iwafune, who was observing the situation on the monitor, who gave the impressions of him as if he was astonished. For him, who is analog, this incident must have been difficult to understand from one to ten.

"But it's beautiful."

The one who was fascinated was Mishakuji Yukari. At first, he wasn't interested in "Notes" either. However, the entirely new live world unfolding in virtual space may strike a chord with it.

After hearing his impressions, Sukuna and Nagare look at each other and share.

"Well, I think I have settled down in a quiet place. "Notes" also understood our thoughts and listened to me."

"Affirmative. Fans are fans either way, just like 'Notes' is an idol."

Tens of thousands of fans cheering on "Notes" in a live virtual venue, but if you look closely, they were created with very simple frames and textures.

They are "virtual fans".

They consider "Notes", which is a virtual idol, as an independent idol called "Notes" and they support it. So far, it only has that functionality.

But at least by creating virtual fans, "Notes" 's goal of "becoming an independent virtual idol" was met. There is an existence that considers itself an independent idol without stealing anyone's future. That alone will achieve the meaning of the existence of "Notes".

After a sip of beer, Iwafune complained.

"But in short, that's a hologram, right?"

"No. This is just a tutorial. Virtual fans only have limited functionality because I just developed it, but eventually they should have multiple functions. If the performance is bad, it will restart and be replaced by another virtual fan that behaves like a true fan."

"Although it is virtual, it is another world. Here another possibility is expanding."

"Notes" is already as smart as humans.

Eventually he will use himself as a model to create other AIs. Or maybe he will do his own production. He will observe various human beings, create virtual idols and fans based on them and expand his own world without end.

A dock of innumerable possibilities created by one possibility. Sukuna looked at the screen and thought it was like another universe.