



MISSING KINGS
RAIRAKU REI / GoRA

K - MISSING KINGS

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN

RAWS: RIDIA

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PROLOGUE: IN DRESDEN

The Dresden Slate, a mysterious relic found in Dresden, Germany during the war. The "Slate" brought to Japan after the war chose the seven kings of supernatural powers.

The "Silver King", a watcher with unchanging power.

The "Golden King" who controls destiny and brings prosperity.

The "Red King" who harbors a fiery flame of destruction.

The "Blue King", guardian of order and justice.

The "Green King" who plans to change the world.

The "Grey King" who protects the weak.

And the Joker "Colorless King" who knows what he will bring.

The "kings" led groups of people with supernatural powers who shared their own power, sometimes bringing people happiness, sometimes spreading terrible death and destruction, sometimes fighting, sometimes uniting, disappearing and being reborn.

In 2012, after the death of the "Colorless King" Ichigen Miwa, who worked as a mediator of "kings", the new "Colorless King" who appeared as a dangerous king of chaos, produced a battle involving the three kings, "Red King" "Blue King" and "Silver King".

As a result of that incident, known as the Gakuenjima Incident, the "Colorless King" was destroyed by the "Silver King" Isana Yashiro and the "Red King" Suoh Mikoto, but Isana Yashiro's whereabouts were unknown. Suoh was killed by Reisi Munakata, the "Blue King", just before his Sword of Damocles fell.

Yatogami Kuro and Neko, who became members of the clan of the "Silver King", known as the Immortal "King", believed in the survival of their king and continued to search for his whereabouts for almost a year.

In a world where multiple "Kings" have disappeared, a new gear of fate begins to turn.

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"Oh, My God." She rolled her eyes and stared at him.

She was a woman with beautiful silver hair and blue-gray eyes. Her movements were smoother than other humans, and he could see that she was trying to treat him as carefully as possible.

After looking at him, she directed her gaze to a long, silver flying object that suddenly appeared above his head, slightly above her line of sight.

"To think that a new individual EX-α would be born here. Furthermore, the shape and emission color of sword-like Kouki are different from blue and red... Silver..."

Her fingers gently stroked the hair on his back.

"I wonder what kind of features he has."

She rolled her eyes sadly.

"Actually, I was doing a different investigation now. If one day I were to decide that this path was wrong... I would like to find a way to go back..."

She was worried that her fingers would be cold while they were still attached to his back, so she brought the tip of her nose closer. She smiled slightly, perhaps because that tickled her palm.

At that moment, the sound of a bomb exploding was heard from the ground.

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Sitting on a bench on the banks of the Elbe, Izumo Kusanagi gazed vaguely at the river's surface under the blue August sky.

"Well... that's not going to work..."

With a sigh, he talked and he ate the sausages he bought at the stall. It was an aromatic sausage grilled over charcoal that was sandwiched between the bread. The large sausage protruded from both ends of the small bread, and when he nibbled at one end, his mouth filled with delicious meat juices. The mustard had a mild spiciness and the aroma of herbs and garlic kneaded into the sausage spread gently.

It was delicious. But Kusanagi didn't come to Germany to enjoy sausages.

"At the moment, the place where the hit occurred has been reversed. What am I going to do now?"

The reason Kusanagi came to Germany was Anna Kushina, a girl who was the only female member of "Homura" and someone Kusanagi should protect.

About half a year ago, Anna, whose eyes were trembling with anxiety and hesitation, said something to him. Kusanagi decided to try to do something about the situation that happened to Anna.

First, he visited the Mihashira Tower, the residence of the "Golden King". However, he was unable to find the "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji and was unable to obtain any information. According to the "rabbit" that replied: "We don't even have a plan to respond to your request.".

Kusanagi, who had already lost his way in the fight, crossed the sea with a ray of hope.

Dresden, the old German city.

Known as Florence on the River Elbe, it is a city of culture lined with historic buildings in the Baroque style. During World War II, it was once destroyed by heavy bombing, but after the war, the urban landscape, which was reduced to a mountain of rubble after the war, was restored and revived, turning it into a city like a phoenix.

And it was also the place where the "Slate" was once discovered and studied.

Kusanagi was walking around this town looking for information about the "Slate".

With the help of "Scepter 4", he was able to meet the doctor who was once involved in the "Slate" research along with the Weismann brothers. The elderly doctor, who was also a survivor of the bombing of Dresden, recounted many memories of the war, but he still did not have the answers Kusanagi was looking for.

Through his connections, he visited everyone who had the slightest involvement in the "base" research (although not many of them survived), and visited the church where the "base" lab was located. He went to see the ruins (although there was no trace of the research institute anymore), he flew to Berlin once, settled down and found various research materials left by the German army at that time related to the "Slate". He too was looking for something to do.

But the result was all in vain.

"In the first place... all the information about the "Slate" was stolen by the "Golden King"... from the beginning, I knew there was little hope, but..."

Kusanagi sighed deeply.

After eating a sausage, he leaned on the bench and looked up at the sky. The summer sky was blue and wide. Four months had already passed since he arrived in Germany.

"That's why I don't have time to take it easy."

In a low voice, Kusanagi muttered.

Since Totsuka and Suoh died, half of the season has already passed.

"Homura", which was started by the three of them, was no longer in the form it once was. Even so, Kusanagi had intended to continue providing a place for everyone to stay until they naturally started leading different lives, but the matter of going to Germany made that impossible, and as a result, he had to expel the "Homura" members from the bar.

Kusanagi sighed again, remembering Yata's tearful and frustrated face.

At that moment, he heard a small cry.

Looking up at the bank of the Elbe River, in front of the bench Kusanagi was sitting on, a small white mouse stood on its hind legs and looked at Kusanagi.

"Hello...?"

Kusanagi couldn't help but greet him because he looked terribly human when he stood on his hind legs, and because his eyes met his round, intellectual eyes perfectly.

The white mouse chirped again as if he were responding.

For a while there was a strange silence.

After a tense time, the white mouse touched the ground with its front paws and began to run as if nothing had happened.

In front of Kusanagi's gaze, thinking that it was a strange mouse, the figure of a running white mouse suddenly took on a dim glow.

"Eh...?"

Kusanagi blinked and looked carefully. He thought it was the reflection of sunlight, but after looking at it again, he could only see that the mouse itself was emitting light.

The way it glowed was similar to the way people with supernatural powers displayed their powers, so Kusanagi suddenly stood up and ran after the white mouse.

If he got into the ditch, he would have escaped, but the white mouse ran into the corner of the road. Driven by a strange premonition, Kusanagi continued to chase the little mouse without hesitation.

(What am I doing? Am I like Alice who wanders into Wonderland chasing the White Rabbit?)

Thinking so, he ran on, passing through the old city with beautiful and solemn buildings, passing a tram, and further on, the white mouse entered a large building.

Taking a deep breath, Kusanagi entered the building without even asking what it was, thinking that he had come this far.

"Here... is this the library?"

Inside, the entire wall was lined with bookshelves, and various people walked back and forth between them, or opened books at the desks lined up in the center. Kusanagi glanced at the scene and searched for the white mouse he was chasing.

A little, he caught a slender tail at the edge of his vision.

When he turned his gaze to him, he was no longer visible, but he could see the stairs to the basement beyond the rope that barred outsiders from entering. If he wasn't mistaken, the white mouse should have gone down there.

"...I apologize for now."

Kusanagi stealthily climbed up the rope and down the stairs.

That basement room was more like a storeroom than a closed-stack library. There were a few shelves and books, but most of the room was filled with simple shelves and old boxes of various sizes were lined up.

Without turning on the lights, Kusanagi illuminated the room with the light from his PDA and looked around. He couldn't see the white mouse.

Each shelf had a label with a name on it. Books and letters donated by someone, relics excavated somewhere, etc. were described.

It was like a storehouse of items that had probably been donated to the library and were worthless or undetermined, or held without the effort to determine them.

Kusanagi walked slowly between the shelves, looking at the nameplate. The year of the gift grew older as he went further in, and in one corner, the nameplate itself was old and the lettering faded.

Kusanagi slowly translated the characters on the plaque, which were like scribbled notes without the name of the donor, into Japanese and read them aloud.

"Articles of unknown owner excavated at the site of a large air raid."

His heart was shaking.

The great air raid, the Dresden bombing raid that triggered the awakening of the "Silver King". The "base" laboratory was destroyed by bombing.

The boxes lined up on the shelves were covered in a thick layer of dust like snow. That must have slept there for many years. When he gently lifted the lid of the box in front of him so that the dust wouldn't fly, he discovered that the inside was crammed with books and documents that weren't even organized. In addition to the boxes, the shelves were also loaded with bags and luggage that were brought in just as they were discovered.

"This thing... is there a chance that it is a hidden treasure?"

Kusanagi raised the corners of his tense mouth into a smile.

"That is, in this warehouse, every time the city is remodeled, the remains of old basements and bunkers are still collected, whose owners and contents are unknown."

"I see. There's a good chance that something will come out of here, rather than just casually asking questions or roaming the ruins of a research facility, I suppose."

Kusanagi immediately informed Awashima, who was in Japan, that he had finally found a clue. Awashima's voice on the other end of the phone was nonchalant, but he could sense a faint hint of anticipation in her.

As an example, he was allowed to use the name "Scepter 4" for the on-site research of the large-scale academic library that functioned as both a university library and a state library.

The presence of "Scepter 4" and Daikaku Kokujoji, the heavyweight behind it, was also effective in Germany.

Awashima was cooperating with Kusanagi in that investigation because she also wanted the information that Kusanagi wanted.

Kusanagi wanted to help Anna. And Awashima was seeking as much information as possible about the "Slate" for Munakata, who had taken the burden of killing "King" Suoh Mikoto into his hands.

However, what he found was only a "sign of a clue", and he had not yet reached a clue. From now on, he would have to inspect one by one the large number of miscellaneous items that were not organized and pushed around as much as they could. Naturally, most of the items were relics from ordinary people who had nothing to do with them, and until he could conclude that they were unrelated, he would have no choice but to spend time examining them one by one while deciphering the German language. It was a daunting task.

"Are you yelling for joy? It's the edge of the cloud you finally grabbed."

Kusanagi smiled wryly at Awashima's response to Kusanagi's complaint.

Still, he was sure that he was finally beginning to see the shadow of the real in the story that seemed to catch the clouds.

Kusanagi's visits to the library continued for a long time.

He moved his quarters closer to the library just for convenience, and he spend every day working day and night in the dimly lit basement.

At first, the library staff, who had an eye for shady things, gradually grew to appreciate them as Kusanagi cleared the shelves and sorted the items while conducting research. The students thought that he was a young war researcher from Japan, greeted him normally, and the number of acquaintances increased. He also got acquainted with delicious cafes around the library.

He kept in regular contact with Awashima to report on progress and heard from Awashima about the current situation in Japan, including what "Homura" was doing. Without that, Kusanagi himself would have been under the illusion that he was a researcher living in Germany.

On the day that summer passed and autumn began to deepen, Kusanagi ate breakfast at his favorite cafe as usual before entering the library storage room.

"Well. Today's part is..."

In a dusty warehouse that felt like his own lair, Kusanagi lifted a heavy box from the shelf and carried it to his desk. When he opened the lid, inside was a large amount of paper that had turned yellow.

"The contents of this box are all paper? No wonder it's heavy."

He picked up the top sheet of paper and looked at it, but even Kusanagi, who was completely used to German, didn't know what the document was because there were so many words he didn't understand. As he frowned at the number of difficult words, he heard the cries of small animals under his feet.

"Eh?"

When he looked down, on the ground a few steps away from Kusanagi was the white mouse that he had chased that day.

No, he couldn't tell if it was the same mouse. Now, he didn't give off light like he did that day, and he stand still like an ordinary mouse. However, the figure standing on his hind legs still looked human.

"....."

Guided there, he thought for a moment what to do in the situation where he might meet up with the lost white mouse. However, Kusanagi thought that his catching behavior would be different, so he slightly raised his hand towards the white mouse.

"Thank you for bringing me here."

The white mouse looked at Kusanagi with round eyes that seemed intelligent and chirped.

Kusanagi returned his gaze to the paper inside the box.

Postponing the reading carefully, he picked up the documents one by one and looked at them.

There were several notes that seemed to be transcribing thoughts and considering them.

It was very difficult to read because it was crossed out with double lines and what appeared to be another idea was written below it. In addition, there were many articles with complicated calculation formulas written down and articles that simply wrote down some numerical values. They looked like a physicist's research notes or something.

As he carefully rummaged through the pile of disjointed papers, looking at each sheet carefully, he found a neatly arranged pile of papers from the bottom.

Seeing what was drawn on the topmost piece of paper, Kusanagi's hand jumped up.

An image that he could understand at a glance, even if he couldn't make out a sentence full of difficult words.

It was a photo of the "Slate".

A circular geometric pattern ran through the center of a stone block cut into squares. Kusanagi vividly recalled the shape of the "Slate" enshrined under the floor made of tempered glass in the corridor on the top floor of Mihashira Tower, which Suoh had entered several times.

Kusanagi suddenly looked at the white mouse. The white mouse was no longer there.

"No way..."

He remembered what the old doctor, whom he heard for the first time after arriving in Germany, said that he was doing research with the Weismann brothers.

The mice are said to have been used as test subjects in the "Slate" research at the time.

Several of the mice placed under the influence of the "Slate" that activated, had a unique ability similar to the "King" known as EX- α , which Kusanagi and the others knew about, and that caused the synchronization of abilities with any living creature around it.

That was almost seventy years ago. Considering the lifespan of a mouse, an enormous amount of time had passed.

However, if there was a mouse that woke up as an individual with a characteristic similar to the "Silver King", an unchangeable characteristic, it wouldn't have been impossible even if that individual survived that amount of time.

Even if he had intelligence and tried to guide someone, he couldn't say that it was impossible.

"Danke schön (Thank you)."

That was what Kusanagi whispered to the white mouse that had disappeared.

Kusanagi took his PDA. With his fingers slightly trembling with anticipation, he called the number of the elderly doctor who was involved in the "Slate" investigation. It was not possible for Kusanagi to judge whether the discovered material was significant or not. He wanted a detailed translation of the material, as well as an explanation of what it meant.

He felt the edge of the cloud he grabbed take shape in his hand.

As he listened to the ringtone, he quickly flipped through the materials and found a signature at the bottom.

Klaudia Weismann.

CHAPTER 1: RAID

October 12, 20:11. The outpost of "Scepter 4" sounded the alarms.

At this time, Akiyama and other members of the special forces were in the bathroom of the camp. It was a relaxing time after the regular meeting ended, and many of the members broke free from their work mode and spent their time in their own way.

"Emergency dispatch. Emergency dispatch. There is an intruder at Mihashira Tower. Each member, please join the board as soon as you receive your department's lineup."

The members of the Special Forces, who reflexively stood up at the alarm, stopped moving in confusion after hearing the content of the broadcast.

"Eh? Mihashira Tower?"

Domyoji, the youngest, twisted his face into a half smile as if he had heard a joke that was hard to react to.

Mihashira Tower is the residence of Daikaku Kokujoji, the biggest and strongest "King" who controls this country behind the scenes. Normally, it would be unthinkable for them to attack that place, and even if he appeared such a foolish terrorist, he would have been quickly dealt with within the "Tokijikuin" Golden Clan before the release of "Scepter 4".

Akiyama took his PDA and connected it to the operating room. A female member who responded immediately reported in a tense voice that they were making emergency arrangements for a helicopter to surround Mihashira Tower, and that the Special Forces should immediately rush to the scene in an armored vehicle.

"It's not a false alarm after all. The place is Mihashira Tower!"

Akiyama raised his voice and ran out of the room with the members of the Special Forces. From other rooms, the members ran out in a panic.

"Are you saying that the Gold Clan is under attack? That's stupid!"

Someone's confused voice hit his ear. They all had the same confusion.

When he came out of the building, the torrential rain hit his body. Splashing puddles and running, he climbed into an armored vehicle that prepared to leave in front of the front gate. A car full of spy agents immediately took off.

The forecast was for rain tonight into the morning. The sound of raindrops hitting the roof of the armored vehicle that Akiyama and the others were riding in echoed. There was also occasional thunder.

The armored vehicle blared its emergency siren and sped down the street. Benzai, who was sitting next to Akiyama in the spacious car with his arms folded and a difficult expression on his face, whispered softly.

"I never thought there would be someone so ignorant to challenge them..."

The members of the Special Forces have various backgrounds, but Benzai is a man who used to be in the National Defense Force along with Akiyama, and because he is more used to such roles than the other members, he is a leader alongside Akiyama. Usually, he doesn't show much confusion, but it seemed like he couldn't keep his cool in this situation.

Akiyama's brows also tightened.

"More importantly, it is a domain of the Golden Clan. Is it alright for us to get involved?"

Basically, people from other clans are not allowed to enter the king's territories without permission. In the first place, it should not have been possible for "Scepter 4", the guardian of order, to invade the territories of Daikaku Kokujoji, the leader of Agreement 120, the agreement between the royal powers.

Even so, if it's a situation where it can't be left alone as "Scepter 4"... At Akiyama's worried words, Benzai simply lowered his gaze without replying.

The vehicle soon arrived in front of the Mihashira Tower. The number 3 of "Scepter 4", Saruhiko Fushimi, who had arrived a little earlier than the others, gave instructions and began to move the members.

"Special ops members, use the main gate, and the rest, secure the other areas and set up a security line. Keep the press out! I'm waiting for the boss's order to enter. Don't act without permission!"

Akiyama and his colleagues immediately blocked off the front of Mihashira Tower and set up a siege net.

Several "Scepter 4" helicopters were flying in the sky. At the top of the Mihashira Tower, a skyscraper that seemed to pierce the sky, were the searchlights of the helicopters that cast many bands of light that split the darkness of the night.

As the rain intensified, the uniform quickly became wet and heavy.

The voices of the members' instructions and reports flew wildly. Apparently, they have not been able to contact the Mihashira Tower security headquarters. If they needed help, there should be a request, and if they didn't, there should be a notice about it, but neither of those things happened.

The intention of the "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji, the owner of Mihashira Tower, was also unknown. Why did he allow such situations? Was he in the tower and dealing with something, or was he absent?

The police also seemed confused about how to get involved in this unusual situation and were struggling to cooperate.

Akiyama and the others quickly formed a formation and prepared for the race.

While he was tense from the stress of an unprecedented battle, he moved his fingers that seemed to be frozen in the night air and cold rain, and braced himself to be able to grab the sword at any moment.

At that moment, a new vehicle arrived. The door opened and a bespectacled man appeared, dressed in a blue uniform with a slightly different design than the general members.

Reisi Munakata, the head of "Scepter 4" and the fourth sovereign, the "Blue King". He is the boss of Akiyama and the others, and is the person who is the "King".

Seri Awashima, the lieutenant of "Scepter 4", snuggled up to Munakata, who was about to step out into the rain. She opened her umbrella and went to Munakata to give a brief report.

"Captain. Preparations are complete. Of the order."

Munakata walked directly between the members. When he stopped just before the entrance, he looked up at Mihashira Tower with the black clouds roaring with thunder behind him.

All the members held their breath and waited for Munakata's instructions.

Munakata looked up at the tower with a face that did not express his thoughts and spoke in a calm but clear voice that reached the members.

"Wait as you are."

All the members held their breath.

They still couldn't act.

They could understand the decision, but frustration filled the members. Akiyama had the same thoughts, and even Awashima and Fushimi, who were at Munakata's side, showed a bit of surprise and frustration.

Looking towards the Mihashira Tower, Munakata's muttering voice faintly reached Akiyama's ears through the sound of rain.

"Has he finally surfaced?"

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He didn't hate the rain. Getting your clothes wet is a bit annoying, but the rain moistens the ground and favors the growth of vegetation. The rain accompanied by thunder was a suitable color for that day's operation.

Humming the children's song "Amefuri" (A Rainy Day), Mishakuji Yukari walked lightly through the entrance hall of Mihashira Tower. Stepping over the body of the fallen guard, he kicked hard at the marble floor.

The surroundings resounded with battlefield sounds such as roars, gunshots, the clash of weapons, beatings, and breaking glass. A large number of Mishakuji's companions wearing full-face helmets with green light running around the place (people who do not reveal their real names or faces, just participating in the same mission) dyed themselves in green light, which unleashed supernatural power and challenged the enemy with a weapon of their choice.

Among the enemies, the people of the "Tokijikuin" Golden Clan, who were under this attack, were humans wearing rabbit masks and clothing similar to oriental obi. They are the bodyguards of the "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji, and are called "Rabbits" who exist to quickly fulfill Kokujoji's wishes, abandoning their name and individuality.

The response of the "Rabbits" to the attack was quick. While the clansmen who were in charge of security counterattacked, the non-combatants were evacuated and the "Rabbit" specialized in combat skills went to the front to stop the invasion of the tower, replacing the security clansmen.

The entrance hall was an atrium that ran through to the fourth floor, and battles were even being fought in the sky corridor that ran through the atrium.

The "Rabbit", who was trying to block the thief's invasion in the corridor, swung the club in his hand, and several helmeted men were knocked down, and two or three of them climbed over the railing to the first floor where Mishakuji was. crashed to the floor of the entrance hall. There was also a person wearing a helmet who broke the glass on the third floor and fell.

A rustle was heard from behind, and a parrot with green feathers flew past. The parrot skillfully flew at low speed next to Mishakuji, it was much closer to Mishakuji than the army of helmets. His name is Kotosaka.

"Yukari! Yukari! Are you alright? Are you alright?"

Unlike ordinary parrots that only repeat words as sounds, Kotosaka speaks intentionally. Mishakuji gave Kotosaka a charming smile.

"Hey. Are you full of energy, Mishakuji-chan? It's scattered everywhere."

It was good until they sent the invasion force to the basement of the Mihashira Tower, but after the "Rabbit" appeared in front, the loss of the helmeted army corps was severe.

Even though they had mobilized a lot of people, they were unilaterally invaded by a few "Rabbits", reducing the number to less than half in a short period of time.

However, in proportion to that, Mishakuji's mood rose. His heart raced as he felt that the time was drawing near to take out his beloved sword "Ayamachi" that he carried on his back.

Looking ahead, Mishakuji smiled. At that moment, five "Rabbits" jumped down from the sky corridor and landed, blocking Mishakuji's path.

Kotosaka, who was flying next to Mishakuji, sensed the danger and evacuated to the sky with a "Quaw!".

Mishakuji raised the edge of his glossy lips and looked at the five "Rabbits". He guessed that it was an elite unit among the "Rabbits".

The characteristic of the Golden Clan is flourishing and prosperity, and it is said that the installation of the "Golden King" will bring out that person's talent. In other words, the abilities of the Clansman are not uniform, but vary greatly depending on the potential of the person.

However, Mishakuji verified that the five "Rabbits" in front of him had a power similar to that of the "Golden King" Kokujoji Daikaku. If Mishakuji is a swordsman, would they be magicians? They are probably people from the Kokujoji family. Kokujoji was an Onmyodo family lineage that has continued since ancient times.

One of the "Rabbits" standing in front of Mishakuji quickly made a sign. Magic from ancient times, the supernatural powers brought to the "Slate" swelled with a synergistic effect, and energy surged in the "Rabbit's" hands.

Seeing that golden glowing energy, Mishakuji wanted to prove what it was.

Power emanated from the hands of the "Rabbit". Mishakuji didn't avoid it on purpose and wrapped himself in his own supernatural power, a supernatural power bestowed by the former "King", not a supernatural power belonging to the current Mishakuji "King". As it was, he received the power of the "Rabbit" head-on.

It was quite a shock. Manipulating space and attacking with the supernatural ability to make the environment follow him as he wished, or sending golden energy to slide backwards on the surface of his body, he flew off without holding on.

Mishakuji danced in the air, twisted and landed gracefully.

"As expected of the "Rabbit" that heard the sound."

Pleased with the "Rabbit's" power, Mishakuji smiled.

A fusion of techniques accumulated over a long period of time and the glorious power of gold. He didn't hurt Mishakuji, but it was quite a beautiful blow.

It wasn't enough to pull out his beloved sword "Ayamachi".

The "rabbits" looked a little scared, but they didn't back down, they grabbed the sticks on their backs and got ready.

Mishakuji also placed his hand on the hilt of the sword he carried on his back. The sword is over a meter long, but the scabbard is specially designed with notches that allow it to be easily removed while being carried on the back. It's a great sword that was once given to him by a person whom he respected and loved. He has always used it and has continued to hone his skills to match that sword.

The blade "Ayamachi" blade reflected the light from the illumination and shined beautifully. Mishakuji smiled. He put his power on top of the sword, and the blade flashed as if were dancing.

Mishakuji stepped forward. The "Rabbits" braced themselves, but Mishakuji ran up and swung his sword faster than they could take an intercepting position.

The battle was decided in an instant.

The "Rabbits" were unable to move from the movement of trying to attack, and fell all at once while being hit by Yukari's slashes. The stick he was holding was also smashed and scattered on the ground.

The pressure of the wind from the street and the attack of Mishakuji came late, and the wind blew.

In the inside pocket of Mishakuji's coat, his PDA announced an incoming call. Without looking back at the "Rabbit" he defeated, Mishakuji took his PDA and put it to his ear.

"Douhan-chan?"

"This is the detachment. We have reached the underground data bank. Work started."

It was a message from Douhan Hirasaka, the leader of the unit that was sent into hiding before the "Rabbit" arrived. Hirasaka, who was dressed in a special ninja-like body suit and hid his face with a ninja hood-like shield that was different from a mass-produced helmet, always spoke politely through a voice changer. The voice had artificial effects.

Hirasaka was the only one among the participants in that mission with whom Mishakuji was familiar. He had been involved in the same mission several times before. Unlike the gaming-oriented people who make up the majority, he was a highly professional person who took the mission as a "business".

"It will take some time to remove the protection. Please don't let the "Rabbit" pass through here."

Listening to Hirasaka's voice, Mishukaji moved to the other end of the first-floor entrance and stood in front of the large elevator door. It didn't have buttons like a normal elevator

and probably wouldn't activate without a special key. Mishakuji stretched out his finger and sent an otherworldly current through his fingers. Due to the power of alteration, the elevator began to move.

The lights came on and the elevator dinged. Even before the door had opened, Mishakuji had noticed multiple strong presences inside.

As soon as the door opened, he jumped in and slashed at one of the "Rabbits" he had been preparing for without hesitation. As he dodged the club-wielding "Rabbit"'s attacks, he pressed the open/close button and the floor number button on the control panel with the butt of the sword handle. Before the door closed completely, he sliced another "Rabbit" with the tip of his knife and kicked the last one to the ground.

"Really? It's our specialty, but it takes time. The Golden clan where talented people gather is not a show. Thanks to that, I'm having a lot of fun."

"What's your objective?"

"It is a mistake. The "King" seems to be absent and there is a feeling of intimidation over their heads."

As he spoke, Mishakuji looked out the window. Raindrops washed the surface of the glass. The night view of Tokyo from the high-speed elevator was beautiful. The city overlooked from the tower, which can be said to be the center of the country, is a sea of golden light. It is a sight that can be said to be a symbol of the prosperity that the "Golden King" has built and accumulated since the end of the war. In every grain of that light, there was a human activity that enjoyed a rich life.

Mishakuji honestly showed respect for the "Golden King" who created that scenario. However, the "King" of Mishakuji dreamed of a different scenario. Instead of receiving the uniform light that others give us, a world full of colorful colors where each grain emits its own brightness.

Mishakuji superimposed the scene of his teacher's dream with the scene in front of him, to fulfill his role as the first step, he gave instructions to Hirasaka.

"I'll take care of the "Rabbits", so Douhan-chan, when you're ready for work, will you be the princess's escort?"

"I understand."

There was a short, clear answer, and he hung up with Hirasaka. Hirasaka doesn't share ideas or a sense of camaraderie, but he's a person who has a place of trust, and he'll get the job done once he takes it on as a business. He could leave them alone.

With a ding, the elevator reached the top floor. The moment the door opened a little, a golden light that burned the eyes entered. Mishakuji didn't panic, just like when he was

attacked by the "Rabbit" earlier, he covered his body with a transparent supernatural membrane.

The power that he attacked like a waterfall, however, slipped over Mishakuji's supernatural film and flowed towards the moon, flying behind Mishakuji. A violent explosion occurred inside the elevator, and the glass shattered and fell to the floor along with the debris.

"It worked?!" He heard an exasperated voice. A "Rabbit", which should have been a mysterious existence, was making such vulgar comments that Mishakuji laughed to himself.

There was no picture, but he couldn't bear to swallow the smoke. Dust stained his hair and skin.

"Smoked."

When he grumbled a bit and got out of the elevator, the "Rabbit" who was waiting for him shuddered.

A considerable number of "Rabbits" was gathered. That was the last line of defense that protected the "Slate".

"Well then, let's finish it."

Mishakuji gave a sly smile, and uttered the sentence that his former master composed.

"The way forward is beyond cut and stretch."

He grabbed "Ayamachi" and kicked the ground hard.

One, two, ran while he cut "Rabbits".

Three, four, beautifully dancing and swinging his sword.

Five people, six people, playing in the gap between emotion and calm, and finding the way.

Mishakuji also began to sing the children's song "Amefuri", moving his body with the song. He stopped counting how many "Rabbits" he had defeated and just enjoyed the journey to his destination.

Ahead, he saw something that looked like a huge and beautiful fusuma.

Unlike the wood and paper fusuma, however, it was a massive door that brought together the best of technology.

Mishakuji blew that door away with the pressure of his sword like it was just a sliding door. Beyond the door was a great expanse of space. The floor was covered with glass on

one side and nothing was placed there. All that was left was a huge stone block under the transparent floor.

Mishakuji entered the hallway and slowly approached the mass of stone as he stomped on the thick tempered glass floor. Kotosaka, who seemed to have waited until the enemies left and it was safe, came up again and landed on Mishakuji's shoulder.

Mishakuji stopped, looked at his feet, and said as a continuation of the song.

"Nice to meet you."

The Dresden Slate.

A mysterious relic found in Dresden, Germany, brought to Japan by Daikaku Kokujoji after the war.

An object that is the source of power that creates the "King" with supernatural powers.

Change the way the world works.

Mishakuji narrowed his eyes at the beauty of that existence.

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He had an old dream.

Kuro's childhood dream. A dream of living happily under the tutelage of Ichigen Miwa, who was a respected teacher, a "King" to serve, and a father-like existence.

Kuro was still 10 years old, had not fully manifested his abilities as a clansman, and was an immature boy with a sword.

Kuro back then, he had a person whom he admired and who was like his target, and he wanted to be like that person one day.

That person had been studying with Ichigen Miwa before Ichigen picked up Kuro. He was like Kuro's older brother. Kuro respectfully called him "big brother".

He was about ten years older than Kuro, and to Kuro he was more of an adult standing by his side rather than another disciple. He was slim and tall, had a graceful bearing, had the dexterity to handle anything with ease, had a sharp head and terrifying swordsmanship. Possessed of a mysterious sense of beauty, he had an elusive personality, but was trusted by Ichigen, and whenever Ichigen went somewhere to fulfill his role as "King", he accompanied him.

"Brother! Please help me!"

Kuro said it often. He often laughed at him, said that he was not suitable for working with children, but sometimes, when he felt like it, he taught him lessons as if it were a game.

However, he didn't teach him how to swing the sword or how to move, and even when he said training, he just hit Kuro who was coming at him. Kneeling on the ground, looking at him, he was very big and frustrating, but Kuro took that unforgiving attitude for sincerity.

Kuro had decided in his heart that one day he would be as strong as him and support him with Ichigen Miwa.

However, Kuro's yearning was suddenly shattered one day.

"Why, big brother?!"

Kuro yelled at the top of his lungs. But that didn't help. In his eyes, there was no image of Kuro.

His sword grazed Miwa's shoulder and blood splattered. His sword, which cut and tore those he was to serve, shimmered in the moonlight.

Kuro's heart froze at the thought of a stranger to him, whom he should have longed for.

Why? Why?

Reliving the thoughts of that time in a dream, questions, fear, and anger swirled, and Kuro...

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When he opened his eyes, there were big eyes with different colors on the left and right in a close distance.

Surprised, Kuro unintentionally let out a stupid voice and leaned back.

"Ne, Ne, Neko!"

Looking down at Kuro from a distance where the tip of her nose seemed to touch him, was Neko, his partner as a member of the Silver clan, and his partner in searching for Shiro together.

"You, when did you do it?!"

"Somehow I thought Kurosuke was around here, so I went looking for you and found you sitting and sleeping in a place like this, moaning."

"That's why there are people who are silently watching from such a close distance! It's been a while since you've been..."

For the past month, Kuro and Neko have been acting separately.

In search of Shiro, the two sometimes perform together, sometimes split up and travel all over Japan. The last time they worked together, Neko stated that "Shiro was swept away

by the sea, so he must be drifting somewhere in the sea!". Kuro, who was frustrated that he couldn't find a single clue, inadvertently jumped on a search plan for Neko and set sail from Tokyo Bay on a motorboat. While traversing the North Pacific, he was overthrown by a typhoon and washed ashore on a remote island. For a time, he proposed to go back to acting differently and they disbanded.

"Hehehe, Kurosuke, long time no see!"

"Oh. When did you come back here?"

"Yesterday! Nya, I sensed that Kurosuke was around, so I was looking for you!"

The reason why they didn't decide exactly what day and where they would meet again is because Neko, who is too free, doesn't keep her promises, or rather forgets them.

He couldn't get Neko to get into the habit of carrying a mobile phone with her, and even if he gave her a note with Kuro's PDA number, she would still lose it. The reason Kuro gave up was because the two of them said that they could go back there in an emergency, Shiro's room on Gakuenjima, where they could return when the time came. Maybe it's some kind of supernatural ability, but thanks to Neko's power, she can somehow find where Kuro is. Kuro has also gotten used to Neko's rhythm and they get along quite well now.

"I see. I also vaguely felt that if I was around here, I might find you again. I thought about going back to the room in Gakuenjima, but I think it would be better if the two of us went back together."

For the past two days, Kuro has been using an abandoned building in Shizume City as his base. That town is where he first met Shiro, and that abandoned building was the place where he used to sleep when he searched for the evil "King", the "Colorless King". He's been long neglected and rough, but he could use it as a place to sleep without worrying about rain and wind.

The whitish light of morning streamed in through the broken windows. He looks like he dozed off a bit last night, probably because he had a hard time falling asleep due to the storm.

"Kurosuke, did you have a scary dream just now? There were some wrinkles between your eyebrows."

Saying this, Neko seemed to imitate Kuro's face, showing an inappropriate scowl.

"A terrifying dream... or rather, it was a dream that brought back inexplicable and painful memories."

"Inexplicable and painful, huh?"

Neko repeated in a tone that she must not have understood, she crossed her arms with a knowing look and nodded.

Contrary to his earlier dream, Kuro lowered his gaze.

One day, Kuro's older brother suddenly pointed his sword at Miwa and defected from the clan.

When he thought about that day, a chill ran down his spine.

He, who should have been no more than a mere clansman, fought evenly with "King" Ichigen Miwa and threw a profound sword over Ichigen's shoulder. He knew that he was a strong person, but he was horrified when he saw Ichigen's blood splattered, since that person could harm even Ichigen.

In the end, Ichigen won the match, but the scar on his shoulder remained until the moment of his death.

He smiled at the young Kuro who was crying angrily and said: "This is fine. This is not the place where that boy can be like he is."

Although he was betrayed and wounded, he handed over his beloved sword to his departing disciple. It is a sword that can be combined with Kuro's "Kotowari".

"More than that, Kurosuke! Was there anything that looked like Shiro?"

Neko seemed to get tired of talking about the dream early on, so she changed the subject and leaned forward. Kuro shook his head bitterly.

"No, and you?"

"He wasn't there. Shiro likes rice, so I thought maybe he went to eat delicious rice, so I went to a place where you can get a lot of rice, but I couldn't find it!"

"You are..."

Kuro weakened by Neko's optimistic idea. If Shiro was in a position to be able to take such peaceful action, he should be the first to contact them.

Thinking about it, Kuro realized that his feelings were heavy and sinking.

No, there was no communication from Shiro. As time passed, the hope they had at first became more and more fleeting. Neko didn't have an ounce of anxiety and kept trying hard to look for "Shiro, who should be somewhere", but Kuro couldn't be that optimistic.

In December of last year, Isana Yashiro, the "Silver King", was attacked by the "Red King" Suoh Mikoto with all of his might while he was still holding the soul of the evil "Colorless King" within himself, and disappeared.

If it was an ordinary person, it was definitely a blow that would have burned all the corpses and disappeared from this world. The reason why Kuro and Neko hope that Shiro is still alive is because Shiro is a "King" who possesses immutable attributes and is almost immortal.

However...

Just as Kuro's thoughts were about to drift in the wrong direction, Kuro's PDA beeped announcing the arrival of an email.

"Uh..."

Looking at the PDA, Kuro softened his expression, which was about to darken.

"Who is~?"

Neko's eyes lit up and she brought her face closer to Kuro's.

"It's Kukuri."

Kuro tilted the PDA's screen so that Neko could see it. She wanted to know if Kuro and Neko were alright, since they hadn't been to Gakuenjima's room for a long time, but it was time to see their faces.

"Kukuri! Wagahai is fine!"

Neko happily waved at the mail screen.

Kuro replied in a concise and polite sentence that they were both fine and they were now at Shizume. There was an immediate response.

"You came back here?! I have something to do in Shizume City this afternoon, so I want to see you!"

"See you!"

Reading the mail, Neko immediately raised her voice.

Kukuri is a friend that she met through Shiro. However, the fact that Kukuri and Shiro were classmates was a false memory created by Neko with her cognitive manipulation ability. Kukuri no longer remembers Shiro. Inevitably, it was only natural for Kuro and Neko's memories to fade and disappear, but Kukuri remembers Kuro and Neko, though memories of their meeting are vague, and she still cares for them as friends.

The friendship with Kukuri was important to both Kuro and Neko.

"Okay, let's meet Kukuri in Shizume City today and then go home to Gakuenjima."

That room in Gakuenjima is not just a base, but a place to return to. It once exploded and was blown up during that incident, but was repaired under the direction of the "Tokijikuin" Golden Clan, and is now officially renamed as belonging to Shiro. The room key had been given to Kuro by a courier from "Tokijikuin".

He must have been courtesy of Daikaku Kokujoji, an old friend of Adolf K. Weismann.

Perhaps Neko was happy with the sound of "home" and she nodded with a big smile.

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After meeting Kukuri in front of the station, Kuro and the others entered a coffee shop in Shizume City. Kuro ordered coffee, Kukuri ordered tea and Neko ordered orange juice and they sat on the terrace.

"If you both came back; you should have contacted me."

Kukuri made a face as if she pouted a little, then smiled with a face that she was genuinely happy to meet with them.

That day was a holiday and Kukuri did not wear the family uniform. She had on a pink knit skirt and a white hat with a little ribbon.

"Sorry, it took me too long to meet this girl."

"Hehehe, Kukuri, long time no see!"

"Long time no see, Wagahai-chan!"

Neko and Kukuri happily high-fived each other. Instead of being close friends, they were more like a playful little sister and a doting older sister, Kuro watched the scene with a smile.

"Is the reconstruction of Gakuenjima progressing?"

"Yes. The last time Kuro-kun and the others came to Gakuenjima was last month, right? It's been a while since then. It's almost back to normal! Oh, but the clock tower and that big crater are still there."

Kuro remembered the huge crater that Suoh opened when he slaughtered the "Colorless King" along with Shiro's body.

After it was all over, when Neko and Kuro returned to Gakuenjima to search for Shiro, they saw a large crater where the heat emitted by the "Red King" was still cool, and they felt a sense of despair. There, Kuro and Neko found a red umbrella sticking out of the ground like a tombstone, proving that Shiro was there.

That umbrella is now in Shiro's room, to be sure to return it to Shiro one day. Neko wanted to take it with her, but she knew she would cry if she lost it somewhere, so she left it there.

"How do you feel about Kuro-kun and the others? They were looking for someone, right? Uh, if I remember correctly, his name is Shiro-kun, right?"

Kuro felt a little pain in his heart because Kukuri didn't remember anything about Shiro, but Neko didn't care and spoke happily.

"Shiro, I can't find him! I don't know how far he's flown!"

"Wait, how did he fly out?!"

Giving a wry smile to the exchange between the two, Kuro once again sank into thought.

(Has it been almost a year since then?)

For the last year or so, Kuro has traveled all over the place looking for Shiro.

He approached "Homura" and "Scepter 4" to see if he could find anything related to Shiro, he traveled across the country looking for sightings of Shiro, visited hospitals and asked if a child with amnesia was admitted. He continued along the coast asking if there were castaways. Kuro looked away, following along the shoreline and asking if there were people who had come ashore, or sailing to search for him at sea and in danger. Clouds swam across the sky in swift currents.

Even if he and Neko split up and searched, they couldn't find Shiro. Where is Shiro? No, in the first place, is he really alive?

Anxiety and shyness ached inside Kuro again.

At this time, Neko who was playing with the juice straw with her mouth suddenly widened her eyes, raised her voice, "Ah!", and stood up on the chair.

"Neko, what's up?"

"The girl of the reds!"

She stared at a dot with round cat eyes and pointed at her. She leaned across the table and stuck her butt out like a cat when finds prey.

When he looked in the direction Neko was pointing, he saw a girl in a red cloak running hand in hand with a blond youth.

She was a long way off, but she certainly resembled Anna Kushina of the Red Clan. He didn't recognize the blonde, but he wondered if he was a member of "Homura". The way they were running was different from just rushing, it seemed like they were running from something.

Anna Kushina was not a stranger to him. In that incident that led to Shiro's loss, he had a relationship with "Homura", but it is said that Anna was the first to say that Shiro was not an enemy. After that, it seems that there was a lot of "Homura", and he was involved with Rikio Kamamoto, a member of the red clan who lives in his parents' house.

If something was happening to her, he couldn't leave her alone.

"Sorry, Kukuri. Could you go back to Gakuenjima first?"

"Hey. Aren't you going with me?"

"I will definitely come back later."

When he smiled at Kukuri, who seemed concerned, and nodded reassuringly, Kukuri was a bit confused and then smiled back.

"Ok, I understand."

Kuro and Neko stood up, looked at each other and nodded. Together they ran in the direction in which Anna and the others had disappeared.

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It has been over half a year since Anna moved into the Kamamoto family home, Kamamoto Liquor Store.

Not only Kamamoto, but also Kamamoto's parents were very kind and gentle, treating Anna like family.

Still, Anna just felt like a freeloader there. It was different from the HOMRA bar that she used to feel like she belonged to.

(We'll be leaving here in the not too distant future. Who will I be and where will I go?)
Not a day went by that Anna didn't think about it.

Anna was sitting in front of the Kamamoto Liquor Store, tending the store. She learned the bare minimum about how to serve customers in half a year of taking advantage. Anna wanted to repay Kamamoto's parents for letting her stay there, even it was just a little.

At that time, the store was idle, and people walking on the street in front were passing by, pointing to somewhere other than there.

Anna lowered her eyes and faced the fire within her.

She felt the flames flickering inside her body. She has been like this for a long time. The fire left by Suoh inside Anna, continued to flicker as if blown away by the wind. She had gotten used to that uneasy feeling.

Anna said that she would not allow herself to be devastated anymore, she closed off her ability to perceive, turned into a shell and sealed herself with a hard shell so no one could interfere with her.

She did not let the small flames left behind by Suoh go out due to the strong wind that was blowing. Or she let the wind prevent the small flames from spreading.

Anna put her hands to her chest and breathed in slowly.

"Anna, are you okay?"

Before she was aware, Kamamoto was standing next to Anna, leaning in as if he was looking at her.

Anna looked at him and smiled back.

"I'm fine."

The current Kamamoto is not the familiar handsome figure, he is a slim and handsome man with the appearance of a surfer. Kamamoto, who usually eats ramen in 30 seconds, suddenly loses his appetite in the summer and loses weight. Maybe he was cursed, or maybe the source of Kamamoto's power was lost due to the weakening of "Homura's" power, and even in the fall, he still couldn't recover his round body.

"Really? You look sick. The shop is fine, so go rest in the back."

"I'm fine. Rikio, you still don't feel well."

"No, I'm just dragging myself out of summer fatigue..."

Just as Kamamoto was about to say that, a figure appeared in front of the store. Anna thought she had a visitor and was about to say "Welcome", but her mouth froze.

The person standing in front of the store was dressed in such a way that no matter how you looked at him, you wouldn't think he was an ordinary customer.

He wore a powered suit designed like a ninja costume and a mask like a ninja hood. His back was equipped with giant shuriken-shaped crossed blades.

"You are Anna Kushina."

That ninja-like person said. The voice was processed and resounded eerily.

"What the hell are you doing?!"

Kamamoto braced himself and raised a barking voice.

"I have a request for you, who is extremely responsive."

"Request?"

Anna whispered softly and withdrew.

He was dressed as a ninja, but the visor that covered his eyes emitted an electronic green light, contrary to his ninja appearance. Looking at Anna from the back of the visor, that person said...

"I want you to look for the "Silver King"."

The "Silver King". Adolf K. Weismann. Yashiro Isana. In order for Suoh to kill the "Colorless King", everyone was left without blood, bones, or even ashes.

"First of all, if you live in the judgment of life and death, find out where he is."

The ninja spoke nonchalantly. It was an order rather than a request.

Anna shook her head.

"I can't."

The ninja drew a kunai from a band wrapped around his thigh.

"If it means you don't have the will to do it, I'll try to "persuade" you to do it. Even if it's difficult in terms of skill, you must try first. Let's create a situation where you can demonstrate your power. Either way I'll make you come with me."

"Don't be silly!"

Kamamoto shot flames from his fist and attacked. The ninja dodged slightly.

"Rikio? Why are you making such a fuss?"

From the back of the family's living room, the relaxed voice of Kamamoto's mother could be heard.

"Don't go out!"

Anna immediately yelled towards the back of the store. She left the store so as not to involve Kamamoto's family.

"Rikio!"

Kamamoto must have realized that fighting there would endanger his family. With a little click of his tongue, he kicked out a flame similar to a soccer ball, causing the ninja to back up some distance, away from him.

He ran to Anna, took her hand and started to run.

Kamamoto grabbed her hand tightly and ran to Anna's feet, but the difference in speed was hard to handle. Anna kept moving her feet desperately, almost falling over and over again.

"Anna, this way!"

He managed to get away from the store and into a less popular alley.

At that moment, his legs suddenly stopped.

The ninja was standing in the path when he turned around. He was holding a weapon that had blades on both sides of the handle that he carried.

"That's it. Give me that girl."

The ninja said in an emotionless tone. It wasn't because the voice was processed that it didn't convey emotion, but rather that the ninja had no real feelings for the act of kidnapping Anna.

He was probably someone else who needed Anna, not that ninja.

"Who the hell are you?!"

Kamamoto yelled and rushed forward. He took off in front of the ninja, jump up, shoot flames from his body and unleash a roundhouse kick.

The flame engulfed spinning kick turned into a small red tornado and attacked the ninja, but immediately after, the ninja disappeared.

He disappeared as if an invisible pit suddenly opened up under his feet and he fell into it. Kamamoto gasped in surprise and looked around him.

Anna saw part of the bright green street behind Kamamoto and the ninja rose up as if he had grown out of the ground.

"There is no need to answer."

The ninja said, brandishing his weapon.

It was a moment too late for Anna to raise her voice and for Kamamoto to turn around.

Just when he thought he was going to get slashed, a huge black bird-like thing flew up and landed between the ninja and Kamamoto.

He had black fur and long black hair that looked like the wings of a bird. His owner had stopped the ninja weapon that was going to cut Kamamoto by squeezing the blade with his bare hands.

"What...?!"

For the first time, the ninja let out an annoyed voice.

The one who stopped the ninja attack was Yatogami Kuro, a young swordsman known as Kuro. The ninja took a huge leap back and kept his distance from Kuro. Because of the ninja's stance, the leeway he had up until now was gone.

"You must be from the Green Clan, "Jungle". I have a connection with this girl. If you want to continue, I will be your opponent."

The ninja's judgment was swift. He put the gun back from him and placed his left hand on the wall.

Then the walls and his hands were dyed with green light, and the tips of his hands sank into the walls as if they were sinking into water.

"Fighting you is not part of my business."

Leaving those words behind, the ninja completely disappeared into the wall.

"Is that the rumored Green Clan's mod ability?"

Kuro muttered a little with a gloomy expression.

"It's been a long time, Black Dog. Hehe, I owe you one."

Kamamoto, who had escaped the threat for now and relaxed his shoulders, called out to Kuro. Kuro looked at Kamamoto and raised his eyebrows suspiciously.

"Do we know each other from somewhere?"

"Uh... That's not..."

Kamamoto dropped his shoulders, but Anna understood.

"It's Kamamoto! Rikio Kamamoto! The Unsung Hero of 'Homura'! He is second only to the Yata-san, the leader of the attack! The eldest son of the Kamamoto Liquor Store!"

"Kamamoto Rikio...?"

The figure of Kamamoto in his memory and the slender youth standing in front of Kuro could not match. Kuro frowned suspiciously and traced Kamamoto's figure up and down many times.

Kamamoto let out a deep sigh of resignation.

"If so, it can't be helped that people won't remember me. Ever since Mikoto-san left, I haven't had an appetite, and even after the summer passed, I still haven't recovered from this poor figure."

Kamamoto said with crepuscular eyes.

"Rikio..."

"No, but don't worry, Anna! Even if I lose weight, I won't lose horsepower!"

Kuro still had a look of disbelief on his face, but he seemed to have decided to focus his thoughts on a more pressing problem than that, so he turned to Kamamoto as if he had regained his composure.

"Why were you being chased by the Green Clan?"

Anna didn't know why and she ran away, but after seeing his ability to slip through walls and paths, Kuro seemed to be able to tell that this person belonged to the Green Clan. Anna, who had blocked her ability to perceive things, was no different than a child who knew nothing.

"We don't know the situation at all, but that ninja bastard suddenly came to my house and said that he wanted to ask Anna for something."

As Kamamoto was explaining the situation, Kuro's partner, Neko, caught up with him and appeared behind Kuro. Kuro slightly raised his eyebrows.

"An requested?"

"That's using Anna's ability to sense..."

"He told me to look for the "Silver King"."

Taking control of Kamamoto's words, Anna said that.

Kuro and Neko's eyes widened and they got excited.

"What?! Can you do that?"

"Nya! Can you find Shiro?!"

The two of them leaned forward and raised their voices.

Anna shook her head as she apologized for giving them false hope.

"I can't do it now."

"Really..."

Kuro said with a voice that couldn't hide his disappointment, and Neko lowered her head sadly. Kamamoto opened his mouth as if to intercede.

"Anna's sentient ability has been unstable for a long time. Right now, she can't search for people."

"But... if they told you to look for him, does that mean he's still alive?"

As if he wanted at least some hope, Kuro stepped forward and said that. Anna shook her head slightly again.

"I don't know."

Kuro nodded regretfully.

"Why is the Green Clan looking for Shiro?"

Kamamoto also lowered his head as if he was lost and let out a sigh.

"What should I do next...?"

"It would be nice to join the other comrades."

A dry smile appeared on Kamamoto's face at Kuro's suspicious voice.

"Homura" is almost disbanded now."

"Who is in charge of "Homura" now?"

"I can't talk about the details, but Kusanagi-san entrusted Anna to me."

"So what happened to the vanguard captain? He's the type to hold his body higher at times like this."

"No, Yata-san..."

Kamamoto muffled his words and fell silent. Kamamoto admires Yata more than anyone, so he must be more upset and frustrated by the current situation.

Anna, who was one of the reasons why Yata became like this, couldn't say anything and lowered her gaze.

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Emptying his mind, he simply ran aimlessly through the city on his skateboard.

The landscape of Shizume City flowed from front to back. Even that felt pointless. Everything around Yata flowed and disappeared next to Yata. All the things he held dear, even Yata's struggles, vanished in vain.

Yata's stomach was filled with rotten anger. Yata is the type of person who let's anger out of him quickly and doesn't drag it down, which is why he's never had anger with nowhere to go rotting inside of him for so long. At that rate, the decomposition would progress and he felt that even the internal organs would rot.

After skateboarding around the city, Yata came to the HOMRA bar. It didn't make sense to go back there, but like inertia, like clinging to something, he always went back there.

When he opened the door where the sign remained CLOSED and entered the bar, there was no one inside and he could see the unkempt dirt. If Kusanagi were there, he would never forgive him. Empty pizza delivery boxes, ramen containers with disposable chopsticks stuck in leftover soup, and empty PET bottles lying around. There was also some trash on the floor that had just been thrown into a plastic bag and tied up.

Even in such a state, no one cared. Because no one came there. The reason why Yata continued in that place was partly because of his attachments, but if he left too, that HOMRA bar, once loved by everyone, would truly die.

Yata went up the stairs. In the room on the second floor, various films left behind by Totsuka were scattered around. In order to escape from the past, he took one of the things that he had seen over and over again and put it on the projector.

Yata sat on the couch and looked at the images projected on the wall from the projector.

The sound of many voices echoed through the video.

"Eh?! What's up?!"

"Yata, Happy Birthday!"

He couldn't see it on the video, but he could hear Totsuka's voice. While he was recording with the camera, he congratulated Yata. "Hooray! Congratulations!" And the comrades of "Homura" sang in a harmonious voice.

The footage was taken on Yata's 18th birthday. Unlike his 20th birthday four months ago, when he was alone and empty-handed, Yata in the video was celebrating surrounded by everyone. With Totsuka at the top of the list, those in "Homura" who loved festivals, liked to make a fuss by throwing parties under the guise of people's birthdays.

"Ah! Is it today? I'm not old enough to celebrate my birthday anymore. Well, it's been a long time... Oh, my God!"

Yata felt that everyone was trying to celebrate his birthday, so he had been restless since morning. He was trying to pretend that he had forgotten his birthday, his face was white, but he also looked happy.

A faint smile appeared on Yata's face as he saw himself in a happy moment.

Amid applause, cheers, and whistles, Totsuka in the video greeted Suoh.

"King, today is Yata's birthday. Celebrate it."

Suoh reflected. Lately, he had been watching it many times, so it was already strange to feel nostalgic for that video, but Yata's heart clenched when he saw the red-haired man, whose sharp eyes had softened a bit.

Yata, who was watching the video, heard the incoming call from the PDA in the form of a watch on his wrist. He looked at it, and as soon as he realized it was Kamamoto's, he immediately looked back at Suoh in the video.

Anyway, it will be another message without content. Things like, what are you doing now? Or, you can't just lock yourself in the bar. Or please call me soon.

What could he do? There was no one there anymore and nothing to do.

As if he was trying to forget reality, Yata focused his gaze on Suoh in the video. Suoh looked at Yata and raised the corners of his mouth.

"Uh. Is it time for Shichi-Go-San?"

"Wait... M-Mikoto-san? I'm eighteen years old!"

"Mikoto. You're making fun of Yata-chan. The Shichi-go-san should have ended five years ago."

"It wasn't even five years ago!"

Now that he thought about it, it was very rare for Suoh to throw a mocking word at him. Suoh was in a good mood that day. Yata was enjoying the day when he was one year older.

"Come on, please clear the way! The cake has arrived!"

Kamamoto's voice was heard and a giant cake appeared. Apparently getting hit by Kamamoto, who was distracted by the cake, Totsuka nearly dropped the camera and the video stopped. In the still image, Kamamoto could be seen holding a cake, Totsuka smiling, Yata wearing a pointy hat, and Suoh smiling a little.

(Mikoto-san...Totsuka-san...)

As if he had cut a thread, he rolled onto his side on the couch and Yata's gaze flickered blankly.

"Everyone threw "Homura" into the trash... even Kusanagi-san..."

When he mentioned Kusanagi's name, he felt a different kind of pain than when he heard Suoh's or Totsuka's name.

Yata is tormented by the pain of abandonment, which is different from the pain of loss. That pain, that irrepressible anger, slowly rotted inside Yata.

For a time after Suoh's death, Yata never showed a lethargic appearance. Rather, it would have seemed like he was fine. Yata was desperate to ensure that "Homura's" ties and place of belonging would continue even after Suoh's pillar had disappeared. That's why, instead of being depressed by Suoh's death, he acted cheerfully and tried to inspire everyone.

Even if it wasn't the same as when Suoh and Totsuka were there, he would still cheer on the "Homura" members that they left behind. That was partly due to his sense of mission, as he was in a position second only to Kusanagi, who had been left as the top of "Homura", and deep down in his heart, he feared that "Homura" to disappear.

He insisted that they should get together more. He was deliberately hilarious, trying to excite everyone's hearts. He didn't notice that everyone was looking at Yata as if they were looking at something painful.

And then Kusanagi said...

"This bar will be temporarily closed from today. The reopening is undecided."

Kusanagi, who had summoned the main members of "Homura", said it nonchalantly.

For Yata, the statement came as a surprise. Kusanagi didn't show any hesitation, even though Anna kept asking what to do. Yata was devastated to learn that Kusanagi and Kamamoto had already discussed Anna's future without Yata's knowledge.

"Wait! What's wrong, Kusanagi-san? In that case, what will you do, Kusanagi-san?"

"I'm out of here."

Those words resounded within Yata like words close to betrayal.

He didn't remember much after that. His blood rushed to his head, he was so frustrated and sad, and he was sorry that he was raising his voice on his own. No matter how much

he screamed or choked, unable to shake Kusanagi's feelings even a bit, not wanting to hear anything, Yata left miserably.

Shortly after that, Kusanagi actually closed the HOMRA bar.

Anna was entrusted to Kamamoto's parents' house, the companions returned to their respective lives, "Homura" disintegrated in midair, and Yata was left alone.

He no longer cared.

Yata closed her eyes and curled up on the big couch like a fetus.

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Immediately after landing at the Ukita airport, Kusanagi called Awashima to report.

"Oh, I just got here. There's a lot of media blackout and there's no such thing as an armed occupation."

He sat on the couch in the lobby and looked at the monitors lined up in the airport. All the monitors were broadcasting peaceful news and commercials. The Mihashira Tower, which can be said to be the center of this country's economy, has been attacked and occupied.

"Thanks for letting me know, Seri-chan."

Upon receiving news from Awashima that Mihashira Tower had been attacked by the Green Clan, Kusanagi immediately flew from Dresden to Frankfurt International Airport and took a direct flight to Japan. Thanks to Awashima's quick news, he was able to return in the shortest possible time.

"More importantly, did you get any results from the comfort you got from us? I won't let you go home empty-handed."

He laughed bitterly at the harsh comments. Kusanagi held up the stack of papers with the image of the "Slate" drawn on top of the files that had been placed on his lap.

Kusanagi's efforts, the support of Awashima and "Scepter 4" and a mysterious coincidence that seemed to be fate had led to that.

Claudia Weisman. It was the material left by a woman who was a researcher for the "Slate" and older sister of the first sovereign, the "Silver King".

Kusanagi, who found that in the underground storage room of the State Library, immediately flew to the elderly doctor who had been involved in the "Slate" investigation with a set of documents that seemed to be related. The nearly 100-year-old doctor's wrinkled eyes widened and he slowly read the document Kusanagi handed him, assuring him that it was indeed written by Dr. Claudia.

"Don't worry, I've done my job. Well, I'm not sure this is helpful. I wanted to take a slightly more technical terminology class from the scholar over there, but I couldn't."

Narrowing his eyes, Kusanagi put the documents away and stood up as he took out a cigarette case.

"Even if..."

"What?"

"Even if you put aside the invincible "Golden King", I don't think the Green Clan will fight head-on."

"Jungle", the Green Clan has always made moves that can be described as "behind the scenes".

The current "Green King" has been on the throne much longer than Suoh and Munakata, and it is said that he awoke during the Kagutsu Incident.

But for a long time, the "Green King" did not appear. It would be appropriate to call him the king of cyber-brain, observing the world through the network without showing himself, and occasionally playing with others as if he were playing a game.

"Homura" also had experience of being manipulated by "Jungle". The year after Suoh became the "Red King", the HOMRA bar was surrounded by middle and high school students who were forced to dance for "Jungle", and there was an incident where modified rocket fireworks they broke the windows and doors of the bar.

Middle and high school students at that time could not be called members of the "Jungle" clan. "Jungle" is disguised as a simple game application, installed by ordinary people who do not know anything about clans or "kings", and actually carry out orders issued in the form of "quests" in the game. It is a system that gives points and rewards. Middle and high school students who surrounded Bar HOMRA were attracted by rumors that if they participated in the mission, which was dubbed a "surprise party", they might receive information that would help them pass the exam.

It was a frustrating and ridiculous affair. "Jungle" was meant to anger "Homura" and hurt minors in the general public, to put them in a bad position. The impression he had of the "King" was something like a "mischievous child".

After that, "Jungle" seemed to have evolved and spread, but the basic form of the clan should not have changed. Those who collect points and rank up in "Jungle" gain supernatural powers and appear to be members of the clan, but in the end they are just participants in a game launched by an evil child.

The clan, who had been playing and joking with each other for a while, challenged them to a head-on confrontation, such as attacking Mihashira Tower.

(Are you saying that my impression of the "Green King" is wrong in the first place? Is there something more tangible than the simple evil that drives the "Green King"?)

What if "Jungle's" move, which until now seemed to be nothing more than malice, was a test of that ambition or a strategic move?

"After occupying the tower, any special moves?"

"It seems that they are tampering with the data bank, but other than that, there are no statements or demands. It is a deadlock."

A slight sigh came from the other side of the PDA.

"No counterattack from the "Golden King". Rather, it seems like it's absent for some reason."

"They knew and attacked?"

"I wonder. Anyway, in the current situation where the influence on the "Slate" cannot be confirmed, it is the captain's policy to keep it under siege without entering other kings' territories."

"The captain... how is the "Blue King"?"

There was a heartbeat before there was an answer.

"...In great shape. He's coordinating the relevant ministries and agencies to deal with the incident on behalf of the unseen "Golden King". He went with Fushimi-kun."

While taking a break in the smoking area, Kusanagi recalled the appearance of the "Blue King".

After the incident, they met once in connection with paperwork related to the "King's" death. Even from Kusanagi's point of view, Munakata didn't seem to have changed in any particular way.

But he couldn't know what was in his heart.

"If it's hard to bear the burden of killing the "King", it doesn't get any better than that."

Last winter, the "Blue King" Reisi Munakata faced off against the "Red King" Suoh Mikoto. It was an action to prevent Suoh's fall of Damocles.

Kusanagi also wants to prevent incidents from happening in Munakata as a result.

Kusanagi softened his voice as if to apologize to Awashima, who was speechless.

"Well, that's not the point right now. See you later."

Kusanagi hung up the phone and his expression hardened, which was a bit loose when he was talking to Awashima.

Things were moving in an unexpected direction. Perhaps no one could sit still anymore.

(You must run from what you really want to run from.)

He remembered the words that Totsuka once said.

He was the type of person who would enjoy even the toughest situations, but, on the other hand, he would never agree to anything he didn't want to do. It was good for giving Kusanagi a break, who tends to overthink things and keep things to himself.

This time, Kusanagi wanted to escape and he wanted to let go of that. That's why he even threw away Suoh and Totsuka's memories, "Homura", and went all the way to Germany.

However, even as he struggled to find a way to "escape" from what was about to happen, Kusanagi couldn't believe it.

Shaking his head away from the wet thoughts of that, Kusanagi stepped forward.

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The storm from the night before was fine until the afternoon, but it rained again in the afternoon.

The wind in the sky was strong and the clouds moved fast, the weather was changeable.

Mishakuji leaned lightly against the glass window on the top floor of Mihashira Tower, looking down at the scenery from above. Kotosaka perched on his shoulder, looking through the rain washed glass with Mishakuji.

The Golden Clansmen inside Mihashira Tower were already under control, and "Scepter 4" surrounding the outside still showed no sign of breaking in.

It seemed that an expert team in that area was working hard to remove the protection of the data bank in the basement of the Mihashira Tower, where the information of "Tokijikuin" was collected. It was a job for mid to high ranks who were better than lower rank combatants who wielded weapons and had little talent. It was only a matter of time before the information was available.

Parallel to their clan work of extracting information from the data bank, another information acquisition operation was also underway from the supernatural direction. It was an information acquisition strategy that would utilize the power of Anna Kushina, who possessed a powerful perception ability. Seeing with a child's clairvoyance, that sounded like something hidden, but her power was the same as theirs, an ultimate synergy. Perhaps, she could obtain more valuable information than the "Tokijikuin" data bank.

However, Hirasaka, who was supposed to pick her up, never returned. For Hirasaka, who worked fast, that was unusual. Has something gone wrong?

Looking out over the rain-soaked city, Mishakuji was humming "Amefuri" again. When he sang a chorus, a sign finally appeared behind him.

"You're late, Douhan-chan. Did you come home empty-handed?"

Mishakuji said without looking back. Hirasaka appeared from under the ground and said what Mishakuji had imagined: "There's been a problem."

"A saboteur appeared and blocked the mission to acquire Anna Kushina."

"Oh, my God, is that why you came home? Douhan-chan, you weren't that good at your job, right?"

Hirasaka was silent. Hirasaka is a highly professional worker, but at the same time he is a realist who does not take unnecessary risks.

Mishakuji stopped spouting any more innocent spite and turned around.

"Isn't the senior staff member of 'Homura' absent? You're not the one who can't outwit the other 'Homura' guys. What kind of interference did you find?"

Without saying a word, Hirasaka took out a PDA from his chest and pointed it up. An image floated in the air.

It was an image of a wild teenage girl and a young man with long black hair and a sword at his waist.

Mishakuji stared at the young man in the image for a moment.

There was something welling up in his chest and Mishakuji smiled softly.

"Ok. I'll go too."

Mishakuji spun on his heel, feeling a slight euphoria from the memory and anticipation.

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Kuro went to Shizume Station to bring Kamamoto and Anna to Gakuenjima.

It had started to rain a while ago, and Neko, who doesn't like to get wet, rushed into the station and beckoned to Kuro, "Hurry up!".

"I'm sorry. Is it really okay for us to hide there?"

Kamamoto apologized.

"There is a room on Gakuenjima Island that we use as our base of operations. It is very convenient for us to ask various questions there."

It seemed that Kamamoto was going to go to the HOMRA bar, but the members had dispersed, and the hot-blooded "Homura" vanguard captain seemed to be collapsing, and he didn't even answer Kamamoto's calls.

Naturally, the enemy established a base, his fortress, and it didn't seem like a good idea to return there under the current circumstances. Also, Kuro and the others are no strangers to the Green Clan searching for Shiro. Kuro thought that it would be better for them to protect them for now.

As they walked through the spacious hall of the station, Anna suddenly stopped. She tilted her head and muttered under her breath.

"I'm sorry."

"What?"

Surprised by the serious tone of her voice, Kuro also stopped. Anna lowered her eyes to look at the tips of her shoes.

"About your "King"... he didn't kill Tatara."

Kuro was at a loss for an answer. Neko cocked her head as if she didn't know what she was talking about, but in reality, the relationship between Kuro and the Red Clan was complicated.

Shiro was chased by "Homura" for a crime he didn't commit, and in the end Suoh Mikoto left them speechless. However, it should have been an action based on the agreement between Shiro and Suoh to defeat the "Colorless King".

But, unable to grow old enough to tell her not to worry about it, Kuro gently changed the subject of the conversation.

"You said that your ability was unstable, but is that because you lost the "Red King"?"

Anna squeezed her hand painfully against her chest.

"This is different."

Anna's eyes sparkled with anxiety. As she raised her eyebrows suspiciously at the situation, a noise went through the station's electrical bulletin board, and the green light burst and the screen disappeared.

"What?"

Kamamoto let out a confused voice.

Right after that, he felt an unusual presence.

The air was filled with tension and the numb sensation hit his skin. Just being there, the pressure was suffocating.

Kamamoto immediately hugged Anna, and Kuro and Neko turned around at the same time.

"Protect that girl."

Kuro spoke quietly and braced himself.

He could hear the rattle and the sound of the fire shutter in the hallway going down. Was it to lock Kuro away, or was it to keep outsiders away?

"I'm nervous... something's coming!"

Neko, who is sensitive to signals, raised her voice. In fact, the air seemed to be electrified and she felt a small painful numbness on her skin.

The sound of slow footsteps echoed. As the sound of footsteps got closer, the pressure on her body increased to the point of her feeling physical pressure.

"Going round and round, we found ourselves."

The voice of a brilliant man rang out. Kuro's body trembled at the words spun by that voice.

"That haiku is like Ichigen-sama's... No way?!"

He saw a man walking down the esplanade. A tall, slender silhouette with a long sword on his back.

Neko hiding behind a pillar raised a threatening voice, "Shhh!".

Every time the man stepped on the ground, green electricity ran through his feet and discharged into the air.

"Fufu, I wonder why that person's poem touches my heart so much."

After muttering to himself, the man smiled at Kuro.

"Hello, Kuro-chan. It's been a while. How have you been?"

Kuro was speechless.

About ten years have passed since he saw this man. But his demeanor hadn't changed much. Kuro clenched his teeth and growled his name.

"Mishakuji Yukari."

Flexible body. Lean, but not just skinny, he has the perfect physique to wield a sword. His lustrous hair curled beautifully, and his facial features were handsome and androgynous to the point of shocking the beholder. His eyes, framed by long lashes, were sharp even when he smiled, and there was a greedy light that kept searching for something.

A memory of the dream he had that morning appeared in Kuro's mind.

Innocent childhood thoughts. A blade addressed to a loved one. Splattered blood.

"Hey, who's he?!"

Seeing Kuro and Mishakuji, Kamamoto raised his voice.

"Mishakuji Yukari. A former member of the clan of the previous Seventh King, Ichigen Miwa, and a disciple of the sword... the man I used to call my older brother."

"Oh, brothers?"

The puzzled Kamamoto didn't look back, and Kuro stared at Mishakuji. Kuro roared at the man he had once admired, yearned for, and been betrayed.

"Why are you here?!"

"Hey, you seem scared. Can't you just honestly rejoice in the meeting with your big brother?"

"Are you the one who pointed the sword at Ichigen-sama? Don't play dumb!"

Kuro lowered his waist, gripped the hilt of his sword and prepared to draw his sword from its scabbard. Mishakuji laughed out loud.

"That's the kind of confirmation other people's souls have. It's a strong bond between me and that person. Still don't get it?"

"Don't joke!"

Mishakuji, who smiled without the slightest sway at Kuro's angry voice, suddenly lowered his eyes sadly.

"When I found out that he had passed away, I cried for the first time in a long time. Faced with such a sad me, I can't believe that my little brother and apprentice would stand in my way."

Kuro noticed that his own hand, which was holding the "Kotowari" handle, was trembling.

The anger towards the man in front of him was strong enough to shake Kuro, but that tremor was not due to anger. It was out of fear.

(The glow of your soul that you see in the exchange of life. Please show me the beauty of it, Ichigen-sama.)

As Mishakuji uttered those words and pointed his sword at him, the still young Kuro stood in front of him, trying to stop the senseless combat. He begged him to stop.

(Stand away. You must not stand before a serious sword without being prepared to risk your life.)

Mishakuji looked at Kuro with cold eyes. The edge of the blade did not budge one bit.

(O Kuro-chan, do you think I will never kill you?)

Mishakuji couldn't feel any kindness or mercy towards Kuro at that moment. Looking at the drawn sword and Mishakuji's eyes in front of him, Kuro realized that "death" was standing in front of him.

Childhood fears came alive again.

Now that he is stronger than he was when he was a child, just by looking at Mishakuji's flawless standing figure, he understood the difference in power between them.

Even though Kuro had challenged the "King" before, perhaps because he could feel the opponent's power so realistically, his body was filled with more tension than at that moment.

"You, you can't go to the Green Clan..."

Kuro didn't know how Mishakuji had been since he left Ichigen Miwa. However, with the green light emitted by Mishakuji, the response was to stand in front of them at that moment.

Mishakuji nodded lightly.

"Yes. That's why I'll take that girl."

When Mishakuji looked at Anna, who was being embraced by Kamamoto, with a beautiful gesture, he took out the famous sword "Ayamachi" given to him by Ichigen Miwa. A green stream clung to what was once the sword of the "Colorless King".

Kuro unknowingly drew his own sword as if it had been drawn by Mishakuji.

"So, as expected, Shiro... Adolf K. Weismann is still alive?"

As if to reflect Kuro's fear and anxiety, the tip of Kuro's sword swung. Mishakuji looked at him, frowned as if he had seen something ugly, and let out a cold voice.

"Come on, I want to make sure the biggest threat to us, the Green Clan, is dead if he's dead."

The word "death" bothered Kuro again. The uneasiness that had been sinking in his heart for a long time suddenly textured him as he got clear words and his eyes wavered.

"Kurosuke!"

Neko's voice hit his ears.

Kuro suddenly turned to face forward. He was approaching Mishakuji's sword that closed the gap in an instant. Kuro immediately accepted it. He turned, and the sound of metal colliding with each other resounded.

"When I found out that you and I were divided into enemies and allies, my heart fluttered, didn't it? I thought that I would carve out a path for this sad fate. But if it's Kuro-chan..."

"Run quickly!"

Kuro suddenly yelled at Kamamoto behind him.

At that moment, as they faced each other, the only thing Kuro could do was block out Mishakuji's relaxed expression. He didn't feel like he could do more than stop it.

Kamamoto exclaimed, "I understand!" Immediately, he heard the footsteps of two people running.

Mishakuji didn't seem to care that Anna and the others ran away, he just watched Kuro closely.

"What? This sword..."

With a snort, Mishakuji brushed Kuro's sword away slightly, undoing the sword fight. Kuro took a few steps back on a leash, gritted his teeth, and counterattacked.

He wielded the sword with a spirit voice. Mishakuji was slightly avoided. The second and third attacks were already dangerous.

All the swords had been read. Contrary to Kuro's despair, Mishakuji's movements seemed to be part of child's play.

"I thought of teaching you a lesson, but I'm not."

"You have nothing to teach me now!"

Kuro swung his sword recklessly. The sword kept cutting through the sky to no avail. The image of reaching even the tip of the sword did not come out, and only impatience built up.

From behind, he heard the low cry of Kamamoto, who should have escaped.

When he looked at him for a moment, he saw the ninja from earlier attacking Kamamoto from behind.

The ninja's blade pierced through Kamamoto's back, and Kamamoto fell with the force of being hit to the ground without being able to recover. He could hear Anna's screaming voice calling for Kamamoto.

"Oh, looking back?"

Mishakuji became aggressive as if he was scolding him the moment he stopped his hand while he looked away from him. Kuro quickly readied his sword and withstood Mishakuji's attack. Little by little, his legs lowered and pushed.

"Hey, are you going to call yourself a disciple of that person?"

"Hey...!"

Kuro groaned and stepped forward with great force on his legs that were about to recede.

Mishakuji danced around and dodged Kuro's strong sword. He aimed at the torso with the returned sword, but it was turned slightly and he couldn't reach it. Impulsing to turn around, Mishakuji's sword attacked Kuro's head. Kuro barely caught it, but it was heavy. He put his hand on the tip and managed to hold it, pushing him back with all his strength.

He was driven by a tingling sense of urgency that if he let his guard down, even for a moment, he would lose his life.

Finding a small space under his feet, Kuro swung his sword at his feet. However, Mishakuji jumped in without showing the slightest impatience. High body dances, somersaults and landings. The blade of the chase was also carried out with a playful backflip. Mishakuji seemed to be dancing gracefully against Kuro, who was facing a desperate battle.

Mishakuji's atmosphere, which was fluttering elegantly with Kuro's attacks, suddenly changed.

His smiling eyes turned terrifying and electricity ran through the air. With a slight flick of his sword, Mishakuji turned to attack.

A fierce attack that seemed to lose sight of the sword if he blinked. Swallowed up and thrown by the attacks that flowed like a torrent, Kuro barely caught them.

Sword against sword, powers clashing violently, and small sparks and lights that repelled each other's supernatural powers exploded over and over again.

"You can't defeat me if you're empty."

Helplessly pushed by the speed and weight of the ferocious blow, Kuro's body fell.

For a moment of fear, the hilt of Mishakuji's sword sank into his chest. Breathing hard, Kuro shot backwards. He hit the wall and fell, rolling on the floor.

"Right now, you are no match for me. Your swordsmanship, your attitude, and most of all, your beauty."

Under a singing voice. Still unable to recover from his ragged breath, Kuro managed to lift half of his body. Mishakuji slowly approached Kuro, who still couldn't get up, sword ready for him.

When he sensed that death was near, the ground just behind Mishakuji glowed green and a ninja appeared below. On his shoulders he carried an unconscious Anna.

"Oh, mission complete? Practice time is over. Too bad."

Silently, the ninja sank back to the ground along with Anna.

"Anna!"

Neko, who was watching from the shadows, rushed over with a shout.

Kuro also tried to rush after them, but Mishakuji pointed his sword at the ground and split it in two, as if he cut Kuro and the rest of them apart.

A straight line crossed the ground of the esplanade, and the ground was cut as if it had been cut by a machine and fell.

Neko cringed and stopped at the pressure of the wind and dust. Kuro also closed his eyes involuntarily.

"Let's meet again, Kuro-chan."

Mishakuji's voice echoed from beyond the dust. When he opened his eyes, Mishakuji and the ninja with Anna were nowhere to be seen.

He couldn't do anything and they reluctantly took Anna away. Kuro gritted his teeth and sheathed his sword, his hand shaking from the numbness of the fight with Mishakuji.

Staggering, he scrambled to his feet and ran towards Kamamoto, who had been slashed by the ninja.

Kamamoto, still lying on the ground, could not get up and was moaning. The back of his clothing was torn and his exposed skin was stained red with blood.

"You are ok?!"

Kuro lifted Kamamoto's body. Kamamoto's hand gripped Kuro's arm tightly, even though he was too limp to get up on his own.

"Oh, I'm fine, Anna, go after them...!"

Kamamoto's face was filled with impatience and anxiety, much stronger than pain.

Kuro hesitated for a moment. However, the wound on his back was large, but not deep enough to endanger his life. Also, Kuro could understand his feelings at that moment, quite painfully.

Kuro nodded deeply at Kamamoto's request.

"Ok, leave it to me. Neko, can you chase them?"

As he turned to Neko, Neko placed her hand over her ear as if she were concentrating her nerves and assumed a stance of looking around her.

"Nya... there!"

Neko pointed in a direction as if he picked up a signal.

Kuro nodded, leaned Kamamoto's body against the pillar and ran in the direction Neko pointed.

Get Anna Kushina back. There was no wavering in that determination, but fear and uneasiness had settled at the bottom of Kuro's heart and could not be erased.

(Even if I catch them, will I be able to beat Mishakuji Yukari?)

Kuro wondered as he ran to Neko's side.

He should have been proud of himself for getting stronger, but he couldn't take on Mishakuji.

Kuro was covered by a feeling of helplessness, as if he had returned to being a child who only looked at his elders.

And Shiro also created a mist in Kuro's heart.

(Shiro, Adolf K. Weismann, is he alive?)

(Come on, I want to make sure the biggest threat to us, the Green Clan, is dead if he's dead.)

Kuro clenched his fist tightly.

His feet were shaking and he felt that he was not standing correctly.

CHAPTER 2: RECOVERY OPERATION

Lying on his back on the couch at the HOMRA bar, Yata stared at the ceiling listlessly without sleeping or doing anything.

He's been coming there for years, but he'd never looked at the ceiling like this until he was left alone.

When everyone was there and "Homura" was in high spirits, he would always look at his comrades' faces or Suoh's back.

He heard the door to the bar open violently.

However, Yata, who was tired and weak on the couch, ignored him as it was too much trouble to get up. Kamamoto's voice came along with the sound of turbulent footsteps.

"Hey, Yata-san, it's an emergency!"

For some reason, a loud crash rang out.

Now that he thought about it, Yata absently recalled that he had just received a call from Kamamoto. He ignored him, thinking it was just a scolding, as if he cared.

Yata lay down and stared at the ceiling, speaking lazily.

"Kusanagi-san always scolded me to shut up in the bar... well, what about Kusanagi-san? Did she leave the bar to go somewhere else?"

"Hmm." Yata snorted. However, Kamamoto never responded.

Thinking what the hell, Yata sat up, turned around, and rolled his eyes.

"Oh, what's going on...?!"

At the entrance to the bar, Kamamoto was lying on his stomach. His back was torn and his clothes were black with blood.

"You must react now, Yata-san...!"

Kamamoto said that with painful sweat pouring down his face, getting up after failing many times.

"I'm in trouble, Anna...!"

"What the hell?! What's wrong?! What happened to Anna?!"

After being in a daze for a while, Yata fell off the couch and picked up Kamamoto. Kamamoto groaned, as if his wounds were convulsed from the blow.

Yata made Kamamoto sit on the couch in the bar, and Kamamoto blew out a harsh sigh.

A mysterious ninja-like person from the Green Clan came to Kamamoto's family's liquor store and asked Anna to use her psychic ability to find the "Silver King".

When she refused, he tried to take Anna by force.

She was rescued by the Black Dog who found her by chance and although he was able to repel the ninja several times, he was attacked by a strong swordsman named Yukari Mishakuji, who was said to be Kuro's older brother, and kidnapped Anna.

Hearing what had happened, Yata clenched his fists so tightly that his nails dug into his palms.

At the same time that anger against the criminal was welling up, he had the strange feeling that he wanted to punch himself.

Kamamoto contacted Yata when he was first attacked by the ninja. It was Yata who decided that it would be a boring story anyway and ignored him. Kamamoto, who was unable to contact Yata, accepted Kuro's offer to stay on Gakuenjima, where he has his base.

Yata was irresistibly frustrated at having to trust another clan's Black Dog more than himself, a comrade to whom he believed he was bound by a bond stronger than blood.

"So where did that fagot go that kidnapped Anna?"

Encouraged by a tingle of impatience, Yata asked, but Kamamoto shook his head.

"The Black Dog is chasing him, but I haven't heard from him yet..."

Yata gritted his teeth.

Anna is an important companion to Yata and someone he must protect, just like the family Suoh and Totsuka left behind.

He didn't know what she was going through, nor did he know where to go. The fact that he had no choice but to trust other clansmen and just wait made Yata feel his stomach burn.

Yata turned his back on Kamamoto and flopped down on the counter, impatience and anger swirling in his stomach with nowhere to go.

"Yata-san..."

Suddenly, Kamamoto called out to Yata as if he was leaving.

"Fushimi... Yes..."

The name came out of Kamamoto's mouth. Yata shook his back. Kamamoto leaned forward momentarily as if he had made up his mind.

"If you ask Fushimi, he might know something."

He looked like he was holding on.

Yata was unable to reply immediately.

Even Yata painfully understood how Kamamoto felt when he failed to protect Anna and she was kidnapped. If something were to happen to Anna, it would be such a feeling that he would not be able to live with it. Several thoughts ran through Yata's head in an instant.

Fushimi, who betrayed Yata, betrayed "Homura" and went to "Scepter 4" with sand on his hind legs, but he didn't think he had any ill will towards Anna.

The last time he saw Fushimi was during the Battle of Gakuenjima, where Suoh lost his life. That person was useless. Seeing Suoh's unbridled power, Fushimi moved away.

However, Yata believed that even Fushimi could not have felt anything. There was no way he didn't have feelings for Suoh, who changed his world.

But in the end, he is a traitor. Even "Homura's" sign, which is his pride and proof of his bond, was burned by himself, and he still denied the existence of "Homura".

(Damn, do you trust him? Do you think he'll help you in the first place? But... because...), Yata thought.

His mind a mess, Yata kicked his chair and stood up. He ran out of the bar without looking at Kamamoto.

He ducked down the side street of the HOMRA bar and struggled a few more seconds. He put his fist to his forehead, scratched his head, punched his knee, and finally reached out to grab the watch-shaped PDA on his wrist.

With a strong hand, he calls the number for the first time in three years.

The possibility that there would be no answer crossed his mind, but when he was about to count the tenth call, the call was suddenly connected.

"...Saruhiko?"

Yata asked with a strained voice. What he got back was a little tsk.

"Identify yourself. Is it from an unregistered number? Who are you?"

"You're a monkey... you've been picking fights from the start."

Yata reflexively sulked at the intentionally disgusting way of putting it.

"Fighting? It's no fun fighting you now. Without the Sanctum's protection, I'd end up intimidating a weakling."

Fushimi's mocking voice echoed over the radio waves.

Yata held his breath for a moment and pounded his fist against his chest as if to scold himself for reacting like this.

"Mikoto-san's power is still within me! I will always be your opponent!"

In fact, inside Yata's body, the flames Suoh gave him still remain. Although not as strong as before, the fire has never been extinguished.

However, Fushimi snorted.

"I don't like it. If you really want me to take care of you, you can switch to another clan."

"Hey, don't make me equal to others! My only clan is "Homura"!"

"Hah, isn't that "Homura" almost disbanded already?"

Through the PDA, he heard Fushimi spit it out with a mixture of mockery.

Fushimi's words pierced deep into Yata's heart. His heart ached as he remembered the scene inside the bar with no one but him.

Yata gritted his teeth and turned away, unable to find anything to answer.

"That happens because you lean on something like a comrade."

After a short pause, Fushimi muttered under his breath. That voice didn't have the enthusiastic color that he had until a while ago, and for some reason it sounded a bit lonely.

Yata swallowed his emotions and tensed his voice.

"...Listen to me, Saruhiko. Anna was kidnapped. According to Kamamoto's story, it was the work of Mishakuji of the Green Clan. But I don't know where they took her. Don't you have any information? If you know anything, please tell me."

As he squeezed out the words, he actually bowed his head. Fushimi's irritated click of the tongue echoed on the other side of the PDA.

"I'm not your informant."

"Even I'm too angry to ask you to do something for me! I'm so upset I'm going to vomit! But, I don't have Mikoto-san or Totsuka-san... Kusanagi-san either. I can't think of anything. I have no choice but you...!"

The feeling that stuck in his chest was like a jagged, distorted mass, and Yata spat it out painfully. As if he was holding on to him, he brought his face closer to the PDA in his hand.

"You don't hold a grudge against Anna, right?"

Silence followed.

Yata waited patiently for Fushimi's reaction, as if he was waiting for a verdict.

After a few seconds, which seemed incredibly long to Yata, the call was cut off without a single word being answered.

Yata stared at the PDA, whose call screen had disappeared.

Anger and disappointment slowly welled up. Yata was disturbed by a feeling of pity for himself, which he expected, and an emotion that, although he did not want to admit it, could be classified as "pain".

Shaking his fists, Yata converged the wave of intense emotions into anger and stood up as if he wanted to shake it off. He went out into the street and ran back to the bar.

"Hey, Yata-san, Fushimi is..."

Yata ran up the stairs without answering Kamamoto, who was waiting for him, and without even looking at him. Kamamoto followed Yata while he protected his wounds.

In the corner of the room where Yata had been huddled for a while, he searched for a box in which various unorganized things were thrown.

"Dammit! I was stupid for even thinking he had a heart!"

As he screamed poisoned, he rummaged through the box looking for something that could be used as a weapon. Unnecessary things were thrown away one after another.

From Yata's appearance, he must have guessed the outcome of the negotiations with Fushimi. Kamamoto slumped his shoulders dejectedly and frowned sadly.

Yata found the metal bat that he used earlier in the box, but it was crushed and rusty. He remembered when Kusanagi had left and the bar was in disrepair with no one but Yata, he twisted it and left it lying there. That made it difficult to use as a weapon.

He clicked his tongue and tossed it away.

"What are you going to do, Yata-san?"

Kamamoto asked with a puzzled voice.

Since it came to that, he was going to catch some blues out there and ask them if they had any information, even if it meant taking them down.

He found a mop and wondered if he could wrestle with it... just as the bell rang on Yata's arm, announcing the arrival of an email.

Throwing away the mop, Yata looked down at the PDA. Immediately, the expression turned serious.

The sender of the email was Fushimi, who had ignored Yata's plea earlier and unilaterally hung up.

Yata braced himself and opened the email with a projection hologram in the air. The email had no text, but an attached image.

The image was a map of downtown Tokyo. One point was marked in red.

Yata widened his eyes.

"Saruhiko..."

Involuntarily, a dumbfounded voice leaked out.

Fushimi stretched out his hand without saying a word, and Yata's turbulent emotions gradually subsided, and he began to have a fever.

He felt as if a power he had been missing for a long time had returned. Yata raised the corners of his mouth and looked at Kamamoto.

"I'm going to get Anna back."

"Do you know where she is?!"

Yata showed the map that was projected in the air to Kamamoto.

"Nanakamado... Mihashira Tower...? Fushimi did this?"

Yata took the skateboard. With that, deciding that a single fist would suffice as a weapon, he grabbed Kamamoto's shoulder.

"I'll take Anna home. You should do something about that wound."

"Yata-san...!"

Looking directly into Kamamoto's trembling eyes, Yata nodded and ran with all his might from him.

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The moment he saw the number on the PDA, Fushimi felt an indescribable emotion.

He deleted the record never to be contacted again. However, Fushimi's mind recalled to what the PDA had the list of numbers recorded.

Stopping in the middle of the grand staircase in the entrance hall of the military post, Fushimi pondered for a moment whether or not to respond to the call.

But in the end, he couldn't ignore it. As he accepted the call and gently put the PDA to his ear, a painfully tense voice asked, "Are you Saruhiko?"

It was difficult for him to analyze his feelings for Yata. However, to some extent, he was aware that Yata was the only person who could touch his heart and influence his emotions.

His position as Yata's best friend and partner was once torn to pieces with his bare hands. Fushimi discarded Yata, who had settled in "Homura", and was happy to be in a position similar to Suoh's dog, and cherished the existence of him being friends with stupid people. He could no longer find his own place next to Yata.

He deliberately hurt Yata's pride as "Homura" and acquired that hatred. The only thing that lifted Fushimi's heart was fighting with Yata as if they were killing each other. Only at that moment there was excitement and a certain kind of fun.

However, after Suoh Mikoto's death, Fushimi lost sight of where to put his feelings for Yata.

Yata, on the other side of the PDA, let out an urgent voice. Fushimi provoked Yata by choosing words that would provoke Yata with just his mouth, as if by inertia.

"Hey, don't make me equal to others! My only clan is "Homura"!"

Easily provoked, Yata reflexively raised an angry voice. A sneer emerged from Yata, who continued to say such things even at that stage.

"Hah, isn't that "Homura" almost disbanded already?"

A weak sigh was heard.

In Fushimi's mind, an image of Yata, whom he had seen while working on "Scepter 4", appeared in his mind.

With no friends around, he was a skateboarder's back with his shoulders down. He was an unsightly figure who caught the wheel and fell into the middle of nowhere. He averted his eyes from the sight of the figure he saw from the moving car, feeling indescribable.

After Suoh Mikoto's death, he felt that "Homura" was slowly dying. A natural process because, it was precisely because of Suoh Mikoto's existence that "Homura" was able to become "Homura".

It was nothing more than an illusion brought on by the euphoria of meeting under absolute existence, like a bond that was thicker than blood. A bunch of aimless idiots, like "Homura" who had lost their centripetal strength. No, it wasn't even a group anymore.

He could have scoffed and laughed, but something heavy had settled on Fushimi's chest.

"That happens because you lean on something like a comrade."

The words spilled out.

For a moment there was silence. It was so quiet that he started to feel that the call had been dropped, when he heard Yata's low and tense voice coming from the other end of the PDA.

"...Listen to me, Saruhiko. Anna was kidnapped. According to Kamamoto's story, it was the work of Mishakuji of the Green Clan. But I don't know where they took her. Don't you have any information? If you know anything, please tell me."

Fushimi heard the pleading voice of "please", with an indescribable mixture of irritation and frustration.

"Mikoto-san or Totsuka-san... Kusanagi-san either. I can't think of anything. I have no choice but you...! You don't hold a grudge against Anna, right?"

Fushimi put down the PDA that he had on his ear.

For a few seconds, he looked at the PDA, which was connected to Yata, with whom he thought he would never connect again.

In the end, he hung up without saying a word.

Fushimi remained in his thoughts for a few more seconds.

"Tsk..."

He clicked his tongue and headed up the stairs.

Fushimi had returned to the camp to coordinate with the ministries and agencies related to the attack on Mihashira Tower and gather information on the Green Clan. The content of the call from just now, while annoying, also contained useful information.

After doing some research in the information room of the military post, he was able to easily confirm that "Scepter 4" was the central figure in the project he had been working on since last night.

Fushimi pulled out his PDA again.

"This is just a reward for giving me a hint.", he murmured in his mind as if it was an excuse to send.

Fushimi clicked his tongue once more after confirming that it had been sent, and then turned around to change.

He left the briefing room and headed for Munakata's office.

As soon as he knocked and opened the door, Munakata was working on a puzzle at his office desk. He wondered if he was joking about that emergency situation, but he was so familiar that Fushimi began to report without rushing.

"I learned the true identity of the member of "Jungle" who attacked Mihashira Tower. Mishakuji Yukari, who was previously a close aide to the previous "Colorless King" Ichigen Miwa."

From the beginning, he remembered the name "Mishakuji" that he heard from Yata. A person who was Miwa Ichigen's number one disciple and also worked as his assistant. There was a record that Ichigen Miwa, at the request of the "Golden King", was accompanied by Mishakuji Yukari to mediate.

About ten years ago, he abandoned Ichigen Miwa and disappeared, but for some reason he became a member of the Green Clan.

The tall swordsman proudly showing his true face, caught by the Mihashira Tower's surveillance camera, matched the image of Mishakuji Yukari, who was a member of the Colorless Clan who was barely registered in the records.

It seems there was a story that Mishakuji Yukari was a clansman with fearsome swordsmanship, to the extent that he could rival the "King", but the attack that time strangely made it clear that the story was not exaggerated.

Tackling "Tokijikuin", which should be impossible to compete with a half-baked force, it was thought that only Mishakuji Yukari defeated all the "rabbit" fighters, each possessing the power of an executive class, and seized control of Mihashira Tower.

Munakata listened to Fushimi's report as he played with puzzle pieces.

"Colorless and green... he's wearing two colors just like you, right? You were able to discover so much in such a short time."

"There was a request for support from another avenue, when I did some research on it, the signs just matched up."

The part he didn't want to step on was scratched, and there was a trace of irritation in his voice. Fushimi changed the subject as he operated the tablet in his hand.

"The Green Clan, "Jungle" is a special clan that is sparsely and widely connected via the Internet. By having a PDA download an application, we have an unspecified number of clan members, but take a look."

An aerial hologram screen was projected from Fushimi's tablet. It was a picture from a surveillance camera from Mihashira Tower a few minutes ago.

A person wearing a strangely designed powered suit and mask was shown carrying a large piece of luggage and sliding through the tower wall as if submerged in water. The moment he broke through the wall, the part of the wall where the masked person's body touched glowed green.

Munakata watched the video and narrowed his eyes with interest.

"Hey, that's..."

"When you become a high-ranking clan member, you use the Green Clan attribute, "Modification", to change the laws of physics and wield powers that surpass ordinary people, but this particular masked clan member..."

"He's a ninja. Interesting."

That struck a chord, Munakata's eyes twinkling with joy.

Fushimi frowned slightly and continued with his report.

"This masked clansman uses his tampering ability to make walls transparent so he can pass through them anyway. With that he doesn't care about the safety of Mihashira Tower."

"This is a ninja's escape from the wall."

For some reason, Munakata seemed happy and spoke in a slightly booming voice. Sensing that a troublesome switch had been thrown, Fushimi opened his mouth to ignore it.

"This masked..."

"This ninja..."

"This masked clansman, he also considers himself a very skilled person next to Mishakuji."

"No, this is ninjutsu."

"Whatever! Here's the problem."

With a strong tone, Fushimi silenced his boss, who was getting excited about the ninja's existence, and enlarged a point of the displayed image.

Looking closely at the red cloth-wrapped luggage carried by the masked member, it could be seen that she was a little girl wearing a red cloak.

"Member of the Red Clan, that is to say former member of the Red Clan, Anna Kushina. I'm not sure what the purpose of the kidnapping was, but it's not good."

Munakata returned to his serious expression and lowered his gaze slightly.

"Anna Kushina... is it a memory of Suoh?"

"Something like that."

Fushimi vaguely claimed that she wasn't his biological daughter, but he probably wasn't wrong either.

"I see."

Munakata changed his face from the boy, who had been playing with the ninjas until a while ago, to the face of a perfect boss.

"What about coordination with related ministries and agencies?"

"It's over."

"Ok, then. Shall we go out soon?"

Fushimi straightened up and saluted like a subordinate.

When he was following Munakata down the stairs of the military camp to go to Mihashira Tower again, Munakata suddenly said.

"By the way, where did the support request you received come from?"

Fushimi looked away bitterly and clicked his tongue as he entered a place he did not want to enter.

"Do I have an obligation to report?"

"No. I trust your work."

Munakata said that, but he must have seen it anyway.

Swallowing his bitterness, Fushimi turned his mouth into a square.

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Just as he reached Tokyo station and got off the limited express train onto the platform, Kusanagi's PDA beeped briefly.

After taking it out of his pocket and checking the message that arrived, Kusanagi stopped suddenly. In the midst of the crowd, his tall figure suddenly stopped, and the people behind him bumped into him and avoided him in annoyance.

Kusanagi couldn't care less for them, and stared at the PDA in his hand.

The sender of the message was Awashima.

"Report. Anna Kushina was kidnapped by members of the Green Clan and imprisoned in Mihashira Tower."

After rereading the short sentence twice, Kusanagi closed his mouth and began to walk with long strides.

He pushed through the crowd and moved quickly as he operated his PDA. Awashima was probably busy with minimal contact. When he called out to Kamamoto, who was in charge of Anna, he received an immediate response.

"Kamamoto. What is happening now?"

"Kuh, Kusanagi-san! Why...?"

"I'll explain later. What about Anna?"

"Sorry! I couldn't protect Anna... I'm..."

"Apologize and reflect on everything later, so let me know now."

He calmly called out to Kamamoto, who let out a hoarse voice. From the other side of the PDA, Kamamoto swallowed his tears and could hear his breathing as if to suppress his emotions.

"Anna has been kidnapped. The culprits are a ninja-like guy from the Green Clan and an oddly strong swordsman named Mishakuji. We received information that she was taken to Mihashira Tower, so Yata-san is heading there now."

Kusanagi nodded upon hearing Kamamoto's voice, who had regained some composure despite being trembling.

"What is the reason for the kidnapping?"

"He said that he needed Anna's sentience ability to find the "Silver King". The Black Dog that was present at the scene chased them, and I think they're probably in the direction of Mihashira Tower. I'll go there as soon as I've given myself first aid...!"

"If you're injured, don't overdo it. You should wait."

He noted that Kamamoto's breathing was shallow and painful. During the attack, he was probably injured while trying to protect Anna.

Kusanagi tried his best to talk cheerfully to Kamamoto, who was trying to contain himself.

"I just got back to Japan. I'm going there. And Yata-chan is heading there, right? Then, don't worry. He's the kind of person who shows his strength at times like this."

Kamamoto held his breath for a moment and replied in a tearful voice.

"Yes."

As soon as he hung up the PDA, the slight smile that had appeared on Kusanagi's face to calm down Kamamoto disappeared.

Anna was taken to the Mihashira Tower. Especially to that place.

In the Mihashira Tower, the "Slate" that selects the "King" and gives power to the "King" is stored.

Kusanagi touched a bag containing materials related to the "Dresden Slate" that he got from Germany.

Knowing that it was unreasonable, he wandered around Germany for half a year and fought. As a result, he was able to obtain materials that could lead to what he was looking for.

But...

Kusanagi bit his lip and jumped from the station building into a taxi.

"To Mihashira Tower. I'll take the limited express."

+++++

Kuro was looking in the direction of Mihashira Tower from the rooftop of the building in Nanakamado.

After chasing after Mishakuji and the others who kidnapped Anna, relying on Neko's cat-like senses, they finally reached Mihashira Tower.

The surroundings of the tower were restricted so that ordinary people couldn't get close there, and the blue clothed ones were in disarray, setting up a siege net. It didn't make it to the mainstream news, but it seemed like a lot of serious things had happened without his knowledge.

"I didn't expect this to happen..."

Next to Kuro, Neko was blowing comfortably in the wind with an expressionless face that had nothing to do with any sense of danger.

"Kurosuke, the guy from a while ago is there. Aren't you going?"

"No, wait. Let's gather some more information and think about the infiltration methods properly."

"Ah, why?"

"Not only the Blue Clan is there waiting, but also the Green Clan inside the building."

"Hmm." Neko snorted slightly in admiration.

Kuro tightly gripped the "Kotowari" scabbard. What he told Neko was true, but behind the scenes, there was also a feeling of fear of Mishakuji in his heart.

Could he face him again and win? That fear made Kuro shy.

"Nya?"

When Neko noticed something, she raised her hand over her eyes like a canopy and looked down.

"Uaaaahhhh!"

Riding on the wind, he could hear a voice that sounded like a roar, all the way to where Kuro was.

The owner of the roar soon caught his eye. He was a young man in a cap, riding a skateboard and racing like a bullet towards the front of Mihashira Tower. Misaki Yata, the leader of the vanguard "Homura", who was a familiar person to Kuro.

"Make way!"

Yata leaped over the siege net of the restless "Scepter 4" with a single jump on his skateboard, smashed through the glass-enclosed entrance of Mihashira Tower, and ran inside.

"....."

"....."

Kuro and Neko watched the scene in silence for a while. With a shocked face, Neko pointed to the crystal of the Mihashira Tower that Yata destroyed and bowed her head.

"Is that where the stupidity went?"

"Kuh." Kuro gritted his teeth and immediately stood up.

"It can't be helped! Come on!"

As Kuro stood up, Neko shouted happily, "That's what we have to do!" and she clung to Kuro's neck.

Kuro pointed his right arm towards Mihashira Tower and concentrated his powers. With Miwa's "connect" power, he stretched out his invisible hand and grabbed a window frame at an appropriate place in Mihashira Tower, grabbed Neko's body and jumped off the rooftop.

He used his invisible hands as ropes and flew through the air like Tarzan through the jungle. Neko showed no sign of flinching from moving high and let out a happy voice.

When they landed in front of Mihashira Tower, they ignored the "Scepter 4" members who were showing signs of flinching around them and rushed towards the tower through a hole in the glass wall that Yata had broken.

"Don't chase them! Hold the blocking line!"

Hearing Awashima's voice behind them giving orders to the members who were in disarray, Kuro and Neko ran after the man who was carrying out the foolish plan.

+++++

After deciding where to go, Yata's ardor and hesitation disappeared, and he sprinted with only fiery determination.

The place that Fushimi showed him, the area around Mihashira Tower was blocked by "Scepter 4", but he went through it anyway, and with a kick on a skateboard with a supernatural ability, he broke through the glass and ran towards the tower.

"Anna!"

Shouting her name from the bottom of his stomach, Yata skateboarded into the entrance hall of Mihashira Tower.

In the entrance hall, he could see dozens of humans wearing full-face helmets beaming with green light. They must be the henchmen of the Green Clan that kidnapped Anna.

Each of them had a weapon in hand. From simple items like iron pipes and metal bats to firearms.

Yata punched several people who got in his way and broke through.

The designer of that building must have been stupid, since he traversed a wide hallway with screeching acceleration.

While showing agitation at the sudden intruder, some of the helmet-clad boys fired attacks with their super powers towards Yata. It was an electric shock with a green light. The air vibrated and green lightning struck the eighth direction. Yata rode his skateboard to dodge the horizontal beams and jumped again to dodge them easily. Yata's nerves sharpened and he could see the thunder running freely through the air.

"What's that?!"

He broke through the lightning attack and rushed towards the group of the Green Clan who were frozen at the back of the hall.

"Is it an intruder?!"

"The remains of "Homura"!"

A confused voice rose from a corner of the group of helmets that still didn't seem to have grasped the situation. Of course, there was no obligation to wait for the interception preparations to be ready, Yata jumped into the group of helmets trying to intercept him with a nervous demeanor, and with a burst of flames gushing out from his entire body, he without hesitation blew the annoying people.

The bloodthirsty group readied their weapons. One of them, a man with a helmet and a sword, slashed at Yata as if he had made up his mind. However, it was a tepid sword movement that couldn't be compared to the sword technique of "Scepter 4". Yata jumped over his head on his skateboard and kicked the side of his helmet as he spun his skateboard in the air.

"Don't call the little fish!"

In the noisy group of helmets, a person holding a gun pointed the muzzle at Yata, but another person suppressed it with a hasty voice: "Enough, you will hit an ally!" It was like a voracious group of people who couldn't take any leadership and were reeling.

"Heh! Don't be afraid!"

He easily dispersed a group that had neither warmth like "Homura" nor leadership like "Scepter 4", and Yata laughed at people who were scared by his impulse.

At this rate, it would be easier than he thought, and when he turned his gaze, something met Yata's eyes.

They were boobs.

Breasts wrapped in light pink cloth. Huge breasts stood up like a wall, depriving Yata of his gaze and thoughts.

When he calmed down, it was just a big billboard that constantly displayed pictures, and it turned out to be an underwear or swimsuit CM, but Yata's face suddenly fluttered at the exhilarating sight that jumped out without hesitation. His body trembled and he lost his balance.

"Whoah!"

The skateboard, which was running at considerable speed, had considerable momentum to fall.

The skateboard flew out from under his feet and Yata rolled on the ground.

Just when he was going crazy, he suddenly fell into the middle of nowhere.

"Ugh... Kuuh!"

Yata, who fell face down on the ground, groaned in embarrassment and raised his head.

The skateboard that flew stopped at someone's feet. Yata fixed his eyes on the shoes, then looked up and widened his eyes.

"Hey, you are...!"

A young man with long black hair and a sword at his waist.

Yatogami Kuro. A young man named Black Dog was standing there.

"Think a bit about the future. Misaki Yata."

Kuro picked up the skateboard that had fallen under his feet and casually tossed it towards Yata.

Yata immediately jumped up and landed on his skateboard, raising an eyebrow.

"Ah? You're not the one to call me that, you damn dog!"

"Damn dog...?"

Kuro was speechless for a moment, shaking his fists.

The group of helmets around him seemed to see it as an opportunity, though they were still in shock.

The light clung to Kuro's trembling hand and the space around him distorted into the shape of a giant hand. Kuro flicked his otherworldly hand to the side. The slowly approaching Green clansmen were struck down by Kuro's supernatural powers. Kuro barked at Yata without even looking at the direction in which he had attacked.

"Don't say vulgar things!"

Kuro's attack destroyed the pillars and the surrounding floor, kicking up dust. Many of the helmeted men flew and fell, and those who barely escaped the attack were left in a daze.

He was an annoying guy, but his strength increased Yata's tension, his rivalry flared up and he concentrated his flame power into his fists.

"Heh, unfortunately I was raised badly!"

With his gaze still directed at Kuro, he danced around and scattered the flames wrapped in his fists around him, causing them to explode. The helmets flew in an interesting way.

The two looked at each other as they approached in the middle of the pile of corpses.

If he gets a weapon, he turns it back on. It's Yata's style to buy right away when someone sells a fight.

Yata and Kuro exchanged sharp glances at point blank range and tried to meet their foreheads.

"Nyaaa!"

A girl's voice broke out and Yata's face was pushed away with a gentle hand.

Stepping between Yata and Kuro, the one separating the faces of the two men who were approaching uneasily was another member of the Silver Clan, a girl named Neko.

"Listen to Wagahai's strategy!"

Neko roared and glared at the two of them with the strangely large, glowing eyes of hers.

"First of all, stop fighting! We'll all cooperate to save Anna! That's it! Let's go!"

Brilliantly and confidently stating a strategy that couldn't even be called strategy, Neko wrapped her arms around Kuro and Yata's necks and pulled them together.

Yata felt a part of Neko's soft and elastic body press into Yata's upper arm.

"Hey! What the hell are you doing giving orders?"

He was about to say something, but he felt a presence around him and kept his mouth shut. When his gaze swept over it, a group of people in helmets who seemed to have run from somewhere else were approaching with their weapons at the ready.

"Here they come again!"

Small fish, but they were many. Like an endless stream of small insects, Yata frowned and looked at the bodies that wore green helmets.

This was not the time to be trapped in a place like this. He had to go see Anna as soon as possible.

"Neko!"

With a voice without hesitation, Kuro called out to his companion. Neko smiled fearlessly with a face that understood everything.

"Leave it to me, nya!"

A jingle was heard.

"Special Technique~ Cat Mountain!"

With a loud voice, Neko raised both arms.

Just as he felt Neko engulf him, a huge object appeared from the hallway floor like a mountain rising up from under his feet and stretching upwards.

Yata looked at it, which rose almost to the ceiling, and opened his mouth.

What appeared was a beckoning monster-sized cat. Three beckoning giant cats staring into space with huge illuminated eyes and raising their left hand to invite good fortune.

Neko who made them appear was sitting cross-legged on the cat's head, which was beckoning in the middle, laughing happily.

"Nyah!"

Yata and the helmeted guys were speechless at the unrealistic sight.

"Come on."

Only Kuro remained motionless on the spot, he said that briefly and started to run. Yata quickly slid his skateboard and followed Kuro.

Now that he thought about it, that girl who is a member of the Silver Clan has the power of hallucinations called perception manipulation ability. In other words, that giant beckoning cat was an illusion that she created. So...

"Hey, will that woman be okay on her own?"

Yata lowered his voice and said that to Kuro, who was running next to him.

He was terrified for a moment, but that was just an illusion. Could she compete against a large number of people with a silly hallucination that has no substance?

Yata had no reason to worry about other clans, but it was hard to ignore the situation when a woman might get hurt.

However, Kuro didn't care about that and ran with his eyes straight ahead.

From behind, one could hear the low, horrifying sound of a giant cat moving beckoningly, the screams of people wearing helmets, and Neko's lively laughter.

Kuro relaxed his mouth a bit and said.

"Don't underestimate the Silver Clansman."

Looking back, a small beckoning mountain-like cat moved across the ground, rumbled on the ground, and mercilessly rushed at the Green Clansmen.

The people who were run over passed out on the ground. Some had lost their helmets and you could see their faces making bubbles. Actually, it was an illusion, so they didn't die or get hurt, but it is assumed that they had a vivid pseudo-experience of being crushed by that mass. The hooves that escaped showed signs of screaming.

Yata turned his gaze to Kuro running next to him. Without hesitation, he entrusted his back to his comrades and went his own way.

He wasn't going to say that he envied him.

However, Yata clicked his tongue with a slight sense of frustration and a feeling of loneliness from being alone.

"You and that woman, everyone and this, uh, I'm so upset!"

He turned the tingling sensation in his chest into momentum and kicked the ground hard.

Just in time, he could see the members of the Green Clan waiting in front of him. He clenched his fists to ease his worries and ran towards the group of people who were trying to block his way.

He brandished a fist that emitted flames, knocking down the opponent without even giving him a chance to take a counter stance. Next to him, Kuro also knocked down people who got in his way with his light movements.

Even while fighting, Yata and Kuro never slowed down.

"Don't say that."

Breaking through the enemy wall, Kuro smiled slightly, took out a voice recorder from his pocket and pointed it at Yata.

"If we walk together through the mountain pass, there is no fear."

From the recorder, he could hear the strangely good voice of a man he didn't know, composing something like a strange haiku.

For some reason, Kuro dyed his cheeks pink and looked at Yata with proud and sparkling eyes.

"What do you think?!"

"Ah? That's disgusting."

Yata raised his eyebrows in confusion and expressed his frank impressions in front of Kuro, who snorted wildly with a flushed face.

"What...?! You bastard!"

Yata kicked the ground hard to increase the speed of his skateboard.

"This is not the time to be joking!"

"I'm not kidding! It's a sentence that contains a grateful teaching that values each other's mutual help, saying that even on a rough road, if you have a partner with you, you will have the strength of a hundred people."

He listened to Kuro's vague words and ignored them.

However, despite Yata's reluctance, he knew that he was running there because he was saved.

Fushimi showed him where to go and of course Kuro and Neko helped pave the way so he could run straight to get Anna back.

"I won't thank you. I didn't ask you or the others."

As he said that looking ahead, he heard Kuro exhale suddenly next to him.

"I don't need your thanks. I'm here by destiny."

"Ah?"

Yata instinctively turned his gaze to Kuro at the thoughtful voice. Kuro had a wistful look on his face as he bragged about the strange phrase on the recorder.

"Mishakuji Yukari. I'll take care of the other side's ability. In the meantime, I can't afford to worry about anything else. You should save Anna Kushina."

"....."

Kamamoto said it. The man named Mishakuji Yukari seemed to be Kuro's older brother. He didn't know the details of what happened between the two.

Yata said, "Heh!" and laughed briefly.

"It doesn't even need to be said!"

The power was transmitted to the foot on the skateboard. The wheel raised flames and accelerated.

+++++

The members of the Green Clan, which abounded like insects on the lower floors, dwindled as they went up, and the upper floors were almost deserted.

Yata and Kuro rushed through a vast space that was unclear if it was a corridor or a hall.

In the distance, he saw what looked like a giant, brightly colored fusuma. Mihashira Tower is a building with a unique presence that blends a high-tech feel with a traditional Japanese atmosphere.

"Black Dog! That's..."

Yata yelled at Kuro running next to him. Kuro nodded, "Ah."

"Looks like we've reached the top floor... where the Slate is located."

As they approached, the majestic giant sliding door seemed to be an automatic door, and it opened smoothly.

"Anna!"

Yata ran inside while calling out her name.

The floor of the great room, which could have been used for a baseball game, was transparent, and in the center below that, was what appeared to be the "Slate".

However, what caught Yata's attention was not the Slate, but the figure of a girl who was stuck in a small cage that seemed to be a bird cage in the middle of the corridor.

"Anna...!"

Anna, who had been sitting in a cage with her head down, slowly raised her head at the sound of Yata's voice.

Yata was overcome with a sense of relief at seeing her safe, as well as the fact that Anna was locked in a cage.

"Damn... what are you doing to Anna?"

To the left and right of Anna's cage, there was a man with a striking face who carried a sword, and a person wrapped in something resembling a ninja costume.

It matched the characteristics of the two who kidnapped Anna that Kamamoto said.

A man with a striking face, probably the man named Mishakuji Yukari, said with a laugh.

"Oh, a cheerful boy has come. Fufu, I'm not doing anything. I was just asking a cute little bird for a small favor."

A parrot perched on top of Anna's cage called out, "Little bird!"

"What?!"

At the same time as he howled, Yata blew out flames of supernatural ability from him and rushed forward. He tried to hit Mishakuji with his red-hot fists, but he dodged Yata with a light step.

"I entrust the hot-blooded one to you."

"I understand."

The ninja responded to Mishakuji's words and disappeared as he sank into the ground. The ground in front of Yata, who was about to turn around on his skateboard and prepare for another attack, glowed green, and the ninja who should have disappeared turned slimy from there.

"What?!"

A ninja hand grabbed Yata's head, and he started and shuddered slightly. He braced himself to be thrown to the ground, but what hit Yata was more than just the impact of hitting his back and neck on the ground.

With a bang, Yata's body passed through the ground as if he was submerged in water.

The ground, which was supposed to be hard on whichever side he touched, turned to loose jelly and he could slide across it. Yata frowned in disgust. His vision was surrounded by green light and the cross section of the floor was visible.

Passing through the ground, the ninja tossed Yata's head into the air. He somersaulted and landed soundlessly.

Yata managed to regain his balance and avoided being unceremoniously thrown to the ground.

He apparently fell through the floor to the floor below. It looked like a very large reception room or conference room. Looking up at the ceiling, a chandelier that looked like a piece of art was hung. He had to get back there quickly and help Anna.

Feeling murderous, Yata turned his gaze to the ninja. Several kunai flew towards Yata.

Yata kicked the ground to avoid it, but the ninja magically took out kunais one after another and kept throwing them. Fushimi's skill in wielding dark weapons would be a good match.

Yata picked up a large ancient table and used it as a shield. Ka-ka-ka, the sound of the kunais nailed to the top of the table.

The next moment, a large blade slid across the table that was used as a shield.

"Gah!"

Yata leaned back and almost avoided him.

Not just the sword, but the entire body of the ninja appeared through the table that was used as a shield. The ninja wielded a blade that protruded from both ends of the handle and cut Yata. The table that the ninja passed through was not cut or destroyed. He surely used the same technique as when he broke through the ground.

"You are using a mysterious technique!"

Yata clicked his tongue forcefully, causing flames to burn from his entire body.

He rushed forward as he destroyed obstacles like tables with the flames he emitted and attacked the ninja. However, that figure disappeared as if it had suddenly fallen. When he realized that he had sunk back to the ground, he appeared behind Yata and swung his sword at him. Dodging with almost animal reflexes, he counter-kicked, but the ninja spun back and plummeted to the ground.

"I'll squash a mole!"

While howling, Yata fiercely attacked the ninja who repeatedly disappeared and reappeared as a mole. The ninja's ridiculous movements sent blood rushing to his head and the blade smashed into his side.

The warding didn't arrive in time, but it prevented him from being cut by concentrating his super powers. Blown up and rolling on the ground.

(Calm down. You're not being nice to me.)

Saying that to himself, Yata took a deep breath and woke up.

Yata had only one purpose: to rescue Anna. He didn't have time to be playing with that ninja.

Yata looked up at the ceiling, which had been under his feet until now, and got up to reach the girl he needed to rescue once more.

+++++

Yata was dunked downward by the ninja whose alter ability allowed him to pass through walls. Kuro, who was standing close to the Slate, came face to face with Mishakuji, tensing his entire body.

"Kotosaka-chan, go look downstairs."

"Kwah! I understand! I understand!"

The parrot responded to Mishakuji's words and flew away.

Mishakuji made his glossy lips form a smile.

"I will teach my cute little brother a splendid lesson."

"Don't fuck with me, Mishakuji Yukari...!"

Kuro let out a plaintive voice and put his hand on the handle of "Kotowari".

Mishakuji grabbed the edge of his black leather gloves and put them back on.

"First of all, it's about manners, Kuro-chan. Call me "Onii-sama"!"

Mishakuji kicked the ground as he turned around as if he was dancing.

Kuro tried to stop Mishakuji, who was approaching at such a speed that he couldn't even blink, with his supernatural power, but Mishukaji's momentum didn't stop. The outstretched hand of superpower was countered by the supernatural power that Mishakuji emitted and he was pushed back with a crack.

"Gah!"

He managed to dodge as he closed in on him and rolled on the ground to avoid him. Even though Mishakuji hadn't even drawn his sword yet, his entire body was overwhelmed with a sense of danger that made his body shudder just by getting close to him.

Kuro knelt on the ground, straightened up and drew his sword as if holding on to his master's sword.

Seeing that, Mishakuji looked down.

"You are not ready to draw your sword."

He said that with a cold voice, and his body stiffened.

He wielded his sword as if he was playing, but even Kuro knew that his sword was always determined.

It was the same when he pointed his sword at Ichigen Miwa who was his master.

Kuro didn't understand at all why Mishakuji did that, but from his look and demeanor, it was clear that he was prepared to risk everything the moment he crossed swords with Ichigen Miwa.

(On the other hand, what about me?)

Involuntarily, Kuro thought so.

Long ago, Kuro considered that the famous sword "Kotowari", entrusted to him by Ichigen Miwa, should never be drawn except for Miwa's request to "Defeat the evil "King". When he drew it, he was prepared to put a single thought into it.

However, the "Colorless King", who was hatching an evil plan, was defeated by Isana Yashiro and Suoh Mikoto, and Isana Yashiro disappeared. Worried about looking for

him, whether he might be alive or not, he wandered as if he were walking on wobbly scaffolding.

And now, just as Mishukaji said, Kuro casually drew his sword just to escape the threat in front of him. Even though he took it out, he had no vision of winning against the man in front of him.

With a face that seemed to read Kuro's feelings, Mishakuji snorted.

The next moment, Mishakuji was in front of Kuro. Thin for a moment. A purple palm pierced Kuro's chest. The strong impact made him catch his breath, and Kuro's body was thrown backwards.

He didn't even have time to wield "Kotowari". Kuro aimlessly drew his sword and was pushed by Mishukaji, who hadn't even drawn his sword, and was smashed into a glass window from behind. Kuro's body, which received a mighty blow with extraordinary power, broke through the tempered glass and was thrown outside.

It was the top floor of the Mihashira Tower, a skyscraper. If he falls to the ground from there, he won't retain his original form. Kuro reached out his extraordinary hand and clung to the window frame.

Kuro narrowed his eyes and looked up at the sky as the glass shards scattered like rain. From the broken window, Mishakuji flew lightly like a great bird and landed on the wall. He leaned vertically against the wall of the glass tower as if he were standing on the ground. It was as if the world had turned ninety degrees to follow him.

Mishakuji's entire body was enveloped in a transparent light. It was the power of a member of the Colorless Clan, the same type as Kuro. The power to connect with something.

Kuro manifested that power in the image of an "invisible hand", and even at that moment, Kuro's supernatural hand was clinging to a window frame a few meters above him, leaving him dangling.

However, Mishakuji was able to harness that power instead of limiting it, wrapping it around his body, slightly manipulating and controlling how he connected to the world. He connected the soles of his feet to the wall with his supernatural power, but when he walked on the wall, it separated without any unnaturalness, creating the illusion that it was a normal floor.

With his hair blowing in the wind blowing from above, Mishakuji walked along the wall until he could meet Kuro's eyes.

"As usual, Kuro-chan. You're always trying to hold on to something. But if you don't let go of that hand, you can't go anywhere."

Mishakuji finally drew the sword that he carried on his back. A leaf was revealed that emitted a unique purple glow that was neither colorless nor green.

Kuro gritted his teeth and stood up with his supernatural hand, imitating his appearance and enveloping his entire body with his power like Yukari. He ran with the image of instantly connecting his feet and the tower wall.

"It's slippery!"

He leaned forward and ran through the glass wall, slashing at Mishakuji, who had good posture. Mishakuji took Kuro's sword with a relaxed expression. One strike, two strikes, the blades met.

Kuro rushed to take a position directly over his opponent, who had an advantage, and swung his sword desperately, but Mishukaji danced and defeated Kuro's sword, and before he knew it, he was in a position farther away. high.

Concentrating on the sword, he neglected his feet, and Kuro's legs would sometimes slide down the wall, giving in to gravity and cramping his back. On the other hand, Mishakuji took a light step on the wall, boldly slashed, and when Kuro avoided him, he jumped high on Kuro's head. Kuro swung his sword at the landing spot, but Mishakuji also jumped slightly to avoid it and landed straight up as he somersaulted. Gravity seemed to go crazy only around Mishakuji.

Kuro gritted his teeth and ran with all his might. Mishakuji laughed.

"Yes, this way."

"I'll cut you down with your sword!"

Mishakuji judged Kuro's movements with playful gestures.

The sharp sound of swords clashing against each other resounded over and over again.

As they crossed swords, his positions were also exchanged, and the landscape reflected in his field of vision became a night sky and terrifyingly distant ground, making him feel dizzy.

"Kuh... I'm at a disadvantage here!"

He reached out his extraordinary hand between the sword fight, grabbed the window frame on the upper floor and stood up. Thus, he immediately turned his back and ran up the wall at full speed aiming for the ceiling.

He kicked off the top of the wall and jumped onto the rooftop. It was a heliport. When he landed on the concrete of the helipad and looked up, there was a Japanese garden with a large pond in the center.

"That's right, Kuro-chan, that's the way it is!"

He listened Mishukaji's laughter behind him. He could have praised Kuro, who had managed to overcome the battle on the wall, even if he seemed to be watching.

Kuro tried to reposition his sword, but his legs suddenly withered away. Finally achieving a decent footing, the fatigue and damage from the unreasonable battle came at once, and he involuntarily fell to his knees. He was completely out of breath and his shoulders were going up and down.

"Oh, even though I praised you, you're still down on your knees. Hurry up and get ready."

He still couldn't breathe. Using only his mind to reconstruct his body, Kuro jumped onto the roof garden.

"Come on!"

"Fufu, really, a loving child."

Mishakuji followed Kuro with a strange smile that seemed to be a mixture of mockery and affection.

He ran over the rocks around the pond for footholds. Unlike Mishakuji, who effortlessly put on the best performance anywhere, Kuro was exhausted from the battle on the wall. He wanted a place with a solid base where he could run and take time to recover from the damage.

"Ah, is it a game of tag this time?"

With a laughing voice, Mishakuji followed him. He jumped through the garden that smelled of grass and water even though it was on top of a skyscraper.

They faced each other again in front of the high-story mansion overlooking the pool and matched swords. The sharp sounds of metals colliding with each other resounded repeatedly, and the colors of his special abilities burst out and light flickered.

"Kuh... how about this?!"

He jumped and swung down with all of his might, the sword being repelled by Mishakuji.

Undaunted, Kuro stepped forward and launched several attacks. Mishakuji chuckled and turned to the side as he inspected Kuro's movements.

"Yes, yes! Do more, Kuro-chan!"

Responding to Kuro's fierce attacks, Mishakuji let out a happy voice. He couldn't imagine him in the middle of a serious confrontation.

Mishakuji jumped up to imitate Kuro's full body attack earlier and swung his sword down from above.

"Cut like that!"

Kuro's leg fell with a heavy thud. However, he managed to accept it and continued to wield his sword.

"Are you still going to practice?"

When he was young, Kuro often pestered Mishukaji, who was his older brother, into giving him lessons. On the rare occasions when he played with him, Mishakuji would say things like, "I can't help it, so I'll play with you.", and by playing Kuro with his ever-changing swordsmanship, he brought out Kuro's strength.

It was nothing but humiliation to remember such a thing at that moment, but Mishakuji's appearance in front of him looked the same as when he was "playing with" the young Kuro.

A cut was repelled by Mishakuji, and his torso was split open. He kicked him in the side as if he was scolding him. He held his breath, but raised his sword ready for a follow up attack. He barely managed to land the blow, he landed on his sword, but couldn't stop the momentum and went flying. He crashed into the parapet and blood dripped from his cut mouth.

"It's a show I've seen before."

Mishakuji looked at Kuro and smiled slightly.

He many times he challenged Mishukaji and many times he was defeated.

(Am I still the same as back then? Even if my body grows, even if I think I've honed my sword skills, even if my feelings for this person change from respect to anger, will I be able to reach this person with my sword?)

Kuro wiped the blood from his mouth.

Mishakuji looked at Kuro with clear eyes and returned to reverse his 'mistakes'.

+++++

Neko was in a good mood.

Due to the special move "Cat Mountain" (she had just thought of the name of the move), which made a giant beckoning cat appear, all the enemies screamed and ran away.

Neko sat cross-legged on the beckoning cat's head, looking down at the escaping rats and laughing out loud.

"Nyahahahaha! Where are you?"

(Neko is strong and amazing. She helps the unreliable ones like Kurosuke and Gusaku, he rescues Anna and finds Shiro. When he finds Shiro, he will praise me for doing a good job.)

Remembering that moment, Neko became so moved that he let out a sigh of relief.

"I found you! Stupid cat! Stupid cat!"

A shrill voice was heard from above. When Neko looked up, a large green parrot was flying overhead and cursing Neko.

Annoyed, Neko raised both her hands into fists.

"Nyaa! What an idiot!"

The parrot, as if amused by Neko's anger, circled above her head, repeating "Stupid cat! Stupid cat!" and spread its wings.

The parrot's body glowed green.

"Thunder!"

At the same time as the parrot screamed, its wings sent a green electric discharge that rained down on the entire room. Neko reflexively turned into a kitten and used the springs in his body to jump higher than the parrot to avoid electric shocks.

The electrical discharge that poured out melted and obliterated the beckoning giant cat made by Neko, like cotton candy in hot water.

Neko kicked the parrot in the back, which laughed triumphantly: "Ah, ah, ah!"

It would be a shame if a cat lost to a bird. She had to show him who was stronger.

Neko grabbed the parrot and they both fell down and fought. She punched him powerfully with her paws and ripped out many feathers.

Cats are dominant in close combat, but parrots have the advantage of being able to fly. Taking advantage of Neko's gap that was taking the mount, he jumped and rose to a height where Neko's claws couldn't reach him.

Above the menacing Neko, the parrot's body was again filled with green electricity.

"Kotosaka Thunder!"

"Nyah!"

Electricity rained down on Neko's body without even avoiding it this time.

The electrical discharge that Kotosaka emitted had the power to cancel out her supernatural powers. The Green Clan is characterized by the "modification" skill, but Kotosaka's technique is to "modify what has been modified to its original state", and the skill that was being demonstrated was instantly nullified.

But of course Neko didn't know. However, she wondered if it wouldn't hurt to be exposed to lightning, and then she looked at her body and realized that she had gone from being a kitten to a human girl.

A disturbing air rose around Neko.

"This woman!"

"Shit!"

The people who had been shaken by the gigantic beckoning cat raised angry voices and surrounded Neko.

"Nyahahaha..."

In the bloodthirsty atmosphere, Neko tried to fake a smile.

Furthermore, even if she wanted to use a special move, Kotosaka was flying in the sky as she braced herself for the electric shock that canceled her extraordinary ability.

One of them in a green helmet swung the wooden sword he was holding. Neko cowered to escape.

However, before the wooden sword swung and before Neko kicked the ground, flames rose up.

"Nya?!"

A bright red flame suddenly appeared and ran around Neko.

Neko bristled, but the flames didn't try to burn her. Instead, it spread as if protecting Neko and burned the surrounding green helmets. Unable to bear the heat of the fire, the helmeted men withdrew.

"Dammit, what is it this time?!"

"Wow! It's bad to be here!"

The flames burned more and more violently, and thick whips of flame that moved like living creatures spread out and attacked the surroundings, like a series of large snakes raising their heads. The helmeted people panicked again, screamed and ran away.

"Another intruder! Another intruder!"

Kotosaka yelled that and flew away into the flames to somehow avoid turning into a grilled chicken.

Neko stared. In the place where Neko was, it was not hot at all, it was warm and cozy. In that warm place, she saw people running with their butts literally on fire. When the flames died down, the room was empty and silent.

Neko snorted. Amid the lingering odors of the burning fire, she caught another scent. She didn't like that smell; it smelled like "tobacco".

"Who?"

Neko's nose sniffed that it was coming from behind the hall's pillars and she stared at him with her multicolored eyes.

+++++

Anna put her hand to her chest. In order to suppress the existence of the things that made noise in her, she thickened the shell that surrounded her. Rejecting the interference from the outside, she directed all of her response abilities inward and monitored the small flame left by Suoh inside her so that it wouldn't change.

At that moment, before the Slate, Anna was left alone, trapped in a cage that looked like a bird cage. Of the Green Clan members who kidnapped Anna, one disappeared under the ground with Yata, while the other broke the window and jumped out with Kuro. Anna bit her lip thinking about them, who were probably still fighting.

Broken glass, part of the destroyed building, and weapons that might have belonged to the Gold Clan members who defended themselves during the attack were scattered. The "Slate" stored under the floor continued to exist with a sense of presence in a world different from the human conflicts that were taking place above it.

Perhaps because she was brought to that place, the shock that shook Anna became so strong that it was hard to ignore.

Anna remembered the words that she had exchanged with Kusanagi before leaving for Germany.

Kusanagi got into an argument with Yata for stating that the bar would be temporarily closed, and that night Kusanagi was drinking bourbon alone in Suoh's room.

Kusanagi said as she sipped the bourbon that Suoh and Totsuka used to drink together to celebrate the new opening of the bar.

"Anna. I'm still overwhelmed with sentimentality. That's why I'm going to leave this liquor here as well."

"Are you ready to go?"

"Oh. It's time to walk. However..."

Kusanagi stared at the bottle with the deep amber color of sake in his eyes, filled with soft determination.

"When things calm down, I'll sip this bourbon slowly until morning. In this bar where they made a racket like fools."

Kusanagi decided to walk and left. It was mostly because of Anna.

But Anna stayed still.

"Mikoto..."

She said the name of someone who was no longer with her.

For Anna, Suoh's red was the only color that colored Anna's colorless world, and more than anything, it was a beautiful sign for Anna.

Anna, who had lost him, lost her way. Kusanagi left for her, Kamamoto got injured, Yata fought and even Kuro and his friends, who shouldn't have anything to do with her, got involved.

Anna's eyes, which could see through everything, now saw nothing.

Suddenly there was a roar.

The door between the silent slabs was blown up, and the body of Yata, which seemed to have been attacked by the enemy, flew into the air.

Yata, together with the destroyed door, flew out several meters, spectacularly rolled on the ground and reached Anna's cage.

"Misaki!"

When Anna raised her voice, Yata, frowning in pain, smiled tightly and stood up. He quickly grabbed a stick-like weapon next to him that he believed belonged to a Gold Clan member, and used it as a staff to stand up.

"Hehe... Don't worry. It's just a handicap."

"Then go to hell with that handicap."

A person dressed as a ninja appeared from the ground behind Yata and said that.

"Misaki!"

Anna yelled in a small, shrill voice. Yata had already taken a lot of damage. With "King" Suoh gone, the flames inside Yata are no longer as strong as before.

The ninja wielded a sword. Yata turned around and tried to defend himself, but it was too late.

At that rate, he would lose.

The flames that were flickering unsteadily inside Anna flared up a lot for a moment.

Then came the flames.

The ninja, who was about to attack Yata, was attacked by a fireball, and the ninja immediately backed away from the attack and jumped back.

The fireballs flew one after another, and the ninja managed to dodge them with his ninja agility.

"Who are you?!"

Right after the ninja yelled, Kotosaka jumped between the flagstones as he avoided the flying flames.

"Kwah! Another intruder! Another "Homura" intruder!"

Just as he was about to say that, the flames attacked him again, and Kotosaka, who was about to be burned, yelled "Kwah!" and fled to heaven.

Certainly, Anna directed her gaze to the source of the flame.

Leaning against the wall between the flagstones, a tall man was standing.

He deftly twisted the zippo around with one hand and played with it, observing the situation between the flagstones through his sunglasses with calm eyes.

Seeing him for the first time in half a year, Anna's eyes moistened slightly.

"Kusanagi-san...!"

"Hi. Long time no see."

Yata's wide-eyed voice called out to Kusanagi, who responded calmly. With a relaxed gesture, he took a cigar to his mouth and lit it with his zippo. He took a deep breath and placed his pistol-shaped right index finger in front of the still burning zippo.

"Bang!"

Along with a playful voice, the zippo's flames immediately swelled and flew like countless fire bullets.

The ninja fled from the incoming flaming bullets, or repelled them, and as if cornered, he descended to the edge of the hallway and landed on top of the corner pillar.

Yata looked at Kusanagi with a dumbfounded face.

"Why are you here...?"

After saying that, Yata hurriedly frowned, as if he remembered how angry he was with Kusanagi.

"Why are you here now?"

Kusanagi walked towards him, stopped next to Yata and smiled.

"Just like you, I came for the princess."

Yata showed doubts whether he would get angry or not, and after all, his face broke as if he had lost his strength.

"What are you saying?"

"Glasses! Sexy glasses! Oh, it won't open!"

Before he was aware of it, Neko walked over to Anna's bird cage, she grabbed the grate and shook it to let Anna out.

"I won't give you that girl!"

The ninja clinging to the top of the pillar lunged at Neko. He approached with a swift, insect-like movement that defied gravity, wriggling through the air and swinging its blades.

Neko jumped back in a hurry and Yata slid into her place as if to replace her.

A loud sound rang out, and the ninja's blade and Yata's staff collided. Yata repelled the ninja with all his strength with a staff loaded with supernatural powers.

"That's my line!"

Barking, Yata launched a lunge. Although it was impromptu, the fact that he had obtained a weapon and the arrival of a reassuring comrade gave him momentum and pushed back the inferiority he had before.

The ninja somersaulted like an acrobat, flying far from Yata and landing on the rubble.

"Since 'Homura' Number 2 came out, you are nothing anymore."

"Yata-chan, can you give me a little time?"

Kusanagi interrupted Yata's words with a light tone and turned his foot towards the cage where Anna was locked up. "Eh?" Yata's eyes widened.

"Hey, Kusanagi-san!"

"This is an important talk. Please, Yatagarasu."

Kusanagi smiled at Yata, who was dumbfounded for a moment, but immediately a fearless smile appeared on his face.

Yatagarasu. Yata is proud of his name as the vanguard of "Homura".

"Heh, if you call me by that name, I can't fail."

Yata raised his voice as his fighting spirit burst into flames all over his body.

"Come on cosplay ninja! The Yatagarasu from 'Homura' will blow your mind!"

Yata's angry voice, the sound of erupting flames, and the sound of weapons hitting each other resounded.

However, Anna was no longer able to even watch the Yata battle.

She held onto her chest and crouched down in the cage.

It was disconcerting. The flames swayed inside her body. The flame left behind by Suoh. Although Suoh left, the "Homura" flame inside Anna still had a fever. It was something very important, but it threatened to change at any moment.

A while ago, when she saw Yata in crisis, her heart shuddered and for a moment she opened the shell she had wrapped herself in. Perhaps because of that, the power that was shaking Anna became stronger.

What shook Anna kept calling to Anna.

Still, Anna couldn't make up her mind and she was cowering.

A shadow fell over Anna, who trembled with her head bowed.

When she looked up, Kusanagi was looking at Anna with his arms resting on the lattice. Kusanagi's expression was calm, but the anguish could be seen beneath it.

"I can't stand it. I wanted to do something about it, so I went to Germany to do some research, but it seems I didn't make it in time."

"Izumo..."

When he found out about Anna's situation, it was Kusanagi who told her to fight. Kusanagi kept running trying to find a way out for the bewildered Anna.

However, Kusanagi's eyes held a painful determination that he could only fight so far.

"Even if I keep looking away from you, nothing will come of it. Anna... no..."

Kusanagi's lips moved slowly and he called Anna by a name that wasn't Anna.

CHAPTER 3: AWAKENING

She woke up feeling the gentle breeze.

Anna was lying on the bed and she stared out the window. She could see the blue sky with passing clouds. A soft warm breeze was blowing from the other side of the window.

(What was I doing?)

She thought to herself with a cloudy head. She looked out the window for a while feeling like she was in a dream, and she slowly moved her gaze around the room.

She saw Totsuka sitting on a chair next to the bed. Totsuka leaned forward and looked at Anna delicately.

"Tatara...?"

"Good morning Anna."

Totsuka said that with a voice that was warm and soft like the wind blowing in the room.

Anna was surprised and deeply relieved that Totsuka was there.

Totsuka had a kind expression on his face, but when he saw Anna, he frowned a little sadly.

"Are you okay? It seems painful."

Anna narrowed her moist eyes and smiled.

She was fine. The pain was gone. If Totsuka was smiling there, everything should be fine.

"I'm fine... I think I had a bad dream."

"Bad dream?"

Totsuka asked back and slowly got up from his chair.

Anna wanted Totsuka to laugh at the dream she had, so she started talking.

"Tatara... you were killed. Mikoto avenged your death and died."

Totsuka walked over to Anna's side and sat on the edge of the bed. Lying on the bed, Anna looked at Totsuka's face.

"So they all collapsed..."

Anna's words stopped there and were gone. Because Totsuka looked up with a sad and apologetic look on his face.

As she looked at that expression, the fog in Anna's head slowly cleared away.

She didn't want to understand.

"That is not right."

Sadness welled up at the words he spoke, and Anna pulled her face down onto the sheets so as not to let Totsuka see her terrible face.

"The dream is... this way..."

She was crying at the end of her words.

"Yes."

Totsuka's voice calmly affirmed reality.

"I'm sorry."

His voice was soft and gentle. Nothing had changed or was going to change. Time no longer flowed in Totsuka.

She could only describe it as a dream, but it was clearly different from the dream she had while she was sleeping. Anna's responsiveness, which had been closed off for so long, was now wide open. Anna's helpless soul was probably responding to the "Slate".

Connected to the "Slate", in a place beyond time, life and death, the souls of people who should never meet again were in contact.

She heard footsteps coming up the stairs.

Anna raised her face in surprise and raised half of her body.

Gotsun. Gotsun. And with the rhythm and footsteps she knew, the sound of footsteps came closer.

"Anna."

Totsuka touched Anna's shoulder.

"It's good to talk."

The sound of footsteps got closer and the person appeared. Illuminated by the dim light that came in through the window, his appearance was revealed.

Red hair.

A red flame hidden in her body.

The one who gave her monochrome world a beautiful red.

"Mikoto."

Tears welled up in Anna's eyes this time because she couldn't stop herself.

Anna jumped out of bed and ran. She hugged him with her whole body. Suoh didn't hesitate and caught Anna.

"You are an idiot, Mikoto!"

Before she knew it, Anna was yelling at him.

Those were the words that she couldn't say when Suoh was alive. Without saying a single word of resentment or words to hold it back, she just looked at Suoh's back.

But right now, anger, sadness, frustration, and love were overflowing like a torrent from inside Anna. It was as if the frozen emotions had suddenly melted.

"Ah."

Suoh accepted Anna's passion with one word.

"You are terrible!"

"Ah."

A low, deep and sincere voice.

Anna clung tightly to Suoh's body. Anna could feel Suoh's temperature much higher than hers. It was the temperature Suoh lived in, the kind side of the hellfire inside Suoh.

She could only count the number of times she felt Suoh's body temperature like this, but the temperature certainly made her feel nostalgic.

And that temperature continued to glow red inside Anna.

Anna gently released his body and looked at Suoh.

"But Mikoto..."

Anna put both hands on her chest that kept Suoh's warmth.

"Your red is still hot."

Suoh breathed out slowly with a smile.

"That's not my red."

Suoh's previous intensity disappeared and he looked at Anna with calm eyes.

"It's your red."

Anna stared at Suoh.

She reflected Suoh in her eyes so she wouldn't miss anything.

"It's your color."

Tears appeared in Anna's eyes again, blurring her vision, but the beauty of the red that Suoh possessed did not change.

Anna smiled without tears in her eyes.

"Mikoto's red... My red."

For Anna, Suoh's red was a salvation.

She is color blind, she is unable to recognize colors other than red, and because she was born a Strain, she has the ability to see things she doesn't want to see and hear things she doesn't want to hear. She even lost her family.

Even so, the reason why Anna was able to live without despair was because Suoh showed her a beautiful color of red, coloring her world.

Strong, terrifying, and most of all, beautiful, this red-lit place was the place where she believed she would live.

The color she thought was gone that day was still inside her.

"I wonder if I can use the power of this red to protect."

Memories of Suoh and Totsuka in the old HOMRA bar flashed through Anna's mind.

(Your power is not to destroy, but to protect.)

Totsuka said that to Suoh, who feared that the power contained within him would one day destroy everything.

In fact, Suoh used that power to protect Anna many times.

Anna will never forget the warmth of Suoh's red that enveloped her.

Suoh looked back as if he trusted the answer. When she turned around following Suoh's eyes, Totsuka was smiling while he was sitting on the couch.

"Anna, you won't let a nightmare remain a nightmare."

The reality was like a bad dream.

She lost someone important to her.

However, that's the past they lived to the fullest, and Anna has to draw the sequel herself.

Now Anna is very aware of the terror of that color red. Scared, restless, and unsure what to do, she stayed in her shell the whole time.

Now, she wanted to face that red.

Suoh knelt down and made eye contact with Anna.

He wasn't the type of person who would go out of his way to bend his knees for someone else's sake, so it might have been the first time she'd exchanged glances with Suoh on an equal footing like this.

Suoh's big hand touched Anna's face.

Anna tilted her face and let Suoh's hand touch her cheek.

"Anna."

She closed her eyes, feeling it deeply, and opened her eyes.

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"Even if you continue to look away, nothing will come of it. Anna... No..."

Kusanagi called Anna by a name that wasn't Anna.

"Red Queen."

Anna opened her eyes.

She accepted the interference from the "Slate" that she had always feared and rejected.

A sea of boiling fire flowed towards Anna.

A fierce flame that could reduce anything to ashes.

Anna's world was dyed red with the color of flames.

Anna whispered those words into her mouth.

"No Blood..."

The disk below Anna glowed the same red as the sea of flames that was born within Anna.

"No Bone..."

The sea of fire inside Anna overflowed and gushed out of Anna's body.

"No Ash!"

Anna spread her arms. The birdcage-like cage that had trapped Anna opened like a toy.

A mass of magma-like flames erupted from below Anna, and turned into waves that filled the space between the "Slate". The air filled with heat and the windows shattered at the same time.

A flame like a rough and stormy sea. The flame of destruction hated to be bound and ran free, trying to burn everything to the ground.

It sought destruction and combustion with the same nature of the flames that the "Red King" had.

But Anna would not allow it.

(This is my red.)

Anna remembered the words that Suoh gave her at the intersection of souls in her dream.

(I don't want to destroy anything with this flame. But I can't sit still here anymore. I'll stop crouching alone in a birdcage while the people important to me are fighting. This red, this flame, is to take me where I must go outside the cage.)

That thought caused the flame to take shape.

The flames sent out from inside Anna took the shape of wings and spread widely across Anna's back.

The flames that came out like a belt from the wings swirled in the hall and shot up into the sky.

Anna looked up at the sky with glowing red eyes. With responsiveness released, she saw the scene in the sky.

On the rooftop of the Mihashira Tower, which pierces the sky, the space distorted and red light burst out.

The Green Clan swordsman and Kuro, who were fighting on the rooftop, looked up at the sky with surprised faces.

A red Damocles Sword emerged from the burst of light.

The Damocles Sword had a shape that looked like flames and a red rose with thorns.

Even though it is the same red Sword of Damocles, it is a new sword that looks completely different from Suoh's rough and crumbling sword.

Anna closed her eyes. She sensed many narrow paths leading everywhere from Anna. It was the thread that connected the scattered friends of "Homura" and Anna's power as the "Red Queen".

Is it because Anna still has Suoh's flames on her body? Or does she have something to do with the inherent ability to respond? Anna, who deployed her Sanctum, was also connected to the clansmen of Suoh, the former king.

"Amazing..."

Yata muttered in amazement.

Yata and Kusanagi, who are next to her, are also connected by threads. Beneath Yata's left clavicle and Kusanagi's right scapula, there are marks of "Homura". It hadn't given a fever since Suoh had left, but now it glowed red with Anna's power.

Along the connected thread, Anna's flames flowed towards the two of them. Anna certainly felt that the two of them had accepted it, which was different from Suoh's flame. It was salvation for Anna, who had ascended the lonely throne.

"The power is overflowing!"

Yata roared and sent flames from his body that matched Anna's flames. Yata's eyes became brighter, and he took on a lively expression that seemed to be that of the vanguard captain of "Homura", and turned his hand around. The makeshift weapon that he picked up immediately moved like a part of Yata's body, and the color changed due to the flames that moved from Yata's hand.

"Come on!"

Riding his skateboard, he approached the ninja who was shocked by the awakening of the "Red Queen". The ninja stepped back and threw many kunais. Yata swung his staff and knocked down all the kunais, then kicked the board and jumped high.

The flames helped Yata to jump, and he jumped at the ninja from above, as if he was riding a wave of flames.

"Urah!"

Yata's club, which he swung downward, grazed the ninja. The ninja staggered back.

Seeing that he had created a large opening, Yata clenched his fists as soon as he landed, and from a low position, he applied force and pulled himself up with all of his strength. Yata's fist went straight for the ninja's face and sent him flying.

His brain seemed to shake with all his might, and the ninja lay silent on the ground.

"Anna!"

Yata smiled triumphantly and looked back at Anna. But that smile faded when he saw Anna.

Anna was about to be swung by the flames that she emitted. The flame wings that spread out on her back also swayed, and she lost her balance and wobbled unsteadily.

It was too much power for a single person to hold in her body. Suoh had always experienced the conflict and depression of having that power.

Anna had glimpsed Suoh's nightmare by interacting with him.

In the nightmare unfolded the spectacle of a city that had been burned and destroyed by a fierce flame that swallowed everything.

(Anna, you won't let a nightmare remain a nightmare.)

She thought of Totsuka's words.

She thought of Suoh's body temperature as he called her and touched her cheek.

A flame that likely turns into intangible heat that breaks its form and swallows everything indiscriminately.

Sweating, Anna shaped it again as it tried to riot.

That was not a devastating fire.

It was meant to take off.

Even if it was lost or broken, it would revive and take flight.

Anna roared. Like a little beast, howling at the sky.

The flickering flames converged on Anna's body and took shape again. Following Anna's will, that became a giant bird to shape Anna's prayers.

A bird made of fire flapped her wings and flew into the sky. It burned the ceiling of the room and went up to heaven.

A bird of bright red flames circled Anna's Sword of Damocles in the sky.

But if she let her guard down, the flames were about to become another formless and ferocious force of destruction. Anna concentrated with all her might to calm the flames.

"Anna!"

"Are you alright, Anna?"

Kusanagi and Yata were calling her. They and Anna are already deeply connected. Not only that. Suoh and Totsuka were also inside Anna.

(This terrifying and incredibly beautiful red will become your ally.)

Anna put her hands on the floor and turned her face down.

Beneath the transparent floor, she stared at the enshrined "Slate".

"I'm not going to lose to you."

She sweated and closed her eyes.

She prayed that it would come back.

(My red, my power. Don't go on a rampage alone. Come back.)

As if responding to Anna's despair, the giant flame bird flapping his wings slowly disappeared as if it had melted into the red Sword of Damocles.

The flame of the "King" seemed to have settled inside Anna somehow.

"Anna! Are you okay?!"

Kusanagi and Yata knelt down next to Anna and looked inside.

Yata frowned in concern and it looked like Kusanagi was about to cry, Anna took a deep breath and smiled.

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The scar on his back was troublesome.

He wanted to give himself first aid and run to Mihashira Tower, but he couldn't do it right because of his back. If he moved wrongly, pain would shoot through him and his wound would open up.

He might have to go to the hospital, but he didn't want to get stuck in long-term treatment.

Kamamoto was struggling to bandage himself alone in the HOMRA bar when a cold bell rang and the door opened.

"Kya?!"

"Ah?!"

Kamamoto was startled by the sudden shout and raised his voice.

Looking up, Kamamoto's childhood friend Nunohashi Ayumi was standing pale at the entrance of the bar.

"Riii-chan?! What happened that you have that wound?!"

Ayumi came closer as she turned around with a crying face.

"Why are you here?"

"My aunt was worried that Ri-chan and Anna would suddenly disappear from the store while yelling and screamed..."

Ayumi is the daughter of the Nunohashi Meat Shop next door to the Kamamoto Liquor Store. Since she is a member of the family, if something happens in his parents' house, the neighbors will hear it immediately.

"When trouble happens, don't come here carelessly because it's dangerous... Ayumi, I'm sorry, but bandage the wounds on my back tightly!"

"What are you talking about?! Please go to the hospital properly! Or rather, an ambulance..."

Kamamoto grabbed Ayumi's hand as she tried to get her PDA. For some reason, Ayumi's cheeks turned red.

"Please, Ayumi. I don't have time right now. Anna is in danger."

"Anna-chan...? What happened to her?!"

Ayumi's eyes wavered. While Anna was staying at Kamamoto's parents' house, Ayumi also became fond of Anna. Kamamoto had seen many times how she tried to take care of Anna by pretending to be an older sister, as if she had a younger sister.

"Anna was kidnapped. It's not a case that can be solved by calling the police. Yata-san and others are going to help now, but... I want to leave as soon as possible."

When he begged and insisted again, Ayumi looked up at Kamamoto with teary eyes and clenched her mouth to hold back the tears.

"Please sit down."

Ayumi took the bandage and said that.

"I'll help you."

Kamamoto sat on the chair at the counter and turned his back to Ayumi. He heard a gasping sound as Ayumi stepped back, facing the wound.

Ayumi is like a little sister to Kamamoto. Even Kamamoto didn't want to show her such an injury and force her to take care of it, but at that moment he couldn't heal himself.

As Kamamoto wanted, Ayumi wrapped him in a strong bandage to hold his wounds.

"Thank you! Now I can..."

Kamamoto quickly got to his feet, feeling that he was able to move thanks to his wound being firmly bandaged.

Immediately, his head felt dizzy and he fell to his knees on the ground. He was anemic.

"Ri-chan! After all, it's unreasonable! It's okay, just take a break!"

He borrowed Ayumi's hand and lay down on the couch. Kamamoto closed his eyes on the couch because he couldn't resist in a situation where his eyes would fly white if he moved wrong.

After resting for a while, his condition gradually calmed down, but he felt like crying out of embarrassment. When he thought about Anna's situation, his body didn't move as he wanted, and he was frustrated.

"Ugh... I'm sorry... Anna..."

Ayumi knelt down by the couch and rubbed Kamamoto's shoulder gently.

"Ri-chan. What does Anna-chan mean to Ri-chan?"

In response to Ayumi's question, the image of Anna, who was always by Suoh's side, and the image of Anna, who swallowed everything and stayed strong even after Suoh left, came his mind.

"Anna is a girl who was loved by a person for whom I had great respect. Of course, if something happened to Anna, who is important to all of us, I wouldn't be able to face Mikoto-san or Totsuka-san even if I were to die. Even though Kusanagi-san trusted me and left it to me... I had to protect her..."

Towards the end of his words, instead of talking to Ayumi, that became an internal monologue. He closed his eyes and prayed wholeheartedly for Anna's safety as he clenched his teeth in rage that he couldn't move.

At that moment, Kamamoto felt a glowing heat in the center of his body.

He opened his eyes and jumped. Ayumi let out a surprised voice.

His entire body was buzzing. In the center of his body, the flame that Suoh gave him, the flame that had grown weaker and thinner after Suoh disappeared, it now recovered its heat and attracted Kamamoto. And for some reason, he felt Anna's strong presence.

"Ri-chan?"

Ayumi looked at Kamamoto curiously.

He remembered that sensation of heat welling up from the depths of his body. It was very similar to Suoh's feeling when he deployed his Sanctum. The core of his body burned and power surged, and a particular part of his body emitted strong heat.

Kamamoto got up from the sofa, turned his back on Ayumi, and lowered the buttocks of his pants.

"Kya?!"

Ayumi yelled again.

"Ayumi! What's going on with my right butt?!"

"What do you mean?! Is something like a flame-like pattern glowing red?!"

"On second thought...!"

Kamamoto's "Homura" "mark" is on the right buttock. It's a tattoo-like pattern that appeared on his body upon receiving Suoh's installation. In Kamamoto's case, when he found out that he had appeared on his right buttock, he remembered very well how Suoh had a very confused expression on his face. It was a bit disappointing that Kamamoto didn't show it off as easily as Yata.

The "mark" on Kamamoto's right buttock was now red hot.

Kachan, the doorbell rang again.

"Eh?!"

The voices of two men shouting at the same time resounded. It was Akagi and Bando, the main members of "Homura", who opened the door of Bar HOMRA. The two of them screamed at the image of Kamamoto showing the girl his exposed buttocks.

"What are you doing, Kamamoto?! Hurry up and put that dirty ass away!"

Bando yelled that. For some reason, Ayumi, who had been shown her buttocks, protested.

"Ri-chan's butt isn't dirty!"

"What are you too?!"

With confirmation, Kamamoto pulled up his pants and pushed his buttocks away, then turned to look at Akagi and Bando.

"Both Shohei and Bando, you guys felt that and came here?!"

"During this time, you seem to have engaged in an unhealthy act of showing your buttocks to a girl?!"

"San-chan, calm down. Kamamoto-san's "mark" is on his buttocks, so it can't be helped. It's not bad, but I guess it's like that."

Akagi regained his composure first, calmed the excited Bando and rolled up the left sleeve of his own clothing. The "mark" on Akagi's arm was also emitting a red glow.

"We were finishing up our part-time job at the burger joint over there, but suddenly, it felt like Mikoto-san enlarging his Sanctum, and the "mark" got hot..."

As Akagi spoke, Bando calmed down and nodded solemnly.

"If the three of us feel the same, maybe other people are feeling the same. What the hell is going on?"

After Bando said that, a bit confused, he moved his eyes confidently.

"Also... for some reason, along with my "mark" getting hotter, I felt Anna's presence... Hey, how is Anna now?"

Kamamoto bit his lip once and opened his mouth to talk about what happened and what could happen now.

+++++

Munakata looked towards the red Sword of Damocles that appeared above the Mihashira Tower.

"No way..."

Beside him, Fushimi, who was also looking at the sword, muttered so. He was thinking of a person inside the Mihashira Tower who might have the ability to manifest that sword. Or maybe there was something more direct about Fushimi, the former Red Clansman.

Munakata was not surprised. Looking at the newborn sword without a single scratch, unlike the crumbling red Sword of Damocles that he knew, he even felt emotion.

In front of Munakata's line of sight, a bright red column of fire rose atop Mihashira Tower. The sound of destruction reached the ground with a slight delay.

The rooftop of Mihashira Tower was destroyed by fire, and a giant bird made of red flames flew out of the room, probably from where the "Slate" was.

The bird circled around the Sword of Damocles.

The high-temperature flames that burn everything to nothing was something Munakata had felt up close and faced many times. The beautiful firebird that danced around the sword was surely the same temperature.

However, the firebird did not reveal its ferocious beastlike appearance that Munakata was familiar with, but instead melted into the side of the sword.

As the members of "Scepter 4" held their breath and looked up, an explosion with a special power dyed in green light occurred on the rooftop of Mihashira Tower.

Debris flew conspicuously and nearly fell to the ground. It was like the aftermath of the battle of the green clan leaders who had occupied Mihashira Tower.

"What's going on up there?!"

"Kuh, it's going to collapse!"

The besieging members of "Scepter 4" were agitated. Awashima immediately called out with a voice that sounded like a cold whip.

"Evacuate while deploying the shield! Fushimi!"

"I understand! Back up twenty meters and re-stretch the siege net!"

Leaving command of the members to the capable vice-commander and number 3, Munakata himself remained motionless even under the rain of debris, never taking his eyes off the Sword of Damocles floating in the sky.

He kept looking at the red Sword of Damocles wielded by someone other than Suoh Mikoto.

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"You're getting excited, right?"

Looking towards the red Sword of Damocles and the fire bird that appeared flying from the center of the roof garden, Mishakuji said that cheerfully.

"The appearance of the red Sword of Damocles, which should have been missed, is accompanied by a gigantic flaming bird. Fufu, it's beautiful. I also want to add some more flashy production."

A flash of green light went through "Ayamachi". Mishakuji felt the supernatural power exploding from him.

Until then, Mishakuji, who had been able to defeat Kuro using only his swordsmanship, began to display supernatural powers. The green sparks crackled violently and flashed brightly. His skin went numb just standing next to him.

Kuro instinctively took evasive action before thinking of anything.

At the same time, Kuro jumped back and Mishakuki brandished a bomb-shaped sword.

A sharp cut and a green electric discharge destroyed the place where Kuro was.

The scaffolding collapsed and debris flew conspicuously, and only the aftermath blew Kuro's body like a paper doll, falling into the hole made by the firebird earlier.

(How unpleasant. Get back to your feet and evacuate.)

Mishakuji laughed at Kuro, who was looking for a place to retreat as he fell, and his gaze wandered.

"Are you still running away? Kuro-chan!"

Mishakuji was free even in the air, as if he had been released from gravity while Kuro was falling.

Kicking the falling debris into the air, he changed direction, he wrapped around Kuro and struck him in the back with the hilt of his sword.

The air in his lungs escaped with a groan from the impact of being hit by a car, and Kuro's body, which had been falling, was thrown up.

Kuro desperately regained his balance in the air and struggled out of the helpless state of the fall. He kicked the debris off to the side and grabbed another piece of debris. As if trying to swim in zero gravity, he chose a large object among the countless debris flying through the air, used it as a foothold, and jumped onto it, reaching the wall and planting his feet on it.

"Kuro-chan, I'll tell you why you're definitely not as good as me."

"Stop talking nonsense!"

He got a little used to running up the wall. Kuro ran through the wall looking for a way to counterattack.

Kuro kicked the wall to challenge Mishakuji, who easily crossed the rubble in midair as if he had the ability to fly.

"My sword carries everything I have."

The two swords collided on the falling rubble. The supernatural powers repelled each other, causing flashes of light. Kuro's hands were numb from the weight of Mishukaji's sword, and he went flying without even being able to stand up due to his poor position.

Mishakuji's chase fell on Kuro's body one after another.

"Joy, anger, sadness, amusement, fear, confusion, surprise, excitement, pride, honor..."

With each word, Mishakuji's "Ayamachi" hit Kuro. Kuro could no longer block the sword with his sword, and all he could do was protect his body with his powers and reduce the damage so that it wouldn't be fatal. A sword imbued with each and every one of Mishakuji's emotions struck at the defenseless Kuro.

Kuro's body crashed to the ground with a blow that seemed to hit from above. Although he managed to get into landing stance somehow, he couldn't control the momentum and slipped on the ground as he kicked up clouds of dust.

"And love!"

Mishakuji lightly landed in front of Kuro and said that.

Kuro, still on his knees, managed to raise his head and looked at Mishakuji.

Zehyu, zehyu, his throat was ringing eerily. Thanks to the supernatural ability of a Silver Clan member with excellent defense left behind by Shiro, he somehow managed to keep himself physically satisfied, but the damage rebounded to the center of his body.

Still unable to stand up, he just shifted his gaze. The place where Kuro fell was a place like a machine room that protruded from the atrium between the "Slate". Looking towards the center between the "Slate", Anna, who was supposed to be trapped in a cage, was free and was able to see a red field that protected Neko from the falling debris.

Mishakuji also looked down between the "Slate" and said without even looking at Kuro.

"But your sword is empty. Miwa's beloved sword, "Kotowari", is like a makeshift stick. So of course, it's not as good as my sword, which dances with everything I have on it."

Kuro tilted his head. Kuro no longer had the courage to retaliate or the words to respond. In this battle, Kuro has not been able to land a single hit on Mishakuji.

A feeling of helplessness and exhaustion shook his spirit. The accumulated damage on his body was also great. The only reason he wasn't fatally injured was because Mishakuji was "playing around". Kuro's sword was not enough.

"Don't lose, Kurosuke!"

Neko's voice resounded loudly among the "Slate".

Kuro raised his face in surprise. When he looked at her, Neko was clenching her hands tightly into fists and looking at Kuro with her eyes straight at him.

"You will meet Shiro again!"

Kuro's shoulders trembled.

(Shiro.)

The hand that gripped the handle of the "Kotowari" gained strength and trembled.

(My sword is empty. What is my sword for?)

He closed his eyes and clenched his teeth as if to bite into his weakness. Everything that had happened so far flashed through his head like a flashlight on.

Miwa who taught Kuro how to use the sword.

Mishakuji treating a young Kuro who pesters him for lessons.

People who called the adult Kuro "Kuro-kun".

Miwa entrusting "Kotowari" to Kuro along with his will.

And...

The school island in winter. To end the conflict, Kuro knelt before Shiro, who acted as the "Silver King".

(Kuro Yatogami, as a member of the clan of the First King, Adolf K. Weismann, I promise to dedicate my life to the King.)

Kuro wanted to help Shiro. He wanted to help him, who is a talkative and unreliable man, but who loves people and works for the people who are important to him.

After being sworn in by Kuro, Shiro relaxed his expression after widening his eyes.

(You really are very formal. You don't need that kind of ceremony to be friends.)

Shiro said that and extended a hand towards Kuro who was on his knees.

(Come on.)

As he took hold of Shiro's hand and stood up, he felt Shiro's power flowing from the held hand. He was a warm and gentle force.

After receiving a fragment of that power that he had for many years, Kuro decided to once again wield its power for him.

Kuro slowly opened his eyes.

His hands stopped shaking and his mind, which had been turbulent until now, had calmed down.

(What am I wrong? That's right, it's okay that this sword is empty. This sword and I...)

He stood up and placed "Kotowari" in the scabbard.

A sword that had swung with a troubled heart, he returned it to its rightful place in the scabbard and held it up in front of him.

"I am a member of the clan of the First King, the "Silver King", Adolf K. Weismann. My name is Yatogami Kuro."

He declared that and took a surprised stance.

"I will never use this sword for my benefit. This sword is for the purpose of opening the way for my "King"! And it is wielded to protect my "King"!"

Kuro's sword is different from Mishakuji's.

He didn't want to be there. He was there for what he believed in, and for his "King".

Kuro himself became a sword.

Mishakuji looked at Kuro's face, narrowed his eyes, and smiled.

"Fufu, you finally have a pretty face... Then, I have to deal with you as a vassal of the "Green King"."

Mishakuji turned his sword around and took a stance.

Mishakuji's face changed. A bright and feminine face with a constant smile was suffused with sharpness and emanated a solemn voice.

"Mishakuji Yukari, ready."

He announced in a low, colorless voice.

A tense period of silence passed. Kuro maintained his unannounced stance and heightened his nerves as he looked at Mishakuji. He didn't miss it for a single moment. In order to insert the point of the sword into the point of the needle and open a path, he looked at Mishakuji with all his heart.

Mishakuji was the first to move. He ran straight to Kuro.

Kuro kept watching Mishakuji's movement until the last minute. Mishakuji's sword danced. Although he carried all kinds of emotions from Mishakuji, he was ruled by Mishakuji's strong ego and drew a trajectory that didn't falter one bit.

Kuro took a strong step forward and unleashed a sword with all of his might.

A cross. A glow.

The two blades intersected and shook violently.

A strong shock ran through Kuro's arm and body, but Mishakuji's body was also swept away by the momentum of Kuro's sword. He spun to kill the momentum and turned to face Kuro.

Kuro was kicking the ground hard and jumping.

His mind remained calm.

The fear, anger, anxiety, and hesitation were gone, and with the will to pave the way, he put all of his strength into his blade.

Kuro's sword, which glowed in a single color, drew a straight trajectory in contrast to Mishakuji's colorful sword.

Mishakuji's eyes were fixed on Kuro's sword.

To the extent that he made him think that he would be unprotected by the sword as he was, looking with admiring eyes, when the sword was about to hit him, he smiled happily and showed "Ayamachi".

The swords swung with supernatural powers.

The powers of the two collided violently, causing an explosion.

Kuro, who was concentrating all his nerves on reaching for the sword, received the aftermath of the explosion all over his body and flew away.

He managed to land on the ground between the "Slate" where Neko was, but fell to his knees and vomited blood.

"Kurosuke!"

Neko cried out in concern. Kuro endured the pain and raised his face.

Mishakuji, who emerged from the rising dust, did not appear to be damaged, but the sleeve on his upper right arm was cut and bleeding.

"The current sword was reasonably beautiful."

Finally, only the tip of the sword reached him.

(But what are you going to do now?)

Behind the hesitating Kuro, Anna stepped forward.

Kushina Anna. Probably the earlier red Sword of Damocles and the giant fire bird that went through the rooftop between the "Slate" and the roof garden. Was he going to borrow power from her? But...

Before Kuro could give an answer, he heard the sound of wings from above, and a parrot swooped down calling him "Yukari! Yukari!"

It's the bird that Mishakuji brought. However, things were different from before.

As soon as he landed on Mishakuji's shoulders, the sound from the depths of his beak changed from a parrot-like bird's voice to a fluent male voice.

"Are you ready, Yukari?"

From the parrot's mouth, there was little intonation, but a voice flowed with a deep presence.

"Please come back now. I'm going to go deeper than this. The person in front of you is no longer a clansman to be captured. She is the Third King, the "Red Queen"."

"But Nagare-chan. I won't be satisfied if I go home with my head down."

Mishakuji naturally chatted with the parrot and looked at Anna with eyes tinged with sword swallowing.

"Now that she's just born and can't handle her power, I think that will be enough."

In response, Kuro grabbed his sword again. Neko also instinctively protected Anna with her hands.

The man who speaks through the mouth of a parrot replied without hesitation.

"I was already able to fulfill my purpose to a certain extent. Let's stop doing something so declining."

Kusanagi was in a position to protect Anna, looking at the parrot on Mishakuji's shoulder.

"Nagare, Nagare Hisui, "Green King"!"

Yata's eyes widened at Kusanagi's words.

"What?! This bird?!"

"No, the bird is just a mediator... The Green Clan put a lot of work into things."

"As expected of the Reds' commanding chief, you are well informed. I admire you."

The parrot's emotionless eyes looked around the group and fixed its gaze on Anna.

"It's not a face-to-face meeting, but it's nice to meet you, new "Red Queen". I am the Fifth King, "Green King" Hisui Nagare. As an apology for leaving early, let me give you a birthday present."

Tension coursed through Anna's body.

Mishakuji lifted the edge of his lips amusedly.

"Or maybe it will be a parting gift. Show me how lucky you are not to die at this level, Kuro-chan."

Mishakuji turned on his heel and started walking. Kuro stretched out his hand to reach him.

"Wait!"

"See you soon."

Mishakuji bowed gracefully. At the same time, Mishakuji's body was engulfed in a strong green light that burned his eyes, and Kuro inadvertently turned around.

When he opened his eyes, Mishakuji and the others were gone.

Yata clicked his tongue.

"Dammit, he got away!"

"Though we lost them this time. For now, let's withdraw immediately."

Kusanagi was about to say that, but he frowned and stopped his words.

"What?"

The surrounding debris became electrified, and a green current erupted. Neko yelled "Meow!"

"My hair is tingling!"

Neko's long hair stood on end, like an animal charged with static electricity.

Anna looked up at the sky.

"Above!"

Above Anna's Sword of Damocles, a dark cloud slowly began to swirl.

It was not an ordinary cloud. With unnatural movements, black clouds flowed onto Mihashira Tower from all directions, spinning like coiled snakes and turning into a large black mass.

Green thunder flickered disturbingly in the dark clouds.

Kusanagi's face twitched.

"This is his present?"

The thunder within the black clouds grew violently and swelled with enough energy to light up the night sky.

"The Raiko technique?"

He heard a crackling voice through a broken voice changer. The ninja who had fallen into the rubble staggered to his feet.

Yata grabbed the ninja's necklace, who seemed to know why.

"Oh, damn, what's going on?!"

The mechanical face mask covering the ninja's face fell off. From inside, the face of a young woman appeared, and Yata rolled his eyes.

"It is a technique of creating lightning by gathering the energy of the lower members of the clan."

"Ah, a woman!"

Yata's face turned red, and as if he had touched something hot, he released her lapels and jumped back.

With a grim expression, she looked up at the thunder that was gathering in the sky and kept growing, and muttered.

"But why of this magnitude? Could it be that a group mission was dispatched that did not show itself to the intrusion unit?"

Hearing that murmur, Kuro remembered his knowledge of "Jungle".

When he was under Miwa's tutelage, he learned the characteristics of each clan. The Green Clan had a strange shape that set it apart from other clans.

Clan members who haven't even seen a "King" and a "King" who never appears. Normally, to become a member of the clan, one has the proper determination and a sense of belonging to the clan led by the "King". But "Jungle" doesn't have that. Inferior clan members join "Jungle" simply by installing the "Jungle" app without even being aware that they belong to the clan.

They act by participating in game-style missions as users of the application, not as members of the clan under the command of the "King". As expected, the people who participated in the Mihashira Tower raid were a limited number of people who were quite

deep, but there were countless people who had just installed a popular game application. But what if you issue what the ninja calls a "collective mission" and gather that power?

It is said that the "Jungle" app began to become popular in Tokyo when Kuro was a high school student. It is not known how many users there are at the moment, but if they are trying to suck the power out of each one of them and throw it to that place, how big will it all be?

The thunder that gathered in the sky above the Mihashira Tower created a green sphere that was bigger than the Sword of Damocles. Dazzling green electricity violently exploded into a giant plasma ball-like body of energy, seeking release.

The ninja made a bitter face.

"Is he planning to finish us off? Shit."

"Hey, what the hell are you talking about? Ah!"

In front of Yata, who was looking at her, the ninja's feet glowed green, she sank to the ground and disappeared.

"Hey, let's run away quickly!"

Neko looked at Kuro and said that. Kuro groaned as he kept his eyes fixed on the sky.

"We won't be able to escape in time..."

If it was just Neko, she could escape with Kuro's supernatural ability. But it was impossible to carry that number of people.

The ninja said that he planned to end everything, but the "Green King" doesn't care if the remaining Green Clan members inside the tower get involved. Is he thinking of dumping everything ruthlessly and without remorse?

The energy body that turned into a huge sphere split.

The released energy fell like lightning as thick as a building.

Anna raised both palms to the sky.

A red Sanctum was opened. A dome-shaped defensive field appeared directly above the Sword of Damocles.

It appeared and blocked the attacking green beam.

"Anna!"

Kusanagi desperately called out to Anna.

Even if it was being blocked by a red field, the green beam did not disappear.

Red power and green power collided head-on, mixing green stream and red sparks in the night sky.

Anna stared at the sky, continuing to catch the thunder falling like a violent waterfall.

Sweat dripped down her white skin. Her expression distorted in agony, her teeth clenched, but Anna's glowing red eyes still pointed at the thunder as if she were eating it.

Kuro couldn't do anything but keep looking at Anna's profile.

Even when he lost Shiro, he was told that he was an obstacle except for the "King" and was not allowed to go with him. Even now, he gritted his teeth at how small his body was that he could only let such a young girl carry him on her back.

Kusanagi and Yata were also looking at Anna with pained and frustrated expressions.

"This time I will protect you all!"

Anna, who had never had anything more than a calm voice and few words, said that in a shouting voice.

Raiko's technique clash and Anna's red field. Anna desperately controlled the power of the "King" she had just obtained to maintain a defensive field, but the endless thunder began to show fluctuations.

The red field, which was continuously struck by intense lightning, scattered sparks and flickered. Anna's hand, which was raised toward the sky, trembled.

Anna, who endured with all her might, closed her eyes tightly. However, from that expression, power suddenly leaked out.

Anna's consciousness was flying. Kusanagi stretched out his arm and caught her body, which was about to fall backwards.

At the same time that Anna's consciousness was cut off, the red defensive field that Anna had deployed had disappeared.

There was nothing to block it, and green thunder fell to swallow it all up. Neko clung to Kuro's arm.

Kuro kept his eyes on the thunder of destruction. The last fight he could take, various actions revolved around his head. But before he could take action, something happened.

The space next to the red Sword of Damocles was distorted into blue. From there, another sword appeared.

The Blue Sword of Damocles.

A blue field unfolded as if to envelop the two swords lined up side by side. As soon as the green ray touched the blue field, it froze and crystallized as if time had stopped.

Kuro and everyone were holding their breath as they looked at the scene.

A giant blue lightning crystal cracked and shattered.

Kuro stared in amazement at the particles of beautiful blue light falling down.

The unconscious Anna slowly raised her eyelids and looked at the red and blue swords floating side by side in the sky.

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"Many supernatural reactions have occurred in various places in Tokyo! That energy is gathering in the sky above Mihashira Tower!"

A crew member in a vehicle equipped with a probabilistic drift measurement instrument reported in a shrill voice.

That was also confirmed visually. If they looked around, they could see countless thin green lights of supernatural powers rising up into the sky.

A few streaks could be seen in the sky in the distance, but from a closer distance one could see the green electricity coming from the PDAs placed by the spectators just outside the regulation line, rising as if it were being absorbed by the sky. The people holding their PDAs didn't even seem to notice. The power of general "Jungle" users who knew nothing was being sucked, albeit in small amounts.

Dark clouds hung over the sky that had absorbed countless thin thunderclaps, and those clouds gathered and swirled over Mihashira Tower with tremendous force.

Within the black clouds that had turned into gigantic black lumps, the energy gathered from all sides charged up with a disturbing crackling sound.

Understanding the situation, Munakata began to run.

"Captain?"

He heard someone call him, but he didn't have time to answer.

He ran up to the Mihashira Tower, ignored the entrance and started running up the wall.

"Captain?!"

Another team member let out a more surprised voice than before.

Munakata dressed in a brilliant blue supernatural light and kicked the wall of Mihashira Tower made of glass. He jumped several meters in one step and ran against gravity.

The green light that gathered in the Mihashira Tower grew violently in an instant, forming a gigantic sphere made of lightning.

Munakata kept running on the wall. One story of the tower was straddled in about one step, aiming for the top of the sky-piercing Mihashira Tower.

In the center of the dark clouds, a clump of green energy flashed brightly, exploded, and became a thick bolt of lightning that struck Mihashira Tower. It was as if the green dragon was about to swallow the head of the Mihashira Tower.

Munakata turned into a single blue light and slid down the wall. Beneath Munakata's scuffed shoes, the window glass shattered.

A red Sanctum was deployed at Munakata's destination.

A thick green beam was blocked by a red defensive field centered around the red Sword of Damocles. However, the thunder did not disappear and continued to attack the red field.

The forces of green and red collided violently, and electricity and sparks scattered vividly.

Munakata continued running while he watched the scene.

To Munakata, the Third King's red was a familiar color.

A fierce, free-spirited color that disturbs the order Munakata is aiming for, and disturbs even Munakata himself. It was frustrating for Munakata, but when he erased that color with his bare hands, he was seized with an indescribable sense of loss.

Munakata felt a strange sensation at the bright red in front of him.

It was certainly the color of the Third King, but the new flawless red Sword of Damocles, and the beautiful Sanctum, shaped to protect them, were different from that man's.

The pure red field struggled to withstand the green lightning. However, it started to wobble due to the fierce unstoppable attacks and finally disappeared.

At this time, Munakata had reached the rooftop.

He raised his right hand, palm up.

He expanded his Sanctum. The blue Sword of Damocles appeared.

He directed the power of blue, which governs order, against the falling green thunder and ruled it.

It was the first time he had used a large amount of power since he had fought Suoh in the incident last winter.

The green power absorbed from people by the "Green King" mechanism and converted into energy in the form of lightning stopped in order.

The giant thunder turned into a blue crystal.

The crystals, which turned into sky-piercing pillars of ice, cracked and shattered.

Munakata slowly lowered his hand, which was pointing to the sky, and pushed up his slightly misaligned glasses.

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After Munakata ran up the wall of Mihashira Tower and fended off a large thunderclap that was thought to be a trick from the "Green King", the Green Clansmen escaped from inside Mihashira Tower.

Judging from the accusing voices saying "They abandoned us.", it seemed that the "Green King" had aborted the operation. Did they feel like they were left behind in the Mihashira Tower because the mission they had been sent had been called off, or maybe some realized that they too were nearly killed by the giant lightning at that time?

In any case, there was one thing for Awashima and the others to do.

"Capture the members of "Jungle" that came out of Mihashira Tower! Don't let anyone escape!"

Responding to Awashima's order, the soldiers surrounding Mihashira Tower began to move. The members, who were frustrated by the long wait, enthusiastically captured the members of "Jungle" one after another. Here and there, the clash of the weapon of "Jungle" and the saber of "Scepter 4" desperately roaring resounded.

Aiming at the point where the siege net of "Scepter 4" had weakened due to battle, capture, and transportation, a group of "Jungle" jumped out, seeming to be timing the escape.

Awashima swung her saber as he stopped the member trying to follow him.

"Eh!"

With a flash of spirit, she swung the sword widely vertically and horizontally, and slashed with a special ability. The grid-like cuts closed in on the party trying to escape through the gaps in the siege netting, closing in on them with a single blow.

The power was moderated to the extent that it did not inflict deep wounds on the body, but those who were hit by Awashima's lattice slash fell to the ground and stretched out. Immediately, the members of "Scepter 4" rushed over, grabbed them, and dragged them to the transport vehicle.

"Lieutenant. It has been confirmed that Mishakuji Yukari escaped."

Akiyama hurried over with his saber lowered and whispered in her ear. Awashima hesitated for a moment.

It was Mishakuji Yukari's power that allowed that group to occupy Mihashira Tower despite the "Golden King" being absent. Most likely, he himself had neutralized all the "Rabbits" inside the Mihashira Tower.

He was a dangerous person to let him go, but...

"Considering the opponent's strength, there are no personnel left to pursue him at this time. We can't do a deep search."

"I agree with that."

Instead of Akiyama, Fushimi, who was behind Awashima, spoke up in a hoarse voice.

"It's frustrating when you get thrown around a lot and all you catch are little disposable fish that don't know anything. I'm out of here for a while."

In that case, there was another person who did important work besides Mishakuji Yukari. A person who bypassed the security of Mihashira Tower and the blockade line of "Scepter 4" with his peculiar ability.

"I trust you."

At Awashima's words, Fushimi silently turned on his heel.

Awashima raised her voice and gave instructions to the members while she looked up at the sky.

Two Swords of Damocles, red and blue, floated above the Mihashira Tower.

(Actually, I didn't want the Captain to use the power of the "King", but...)

Thinking so, Awashima shook her head slightly, realizing that she had faced the anxiety within herself.

(If it's hard to bear the burden of killing the "King", it doesn't get any better than that.)

She remembered Kusanagi's voice over the phone.

Awashima seized the hilt of her sword without giving much thought to the task at hand.

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Douhan Hirasaka slipped through the siege of "Scepter 4" and ran through the city to get as far away from Mihashira Tower as possible.

She ran into the alley and caught her breath.

"As expected of the "Blue King" to calm down the lightning technique. They helped me by accident."

"Scepter 4" was chasing down and capturing the escaping low-ranking clansmen. She should disappear now.

In her heart, Hirasaka thought that the return on that business was small compared to the risk and effort. "Jungle" is a good customer, but due to her gambling temper in everything, Hirasaka, who pursues an efficient business, often did not get along.

She didn't trust or believe in him to begin with, so she didn't even think that she was betrayed when she was about to be killed along with the enemy.

She activated a special ability and went through the wall she was leaning against. She decided that it would be better to escape through the wall repeatedly and go into hiding.

However, when she was half submerged in the wall, several knives flew towards her and pierced the wall that Hirasaka was trying to break through.

She took a breath and withdrew. She couldn't go any further inside the wall. When she pulled her slumped body out of the wall, there was a man in a blue uniform, blocking the alley. A person whose details she knew. Saruhiko Fushimi, a member of the "Scepter 4" Special Forces Corps and the number 3 in command.

Fushimi turned the knife around like a handcuff.

"I'm not incompetent enough to allow the same trick over and over again."

"Scepter 4" is good at defending and capturing with the control field. Using the throwing knives as a go-between, Fushimi should have put a field on the wall that Hirasaka was trying to break through, preventing her from breaking through.

Originally, Hirasaka's tactics relied on surprise attacks that made the most of walls. Hand-to-hand combat isn't her forte, but since her opponent uses a throwing knife that blocks Hirasaka's technique, she had no choice but to create openings even in hand-to-hand combat.

Hirasaka drew the two swords from her back.

Fushimi put his hand on the saber.

"Fushimi, ready."

The saber was gently drawn, and he took the basic stance of standing it vertically in front of his chest. Fushimi smiled slightly.

Hirasaka launched a preemptive strike. She lowered her body and attacked, aiming for the legs and swinging the sword. If they stop moving, she could escape in the meantime.

Fushimi jumped slightly to avoid Hirasaka's sword. A saber swung down from the sky. Hirasaka raised the other sword and struck back.

She turned her body around and threw a kunai. However, all of them were struck down by a saber with brilliant blue supernatural power, and the saber swung in a fluid motion.

With a sharp sound, Fushimi's saber and Hirasaka's sword collided. The metallic sound of intersecting blades resounded several times, and Hirasaka's legs fell off.

Hirasaka's body was damaged in the battle with Yata, a member of "Homura". Fushimi's slashing attack couldn't be met with the one-handed blade, so she crossed the blades of both hands to catch the saber that was being swung downward.

Fushimi suddenly smiled a little.

The saber was quickly drawn, and the next moment she felt a strong impact on her torso.

"Gah!"

She heard the sound of her powered suit armor breaking, and before she knew it, Hirasaka was lying on the ground.

Her arms were twisted behind her and held her.

"Green Clan member, I will ask your name during the interrogation. You will be detained under Article 1 of the Anomalous Phenomenon Management Act."

Fushimi's hand pulled out Hirasaka's PDA from inside the powered suit.

Losing ownership of the PDA, the power that had been lent to her by the "Green King" disappeared from Hirasaka's body.

In "Jungle", only Mishakuji Yukari and other true executives possess supernatural powers in the true sense of the word. The other psychic powers possessed by the other members were only temporarily lent by the "Green King" through the "Jungle" app. Hirasaka, who is a top-tier player, is no exception.

(The loss of the special ability that is a work tool in the containment of the person. This time the business lost a lot.)

Hirasaka thought so with a cool head and closed her eyes.

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The capture of the low-ranking clansman of "Jungle" who were fleeing from Mihashira Tower was almost complete, and a transport vehicle was launched to pack them up and send them to the holding place of "Scepter 4".

Munakata, who returned to the ground, stood in front of the entrance of Mihashira Tower, thanking Awashima for properly leading the capture and Fushimi for capturing the excellent ninja from "Jungle".

They still had a lot of work to do. After the unprecedented incident in which the territory of the "Golden King", which is the cornerstone of this country, and the "Tokijikuin" Golden Clan, which clearly could not resist the attack of "Jungle" at that time, were attacked, it was an urgent task to find out what to do with the "Slate" managed by the "Tokijikuin".

But before that, Munakata had the responsibility to welcome a new "Red King" as the "Blue King". Even more so at that time that "Tokijikuin", which had that responsibility, did not work.

After lining up the special forces and waiting, Anna Kushina, a girl who can be said to be Suoh's memory, Izumo Kusanagi, the staff officer of "Homura", and Misaki Yata, the vanguard captain, appeared from the depths of Mihashira Tower.

Anna Kushina stepped on the broken glass and left the building. She stopped her feet when she noticed "Scepter 4" waiting in two lines.

After all, there was an unmistakable sign of a "King" in her.

It houses the fire of hell, a symbol of violence, disorder and destruction. However, he did not feel any danger of tingling. He heard that she was originally a girl with a strong responsiveness. She perhaps knows better than anyone how to interact with the "Slate". Or, because she was close to Suoh, was she already familiar with that flame?

Anna stopped and looked in that direction. Awashima raised her sonorous voice and issued an order.

"To the new Third King, everyone, draw your swords!"

The main members of the Special Forces drew their swords one after another while raising their names, and drew their swords vertically towards the sky in front of their chests.

The flower path of the sword was done. Fushimi and Awashima also grabbed the hilt of their sabers.

"Fushimi, ready."

"Awashima, ready."

They created a path to welcome the new Third King.

Yata showed a disgusted look, as if he was careful of the line of bare swords. Kusanagi controlled him lightly with his hand.

Undeterred, Anna walked straight down the path of the sword. Kusanagi and Yata also stepped behind her to protect both sides.

When she got to the front of Munakata, Anna stopped and silently looked at Munakata.

It was a place to meet the "King", but they were acquaintances. Kusanagi casually greeted Awashima, but was ignored. Munakata also knew that Kusanagi had been in Germany for a long time and that Awashima had cooperated with him.

Yata hesitantly tried to thank Fushimi, but Fushimi ignored him as well. In fact, Munakata was convinced that it was the "request for support through another channel."

In the midst of that, Anna did not look away and looked directly at Munakata.

"Thanks for your help."

After a few moments of silence, Anna offered a simple, childlike thank you.

"If the "Red Queen" was in her prime, my help would not have been needed."

Munakata responded with a slight smile and immediately hardened his expression.

"However, it is true that the "Green King" Hisui Nagare is a presence to beware of. He is a creepy man."

In the end, even after all those incidents, the reason why the "Green King" withdrew so easily was the unforeseen situation of a new "Red King" awakening. It is very likely that he was able to obtain the desired information from the Mihashira Tower data bank. Whether it was the whereabouts of the "Silver King" or the "Golden King", or information about the "Dresden Slate", that was just a preliminary skirmish.

There was no doubt that the "Green King", who had been buried underground for a long time, was about to start something.

From far away, he listened the sound of running footsteps.

Anna's gaze turned in that direction, and a definite joy appeared in her expressionless expression.

Running towards them were Rikio Kamamoto of "Homura" and seven other members of the Red Clan. They seemed relieved when they recognized Anna's appearance, and Kamamoto, who was in the lead, relaxed his expression with a face that looked like he was about to cry.

"Anna... I'm glad you're safe...!"

Yata raised his fist with a smile towards the members of the Red Clan.

"You guys are late!"

They must have sensed the awakening of the "Red King" and rushed over. Munakata looked at the scene of the Red Clan with interest, wondering if there was such a substitute for the "King".

Anna smiled and nodded at her comrades who ran up, then she looked to Munakata.

"Please, take care of the rest."

"I understand."

Considering Anna's words as a request from the "Third King", who was part of that incident, to deal with the situation and transfer command, Munakata raised his voice to declare it to everyone around him.

"With the agreement between the Third Queen and the Fourth King, from now on, Mihashira Tower and the "Dresden Slate" will be under the control of "Scepter 4", and full authority will be entrusted to the Fourth King Reisi Munakata. "

Anna nodded.

After that, her gaze fell on the saber attached to Munakata's waist.

Sensing the meaning of her gaze, Munakata drew the saber from his waist and held it horizontally in front of Anna.

"Yes. I killed Suoh Mikoto with this."

There was no disturbance in Anna's behavior. Looking at the saber with a transparent expression that showed no sadness or anger, she gently placed her hand on the scabbard.

Even though she is a girl, when the "Red Queen" touched the saber of their own "King", the members of "Scepter 4" who were standing were wary and noisy.

For the members of "Scepter 4", sabers are a way to control their own abilities. They cannot be carelessly touched by other people, and it is not unreasonable to be alert against the "King" of the Red Clan, which can be said to be an enemy clan.

Responding to the vigilance and hostility of the "Scepter 4" members, the Red Clan members also showed signs of agitation, but Kusanagi placed a hand on Yata's shoulder to calm him down and winked at him. As Fushimi clicked his tongue, the members of "Scepter 4" held back with his hands.

Anna gently moved her hand over Munakata's saber and stroked it.

As Munakata watched the little white girl's hand slide over the scabbard, memories of that winter day came back to him.

Suoh laughed with a kind face that he had never seen before, as if the possessed spirit had fallen.

A red Sword of Damocles that fell and crumbled.

The feeling when Munakata's saber pierced Suoh's heart.

The weight of Suoh's dying body leaned against him.

Munakata blinked and his eyes widened. Anna withdrew the hand that was touching Munakata's saber.

"It was what Mikoto wanted. I don't hate you, but I don't want to thank you either."

What Anna told him was an honest feeling that couldn't be repaired. Munakata smiled and nodded.

"Alright."

He remembered what Suoh muttered like a moan, it was the words for that girl, Anna Kushina.

(Sorry, Anna. I can't show you that pretty red anymore.)

But she was no longer just an observer.

She became the Third Queen, the "Red Queen", emitting a bright and dangerous red.

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Leaving "Scepter 4" and approaching with the hasty companions, Kamamoto knelt on the ground and placed his hands on Anna's shoulders.

"Anna... I'm sorry. I couldn't protect you..."

Anna shook her head and put her hand on Kamamoto's arm.

"No. I'm the one who's sorry. Are you okay with your injuries?"

"This kind of injury is nothing...!"

Bando raised his eyebrows at Kamamoto's tears.

"This guy who used to hang around in the bar often says that! Listen to me, Anna! This guy, Kamamoto, brought a girl to our holy place, the HOMRA bar, she healed his wounds and then he showed her his butt."

"San-chan! That's good now!"

Akagi soothed Bando with a concerned smile.

"By the way, why are you here?"

At Kusanagi's question, Chitose and Dewa looked at each other.

"We saw the red Sword of Damocles in the sky... I felt the flame within me, which had been weakened for a long time, whispering."

"I wanted to know what was going on, so I went to the HOMRA bar with Chitose."

Fujishima and Eric also exchanged glances before opening their mouths.

"I was in the room with Eric, but when Mikoto-san opened his Sanctum, I felt something similar, so I went to the bar with Dewa and the others."

"Then, we heard the story of Kamamoto-san."

"Knowing that Anna was in the Mihashira Tower, we came running."

Kusanagi nodded and looked around. Anna also looked at the faces of each person who came. They all had a complex expression that was a mixture of relief, joy, and strong confusion that Anna was safe.

"Anna... have you become the "Red Queen"?"

As if he represented everyone, Kamamoto asked quietly.

"Hey! Anna, you were awesome! You're really cool and you even helped us out!"

Yata said proudly before Anna could reply.

Anna slightly relaxed her expression when she saw Yata.

In that place, Anna felt that Yata and Kusanagi accepted her flame without hesitation.

But not all did. For the members of "Homura", Suoh Mikoto should have been the only "King".

She couldn't become "Queen" of "Homura" just by being chosen by the "Slate". She wasn't sure if everyone in "Homura" would choose her, but even so, Anna was happy that everyone who had been laughing together at the HOMRA bar was there once again.

"I was called by the 'Slate' for a long time. But I was scared, so I pretended not to see, I pretended not to hear."

Anna put her hand to her chest.

"But I stopped looking away. The red Mikoto showed me will be my red this time."

Anna smiled as she looked at "Homura" over everyone's faces, each with her own expression.

"Thanks for coming."

Kusanagi put a hand on Anna's shoulder.

"Anyway, let's go home. Rest well now and let's talk about the future later."

Anna nodded once, then said, "But wait a minute.", and she turned away.

As if not to get in the way, she approached Kuro who was watching the situation from a distance, and Neko who was crouching next to Kuro and watching the procession of ants, looking tired of the situation.

"Many thanks for everything."

When Anna thanked him, Kuro shook his head.

"No. There was a course of events and my own personal reasons. Besides, in the end, we were the ones who saved ourselves."

Anna looked at Kuro and took out a red marble from her pocket.

"Take this."

Before handing over the marble, Anna wrapped her hands around it and put her strength into prayer.

The responsiveness that she had been shutting down for a long time blossomed even more after being awakened as "Queen".

She didn't know if that would work, but Anna transferred some of her sentient abilities and gently opened her hands so they could connect with their loved ones.

"This will be a talisman for Kuro and Neko."

Kuro looked at the marble in Anna's palm curiously, and obediently took it.

"I pray that you can find the person you are looking for."

"I appreciate it."

Kuro grabbed the marble and lowered his head slightly.

"Neko, let's go home.", He said as he said goodbye next to Neko. Before returning to her comrades, Anna once again looked at the busily moving "Scepter 4".

Munakata was alone among the members of "Scepter 4" who pulled out the people from "Jungle" who were still inside Mihashira Tower, carried out the injured, and handed them over to the emergency services. Munakata was standing still doing nothing.

Seeing him, an uneasy murmur passed through Anna.

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The "Red Queen" left, and only Munakata's blue Sword of Damocles floated in the sky.

Munakata was looking at his own sword.

He always had a hunch.

From the moment he took Suoh's life into his hands, he felt the feeling that he could no longer be a flawless "King" grew stronger little by little.

And now that feeling became a visible form.

A small crack went through Munakata's Sword of Damocles.

"The burden of killing the "King"..."

Munakata looked at that small wound and muttered.

"Let's take it and stand up."

Munakata began to walk. No matter what the circumstances, there was no cloud in the path of the "Blue King".

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Mishakuji Yukari walked while he hummed.

Kotosaka was flying to the side.

"You saw many interesting things at Mihashira Tower. It's a pity you didn't receive a direct memory."

Remembering the various beautiful things that he was able to see that time, he smiled.

"My cute little apprentice has finally started to grow. I witnessed the birth of the new "Red Queen"."

Kuro's sword that reached Mishakuji, and the power of the reborn "Red Queen" that soared into the sky in the form of a giant fire bird. Both were immature, but there was beauty in it.

There is certainly the perfect beauty of perfect things, but there is also the beauty of young shoots that make you feel the growth of the future.

And the distorted beauty when something that was supposed to be perfect is missing.

"The Sword of Damocles of the "Blue King"... I was able to confirm the status of it."

Mishakuji was looking at the blue Sword of Damocles as he left. He witnessed fault formation there, if only slightly.

Mishakuji laughed, spread his arms wide, and danced round and round.

"Fufufu, all the actors are here."

"Not yet, Yukari. We don't have a key person yet."

Hisui Nagare spoke through Kotosaka. Mishakuji looked at him sideways.

"That's right. Adolf K. Weismann. Nagare-chan, you are obsessed with him, the "King" from the beginning. We have to put him on top of this game board as soon as possible."

In the first place, the main goal of that operation was to expose the "Silver King".

Hisui Nagare claims to be a fan of the "Silver King". Nagare has extraordinary affection for the "Silver King", who discovered the "Slate", moved it, and dreamed an extraordinary dream like him.

"But the die is cast. The countdown to the real party has begun. Isn't it? My lord, "Green King"."

Kotosaka, who had the spirit of Nagare, landed on Mishakuji's shoulder. Mishakuji knew that Nagare was in a good mood just from the feeling on his cheek.

"Affirmative."

Mishakuji's lips also naturally lifted the corners of his mouth to create a smile.

"So? Were you able to get some results from the Mihashira Tower data bank?"

"That is also affirmative. As expected of the Mihashira Tower, which is the center of this country. It was a treasure trove of confidential information. Among them, there was also a clue about the "Silver King"."

"Oh, where is the "King" you're looking for?"

"The "Silver King" is in the Land of the Dead."

Mishakuji's eyes widened slightly. A giggling voice could be heard from behind next to Kotosaka.

"As expected of the "Golden King". To have concealed the existence of the "Heaven's" twin so perfectly."

There was joy deep within the flat way of speaking with little intonation. Mishakuji smiled at his master's good humor and said, "You're going to be busy from now on."

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Kuro and Neko returned to Gakuenjima after sunrise.

When he first went to see Kukuri, Kukuri seemed to be worried about them, and she was exaggeratedly happy for their return.

"Welcome back, both of you! I'm glad you're back. You said you'd come by later, but you didn't come back at night and I got worried."

"Sorry. We had several problems. We were late."

"Kukuri, I'm home!"

Neko yelled happily. For Kuro, that is now a place to return to, but for Neko, who has memories of living there with Shiro, Gakuenjima is like her hometown.

Kukuri was also invited, and the three of them had breakfast in Shiro's room. Kuro and Neko didn't have dinner yesterday. Calming down the hungry Neko, he stopped at the family kitchen in Shiro's room, cooked rice and grilled horse mackerel, he poured in bonito broth and made tofu and wakame miso soup.

After finishing breakfast, which was simple, but Neko and Kukuri liked it very much, Kukuri made herself a cup of tea after her meal. Neko was misbehaving and sucking on the fish bones while she played on the bed.

Kuro took out the red marble that Anna handed him and held it up in front of him.

"Kurosuke, what is that? Caramel? Spicy? Sweet? Tasty?"

"It's not food. It's something Anna Kushina gave me when we parted ways."

Kukuri also looked curiously at the small red crystal ball pinched by Kuro's fingers.

"What? A marble?"

"Yes. She told me to carry it as a talisman..."

Anna Kushina is a girl with a strong sense of sensitivity that the "Green Clan" had their eye on. He also heard that red marbles were used as a medium when she was taking full advantage of the ability to perceive.

That's what she gave him. He thought there was some kind of power put into it, but so far she seemed like nothing more than a normal marble.

As she stared, Kukuri who seemed to be interested approached Kuro and looked. Neko also rushed over and jumped onto Kuro's back with the momentum of the charge.

He tried to scold her so she wouldn't act violently in the room, but Neko clung to Kuro's back and stared at the marble, her wide eyes twinkling.

"It's Shiro!"

That's what Neko said with a happy, confident and bright voice.

Kuro jumped and looked at the marble.

Certainly some kind of image shuddered in the depths of the marble.

As Neko continued to look at it, the oscillating image formed what seemed to be Shiro's back, just as Neko had said.

Kuro's lips trembled.

"Shiro...! Where are you now...?"

A small back was reflected in the small marble.

Even so, Kuro was convinced that it was Isana Yashiro.

He's been looking for him for almost a year.

On more than one occasion he felt the fear that he was dead and that he would never see him again.

Now, with the help of Anna Kushina, Kuro and Neko are connected to Shiro by a very thin thread.

Kukuri, who was looking at the marble with Kuro and the others, muttered in a strange way, but with something that touched her heart.

"This person is... Shiro-kun...?"

The Shiro on the marble didn't look back. Neko waved her hand at the marble.

"Shiro! Hey, Shiro!"

"Shiro! Can't you hear me?!"

Kuro also yelled without hesitation. However, perhaps because the connection was one-sided, Shiro did not respond to Kuro and Neko's calls, and the image finally flickered vaguely, like the first time, and disappeared.

Even though the marble had returned to just a transparent red marble, Kuro and Neko continued to stare at it for a while. After a few seconds of silence, the two looked at each other.

In contrast to the stunned Kuro, Neko had a big smile on her face.

"Shiro, are you there!"

Neko said that happily.

"Ah..."

Kuro replied with a hoarse voice.

Surely that wasn't an illusion. It was only for a moment, but Kuro also felt connected to Shiro.

Shiro was alive.

"Kuro-kun, Wagahai-chan... right now... you two are important people."

Kukuri spoke with a somewhat dreamy voice.

"I only know about Shiro-kun from the history of the two of you, but for some reason, when I saw the reflection of him in the marble, I felt a strange nostalgia."

"I see. I'm sure he'll be able to get along with Kukuri. When he returns, please meet him."

Kuro smiled as he lowered his passionate eyes. Neko shook Kuro and said, "Let's go pick up Shiro!"

Kuro gripped the marble tightly to confirm the connection.

EPILOGUE: IN THE SCHATTENREICH

"Recently, my sister has often been working alone on the investigation of the "Slate" from a different angle."

When Kokujoji appeared in the lab, he asked Weismann, who was alone in front of the research materials, about Claudia.

"What is the other angle of investigation?"

"I don't know. I haven't heard it yet."

Kokujoji cast a stunned look from under his military cap.

"Brothers, research chief and deputy chief. Why don't you share the information correctly?"

"Well, these kinds of things happen to us a lot as brother and sister. We are both loyal to our own interests. When I want to investigate something, I investigate it only until I am satisfied, and when I get a certain number of results, I listen to the opinion of the another person."

They are brothers who have been working as researchers since their teens. They were used to that area. Kokujoji also seemed somewhat convinced and said, "Is that so?"

"She doesn't hesitate to involve me in researching her hobby. Things like testing the toxicity of a "new dish" my sister has researched and developed..."

"Ah..."

Kokujoji became somewhat distant.

Kokujoji, who inadvertently shared the ingredients sent from his hometown, sparked Claudia's sudden interest in fermented foods, which can be found in many Japanese dishes, and she began researching them. She would often invite Kokujoji to perform a demonstration experiment called a dinner where she would serve "new dishes".

It was Weismann's job to verify the safety of the "new cuisine", that is, the various fermented foods produced by Claudia's reasoning and experiments, using numerous reagents.

By the way, he only guaranteed safety, not taste.

"That kind of thing, when my sister rushes into her hobby, I follow her or help her, or rather, I am forced to act as an assistant or a slave."

A younger brother is no match for an older sister. Weismann spread his hands and shook his head, saying, "I'm here."

"But she will always be thinking of following you as you go."

Having said that as if it were natural, Weismann suddenly widened his eyes and then distorted his face to him.

"As expected of the Lieutenant. You are sharp."

When Weismann tends to get so caught up in something that his field of vision tends to be narrow, Claudia presents a different perspective, or she devises a way to get back when he gets stuck.

"The reason I can fully immerse myself in my research is that my sister is with me, which gives me a great sense of security."

Kokujoji had a half admiring, half exasperated expression on his face.

"Speaking of a complementary relationship, it sounds good, but you seem to be very spoiled. If Doctor Claudia is still investigating the "Slate" from a different angle, she may be worried about you who tend to dream. Don't give your sister too much trouble."

"Eh?"

Weismann pursed his lips.

"Oh, what are you talking about?"

In good time, Claudia stuck her face into the room. Kokujoji, who had always had good posture, stretched out his spine.

Weismann smiled and waved his hand.

"It's the Lieutenant's scolding. I tend to dream. The same thing happens to my sister who entrusts her dreams to the "Slate", right?"

"But surely Addy is too optimistic, right?"

"Your sister will soon become a Lieutenant."

Claudia turned to Kokujoji with an artificially serious look on her face.

"Thank you for your help, but please continue to take care of my dreamy little brother."

"Ah, yes. I'll do my best even if I'm weak."

"Heh~"

Claudia chuckled as Weismann puffed out his cheeks. Kokujoji slightly relaxed his cheeks.

"Lieutenant Kokujoji, can you take it easy today?"

"No. I have to go to Berlin again."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Then when you get back, let's have dinner together again."

Claudia smiled and Kokujoji bowed his head and replied, "With pleasure."

It was February 1945, two days before the Dresden bombing.

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The airship designed and built by Weismann was not the "Himmelreich", but a second airship of the same type.

Complementing "Himmelreich", the airship named "Schattenreich" was requisitioned by the United States after the war, but recovered by Daikaku Kokujoji and secretly transported to Japan.

After that, Kokujoji continued to hold the "Schattenreich" for a long time so that he could take off at any time. As a preparation in case of a problem with the "Himmelreich", in which Weismann was traveling. After the danger of the "Green King" became apparent, he took special care to hide its existence and never stopped maintaining it so that it could one day be used by Weismann.

Weismann/Isana Yashiro was in the "Schattenreich". In the "Schattenreich" communication room, he received a report from a "Rabbit" in Japan.

With a sigh mixed with frustration, relief, and regret, he raised his head. Outside the window, he was nearing the end of the night and had turned white.

Shiro left the communication room and walked down the corridor towards the bridge where Kokujoji was.

After being pierced by Suoh Mikoto along with the soul of the "Colorless King" that was trapped in his body on Gakuenjima, Shiro awoke inside the "Schattenreich".

Burnt in the flames of Suoh's destruction, the shrine collapsed and sank into the sea, leaving no trace of its existence, let alone its original form.

However, even though it was burned to pieces, Shiro was still thinking.

An existence that remained even after becoming only the soul of the dead body. If it had been Weismann, who had been afflicted by the despair of the past, surely the remaining

soul would have turned into a murky sea, and would have eventually scattered and disappeared.

But Shiro had decided not to be a bystander anymore.

—Older sister.

The end of the dream he saw with his sister remained.

—Lieutenant.

There was a responsibility that he let his friend carry on his shoulders.

—Neko.

There was a girl who innocently adored him and needed him.

—Kuro.

He was the Immortal "King", he promised to return without saying anything.

Thinking about the people important to him and thinking about what he had to do, Shiro's soul struggled for the first time to live.

In response to Shiro's will, the unchanging power of the "Silver King", which once overlapped with the destruction of the "Red King", worked, and the body of the shrine reconfigured itself while floating in the sea.

However, Shiro's body, which was floating in the open sea in a state of suspended animation, just as he was, would have turned into algae in the sea.

It was Kokujoji who was convinced of Shiro's survival, he found him in the vast sea by detecting a slight deviation from Weismann and took him to the "Schattenreich".

(You're still spoiled.)

After a long sleep, Kokujoji called for Shiro, who woke up in the "Schattenreich's" bed.

(It's been a long time. We haven't seen each other like this in seventy years.)

Shiro looked at the deeply wrinkled face of Daikaku Kokujoji, who was in his late nineties, with a strange sense of calm.

(Lieutenant, you're still the same.)

Those words naturally came out of Shiro's mouth.

It shouldn't have changed. Kokujoji, who was a fearless youth, had turned into an old man with white hair and beard. But Shiro certainly felt that way.

(No matter how old you are, you are stubborn and direct... Your sweet eyes haven't changed at all.)

His eye sockets had sunk in over time. But those eyes had the same light as those eyes that once scolded Weismann, looked in the same direction as Weismann, and never left him.

Shiro opened the door that led to the "Schattenreich" bridge, while he reflected on the memory of the day he met an old friend.

A wide bridge, similar to a corridor. The walls were carved by Dresden artisans and adorned with statues of goddesses.

A bed was placed in the center of the bridge. Multiple hologram screens hovered in the air above the head of the bed, and the vital signs of the owner of the bed were always displayed.

The owner of the bed was Daikaku Kokujoji himself.

After rescuing Shiro in that airship, he had become even weaker than when he met the awakened Shiro after 70 years.

The body, which was healthy even in old age, was becoming thinner, and the functions of the organs gradually declined. It was already difficult to speak.

The "Golden King", who had long reigned as the biggest and strongest "King", he was about to exhaust his life.

The reason why Kokujoji was in "Schattenreich" is not to rekindle his old friendship with Shiro. Feeling that his life was coming to an end, he chose that airship as his final destination.

Kokujoji Daikaku is a very large presence in this country and in the balance of power between the "Kings". As long as there are discomfort factors, it was decided that in the end he could not be found helpless on the ground.

Shiro looked at Kokujoji's face. He seemed to be sleeping peacefully now. He got out of bed quietly and stood in front of the window. The sky was whiter than before, and the clouds were tinged with dim light.

"What's up, Weismann?"

Kokujoji's voice echoed directly in his head.

Shiro was not surprised. Kokujoji, whose throat and lungs were already weak, used his supernatural powers to speak as usual in those days.

Shiro turned to Kokujoji and began to walk slowly.

"I think the dawn is near. This is a special seat."

Dawn a little earlier in the airship than on land.

"Isn't this a familiar sight to you?"

"Not really. No matter how many times I watched the sunset and sunrise, my world remained frozen."

He escaped and stopped time alone in the airship. Not only his body, which is changeless because he is changeless, but also his mind had become stagnant and days passed when nothing changed whether he slept or was awake.

Shiro narrowed his eyes and stared at the sky, which was gradually becoming clearer.

"But now I can feel the light start to move again."

"Sunrise... the beginning of a new world, huh?"

Shiro lowered his eyes and gave a slight self-mocking smile.

"I'm relieved that my friends also managed to meet the same sunrise."

The attack on Mihashira Tower. The Green Clan, who seemed to be searching for the whereabouts of the "Silver King", caused an incident involving "Homura", Kuro and Neko. According to the previous report from "Rabbit", the Green Clan withdrew, but "Tokijikuin" suffered a lot of damage and it seems that they took away the confidential information that was handled in Mihashira Tower.

While such an incident was taking place, Shiro could only be in the sky away from Japan.

"If I can't go save them because I'm hiding, I'm disqualified as "King"."

"After I picked you up with a reconfigured body, it was my instruction not to return to Japan. Don't worry about it."

Shiro walked over to the bed Kokujoji was lying on and sat on the edge.

"You've kept me away from the "Green King", right? Don't worry about me, Lieutenant. It seems he found out about this airship through the Mihashira Tower, and the time for recreation is over."

The sky was getting brighter. Fate turned around.

"Everyone is on the move again."

Shiro looked at his hand.

It wasn't his real hand; it was the hand of a teenager. From the moment he became that hand, Shiro's time, which had stopped, began to move again.

"Ever since I saw your dead body, I had a feeling that this would happen. I understood because I am the "Golden King" who controls fate. The things that exist now will change... no."

"Will finish?"

When he said that predicting Kokujoji's thoughts, he felt a hint of a wry smile from Kokujoji.

"I think you will be forced to take care of the rest."

"Is different!"

He unintentionally raised his voice and looked at the lying Kokujoji again.

"Lieutenant, you shaped the dream that my sister and I had. Using that "Slate", I couldn't have done anything scandalous, trivial, good or bad... You made my dream come true."

"That is also different."

A withered, hoarse voice shook the air. Shiro widened his eyes.

Although it should have been difficult for him to speak, Kokujoji spoke softly, but his throat trembled as he explained his thoughts.

"It's the dream of the three of us. That's why I made it come true."

He had an impossible dream.

In the midst of a cruel war, his goal was to create a world where everyone could be happy by researching the "Slate", which had enormous potential.

He was often scolded by Kokujoji for being too optimistic.

Claudia must have been worried about her younger brother, who tended to have narrow vision due to his obsession.

Still, the scenery that the three of them dreamed of was surely the same.

A world where bright light would shine beyond the dark ages.

"Weismann... What a beautiful new world."

The sun was beginning to peek beyond the sea of clouds. Pure white light shone from the golden sun.

Kokujoji watched the dazzling spectacle.

"Yes."

Shiro nodded silently.

"I once dreamed of a view like this."

Kokujoji's sweet eyes, which have never changed, shone in the sunlight.

"Yes."

Suppressing his trembling voice, Shiro gently nodded once more.

"It's a shame to close your eyes..."

Kokujoji's eyelids trembled.

With a slight smile, the spectacle of dawn burned into his eyes until the end. Slowly, his eyelids lowered.

"Yes."

There was silence.

Then the electrocardiogram went parallel and there was a sound that indicated cardiac arrest.

The screens monitoring Kokujoji's vital signs closed automatically.

Kokujoji Daikaku lived most of his life as a "King".

He rebuilt the devastated country, made it prosperous, was always at the center of the seven kings that appeared and disappeared, and continued to manage only that "Slate".

For a while, Shiro sat next to his friend, who had survived as a "King" until the last drop of his life.

Before long, Shiro slowly stood up and walked out onto the balcony overlooking the outside of the bridge.

A strong wind was blowing, making Shiro's hair and clothes flutter.

The morning sun was revealing itself, making the clouds shine beautifully.

Standing at the edge of the balcony, Shiro gazed up at the dawn sky, illuminating the world in a new light.

"Lieutenant. As you have walked, I will walk forward."

He opened his arms to face the world he had been ignoring for so long.

"I won't run this time. I'll face him."

Beyond the dream that his friend fulfilled.