



"BEFORE ZERO"

CHAPTER 5: BATTLE START

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD

The moment Minato Hayatoshi entered the room following Habari Jin, the smell of blood and burned flesh snorted.

The room was surrounded by dim darkness. Not only were the lights turned off, but the windows were also blocked that should let in sunlight.

But it is not completely dark. The red, blue and radiant light of different abilities hit each other while flashing violently. The battle is on.

Based on information confirmed in advance, this room must be a shared room of less than 20 tatami mats. Not enough room for a full-scale battle. However, Minato's eyes, which began to get used to the darkness, clearly recognized a space that was larger than that.

A large space has been created by removing the walls of several rooms, focusing on the common room of the detention center. Is it a space for interception created in anticipation of an attack from the outside, or is "Purgatory" living in the facility piercing the wall in a playful way? He doesn't know, but this hasty "corridor" had turned into the biggest battlefield of the day anyway.

When the two of them started moving towards the shadows, looking at their surroundings...

"Habari! And Minato!"

There was a call from the corner of the room.

"Zenjo, what is the situation?"

When Habari calls again...

"I'm addicted to this! I was waiting in this room!"

Zenjo said again as he dealt with three black clothes. The face that removes their fangs seems to laugh.

"And there is a nasty guy."

At the same time as that word, a thin whip-shaped mass of flames burst out of the darkness and attacked Habari like a poisonous snake.

When Habari instantly drew his sword and turned his "head", the flaming whip shrunk and recoiled, sucking on the hand of a man a dozen meters away and disappearing.

"Are you Soma?"

Answering Habari's question...

"Yes, it's me."

The man replied in a fuzzy tone.

Thin, thread-like eyes on the back of light-colored sunglasses. A smile that seems to stick to his mouth. It has a mask-like face that cannot be read.

The tall, slim physique and moderate demeanor, in the "Purgatory" martial arts group, their hair color is slightly different.

His "uniform", even a black suit that spreads a feeling of intimidation, only for this man, looks like a clean dress.

"Purgatory", Executive Soma Hitoshi.

He is also called the advisor and number 2 of the "Red King".

"Welcome, Habari-san. And I'm sorry. It is the appearance of the "Blue King", but my general is sleeping in the back... God only knows when he will wake up."

Soma speaks with a unique intonation like Kansai Ben's, which is exaggerated in a cartoon.

"Even if I don't get this far, I'll take care of you. I don't think it's possible, but I'll try."

"No, Soma. There is no shortage for the other party."

With a beaming smile, Habari held up the saber. The vanguard aims at the heart of Soma.

"Far from being unreasonable, you are an uncomfortable opponent. You can be said to be the worst except for Kagutsu. If you don't die soon, they will kill you."

"Ah, I must be careful. Really. A face-to-face showdown with a "King"..."

Soma pulled out a cigarette case from his chest.

"Before that, let's take a break, huh."

When the breathless Habari smiled a bitter smile, Soma also bowed with a masked smile, then took a cigarette and raised his left hand to his face.

The little finger on Soma's left hand was missing at the second joint. The cross section of the cut finger glows red with the extraordinary capacity of the flame. That was Soma's "Holy Mark".

Using the chipped finger in place of a lighter and moving the fire toward the tip of the cigarette, Soma began to smoke deeply.

Meanwhile, the sound of the sword battle between "Scepter 4" and "Purgatory" echoes through the room. Also, what hides it is the moan of the wounded black clothes.

However, Soma pays no attention to them at all. Habari also just looks at Soma with interest.

Finally, Soma turned his face towards the ceiling and exhaled for a long time.

"Fuu..."

Soma moved his left hand forward at the perfect moment to cut off the conversation. It is like throwing luggage in his hand, but he has nothing in his palm. Instead, a high-pressure "flame" erupted from the severed surface of the little finger and was shot into the space in front of it.

Soma's technique is called "whip". The flame that emerges from the missing finger cross section literally flutters like a whip. Autonomy and trajectory.

Like a laser, like a poisonous snake, the flaming whip piercing the darkness was not targeting Habari, but Minato at his side. The moment the tip of the fire whip seemed to crush Minato's eyebrows, Habari's saber flashed and the blade with a blue light flickered from the side.

The flaming whip that floated in the air for a moment, when swiftly swaying like a snake, attacks Habari this time in an arc-shaped orbit.

As he touched the head of the whip again, Habari stomped, crossing the "hole" in an instant with his extraordinary leg strength, and advanced until he reached Soma.

Whether or not the difference in range between the whip and the saber changes to the saber advantage when sneaking into the chest, the fire whip, which moves more freely and precisely than a live arm, is fully functional even in attack and defense at close range.

Habari and Soma began to fight a fierce battle.

In contrast to Habari's sword skill, which unifies all of his sword, body, and abilities, Soma keeps his left hand down and does not hold it.

The whip that extends from the little finger blinks rapidly like a creature of its own will and accurately repels the blue blade that thrusts itself over and over again. Soma himself protects his body with the whip, keeps the cigarette in his mouth and adjusts his standing position calmly leading the stars in a dance.

"After all..."

Habari said without any sign of discomfort.

"It is not easy to kill if the messenger is on the defensive."

"No... this is barely."

Soma responds with a suffocating tone and finally spits out a cloud of smoke.

"Minato!"

Without letting go of his swordsman's hand or looking back, Habari said...

"Please rebuild the place. Ask the others."

"Yes."

Within 30 seconds after that, she takes control of the battlefield and makes a breakthrough.

Minato quickly looked around. Eyes accustomed to the dark pick up the situation in the room and the disposition of his companions and the strength of the enemy, and reconstruct the history of the battle in his brain.

That way, Minato must understand, how "Scepter 4" and "Purgatory" have been fighting in this room for the past few minutes.

And how Akio died.

+++++

The "Saw Traction Unit", which deviates from the original "Scepter 4" powerful control and cooperates at high speed by reflexes and instinct, has the power to easily cut through "Purgatory" like a flock of beasts. Neither a group of daring black suits nor executives with destructive abilities could contain a swarm of rapidly rotating blades.

However, the situation changes when a strange brain named Soma appears in the herd.

Soma was an exceptional technician among the powerful and crudely talented of "Purgatory". He was a genius who reached the realm of art, a genius comparable to Zenjo and the "Saw Traction Unit", and an advanced precision machine.

"Red King", from the existence of Kagutsu, flowing through the relationships formed by the facility, raging in the body, a tremendous amount of heat gives the subordinate clansman the power of destruction, but in the end, the energy it will burn its own body.

Soma is in full control of his own free will.

A strong "individual conscience" that does not renounce its own reason even with the "King of violence" on top, that is the basis of Soma's technique and also the reason for his peculiar position.

His position is the "immovable number 2" position in "Purgatory".

There is no organized chain of command in the prison. Like a flock of beasts, there is only one hierarchy of forces, which is very fluid and fluctuates with replacement of personnel.

It is not limited to this, the situation always boiled in a violent whirlpool around the "Red King". Nothing can maintain a firm presence there.

However, in the situation where even life is lost in an instant, Soma has been Kagutsu's assistant for about two years.

As a ghost beast that lives in lava, he himself is a superhuman by Kagutsu's side, and is an abnormal existence.

However, personal characteristics and abilities are only part of Soma's danger.

Soma was the best in individual combat technology and at the same time, he had more skill as a group commander. The whip of fire that pierces the heart, leaving the enemy's neck, was also the whip of a beast master who commanded a group of allies.

When Soma appears on the battlefield, the black clothes fighting for a strong self-begin to behave as if they are living creatures with only one will. Soma himself does not give clear instructions or strike the underside of the black robes, but Soma's "whip", which has both precise movement and long range, intervenes at key points in the battle unfolding around it. By doing so, he can control the transition from the war situation.

It was a unique ability in all clans under the Seven Kings. To put it bluntly, it was close to the combat assistance provided by Hayato Minatoshi's slow knife, but it was even more sophisticated and strategic. The flaming whip that runs between the beasts was an extension of Soma's brain, a nerve fiber that controls the body of a beast.

In fact, even in this "hall", the black robes of "Purgatory" acted under Soma's intent without being aware of themselves, releasing the power of fire and dispersion. Soma's "one move on the board", and because of that they burned their lives and collapsed, they were the game pieces that Soma enjoyed, the exploding stones and the abandoned stones.

The black clothes self-destructing special attack folds up, and Zenjo and the "Saw Traction Unit" split up and isolate themselves.

A group of swordsmen who surpassed the instinct of the beast were on the verge of being crushed when entangled in a mysterious and unusual intelligence.

+++++

But now...

Habari represses Soma's actions. The tentacles are blocked and the giant beast once again divided into an uncontrolled swarm of beasts.

"Scepter 4, get together!"

Minato threw a knife to each corner of the room in rapid succession, giving a sharp command.

The black clothes of "Purgatory" are like amateurs in the sense of a group battle. Without Soma's guidance, they couldn't cooperate properly. The individually encircled and divided chainsaws were able to quickly defeat several black clothes and escape by simply hammering in a few knives and creating an opportunity.

Zenjo, Azuma, Bado, Chidjiwa, Daiba. When the five men gathered together, Minato called to Habari's back.

"Commander!"

"Yes."

While shooting a strong blow in moderation, Habari jumps away from Soma, after a few steps back, he is left with Minato and Zenjo.

"Habari!"

"Commander, are you safe?"

Habari gives brief instructions to the men who speak to him.

"Rebuild the "Saw Traction Unit". Not everyone can go."

"But Akio is not here!"

Zenjo said that. It was also a word that he said for the other members.

Zenjo and the others understand. The "Saw Traction Unit" is not just a team of powerful swordsmen. It is a fierce precision machine in which individual qualities and unconsciousness are intertwined at the instinct level, it cannot move properly without Akio, one of the gears.

But...

"I will take the place."

When Habari said that, everyone was shocked by the void for a moment and understood immediately.

Certainly, Habari will have sword skill and divine judgment, and Habari Jin will more than make up for the hole Akio Minato has left.

"But, Commander..."

Minato won.

The "Saw Traction Unit" is, so to speak, the "king's alternate force" in clan fighting, and it is the end of the story that the "Blue King" himself joins it. In the unlikely event that they are killed outright with the "Red King", it can unleash an unprecedented disaster, the "outbreak of royalty".

"Yes, Minato."

Habari responded with Minato's will.

"Today we cannot fight Kagutsu. This battle is our defeat. So..."

Habari turned the tip of the saber toward Soma.

"Today's ultimate goal is to seize the head of 'Purgatory' executive, Hitoshi Soma, and retire."

"Oh."

Zenjo, Azuma, Bado, Chidjiwa, and Daiba resumed in anger and fighting spirit.

It was a reasonable place to end the battle that Akio lost.

"The same order."

"I will need your eyes again."

Minato leaning forward was controlled by Habari's words and Zenjo's hand.

"Go ahead, Minato. Now, I'll get souvenirs in the fall."

Zenjo was sharpening his fangs to laugh. There was only anger in his eyes.

The words ran out and the remaining killing intent focused on Soma with a sharp eye.

"Really."

Soma coughed with a smile on the edge of his mouth.

A chunk of ash fell from the tip of the cigarette.

"Everyone, draw your swords!"

They have already drawn their swords. Members of the "Saw Traction Unit" ceremonially repositioned the swords they had been holding.

Zenjo has a saber, Azuma has a twin sword, Bado has a spear, and Chidjiiwa and Daiba have daggers.

"With a sword, according to heaven, our justice is incomparable. "Saw Traction Unit", mission execution!"

With the command, his specialties were tinged with an extraordinary light. As he spilled the blood that wet the blade, it was blue, strong and glowing brightly, illuminating every corner of the "hole".

The six-body "Saw Traction Unit" has been revived. He was a divinely combative figure who turned anger and murder into light.

Soma got ready for the first time. In the next moment, a series of super speed attacks can turn to dust.

Distrustful of the reassembled "Scepter 4", the black robes that had been rolling in the distance began to move in anticipation of the resumption of the battle.

The tension was building in the room again.

+++++

There is still something.

Minato's consciousness couldn't fully digest the sensation of strange matter in the corner of his thoughts.

First of all, the "Saw Traction Unit" was a perfect wall. It was a unit organized to be a perfect wall. No matter how strange Soma was, there should have been no possibility of attaching him to the ring of blades spinning at high speed.

What killed Akio, an unknown factor that broke the "ring" circulating in the perfect wall should still be in this room.

Minato looked around the "hallway" again. Before, he was paying attention to the position and movement of humans, but now that he's in a winning state, I've also noticed things around him.

Remnants of battle and destruction on the floor and ceiling. A blackout curtain that closes the window. Concrete fragments still remain on the edges of the perforated loose walls.

And he can see that furniture like sofas, tables, and shelves were the living space of "Purgatory".

Part of the view is hidden behind the pillars. Minato moved carefully and changed his mind.

Akio had fallen there.

"....."

Minato snuck under Akio, hiding in the shadows.

He hugged her body from behind, but she wasn't breathing and he wasn't ready to move. From the amount of bleeding around her and the huge wounds that pierced her while burning her heart, he was sure that she had died instantly.

A long saber rolls beside him. Akio's favorite sword, "Shiden".

It is not an offensive or defensive attitude. It is a situation that makes him imagine how she was suddenly beaten and killed with one blow.

There were no scratches on her face, and the wide-eyed expression remained as it was.

A slight expression of surprise.

Even if she was attacked by an enemy, she would have reflexively avoided him and blown him head off with a flash of "Shiden". That was the reason why she was selected as a member of the "Saw Traction Unit", and her qualities.

What surprised Akio? What kind of enemy could she not respond to?

Minato surveyed the surroundings while being aware of Akio's point of view.

Half-eaten pizza on the low table. A gaming machine is hooked up to a big screen television near the wall and a controller is lying around.

Do black clothes play games?

When he thought that...

"Uncle, what are you doing?"

He hears a voice from behind.

Minato looked back. A knife that slides from his sleeve into the palm of his hand pierces the enemy's heart the next moment. That was the moment.

But...

Minato's hand stopped when he saw the black clothes behind him.

It was a fatal delay in reaction.

In front of Minato was a young man, not a boy, but he was under 20 years old.

The sleeves of a black suit that he is not used to wearing are rolled up.

In fact, a poor intelligent student than a member of a violent organization.

It reminded him of his twin sons waiting at home.

The other day when their high school uniforms were tried on, they both appeared to be wearing uniforms.

"Is it too big?" Says Minato.

"They'll be big soon.", Akio replied.

Then, Minato understood.

"Akio, you too... you saw this kid."

"Ha, what is that, idiot?!"

The boy's fist was covered in red flames along with his forearms.

An extraordinarily strong fist pierced Minato's chest. He couldn't allow him to speak.

In a short time before he collapses to the ground, his eyes are quickly defeated and his vision closes to darkness.

A child's voice was heard from above the fallen Minato.

"Hey, this is two stars."

Then another boy, probably the same age, called.

"He was about to die now. Satsuki, it was dangerous too."

"I don't feel like I'm going to lose to him."

"He thought you were a boy and was not careful."

"I am not a child."

+++++

"Minato!"

From somewhere far away, Zenjo's voice is heard.

"Wait, Zenjo."

The commander stopped Zenjo.

"Zenjo, now, focus on Soma."

Is this a member of Kagutsu?

"If you defeat Soma, you can do anything else."

The voice is far away. It's like saying something of a swordsman.

This may be a scene he need to stop.

The "Saw Traction Unit" is dangerous equipment that tends to run out of control.

Above all, because the commander is also interesting and inspiring.

The group is also constantly fighting.

"Habari!"

Something suddenly became noisy.

"This sign... he's the one."

Commander.

"Wow, it's finally here."

Soma looks.

A wave of sound. The opening voice of "Purgatory" that shakes the space.

"Come on, ours."

The boy's excited voice.

+++++

"Oh, I can't hear it anymore. Something vibrates on the ground... don't distract me."

What the hell was he talking about?

He wondered if that boy was saying, "I'm not a boy."

What happens? If he thinks he have grown up, he is still a child. That age is very difficult.

"Akio, what do you think?"

"Stupid, do you really want to deal with kids?"

"Oh, not at all. Exactly correct."

"You are a kind person. And always make the right decisions."

"There is no mistake in the important things in front of you, the things you must protect and order."

"Today and in the future."

"Where will you go next?"

"As always, I'll jump as I want."

"Of course, I am with you."