



**"BEFORE ZERO"**

**CHAPTER 2: BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

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

A cat that has disappeared recently appeared at the front of the garden with a prey that it had killed.

When Akio, who went to a distant university, visited a young man about six months later, Shiotsu was immediately associated with such a scene.

"Marry this boy."

Contrary to Akio's expression at the entrance, which is something she's good at, she brought a strange one.

Shiotsu thought.

The young man in front of him is slightly shorter than him. The age is the same as her, who is 20 or two younger, but when it comes to Akio, who is mistaken for a high school student at eighteen, she appears to be an adult and a child.

What kind of person does it mean to show up at someone else's house after being after a girl?

No, the reason he sees them with such colorful glasses is that he has probably been involved in Akio's love affairs several times in the past. If he looks at it without prejudice,

the young man in front of him seems to be a very ordinary person without any special points. On the contrary, polite behavior makes he feel even better.

However, there was a sense of incongruity, like "why is Akio such a genuine person", which made him feel like it was strange.

Unfortunately, there was no advance notice for the day's visit, and her parents were paying, so Shiotsu decided to deal alone.

"I'm sorry to have arrived suddenly."

The young man, who called himself Hayatoshi Minato, sat down by the table and bowed deeply.

"Today, I was visiting Akio's parents' house to receive a greeting, and suddenly there was a story that said, "I will show my face to Brother Gen."

From the first glance impression, it was a reasonable greeting, he was calm and uncomfortable.

On the other hand, Akio,

"Well, this is also like a family home. It's another home."

She immediately stretches her legs to make it easier.

"Akio... I don't mind if you relax, but at least after the greeting."

Minato nodded his head as Shiotsu frowned.

"I was planning to show you what I'm doing today."

"Oh, by the way... it's a pain."

Akio sat in a sitting position next to Minato, even though she was scared. Since she is experienced in kendo, when she sits down seriously the form is determined.

"Oh..."

It wasn't his attitude that attracted Shiotsu's interest.

Akio obeyed what the others said.

It is the fact.

"Akio told me that she has a family relationship with Shiotsu-san."

"Oh..."

Shiotsu returned to Minato's words.

"Well, it's a long-distance relationship, but this street and my house are in the neighborhood."

"Especially, Shiotsu-san was like a brother and sister, and they went to the dojo together."

"They told me to be careful not to hurt their son..."

"I see... Akio-san is committed to everything. The parents would have been relieved to see Shiotsu-san."

"Yes, I'm fine with that."

He was caught up in an indirect conversation, and Akio got in the way.

"Yes. Then..."

Minato corrected his posture towards Shiotsu.

"I think I was surprised by the sudden story, but I'm not overly cheerful. I don't know if it will be five or ten years before I get married, but I look to the future. I would like to apologize for the relationship I established."

"Ah..."

It is a long time to say that two people, who have just met, will ask for forgiveness ten years in advance...

"Sorry, nothing... what if I say 'I won't forgive you'?"

After blurting out such a word, Shiotsu rushed in and added Minato.

"No, I'm sorry. Right now, I want to say, 'I don't mean to speak in the first place.'"

As a social resignation, it should be possible to say "Congratulations" or "Cheers to Akio" here. However,

"But it's okay."

Once again, he was afraid to say it again.

"Besides, brother Gen says that."

Akio sharpened her mouth.

"It's the cancer that makes you think 'it's not going to last any longer', so I came all the way to see you. You'll be fine next time."

"Eh?"

Minato bows his head and...

"Oh. Are you hanging me 'decently'? I see, I see."

He didn't seem to feel uncomfortable with "next time", Minato cried, laughed and turned to Shiotsu again.

"Again... that's why, Shiotsu-san..."

Minato said, leaving a smile on his cheek.

"I want "brother Gen" to support me. Both Akio-san and me."

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After that, the situation changed more quickly than originally expected.

Far from "five years, ten years ahead", he entered the group six months after the greeting, and a year later, Akio had twins.

Akio wanted to get married and give birth, of course, but Akio's parents and others around her with their "we want to summarize the story this time" and "we want to calm Akio" helped.

The other party, Minato,

"So, it's faster than I thought, but let's start over."

He made arrangements for important things like finding a job and moving.

Minato's parents died prematurely and it was said that a small inheritance had allowed him to earn a living until his income was stable. He said, "It's a long time before we can give back to all of you...", but he had no tactic to rely on public support or the home of Akio's parents.

Although Minato is calmer than the average person, Minato, who has not passed the age of 20,

"It's okay. You have plans for the future; I think there is something like a life plan."

I confirm Shiotsu every time,

"If I say it strongly, my plan is to complete it with Akio."

Saying that, Minato laughed at ease.

"I will not be bored for the rest of my life."

"Not boring." Shiotsu, who tends to accept unplanned situations as stress, is an idea that never comes to light.

"If it is okay..."

Rather, it is less flexible.

Have thought about it,

"I think it's good for Shiotsu-san to have the ideal of "being there" in things," he said.

About five years later, the relationship between Shiotsu and the Minato family continued unabated.

Shiotsu, who dropped out of college to become a policeman, and Minato, who became a general clerk. Akio, who has had several short-term jobs while raising her twins. In general, they are a very ordinary citizen.

Akio's parents died one after another when the twins were three or four years old, and Shiotsu decided to take care of them on behalf of their relatives, but Shiotsu also had his own job and his own life. When he visited the Minato family on occasion, he was surprised by the growth of the twins.

The reason it changed is the appearance of a person named "Blue King".

The "Blue King" Habari Jin recently established an organization called "Scepter 4". As a result of the aptitude test within the police, Shiotsu was chosen as one of them, and was soon placed in the position of the King's official lieutenant.

Furthermore, the Minato family, who were related to Shiotsu, underwent a similar test, and it was found that everyone, including children, was fit to have powers.

Unlike Shiotsu, who originally had an ideal of social order, they had the option of living as ordinary people while being watched by the authorities. However, mainly due to Akio's high hopes, the Minato couple received an installation from the "Blue King", and they both became members of the "Scepter 4" maneuvering section.

Of course, Shiotsu objected. The functions assigned to the new organization are those in which the exchange of lives is normal.

Not recommended for couples with young children. That is something common sense cannot admit.

But there were some extraordinary factors in the situation.

One is that Minato Akio has displayed unusual aptitude that surpasses Shiotsu's. If she accidentally wakes up to a Strain and become a stray person, along with her own direct personality, it cannot be left out in the general public.

And one more thing is the rise of the "Red King" Kagutsu Genji. The number of people who can control the members of the red clan led by Kagutsu is scarce, and the breakwater that stops the collapse of society must be reinforced no matter what.

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These are ancient stories.

Akio's twins are 12 years old. They will become middle school students this spring. It seemed to him a great achievement that this family was able to enter milestone season without missing any.

By the way, the twins' birthday is in early March. He tried to adjust the shift for the Minatos to celebrate this with their family, but he couldn't make it easy for Minato and Akio to go home at the same time, so the month was halfway there.

And now that day.

"It's a bit late so start first."

Said Minato who got the phone call from Akio,

Shiozu was a bit gloomy.

"Uh."

There are already five plates on the table. Minato's home cooking. He knows it's always good to work, but it will take a certain amount of time to prepare this beautiful dining table.

It was planned that Minato after the night shift would get ready for today's party, and Akio, who will be leaving the office for the night, will join him later. Shiotsu, who happened to be working at the same time as Akio, also decided to participate, but he remember that he was just an "uncle of a relative" and is in an extra position.

Although, that's...

Akio, the mother of this family, wonders what she would do later than that. Where the hell would she stray on a day like this?

While Shiotsu was irritated, Minato and their sons were...

"I can't help it. Hayato and Akito. Let's cut the cake."

"Yes, I'll get a knife."

"I'll serve you a plate."

Then she changed her schedule and started working. He's used to Akio not moving as planned.

Also,

"I'm glad Shiotsu-san is here. Only three of us really lack emotion."

"Oh."

It made him worry about it.

Akio returned home about an hour later.

"Oh, have you already given a gift? Did you give it to Hayato and Akito, brother Gen?"

The twins waited in time, looked at each other and responded with their voices.

"Catalog gift."

"Buhahaha! What is that?"

Taking the catalog brought by Hayato, Akio laughed even more.

"Brother Gen, this is what you will give them! It's like tableware or futon!"

"It's not interesting and I'm sorry."

Truth be told, a paper cutter similar to the one custom made the other day for "Blue King" Habari Jin.

The twins of the Minato family are said to have a strong longing for the "Blue King" Habari Jin.

If he gives a gift that matches Habari, Shiotsu's thoughts that would make him happy would collapse on his birthday.

The paper cutter that was supposed to be given to Habari was used to kill the member of the "Purgatory" clan at the hand of Zenjo, a member of the Mobile Task Force. A similar one is too sinister to give away.

"Brother Gen is really boring. He's too boring to laugh."

"Akio, I'm not saying that."

Minato gives up on Akio who keeps laughing,

"I am happy, Shiotsu-san."

"I have fun choosing."

The twins said to Shiotsu.

"It's good to be funny."

Akio said with a smile and satisfaction.

"Because we are like that. It's just ordinary boredom."

Namely, this year's gift that the twins were given with the couple's joint name, chosen by Minato, is a fountain pen with the names Hayato and Akito.

"It is a souvenir. It won't force you to be interesting."

Minato smirked.

"Thanks Dad."

"I appreciate."

The twins said.

"This house would be useless without me."

Speaking like this, Akio went to the front door and returned with a large box in both hands.

"What are you doing with that big box?"

When Shiotsu asked, Akio raised the box to her face level,

"I bought a set at an electronics store."

"Wow!" Said the twins.

"Akio..."

When Minato yelled, Akio looked back in trouble.

"I know. I spoke with the children and "decided to graduate the toy". This is not a gift, it is mine."

"Is there such a graduation?"

Akio ordered the twins, ignoring Shiotsu's words, if there was such a graduation.

"Hayato and Akito. I'll let them do it, so I can connect various things."

While Akio was late and ate, the twins clashed, hooked up a game console to the TV in the living room, completed the initial setup, and started playing together. For the game software, they choose what they bought together with the main unit and tested it.

Finally,

"Okay, let me do it too."

Akio, who had finished eating, also intervened there.

"The controller is not enough."

"There are only two."

"I am the owner. You take turns."

"She is not willing to give it to her son."

Minato said to Shiotsu who leaned forward.



"Apparently that was the correct answer."

"Correct answer...?"

"The children said: "We are adults now.", So I thought about putting them together... but I'm afraid I still don't have enough time to play."

The appearance of Akio and her children addressing the television in the living room is more like a close brother and sister than parents and children.

"But in high school, playing with parents would be boring."

"Perhaps it is a great distance from children of the same age. After all, the occupations of their parents and the qualities of children's blood are special."

"I see... it's a job."

"Even if I'm working or raising a child, I'm trying to find everything... I trust Akio's nose."

"What is that "nose"?"

"I call it instinct... She always looks messy and always makes the right decisions where necessary."

Shiotsu looked towards the living room. Both Akio and the children play seriously, shake their bodies and raise their voices. When he was really serious and Akio's legs stopped, Minato rushed over and stopped.

"That's it..."

Marriage, childbirth and enlistment in "Scepter 4". Akio's actions and choices thus far seemed to always be hasty and reckless from Shiotsu's perspective.

If everyone is connected to this scene,

"I see, it's true."

It certainly feels that way now.