

K  
SIDE:GOLD

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# **K - SIDE GOLD**

**TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN**  
**RAWS: RIDIA & ANNO**

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## **PROLOGUE A: FLYING GHOST SHIP**

May 1945.

A corner of the Atlantic Ocean where the sky and the sea occupy all the view.

From that endless blue sky, a barrage formation of SBD Dauntless began to descend in several rows. It was a sudden sortie, and it was a rough formation with only 20 bombers, but no problem.

A target, or a single ship.

According to the reconnaissance plane report, the weapons could not be seen.

It was a gigantic rigid airship that moved slowly close to the glistening surface of the sea.

The leader of the formation, who descended a bit ahead of the others, couldn't believe that it was a real existence as he approached in the blink of an eye. The strange way to connect the flat air sacs was like a bivalve with a displaced shell.

(Or the clunky pancakes my daughter made.)

After the Third Reich's surrender of Germany the other day, the formation commander pressed the bombardment button at just the right time, shaking the sight of home from him that had come to mind frequently.

In response, the suspended armor-piercing bombs left the aircraft and fell on the airship.

He could feel that his companions were also throwing bombs one after another behind him as they began to ascend.

After a few seconds, the explosions occurred in rapid succession far below.

The roar was surprisingly far away, the flames blurred by the sunlight, and only black smoke billowed from near the surface of the sea.

The formation leader tilted the aircraft so that the situation could be clearly seen and began to circle around the column of black smoke. That was not for his own viewing. It was for his partner who was looking at the camera in the back seat sitting back to back. The sound of the shutter opening and the film rolling up continued uninterrupted from the beginning.

"What do you think, David? Is the ghost ship a piece of wood?"

"No, Captain. It's still burning, but it will explode soon."

The two experienced pilots recalled once again the mysterious mission entrusted to the United States Atlantic Fleet. All the formations that were flying together must have felt the same way as them.

Mobilize the entire fleet to locate and sink an airship that has been sighted in the Atlantic Ocean for the last month or so.

It wandered around doing nothing, wandering aimlessly, and before long the sailors coming and going called it the "ghost ship".

In that nickname, there was no fear involved.

At the time, it was a common name mixed with a lot of ridiculousness. The level of ridicule among military personnel increased when it was bluntly identified by references to intelligence.

This is because the true identity of the suspected ghost ship (anyone who sees the text can't help but burst out laughing) was the "secret weapon" of the German Third Reich, which surrendered to the Allies last week.

(If I remember correctly, it was an aerial gunship for anti-barrier balloons? That German bastard... How many Messers could be built with the time and materials required to assemble such a large and thin target?)

The formation leader shrugged at the tragic ending.

"Well... why did Fleet HQ order a mission like this to be "recorded in detail"? If they were found during the day, they would know there would be no such thing."

"Yes, Captain. I was also concerned about the phrase "Beware of the silver light". It may have been loaded with a new type of bomb."

Even while he was conversing, his quiet companion kept pressing the shutter while he kept his eyes on the camera.

"A new type of bomb, huh. I heard rumors..."

The leader of the formation finished checking if his companions failed in the bombardment and reduced the number. He couldn't even see the plane that landed in the water around the black smoke. There was no accident report of the following plane. The mission was completed.

Involuntarily, he let out a faint impression.

"Anyway, the rumored ghost ship has finally returned to the bottom of the sea."

"Yes, Captain. It is difficult to understand why the remnants of the German army still roamed the waters so far from the defection route to South America."

"We'll never know, right?"

Behind the mutter, the captain regretted completing the easy mission.

(Thanks to him, I was not sent to the Pacific front and I was able to kill time until the end of the war... but that's all.)

He continued the conversation until the confirmation of the bombardment with the feeling that he was watching the final moments of the benefactor.

"That name... Did you say "Heaven" or something?"

"No, Captain. The meaning is the same, but "Himmelreich".

"I remember well. Well, in that case, the crew was in hell instead of heaven."

"Ah?!"

The half-stunned banter was interrupted by a startled cry.

The captain, who immediately turned his attention to the control stick, asked sharply.

"What happened?!"

What he was wary of was the attack by German Air Force planes supporting the "ghost ship", but his partner's response was completely different... or rather, it was impossible.

"That's stupid... the target is alive and well! Can't recognize the damage!"

"What?! That's stupid!"

The captain, who shouted the same lines as his partner, saw the same scene as his partner when he dropped his line of sight to the surface of the sea.

From the fading black smoke, a "ghost ship" with the same speed and shape as before the shelling was slowly coming out. The upper deck, which should have been shelled, was completely unscathed, not to mention stained with soot.

Did they all miss the target in the formation barrage?

It looked like a light alloy, but is it heavy armor?

A secret function hidden in a secret weapon?

From the common sense check to the absurd delusions running through his mind, the captain shook his head slightly.

"Impossible."

He immediately changed his mind. As a veteran pilot, he took the following measures against the real "enemy aircraft" that roamed below.

"If the shelling doesn't work... let's put a machine gun on deck and see the reason for its solidity with our own eyes."

However, he was stopped by his partner.

"No, Captain. Wait a minute."

"What's up, David?"

"Should have been in the order. Did you skip the second half again?"

Having regained his composure, he accurately repeated the details.

"If the bombardment fails to hit the intended attack, report to headquarters and await the next order."

"I didn't understand the meaning, so I skipped it."

The captain's defense was justified.

There's no way a single airship couldn't be sunk by a formation bombing attack.

It would be a mistake to assume that the intended attack would not be achieved.

That should be there, but reality kicked in the obvious and was there beyond assumptions.

"This is Emmmental 1, Fleet Command, please respond."

With his friend in the background, who began to communicate with the command center with a high-performance communication device that was adapted, the formation leader at least launched a verbal attack on the impossible existence.

"..."Ghost ship", huh?"

The silvery-white aircraft continued to fly over the sea, where the black smoke had already disappeared.

A tall man looked up at the sky from the wheelhouse of the Himmelreich airship.

There was no gleam of joy or longing in his eyes that reflected the dazzling blue. The white silk beauty with long silver hair falling down his back lacked vitality. Only resignation and boredom enveloped him in a stagnant way.

His expression moved slightly.

In front of the frontal airbag that protruded far forward, the barrage formation that was flying in the sky began to move backwards in a somewhat chaotic manner. He could see the frustrated and suspiciously distorted expressions of the pilots.

"Good work."

The man murmured softly and slowly turned on his heel. Only the dull sound of the engine accompanied the steps towards the bench placed in the center of the wheelhouse, which seemed to be an annoying step.

And then a new assistant joined.

"It should work with that, answer me! Hey, let it go!"

It was a communication mixed with a terrible noise. It even picked up the noise of people colliding.

"The presidential decree should have given me priority in the negotiations! Get off!"

He was familiar with his voice, which was the exact opposite of him, full of lust for life and power.

If he remembered correctly, an acquaintance from the Ordnance Bureau... why would he hear that voice over the Pacific Ocean?

As he vaguely guessed the reason, still longing for the broken past, the man next to the couch turned his feet towards the console of the communication device. The noise disappeared when the communication frequency was adjusted.

"Werner, is that you?"

The man named Werner reacted violently to his weak speech.

"Weismann... Adolf K. Weismann!"

The man's mouth, Adolf K. Weismann, slightly dropped as he was struck by his unchanging vigor. He responded with harmless sarcasm.

"Even if you don't yell, the communication is clear. It's been a long time since we parted at Peenemünde."

"Oh, that's right... yes."

Werner's voice, who understood that there was no problem with the conversation, dropped suddenly. Expressing his feelings clearly, he squeezed out a heavy voice.

"It was too bad about your sister."

"....."

"It was a loss to humanity."

It was conveyed that the exaggerated assessment of him was not entirely false, but because of that, a wind of loneliness blew on Weismann's chest. It was true that he was happy with the assessment, but more than that, there was much more that only he and the other person could understand... A lot had been lost along with his sister.

He wanted to scream and complain, but he couldn't scream anymore, and even if he complained, people wouldn't understand.

"Everyone I meet after that... will say that first. Did you really like my sister, or do I look dangerous without my sister?"

"Both."

Werner stated briefly.

"That's why I'm going to mourn my sister first and then I'll invite you."

He began to speak with his characteristic directness.

"I turned myself over to the United States, to continue my research."

"Is it an invitation to do the same?"

Having already roughly grasped the situation, Weismann still confirmed the other party's intentions.

"What does that have to do with the recent rain?"

"I'm sorry."

First of all, Werner apologized. He continued with a bitter voice.

"It wasn't my order; it was the military commander's priority order. I visibly made him see if you were worthy enough to accept the surrender."

"The result was a success."

"Ah, the people here seem to have decided."

He felt an annoyed look around him. After that, his voice became brighter.

"I received only fragmentary information, so I don't know much about it, but... if you provide the "power" you have acquired, the United States will welcome you with perfect preparation for the investigation."

"The ending is unreliable."

At his happy words,

"At least that's what the presidential decree says. I, who just surrendered, cannot judge how seriously the politicians and military personnel of this country take it."

The sarcasm from the surroundings returned.

Recalling the conversation, they once had in the Ordnance Office, Weismann smiled... and soon realized that he had lost the mental strain to do so. The laughter disappeared before turning into an expression.

Only affection led to advice.

"Werner, I cannot offer my "power". There is no such thing."

Exactly, he could do it.

The way is to place the target human under his influence.

However, Weismann secretly refused to teach or practice it. Being locked in that airship was originally such a thing. That conversation could be an act of detachment from himself that it hadn't been long since he locked himself away, and an act of repentance to the world.

Thinking of that, his voice hardened.

"I'm sorry, but... I don't think you have any feelings; I will politely decline the matter of giving up. My request is that you leave me alone. That's all. Tell that to the great people around you."

"Wait, Weismann!"

Perhaps because of the danger of the communication being cut off, Werner held back.

"Do you intend to continue roaming with the airship from now on, a man like you?! It's true that I'm sorry about your sister, but you're still alive."

"Let's dispel the real concerns of great people."

This time, Weismann interrupted his voice and said.

"From now on, I will not side with any country, and I will not give this "power" to anyone."

For a moment, there were various noises on the other side of the communication device.

"Is it believable?"

"We have to secure it now."

"We cannot give that power to the communist camp."

Several tens of seconds after the fragment of suspicion was spilled, Werner sadly said again.

"The people here are afraid of you and the power you hold. That's why I want to know their true identity, and I don't want someone else to steal it."

"....."

Weismann barely swallowed the resentment as he was about to make a sound: "I know, it's deep in my bones.". Unbeknownst to Werner, that fear led to the bombing that tried to end it all, and the kidnapping of the researcher himself.

The human pain, anger, hesitation, and fear that swirled there collapsed in despair.

Now, all that's left in the empty burned fields is a little secret clinging to a good relationship... only expectations.

Instead of cursing, Weismann said it.

As an impulse for a friend he had parted with.

"It won't be stolen, I'm sure."

"What do you mean?"

He didn't give the puzzled Werner a straight answer.

"You'll find out eventually. No, it glows so anyone can see it clearly."

Weismann prophesied as one of the "Kings" who were first seen by the "Slate", the owner of the "power" that was there. He looked at the empty blue sky and longed.

"I'm sure the sword will rise up in the sky with just my thoughts."

He called lightly to the other end of the communication device that had been silent for some time.

"I want the people who are there now to talk to the most important people."

"What?"

Werner and the "people around" realized that it was a message for the president.

Weismann issued a clear and direct warning that benefited them.

"Don't touch the sword."

There was no objection to his comments that sounded like an order.

"That's it. Werner, I pray that your dreams reach the moon."

It was completely natural, as if to lower the curtain at the end of the performance,

"Viel Glück." (Good luck.)

Adolf K. Weismann said goodbye and hung up.

A few days later.

On behalf of the President, the United States declared that the crew of the airship "Himmelreich" would be placed under shelter as refugees. It is not known whether Adolf K. Weismann laughed or was astonished at the blatant one-sided "don't mess with anyone else" threat that had no effect or binding force.

However, the airship continued to wander the Atlantic as a "ghost ship".

Many people, in many positions, lamented his inaction.

However, that idle action was exactly what he wanted.

## **PROLOGUE B: THE SWORD IN THE SKY**

Daikaku Kokujoji was walking through the driving snow.

The blizzard half obscured the landscape, and there was nothing but flat ground, and he moved forward with only one thing in mind.

He suddenly realized it by the feel of his feet.

(This is not snow.)

The moment he realized it, the scenery in front of him completely changed.

To be precise, Kokujoji's own view of things changed.

What appeared to be snow turned into grains of silver, and the flat land turned into a field of silver.

Every time he took a step forward, a white glow began to dazzle his eyes.

(I remember this glow.)

The next morning after the hateful bombing.

In the sky over the city of Dresden, which had turned into a mountain of rubble, the proof of the "King" shone brightly in the form of a sword.

He had no idea why that was so bright.

Kokujoji was aiming for that place on his own account.

He thought of his friend that used that brightness as "power".

(Is this view your world?)

There was nothing there as far as he could see.

It was an empty world filled with a beautiful glow.

Still, Kokujoji didn't stop walking.

Because he decided to follow the path where his friend had stopped.

(It should be up there.)

His footsteps, by his own desire, inched closer and closer.

At the root of the "power" that he lurked in the depths of that silver world.

The mysterious holy relic, the heart of the "Slate".

Before long, Kokujoji...

(What?)

He felt that he saw a faint "color" that wasn't silver in the glow.

Looking into the distance, the jet blackness that separated silver and the world, in other words, at the sky ahead,

(.....!)

Little stars were shining.

(Different colored glitters... I remember this too.)

In the midst of so many commotions and incidents, and the struggle to survive, the scene that he had been buried in the depths of his memory was vividly recalled.

The silver sword-shaped glow was not entirely one color.

A number of brilliance was woven into each part.

(Was it the same color and number as that star?)

Now that he thought about it, in an experiment at the research institute, there were blue eyebrows and red funnels among the colors inhabiting individual EX- $\alpha$  mice.

(What colors and how many are there?)

Kokujoji sensed that he had gotten some kind of clue and quickened his steps.

With a racing heart, he stretched out his hand to reach for the heavens.

(What does this mean?)

The moment his outstretched hand broke through the silver snowstorm and almost touched the stars...

June 1945.

Kokujoji woke up at the bottom of the dense forest.

The smell of vegetation that makes you cry even at night filled his lungs and, incidentally, his empty stomach.

A stern face was barely visible in the dim moonlight filtering from the treetop. A sergeant who seemed to have woken him up with a light jolt to his shoulder. He moved his lips as little as possible and said quietly.

"Lieutenant Kokujoji."

"What's up, sergeant?"

Kokujoji recovered as a lieutenant in the Imperial Japanese Army without leaking the slightest bit of dreams from him.

The sergeant dropped to one knee and reported so his voice wouldn't echo.

"The scout has returned. As expected, Lieutenant, British troops are deployed to the front."

"As expected."

Kokujoji sat up and looked at the container he had leaned against. He seemed to have inadvertently fallen asleep while he was meditating to explore the "Slate" was lurking within. Or maybe he was drawn to the "Slate", he immediately dismissed it as an excuse to let his guard down.

He quietly got up and then said.

"Let's listen directly."

"Yes."

With the sergeant in the lead, he proceeded with his immediate mission.

For the important mission of returning to the homeland.

In early April, a submarine secretly set sail from the naval port of Kiel in northern Germany.

The destination was the Empire of Japan, 30,000 kilometers away.

The cargo consisted of military attachés and military engineers sent from Germany, technical officers, including Kokujoji, who was returning to Japan, a small number of Japanese soldiers, and various weapons and supplies from the German army.

That trip ended in failure.

Because the war situation deteriorated while waiting for the "Slate" brought by the authority of the Office of the President, the ship crossed the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope instead of taking the shortest route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arctic Ocean. He had no choice but to take all routes.

It took them a month and a half to follow the route, which was not easy because it was long, but when they reached the eastern part of the Indian Ocean, they received a radio signal sent all over the world.

It was the unconditional surrender of the German Third Reich and an order to stop fighting and surrender.

A few days after debating whether the information was false by the Allied Forces, the Japanese engineers decided to commit suicide amid growing expectations of the ship's surrender (everyone was already fed up with the war). They worried that the surrender argument would be confused because they had high-ranking officers on board.

Lieutenant Daikaku Kokujoji was appointed to coordinate the remaining Japanese soldiers on board.

The main reason was that he was the highest ranking lieutenant, excluding self-determined technical officers (both field officers), and that he was in charge of transporting something important on a special mission from the Presidential Office.

Although the captain of the submarine decided to surrender, as a last resort for the Allied nations still at war, Kokujoji and other Japanese soldiers and most of the cargo were delivered to a remote port in Malaya.

The port was barely occupied by the Japanese army, but the rear was already blocked by the British army, and the local garrison was cut off. They were few and they offered to accompany Kokujoji, who was determined to return home. It was evident that the garrison would be wiped out once the British offensive began. In that case, at least a thicker straw, they bet on Kokujoji's advance.

More precisely, Kokujoji bet on the latest German equipment received from the submarine.

It all consisted of five transport vehicles, a reasonable number of infantry rifles, and some heavy weapons. Supplies such as fuel, food and ammunition that the submarine left at the limit.

And a sturdy container that contained the "Slate".

Kokujoji was in the sphere of influence of the Allied Forces, and together with a group of about fifty people, it was presumptuous to call it a random mixed force, and they were forced to chase the retreating front lines of the allied forces.

Then he wandered through the jungle for over a month.

They evaded the British and continued south in search of friendly forces. Once he reached the southern tip of the peninsula, he could even hope to return to his homeland from Shonan Island, Singapore.

A faint but lonely hope kept them going.

Meanwhile, Kokujoji strictly forbade any engagement.

He made sure to explore in secrecy and proceed carefully.

Against a small unit scattered in a remote jungle like that, if he made full use of the latest German Army equipment, he should be able to win once or twice. However, the victory rallied the surrounding enemy forces like a mothlight. They should crush them while fighting that enemy army, and the next enemy army, and so on.

Kokujoji's strict order was precisely because he was aware of the overwhelming number of Allied Forces in Germany.

Even the soldiers accompanying him did not want to die unnecessarily, now that they had found hope of returning home. In other words, they didn't want to fight. They endured a march through the jungle, exhausting from exhaustion and hunger, and obeyed the orders of the first lieutenant, who was young but dignified.

However, the time had finally come for such a frenzied stealth to hit a wall.

Kokujoji frowned after hearing the scout's report.

"You were building an outpost with a number that could be called a troop, instead of just patrol sentries, right?"

"Ha, that's right."

An upright scout replied. There was a clear hint of anxiety in his expression. It was natural that he had seen with his own eyes that dark clouds hung over his feeble hope.

Instead, the sergeant, who showed no sign of agitation, speculated quietly.

"In that case, even if you underestimate the size of the enemy army, it will be the size of a battalion. Will we deviate as usual?"

"No, there are no other roads on this isthmus that only allow vehicles to pass. That is probably why the British are stationed there. Alternatively, it may be a key point where the division is based."

Saying that, Kokujoji noticed that the scout's expression had turned even darker. Although ashamed of his own mistake, he spoke words of gratitude.

"Don't worry, I'll do something about it. It was hard work."

"Yes!"

After confirming that the soldiers had withdrawn, he looked back at the sergeant, who had an unusually bitter smile on his face.

"That I have to do?"

"I know you're restless."

With the same bitter smile, Kokujoji put his hand to his chin.

"If I'm really careful, I'll take a detour next time, no matter how long the detour lasts, but... what about the rest of the food?"

"Reduce it further to five days."

Food delivered from the submarine was also low after a month of marching. As long as they keep their feet in mind, they won't be able to accelerate and it will take days. It was an unavoidable situation, with no other option.

The smile disappeared from Kokujoji's face, leaving only bitterness.

"The only way to reach friendly lines is to defeat the enemy and take their food. At least a battalion-sized enemy force, with fifty starving men here... no matter how modern the equipment of the German army, would be hard to kill 10 people."

"If you can catch the enemy off guard and defeat them twice, you'll be fine."

The smile faded from the sergeant's face.

Kokujoji thought for a few more seconds before saying.

"Just let me get ready for the dawn raid. I'll think about it for a bit."

"Yes."

After the sergeant quietly left, he sat cross-legged on the container that contained the "Slate". He stiffened his posture as if he were sitting in Zen meditation, but his inner mind was intensely anguished.

(Finally, I'm in a bind... what should I do?)

It's not like he was thinking about how to efficiently use the latest equipment of the German army. Like other cornered Japanese forces, they were unwilling to recklessly charge into enemy positions. Since they landed in Malaya, or even before, since they left the Kiel Naval Port, they had hesitated for a long time. Namely...

(Is this the time and place to launch the "Slate"?)

Within the container, the "Slate", which had most of its functions sealed, possessed the power to awaken the "transcendent ruling race" in the König Project. There was already a precedent.

Despite that, he hesitated to let go of the "Slate" until he was cornered at the last minute.

The reason was simple and serious.

(What criteria does this "Slate" use to choose a "King"?)

It was a concern.

It is said that one of the precedents woke up at some point during the bombing.

On the other hand, a woman who should have faced a similar situation did not wake up.

Even the "transcendent ruling race" could not explain why such a difference arose. Of course, the fact that he had half stopped thinking due to that woman's death was probably also an important factor.

(I still don't understand anything about the "Slate".)

Kokujoji planned to carefully unravel the mechanism after he returned to Japan. However, since the return to Japan by submarine had been thwarted halfway, there was no more room for maneuver.

(That being said, is it okay to carelessly release it out of desperation?)

Assuming that a battle with the British Army was about to take place,

What would happen if an unrelated soldier woke up?

What would happen if someone in the enemy British army woke up?

All plans will fail.

He didn't want to rush things and risk someone with different intentions awakening as the "King". He didn't want to take possession of his power, but he absolutely couldn't stand the fact that the dream the three of them had was ignored.

(Definitely...)

Suddenly, his thoughts hit on the reason.

(That's right... I have something I can't give up.)

He still didn't understand anything, he didn't want to rush things and take risks... those things that came to his mind were clever excuses to stop.

(I will... I'll do my duty... I swore, right?)

With the tenacity of his vows, Kokujoji coldly probed into his own heart and mercilessly confirmed the existence of reason. To witness without shame before the dead and the living everything that "Slate" did.

And then he understood.

(This is not "hesitation" but "fear" of taking a step.)

Once he figured it out, it was easy to handle.

(Don't be afraid to continue, that's enough.)

Kokujoji slowly opened his eyelids.

One look without hesitation shot the world.

Then came the moment of choice.

Dawn was near.

Kokujoji Daikaku sat quietly and waited for the meeting.

First, a sergeant who was ready for battle climbed under the container.

Before long, all the soldiers who had even learned their faces during the march arrived.

Under the fading stars, looking at the white horizon, Kokujoji spoke with determination.

"If you have to, do it."

He put the "Slate" under his feet and stood up determinedly.

"I will cast away my life as a human and reign as one and only. I will rule over all and condemn the foolish. I will harness power beyond human knowledge to bring about equality and prosperity. Yes, that's right."

A secret "power" worked in front of the soldiers who did not understand the meaning of the words and only kept an eye on him.

The seal that bound the "Slate" inside the container was slowly coming undone.

The seal mechanism was a type of curse linked to the five elements that capture the earth and atmosphere through the circulation of the four seasons of wood, fire, metal, and water. The resulting "spirit slowdown", "function suspension", was different from the original operating principle of the "Slate", and in fact did not suppress the power of the "Slate". The essence was the creation of a "field" that blocked the forces that acted on the "Slate" from the outside.

In other words, if the "field" was disturbed, the seal would lose its effect.

In the past, Kokujoji willingly undertook that act, which he had previously avoided out of amazement at the mysteries that could be touched by human hands. It seemed quite and charmingly easy.

He was standing in a scene that was different from the one he was concentrating on.

The moment he realized that, something echoed from afar.

The sound of his heart, the rumble of the earth, or... the movement of the world.

That would belong to him.

It would make it his own strength.

(That I have to do?)

Power was not simply given. He felt that he was assuming some kind of intentionality.

Mission, function, role, characteristics, temperament, true meaning... various concepts permeated his consciousness.

(So what?)

The vow he made to become "King" was more than just words.

The intentionality of the acquired power did not change at all. Whether or not that happened would be up to him.

(It's what you want, come!)

Kokujoji yelled at the "Slate" that appeared before him.

He called the "Slate" and came

He was chosen.

Then, it was his turn to grab it.

At the request, something spilled over from the depths of the "Slate".

The movement of the world increased, the expansive land divided, and a glow gushed forth as if were blowing from the heart. A dazzling brilliance erupted as if it had come to life, filling the heavens and the earth.

Kokujoji controlled all that shine.

The power to nurture that makes life.

The dazzling and precious power of "Golden".

However, Kokujoji did not get drunk on that rule.

He knew that that golden was the "power beyond human wisdom" that he had decided to accept with determination.

Experiencing it firsthand, his determination was even stronger.

(We must begin this long journey... at least to generate a desirable mystery.)

Kokujoji voluntarily regained his consciousness from that world.

The familiar appearance of the soldiers returned.

They were all looking up with dumbfounded faces.

It wasn't Kokujoji, who was on top of a container.

Above that, they were looking up at the sky at dawn.

Kokujoji also followed their gazes.

Something that he had already understood was floating there.

The energy crystal that was generated with the birth of the EX- $\alpha$  individuals... It was similar to the one he had seen in Dresden, but it was different... It was a gigantic golden sword that boasted tremendous extravagance.

Kokujoji muttered as if confirming its existence.

"Power manifests as a sword, huh?"

His faintly glowing body was filled with golden "power".

Kokujoji gave an order that sounded like a scolding, which was not encouraging at all.

"Come with me! Live and return to your homeland!"

Without relinquishing his responsibility to anyone, he called the soldiers.

The soldiers did not respond enthusiastically either.

"Yes!"

Over fifty people were sucked into the causal law deviation feedback loop by greeting in perfect order. They became  $\beta$  individuals and became "vassals" led by the "King". Suddenly, they all felt "power" overflowing within them. For most, it was not a weapon to fight.

The sergeant had an irresistible desire to paint.

The explorer wanted to wield a hoe in the fields of his hometown.

The other soldiers also treasured the "golden" they felt inside.

Kokujoji looked at them, took them in his heart and gave them orders.

"Follow me!"

They began to advance with determination and strength.

The British Army was hit by a miraculous storm.

A golden wave passed through the center of the camp where the two divisions had settled, forming a single path.

A group of what appeared to be Japanese soldiers ran through the terrified camp at terrifying speed. Despite sporadic artillery fire, they continued their advance. Either they continued on their neighbors, who had come under fire, or they crushed the shelling tank head-on.

It happened in just a few minutes.

Only after the golden sword floating in the sky at dawn disappeared, did the British army wake up from a beautiful nightmare.

After waking up, they were stunned to realize that the scars from their nightmares remained in reality.

This battle was not recorded in official records and the United States confiscated all materials. Britain and the dubious Soviet Union protested vigorously, but in the end there was no further progress.

Contrary to the shock of the people involved, that so-called "Golden March" was buried in numerous anecdotes as laughable battlefield tales.

Lieutenant Daikaku Kokujoji and the remaining 40 soldiers were summoned to the mainland for their achievements in breaking through the Malaya front and bringing in valuable supplies from Germany.

The following month, the Empire of Japan announced its acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, ending the war.

## **CHAPTER 1: KATASHIYA, SOMEI NAZUMI**

"GHQ" Abbreviation for Headquarters/Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP). In general, it referred to the headquarters of the Allied Occupation Forces, or in its entirety, which guided and supervised the implementation of policies to rebuild defeated Japan as a democratic nation. Established in 1945, dissolved in 1952 when the San Francisco Peace Treaty went into effect.

December 1948 (Showa 23).

Three years have passed since the defeat.

The Japanese capital Tokyo, once a burnt-out field, had already taken on a new look.

It was getting dark. In the middle of the open street, a streetcar full of people returning home rang its bell and slowed down. The buses, trucks, and even the passenger's cars that came and went were not coal vehicles, but gasoline ones. The number of tricycles (bicycle taxis) prowling the sidewalks looking for customers also increased.

The stone-roofed sidewalk was also crowded with men in soft hats and coats heading home or to the bar. At the base of the wooden telephone poles, there were no longer any wounded soldiers with amputated limbs. At that time, there were many simple stalls and

street stalls, women hawking, and children waiting for jobs like shining shoes and unloading.

Standing in the twilight, the streetscape was made up of concrete buildings that had survived the fire and private wooden shops that filled the gaps, overhanging the eaves. Even if it was a bit deep, the gap between the buildings was beginning to form. Immediately after the occupation, the number of signs in English had decreased, and Japanese and English were mixed.

These spectacular scenes of reconstruction enlivened the center of the city.

"Haa, haa..."

However, it changed completely when you entered an alley a few meters away.

Behind the building facing the street, there was still a desolate burnt field. Everything that was once a city, a house, a person, all the pieces that were burned by the great air raids were thrown away. The tragic fall of the main street, which looked like a movie set, rather highlighted the dangers of reconstruction.

The back roads of that world.

"Dammit! What the hell are... these guys in black?"

A man fled as he cast a long shadow. Wearing typical worn clothes and lace-up shoes, what you could see anywhere, but what he carried under his arm was a shiny leather bag.

Then suddenly, the voice of a well-mannered man came from behind him.

"Quick, then left."

"Hey!"

The man who jumped on his shoulders realized that he was running into a dead end and immediately turned into the path to the left.

The area was a maze of shadows, with piled up scrap wood and unknown shacks as obstacles, combined with the darkness of twilight. Again, the alley was divided into a thousand parts.

"This is my territory... 'Flea's Kanta', but why are you ahead of the curve?!"

Shouting, the man, the self-proclaimed "Flea's Kanta", jumped into one of the forks.

However, he could see someone standing in front of him in the distance.

"Oh, again?!"

Like those who had blocked him from the beginning, he was wearing an unknown uniform. The color, which was hard to see after being tinted by the setting sun, was

apparently blue. On his left hip, he could see a long object that seemed to be a military policeman that had been dismantled a long time ago.

With his hand on the handle, the blue suit suddenly took out a white blade and shouted.

"Hey! Where are you planning to run to?!"

"Eh!"

Kanta fled to the side street to the right, turned around and sprinted, into a barrage of swords that seemed to be about to be cut down at any moment.

He heard another voice from behind.

"Hoizumi, excessive pressure. Correct course to the right."

"H-help me."

Unable to understand what was happening, Kanta ran with tears in his eyes.

In front of him, once again, someone stood in his way.

It looked like the same blue suit, but the hem was long enough to reach her ankles. Long elements were also omitted from the start. Or rather, like Musashibo Benkei, he had a long-handled naginata on the ground. Above all, he was small enough to be mistaken for a child.

"Then give up gracefully!"

The high-pitched voice was that of a young woman.

"Hey?!"

Struck by momentum, Kanta did not let go of that day's prey, though he involuntarily slowed down. He stubbornly took another step toward a side street.

But before he could take the second step, a new blue suit appeared at the end of the path.

"Oops! We just got here!"

Secondly,

"Toneyama, target captured."

Another path was blocked by a new blue suit, and finally turned into a mouse in the bag.

"Dammit."

A final proclamation was fired behind him, who was caught in the middle of the four crossroads.

"Twenty-five moves, huh?"

The voices that echoed in the alleys of the burned fields were as regular as the sound of footsteps.

"Hmm, I can't do it right. I can't help but slip... even though I have so much power, what am I missing?"

Kanta turned around and finally saw his pursuer.

Carrying the setting sun on his back, he walked right away, he was probably a young man.

As if to decorate the top of his blue clothes, he wears a cap that is slightly deeper than his eyes.

The raincoat cloak with the right half open did not have a holster that would normally be seen at his waist.

His tall, slender body stretched to such an extent that one wondered if he had a stick in his body, and even on rough roads his footsteps were undisturbed and his boots trod in an orderly fashion. All of those were the characteristics of a former officer that could be understood at a glance.

But Kanta felt that it was not so...

(This guy is the head.)

He even remembered the illusion of being pushed as much as he walked the other side. Eventually, the illusion overcame the impatience that kept him stuck. He looked around him, then made a desperate escape.

Turning away from the pressure... in other words, towards the petite woman in front of him.

The blue clothes on the left and right were...

"Ah."

"Ah."

A young man passing by.

"Ah."

And (for the target) he was inadvertently leaking his voice into the worst choice.

Kanta rushed towards the woman with what vitality he had left.

He hadn't had time to notice before, but her face facing the setting sun was beautiful, even with her eyebrows strongly raised. She was not a child; she was an adult.

She was short.

"Don't come."

As she said that, he went from a stubborn attitude like Benkei to an eight phase posture in a classroom.

Kanta felt that he was playing the bad guy in the narrative. In addition, he came out to the extra mouth.

"Don't underestimate "Flea's Kanta"!"

Of course, he wouldn't put his head in front of the naginata in a foolish way.

He jumped in front of the woman.

It was a jump of five or six meters, which was impossible for an ordinary person. It didn't matter how much she wielded a stick, she wouldn't reach. As usual, he jumped over her head and waved goodbye to her.

He cast a fearless smile over the back of the beautiful woman who was frustrated.

His face relaxed in such delusions.

"I am of short stature!"

The woman's roar fell like lightning.

At the same time, something bright blue hit his face in the sky. It was a merciless blow that would cut the body in two if it was a swordsmanship, and if it was a serious one.

Kanta saw what had knocked him down as he fell with flashes of white and blue at his sight.

It was a bright blue sword that extended from the naginata.

Standing in front of Kanta crawling on the ground, the woman dropped the stone with a thump and made eye contact.

"If you want to control the sky, at least call yourself "Leopard" or "Eagle"!"

In the fading consciousness of him, Kanta himself muttered.

"...Yes, mom."

She heard him reply in a low voice.

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In the nearby plaza, the blue clothed people who were rolling "Flea's Kanta" who was bound by both ankles, began to line up in front of the man and the woman. Looking at them and opening a gap, he couldn't against all three.

Meanwhile, the young man shouted to the side.

"My God."

His handsome brows were clouded with anguish, but his spine remained straight.

"Why is everyone going to Chika-san instead of being silently tied to the ropes? I think it's obvious at a glance that it's a skill not to be underestimated."

The person who was thrown was also upright and came back resolutely.

"The reason why you can see that is because Nazumi-san himself has a certain level of skill."

Carrying the naginata on his back, he shook the bag he had retrieved with his hands.

"Please, thinks more of those who can't."

"Is that so?"

"That's how it is."

Finally, a line formed in front of the two arguing.

The man in blue on the far left gave an unknown order in a voice that seemed to be backwards.

"Call roll! Iyoda, unharmed!"

"Rokugo, unharmed."

"Hakizawa, unharmed~"

"Um, yes, Nizuka is intact."

"Hoizumi, unharmed!"

"Hentani, unharmed!"

"Toneyama, unharmed."

After confirming that everyone's report was correct, the Chika woman also confronted the man. Straightening up, she raised her face fully due to the difference in height and reported.

"Hatsukome Somei Chika, unharmed."

"Hatsukome Somei Nazumi, I understand."

Nazumi nodded and bent down to receive the bag.

"The background of this "Hagure" is... you don't even need to ask."

"Yes, the area around here is said to be thieves. Nanakamado..."

When Chika looked at him, Iyoda on the far left responded.

"Yeah, I haven't seen anyone who looks like a spy!"

"Really~? It's Iyoda-kun's guarantee~"

"I've done it myself, so I'm sure. I've also taught you the tricks."

"Ok, then, I guess. That's the trick, even for me."

"Don't talk in private! In front of the "King"!"

"Huh?! Hoizumi-san, I don't want you to suddenly yell at me."

"What should I do next?"

Chika let out a deep sigh as she saw the blue clothed people start chattering.

"Sir, are you really going to fight Nanakamado's Strains with such a rabble?"

Nazumi, on the other hand, smiled distantly.

"Don't trust your husband any longer, but the "King". They are the elite I expected. Together, we will constantly establish a place for ourselves... the Fourth Legislative Affairs Bureau of the Legal Affairs Agency."

"The "King" does not have enough achievements to believe, but as a wife, I will believe my husband's words."

"Honestly, I am very happy, but there is a difference of opinion. Now..."

Half a step, Nazumi advanced and the blues clothes immediately straightened their posture. He overlooked the slowness of some parts and gave instructions as "King" to his "vassals".

"Chika-san and I will escort this man to Nichidokuji Temple. Continue to clean up the camp. The manager is old, don't be rude."

"Yes!" "Ha!" "I understand~" "Haha, yes." "Leave it in my hands!" "Yes!" "I understand."

The "King" received the response from the "vassals" with different voices and attitudes.

(I have to decide on a standard ritual soon.)

He wrote the new task in his mind. He turned back on his heels with a smile.

Looking at the still-stretched "Flea's Kanta", he naturally drew the saber with its scabbard from his left hip and hooked the end to Kanta's grappling rope, as if it were a planned action during his walk. As it was, he didn't feel any force and carried a person on his back.

With the body of a traveler with a load tied to the top of a pole, the individual EX-α "Blue King" Somei Nazumi, said...

"In the meantime, let's see how Kokujoji-kun fares."

Nichidokuji was an ancient temple located in Teramachi, northwest of Ueno, which survived the air raids.

In late July 1945, just before the end of the war, a group of more than 40 graduates began living there. The name of the stay was "Treatment of endemic diseases in the south". In fact, after returning to Japan, Lieutenant Daikaku Kokujoji, a technical officer sent to Germany who led the group to break through the Malay front, fell into a state of indecision, and the military allowed him to do so in exchange for meritorious service.

Then after a month waiting period, the Empire of Japan collapsed.

Kokujoji became a former lieutenant and the former soldiers were fired from the call, but for whatever reason, no one left. Since Nichidokuji Temple was a temple and shrine connected to the edge of Kokujoji, they were not expelled and continued there.

Shortly thereafter, the "post-war" storm of surrender and occupation, demolition and redevelopment, reactivation and reconstruction raged, and the activities of more than 40 ex-soldiers and graduates who were defeated temporarily ceased.

The first incident in which the occupation forces sent by the Allied Powers to Japan, the so-called Occupation Forces, encountered an abnormal situation coming from a different direction than the lost Kokujoji faction was the "Chofu Incident". at the end of October 1945.

According to the report, this incident was described as "a small-scale riot and mass hallucination that occurred at a site where the Japanese army's big guns were incinerated". As the most important task of disarmament, the fighter planes and bombers gathered from all over the country poured with gasoline and burned to the foundation of the rice field.

It was a giant red sword.

Fierce flames burning metal, sparks flying in the air currents, black smoke that billowed up and reached the cloudy sky, and it was a huge red sword that proudly soared into the sky.

Beneath this mysterious phenomenon, a commotion called the royal incident was taking place.

A fiery red monster attacked the unit of US soldiers guarding the depot. The American soldiers had no choice but to flee in the face of something humanoid smashing armored vehicles and vaporizing machine gun bullets. Combined with the surrounding black smoke, the area was said to be truly hellish.

When enraged, it turned into a monster... the nickname "Demon" that the soldiers whispered later, along with the swords of heaven, disappeared in black smoke. As a joke, there were no fatalities, so it was officially announced that all the incidents were "mass hallucinations caused by the toxic gas generated during incineration", but the soldiers on the scene did not believe such hoax. Hallucinations do not destroy armored vehicles.

Of course, the party that sent the message, Headquarters/Supreme Commander Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP), was aware of that when he made the announcement.

In fact, before the occupation, his Headquarters had also received a warning letter from his home country about the "Sword" and the "King". Of course, no one took it seriously.

"If the "Malaya Golden Legion" mentioned in the document really existed and could turn people into paranormal weapons, Japan would not have given up and fought a decisive battle on the mainland."

That was his common sense.

Such common sense was completely nullified by that "Chofu Incident".

In order to deal with the hidden that was spilling over into reality, they took out thin materials from the corner of the shelf, but all they could find was an irresponsible description that there was no way to deal with it. When he requested to invite researchers to his home country, he only received a ruthless response that there were no full-time researchers.

During the various movements, the fear of the General Headquarters deepened.

He was not only afraid of the power of the evil demon (although it was not clear if it could be said). Above all, they feared that their paranormal existence would attract the attention of the unstable occupying nations.

The Japanese, who had accepted the occupation forces with incredible obedience, could use the incident as an opportunity to rise up all at once. The red sword that appeared at the disarmament scene could be a symbol of that. In the first place, the evil demon that appeared... wasn't it under such a plan?

Fearing the spread of the incident, the Headquarters immediately went on high alert and turned off the news, adding the items "sword" and "katana" to the press code and radio code, which are the control and censorship rules for the media (as a side effect of that, the Occupation Army's "sword hunt" was accelerated, and kendo was banned for a long time).

Judging by the results, those concerns ended up being unfounded.

There were no ex-military uprisings, no Japanese people's guerrillas, no links to the political situation, no labor disputes. The Japanese simply looked askance at the Occupation Army's sudden panic.

The General Command was relieved anyway, but the real problem, the stormy seas that battered them, came from home. Upon receiving the report, the United States government began to show signs of intervening in the administration of the occupation. Above all, the news that the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), an intelligence agency, was moving to establish a branch in Japan, upset and angered them even more.

The OSS, which had been greedily trying to expand its organization in line with the intensification of its anti-communist policy, used the "sword" riot as a pretext (the OSS itself did not understand the interest and threat of the "sword" held by the central White House of the United States), his intention was to create a base of operations in the Far East.

The Headquarters, burning with the desire to create an ideal democratic nation in the experimental field of Japan, resolutely repulsed the "rogue spies" who tried to set foot on its territory.

"The Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, Headquarters, relies on the intelligence and security functions of the Subordinate General Staff Offices."

Sending a strong message that shocked his home country, he declared that Headquarters would oversee the handling of the "swords" in Japan. OSS was frustrated by the unexpected refusal, but in the end, the opening of the OSS Tokyo branch was postponed on the grounds that "the entry of multiple organizations would create confusion in the chain of command". This dispute would continue two years later, in 1947, when the OSS was reorganized into the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

At the end of 1945, the General Headquarters, which had scolded the country saying "we will do it alone", restored the "King" and his source of power, the "Dresden Slate", in the Second Department of General Staff due to the small number, this core information was revealed the day after the investigation began and an intelligence agency tasked with the search was established.

The institution was not given an official name, but was simply called "Nanakamado" after the name of the hotel that was requisitioned as its base of operations. Starting with the smallest numbers, information and authority, they were immediately, mercilessly subjected to a series of tests.

During the next year, 1946, due to an incident where blue, green, and gray "swords" appeared one after another.

The locations were all close to the capital, but Nanakamado failed to capture the "King" every time. They didn't know if his abilities were good or bad. That was due to the fact that it was hard to predict where the "Sword" would appear in the first place, and that there were no disturbances like the "Chofu Incident".

For the general command, it was lucky that there were no riots, but it was not a comfortable position to be happy. According to the documents, the red and blue mice

were confirmed during the experiment, and it was someone else who made the silver and gold "Sword" appear. If the red fire demon was the newly empowered "King" of the Japanese, then there would be as many of its kind prowling the capital as there were colors.

No matter what, they had to find the "King" and the "Dresden Slate" and bring them under his control.

However, for a long time there was no good material to overcome the situation. Nanakamado had many Japanese collaborators under his umbrella as spies, and Headquarters was building an electronic radar detector equipped with a huge satellite dish at Atsugi to detect and investigate the "Sword".

Until a certain event... happened.

Late in 1946, Nanakamado made a shocking report to Headquarters, which had received a paltry report that the sensitivity of the entire radar was good. They said,

"I have captured the failed demon."

That was what it meant.

The "failure" captured was Japanese, male, 29 years old.

He was a thug named "Tsubute no Toku" who roamed around Shinbashi.

Nanakamado's spy was at the bar where he was talking about his bravery, "I've hit policeman Mappo many times." with liquor bomb in hand. Facing the spies who had ignored him as drunken nonsense, Toku used the strength of him with complete calm. He threw a "stone" of his hand, which should have had nothing, and broke the light bulb in the shop, which only had one.

The spies tracked down Toku (who appeared to be a repeat offender), who had escaped from the dark bar, and eventually captured him with the help they had gathered. Surrounded by muzzles, Toku flinched and gave up easily.

Nanakamado, knowing that threats with weapons would be effective, immediately took him to an international hospital linked to the agency. There, they forced him to demonstrate his strength, under close surveillance, and he underwent a thorough interrogation and physical examination.

When he lightly waved his hand, the "stones" flew out.

Toku had nothing in his hand.

So what was he throwing?

Conventional science could not explain the phenomenon. The research group even gave up an excuse and only sent a vague series of characters that read: "It seems to be emitting some kind of force field."

According to Toku's own testimony, he had been obedient ever since he was caught.

"Ah, it's been about half a year and I've been able to make it somehow."

He said that. Of course, neither Headquarters nor Nanakamado believed that.

At first, they, who were extremely materialistic, searched for a path to clarification in medicine, but that too was unsuccessful. The last X-ray examination was done until the laparotomy, and all that was obtained was the appendix, which was slightly inflamed. In later demonstrations, not only his hands, but also his legs, his buttocks which he jokingly shook, and even the tip of his tongue produced "stones" like a street performer.

It was only after that stage that they finally went back to checking the materials they had neglected at first, saying they were "too conceptual and didn't know what they meant".

According to the document, "Deviation from the Causal Law", also "Probability Manipulation", also "Convergence Theory", also "Feedback Loop", also "Resonant Object", also... "Fureude"?

The conclusion of the verification was that it was "too conceptual and they didn't know what it means". Even the outline of the system of the theory could not be grasped, and even a single description provoked a dispute over its interpretation.

In the end, they were only able to glean snippets of "what they were actually seeing" from the text.

- "King". They are called EX- $\alpha$  individuals. A person with extraordinary powers.

- "Sword". His name is Kouki Shubert in sword form. A luminous phenomenon that appears over the heads of EX- $\alpha$  individuals.

- "??". They are called  $\beta$  individuals. A peculiar ability with weak power influenced by EX- $\alpha$  individuals.

Only those three points were barely identified.

It was thought that Toku was probably a  $\beta$  individual, but controversy soon arose within the research team over the interpretation of "affected". It was possible that the "King" gave him power just that Toku was unaware. If you can get power just by being there, you can grow up and become a "King".

In fact, the situation in which "the generation of  $\beta$  individuals" not based on the influence of the "King" were faced was an unexpected event for those who studied the "Dresden Slate" and those who awakened it. In other words, there was no one who could give a clear answer on that point, but even so, they couldn't leave it vague due to his position.

At that time, to reduce ambiguity as much as possible, they decided on a code name for the "individual  $\beta$  = person with low level abilities affected by the King" that they would use on their side (they were very serious).

First of all, the "individual  $\beta$ ", which the "King" would already know about, was not desirable from the point of view of secret investigation. Then, since the word "King" itself was not desirable due to national characteristics, great era terms such as "servant" and "subject" were excluded from the candidates. "Slaves" and "servants" had a bad image (they seriously thought about it).

In the end, it was decided, with complete disregard, that the research team would use the term "biological variant" for convenience when testing to Toku.

In other words, "Strain".

While they were discussing whether or not such a fruit existed, Nanakamado continued to investigate. Spies scoured the front and back of the capital, capturing the Strains one after the other, searching for bits and pieces of the incident that they had dismissed as nonsense.

Most of the newly captured people only had a street performance power level like Toku, but they were still useful as samples for data collection. Among them, there were some who possessed vicious powers reminiscent of demons, and in some cases, they were forced to shoot them dead. As part of the experiment, the captured Strain was asked to cooperate as a spy or combat agent.

Through those royal activities, Nanakamado gradually expanded and changed in quality.

After the Gray, the appearance of "swords" ceased annually, and the organization's mission to search for the "King" and the "Dresden Slate" had become a mere shell. Rather, they went on the trail of the demons that only caused conflict and fell into a state of putting the cart before the horse, devoting themselves to the capture and management of Strains, a power they could control.

It was the same if they had dozens of Strains suitable for battle anyway.

They did not want to neglect expanding their forces in case they faced the "King".

As the Strains' investigation progressed, it would likely find a way to deal with the "King".

Nanakamado was fascinated by immediate power and armed himself with theory by making excuses over and over again. The entire International Hospital building, which had been nothing more than a laboratory, was transformed into a research laboratory and the number of Strain's staff increased.

The Nanakamado intelligence agency, which was supposed to be established for security purposes, was under orders from Headquarters to search for the "King" and the "Dresden Slate".

It was early in 1948 that Nanakamado became aware of the existence of a strange group, "Tokijikuin", which oscillated around the ruling party. From the point of view of the intelligence agency, they were nothing more than old-fashioned political veterans, or some kind of extra-parliamentary group that dealt violently with Congress and its political opponents.

Objectively, "Tokijikuin"'s position was that of an escort for important people, all of whom were martial arts masters, carefully and reliably guarding their targets, smoothly and peacefully removing obstacles, and simply participating in that mission. Nanakamado had followed the general public's weak perception that they were valued as a group that repelled the threat of assassination and violence in a political situation that had not yet calmed down, without realizing it.

In the midst of his hectic days trying to capture Strains, Nanakamado was obsessed with the belief that the "King" was also hiding in the dark. They never imagined that the "King" or his coterie would openly appear in public, and even enter the center of politics.

They themselves were unaware of the anomalies of "Tokijikuin", so they were often asked by Headquarters to "check whether the group protecting the ruling party had any connection to the former nationalist or communist forces". For the first time with an investigative order, they kept an eye on its existence. The orders were also issued to the entire Second Staff Division and were not specifically designated. It was just a notice that would inform them as an organization to which they belonged.

At first, it was the Second Department of the General Staff that acted, but when the time came for the politically oriented intelligence and security agency, which was its main job, to look at the history of the past, the terrifying nature of that so-called group "Tokijikuin" had become apparent.

"Tokijikuin" did not make political statements on its own.

They were just choosing who to escort.

They completely protected the one they chose and refused to get involved even if the other requested it.

The current ruling party, or even a small percentage of elected politicians, were members of "Tokijikuin", which repelled everything from thug attacks, obstruction of proceedings, intimidation of ideologues, to gangster invasion. Under the asylum, they spent their time "freely" without any concern and expanded their power.

In the postwar stupor, when everyone was bent on eating politics, it was an impossible blessing.

Opposing factions and political opponents within the same faction could not make ridiculous protests like "why don't you protect us?". The political world was divided

between those who sympathized with the elected side and those who opposed it more violently, the latter being in charge of increasing the value of "Tokijikuin".

The political world was in secrecy, but at a fast pace, increasing its dependence on and compliance with them.

The second staff officer who investigated the above shuddered.

Nothing happened, the true identity of "Tokijikuin" was a political organization that controlled national affairs through violence.

Upon receiving the report, the Headquarters immediately ordered the Second General Staff Department to investigate the direction of the policy led by "Tokijikuin", and Nanakamado to investigate the source of power that enabled such actions.

The first was the response to the release of the Japan Coast Guard in May, which took over the old Navy and gave Headquarters a certain sense of security. The Japanese government swallowed whole the many strict restrictions imposed by the international community. "Tokijikuin" remained impassive and the line that they were a nationalist who wanted to react against the pre-war regime disappeared.

The same was true of the Kinuta Studio barricade incident that occurred in August during the third Toho dispute. In the mutiny, which was commonly said to be "only the warships did not arrive", the Japanese government fully cooperated with the occupying forces in eliminating the union. After all, "Tokijikuin" was silent, and the line of complicity with the communist power disappeared.

Based on the actions of the Japanese government and the reaction of "Tokijikuin", the Headquarters said:

"At least in the current situation, the policies we promote and the orientation of "Tokijikuin" go in the same direction."

That concluded. If they stabilized the government administration and pushed it strongly in the same direction, they would not go out of their way to make it their enemy. They would even say that it was useful. The question was if that deal was just for now, if it would change in the future, and if they were targeting Nabe in the first place.

Headquarters cautiously took a wait-and-see approach for coordination between the Japanese government and "Tokijikuin".

On the other hand, the latter would take an unexpected course.

Nanakamado intended to instigate a Strain on the spot if "Tokijikuin" moved when the political change broke out. It was an extremely violent story, but the fastest way to test an opponent is to use force. All the turmoil ended up out of their control as a result, but their tendency as an organization to want to use the power they possessed would continue to grow like a dangerous addiction within them.

In any case, due to lack of time, the focus of the investigation shifted to an internal investigation of "Tokijikuin" itself.

The name "Tokijikuin" was said to have come from their base of operations, "Nichidokuji Temple".

The temple was related to Daikaku Kokujoji, a former lieutenant who was a technical officer sent to Germany, whose whereabouts were unknown. As soon as it became apparent that he was staying nearby, Nanakamado suddenly became more nervous.

It was none other than Daikaku Kokujoji who was seen as the commander of the "Golden Legion of Malaya", in other words, one of the "Kings" who wielded the "Sword". At the time of the defeat, the Japanese Army General Staff had burned a large number of confidential documents, including the movements of envoys to Germany.

As a trend of the occupation forces as a whole, the unit that should have returned to Japan before the defeat did not carry out a decisive battle on the mainland. Because of that fact, they considered the myth of the battlefield to be a shame, and did not seriously approach the quest until the demon appeared. However, even if the search was resumed, it became more difficult as time went on.

That time it happened in a completely unexpected direction.

For a group that was supposed to have great fighting power to strive to go into hiding for several years and become a political association was, unsurprisingly, so eccentric that no one at Headquarters could have imagined it. Like the coup incident before the war, they were wary of an armed uprising that would challenge the occupation forces to a fight, but they did not take such easy and light-hearted action and secretly took control of the situation.

Nanakamado inadvertently discovered that the true identity of "Tokijikuin" was a survivor of the super-human corps that wreaked havoc in the Great War (that's what it seemed like to those who didn't know the real situation), as well as "King" and possibly the "Slate". The whereabouts of the "Slate" were also revealed. Frustrated by the sudden encounter with the threat, they made an urgent request to the General Command.

From the point of view of the intelligence agency, they demanded that this "undesirable organization" be removed from public office, and even cooperated with the forced detention or removal of the Occupation Army itself.

However, the reaction that Nanakamado expected was not returned at all.

All requests for detention and removal from public office were denied.

Nanakamado was puzzled by the completely unexpected response, but the Headquarters also had its own conveniences and expectations.

Due to the nature of the organization as a full-time intelligence agency, Nanakamado naturally recognized the enemy as the target of the search, but that was not the case with Headquarters. At least they didn't have enough bad feelings to go on to blindly eliminate him, such as establishing a wait-and-see policy on "Tokijikuin"'s activities due to the Second Division General Staff's previous investigation.

Conversely, Nanakamado's request to remove him from public office caused a great reaction within Headquarters. To Nanakamado, it was just one of the orders that Headquarters routinely issued to Japan. It was just a request to exclude "Tokijikuin" from public protection, and that was his intention.

However, in fact, that very request (which Nanakamado, who was unfamiliar with politics, knew nothing about) was an act that got on the nerves of Headquarters.

In 1948, in occupied Japan, a major policy shift was in full swing that was later called the "reverse course". Originally, the Headquarters intended to rebuild Japan as an ideal democratic nation (democratize without arming), but the situation of rapidly expanding communist forces slowed its continuation.

In the midst of the structure of the Cold War, which intensified around the conflict with the Soviet Union, Japan, which was on the front lines, would quickly become a nation that would serve as a "bulwark of the Far East" and would join the field western liberal. To that end, promote Japan's economic independence, prevent communization, and, above all, consider rearmament. With a sense of frustration, Headquarters had to accept these "ruined policies" that had been broadcast from the United States.

As for the expulsion of public officials, the conventional policy of targeting militarists and nationalists and their supporters, as well as heavyweights in political and business circles who cooperated in the war, was softened, and those who would be useful were released from exile, for economic recovery. Instead, the expulsion began, targeting troublemakers, potentials, or collaborators with communist forces. Headquarters was disappointed that Japan was finally caught up in the ugly reality seen around the world, political and military conflicts.

It was precisely at that moment that Nanakamado made an impertinent request.

What's more, even for a moment, the exclusion of "Tokijikuin", which was considered to be in the same direction as the policy pushed by Headquarters, was logically and emotionally inevitable.

Even so, since switching to the "reverse course", HQ had come to place more emphasis on public appearances, perhaps out of frustration at irreversible setbacks, or remorse at waking from a dream.

In that case, the posture was one of indirect control... that is, the way in which the General Headquarters issued instructions and recommendations, and the Japanese government disseminated and implemented them. Although the occupying forces were the de facto

rulers of Japan, they took different forms. Headquarters wanted to believe that the role of the Occupation Forces sent by the Allied Powers was to supervise and guide Japan until it became independent as a healthy democratic nation.

If they abandoned that stance and moved to remove "Tokijikuin", the ruling party and by extension the entire Japanese government would immediately become unstable. First of all, considering the permanent position of "Tokijikuin", the act of exclusion itself could lead to the destruction of the political center. Also for Headquarters, the nation of Japan was a painstaking effort that took three years after the war to form. They had no intention of throwing that progress into the fire.

The Headquarters, which was aware of the goal of Japan's self-sufficiency, the so-called "peace with the Allied Powers", made the final decision that that system, including the Japanese government and "Tokijikuin", which was moving in one direction favourable, should be "maintained".

As a result, Nanakamado found important information about the identity of the "Tokijikuin" Temple and the location of the "King" and the "Dresden Slate", but ended up giving a bad impression with his careless request. And the Headquarters, which felt that his words and actions were not calm, issued an indecisive order to "continue to monitor" the movements of "Tokijikuin", and behind the scenes, the Japanese government approached a certain organization... They started Negotiations for the constitution of the company.

Although Nanakamado was not satisfied, they switched to the method of direct surveillance of "Tokijikuin's" base of operations, Nichidokuji. If they could secretly capture Daikaku Kokujoji, who was supposed to be the leader and "King", or confiscate the "Dresden Slate" that was supposed to be in his possession, they wouldn't have to worry about the feelings of Headquarters. Yes, they were vengeful.

However, the "enemy" was not calm enough to accept his sweet plan.

Nanakamado, who sent the spies, soon found out that all the important points to monitor Nichidokuji were being controlled by the "Tokijikuin" side.

A secret cordon had already been established in a corner of Teramachi. On the contrary, Nanakamado was forced to withdraw his personnel because he was caught approaching and invading the neighboring area. They were enraged by the absolutely disgusting and ruthless way of returning from the battlefield, but an incident that struck them with astonishment immediately attacked them.

The Japanese government, which was undergoing restructuring, had a government agency called the Legal Affairs Agency.

In February 1948 the Ministry of Justice and the pre-war Office of Legal Affairs were merged (in June 1949 the Ministry of Justice was reorganized and in August 1952 it was reorganized into the Ministry of Legal Affairs). directly to the government and cabinet.

A new department was established in November in the Legislative Office.

It was called the Fourth Legislative Office of the Legal Affairs Agency.

Their job was to be "responsible for handling peculiar phenomena that were not within the scope of current law, as well as those that possessed induced abilities". It was a strange thing that could be taken either way, and if the interpretation was broadened, it would be "general measures for criminals with special abilities that were proliferating in the public".

In addition, the "execution" that accompanied the management and measures were outside the jurisdiction of the Legal Affairs Agency, so it was entrusted to a specialized external body. The director of the Fourth Legislative Bureau simultaneously served as head of the external organization.

In other words, this was a formal Japanese government organization that cracked down on crimes with special powers.

Nanakamado was shocked by the sudden appearance of the opposing forces, and made a plea at the Headquarters under the name of reporting.

"Letting the Japanese government run Strain would inevitably raise serious security concerns."

They received a short and pithy response to that hype.

"We can expect some effect on the organization."

Suspecting them, Nanakamado set out to investigate a suspiciously newly established department and was surprised to make the first move.

The "King" of the "Blue Sword" was the head of the Fourth Legislative Bureau of the Legal Affairs Agency.

That was what it said in his appointment letter.

The "Blue King" (which was written on the appointment letter), officially designated by the Japanese government, was an organization that cracked down on crimes with special powers. There was no way something like this could be established without being scolded by Headquarters. Nanakamado finally understood the meaning of the short reply above as if they were drenched in cold water.

Headquarters approved the establishment of that new department of the Japanese government after receiving information about the "Blue King" from the Japanese government without relying on Nanakamado's sources. Probably through "Tokijikuin".

"Headquarters colluded with the "King" who owned the Japanese government."

Looking back on their own actions, Nanakamado was very impatient with the inevitable treatment.

"Although we are a subordinate intelligence agency, we are protected against Nanakamado."

However, they were not only very impatient, but also very angry.

The strategy of suppression of the expansion decided by the General Headquarters was only reflected in the incomprehension of the high spheres.

They could only think that controlling the reckless movement by establishing a rival organization meant that their territory had been devastated.

In that surprise attack, they were bitterly reminded that they were just a department under the command of Headquarters, but they were not steered in the intended direction: to be discreet and quiet. On the contrary, being cornered made them more frustrated and their attachment to the power in their hands deepened.

Furthermore, they intuited that the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau was not a "background intelligence agency" but a front organization with real power, threatening their survival. It was proof that dealing with Strains was no longer a covert manhunt behind the scenes, but a frontline security operation.

In fact, just after the inauguration of the Fourth Legislative Office of the Legal Affairs Agency, a group of people wearing unfamiliar blue uniforms began to walk around. Perhaps intending to be a threat, several Strains agents who were involved in intelligence activities disappeared and instead began to see the arrest of criminals with special abilities by people dressed in blue.

Due to their high level of experience and confidentiality, Nanakamado, who had come to regard the management of the Strains as their own business, handled the situation out of themselves and half openly. Their action could only be seen as a countermeasure by Japanese Headquarters and the Japanese government.

Times were beginning to change.

According to the will of the United States, Japan would regain its independence through a peace treaty with the Allies in a few years and would escape the occupation. At that time, the Headquarters would cease to function.

At the same time, Nanakamado should also be forced to make unwanted changes.

Given the value of the Strains, it would be impossible to deliver all the results to the Japanese government, but the authority to do what they wanted in an occupied country would be greatly reduced. The relocation of established facilities and the relocation of personnel, including Strains, could also take place. What was more important, Nanakamado himself as the "Anti-EX- $\alpha$  Intelligence Agency" had become obsolete, and

the possibility of it being dismantled along with Headquarters was extremely high. It seemed that the Fourth Legislative Affairs Bureau of the Legal Affairs Agency was established as a preliminary preparation for them (that suspicion was correct).

After all, the targets of the search, those with supernatural powers to watch out for, EX- $\alpha$ , who likely possessed core information that couldn't be extracted from Strains, were already in the system.

What's more, if they followed the style of "Tokijikuin" that had infiltrated the Japanese government... on that occasion, the "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji was clearly showing his sympathy for the policies promoted from the Headquarters. In that case, the United States, which was reinforcing its anti-communist policy, was likely to accept the existence of the "King" in order to make use of the military power of the "King" and others on the basis of political stability. The perceived danger that arose from the policy was offset by the advantages of the policy.

After the peace treaty, Nanakamado would, at best, be reduced to a small research institute.

The intelligence department, which was the main mission, would undoubtedly be dismantled.

The itinerary was already being created.

As the situation progressed, a tepid sense of danger began to erode them.

It is no longer possible to reverse the current of the times by achieving great achievements.

What they were to obtain was not the achievement that anyone appreciated.

It was the power to override the current of time.

The Nanakamado intelligence agency was terrified and secretly began acting recklessly or uncontrollably.

Power... to get the "King" who should still be lurking somewhere.

In a corner of Teramachi where the sun had set.

A pre-war Ford car parked in front of the open gates of Nichidokuji Temple. With a strange squeal, the engine stopped. After a delay, the lights went out and Nazumi and Chika got down from the front seats.

The person who welcomed them was also used to it, and soon a figure with a lantern appeared.

Nazumi straightened his back as usual and smiled down. Chika also bowed beautifully.

"Sorry for being late at night, young commander."

"Welcome to both of you."

The young man responded politely, but his voice mixed a slight tone of displeasure. The facial features that appeared in the twilight of the lanterns actually retained a youthful look, but the person himself did not like to be called that.

Nazumi named him that because he believed that anyone under the age of 20 was considered a youth. He didn't mean to mock either and smiled brightly.

He asked in a very natural, cheerful way, but with a smile that could only be seen as eating people.

"Is Kokujoji in the room?"

"No. He's feeling fine today, so he's been spending the day at the research institute."

"Hmm.", Nazumi looked at Chika.

Chika looked at him and shook her head.

"There... I guess you're in charge."

"Is that so? Well then let me go to Kokujoji's house by myself."

Disappointed by the flat refusal, Nazumi turned his attention to the car.

"I brought a new Hagure. Please give me some rice."

"Ha, let's meet everyone."

The young man bowed.

The boy who was sent by the main Kokujoji family in Kyoto with evil intentions had become a cunning assistant to manage the Kokujoji clan, which was housed in this temple before he knew it. From managing accommodation to coordinating missions, he was active in a wide range of fields, and there wasn't a single person in the faction who looked down on him for being a junior.

He was still an ordinary person who had not been given power by the "King", but it seemed that human ability had nothing to do with it. Despite being none other than the "King", the young man felt good about it.

"Chika-san, please ask him."

"Yes."

Chika opened the rear door of the car and made eye contact with the man who had settled into the seat, the self-proclaimed "Kanta the Flea". Convinced with a force that allowed no evasions.

"Untie the rope, but don't run away. I'll take the report tomorrow, but first of all, I'll guide you to an inn where people like you, who have been endowed with strange powers, gather."

Instead of running away, Kanta nodded many times.

"Heh, yes, of course!"

Not only that, but when the rope was untied, he would humble himself, keep low profile and uprightness.

"My name is Chiezaki Kanta! Please tell me your name!"

"I am Somei Chika."

"I am her husband, Somei Nazumi."

Next to Chika, who responded, Nazumi lined up at high speed and appealed. The elongated spine was slightly bent.

Chika didn't care if she was next to him, and she lightly wrapped both palms around Kanta's palms.

"Work hard to make amends and become a Katagi. This is a place that can help you with that."

Kanta, who received a heat he hadn't felt in a long time in his wrapped palm, contrary to the force of the blow, screamed face down.

"Hey!!"

"First of all, let's eat some rice. Nangu-kun."

"Ha, please come this way."

"Thanks!"

The three of them walked through the door together.

Nazumi, who stayed behind, straightened his back and got into the car. Gyu-gyu-gyu, he let out a strange squeal and shuddered as the engine started, reflecting on his careless instructions.

"Hmm, did that happen because I asked Chika-san to "ask" him...? From now on, I'll say "hand over that criminal". Yeah, that's good."

The car left the gate lightly.

In fact, the facility is located on a slope in Teramachi, a nearby area where you don't even need to use a car.

"Laboratory" was a convenient name and had almost no scientific equipment. The internal structure consisted of a long corridor, some habitable facilities and a lounge at the rear, and everything except the entrance was buried in the slope.

This unique structure was due to the fact that the facility's predecessor was a bomb shelter built to protect Teramachi's cultural assets from air raids. The surrounding slopes, hillsides, and fields were all owned by Nichidokuji Temple.

After Daikaku Kokujoji's stay at Nichidokuji Temple, he secretly remodeled that bomb shelter into a storage facility for the "Slate" he brought with him. Specifically, the ceiling, walls and floor of the innermost room and the corridor leading to it were hardened with a thick layer of strong concrete containing reinforced concrete.

Excluding very small ventilation openings and holes for wiring, entrances and exits to corridors and facilities consisted of a single full-size door, a one-person hole in the concrete block.

The only way to remove the "Slate" from there was to first excavate the slope and then use explosives or machine tools to blast a large hole in the wall or ceiling of the room. In other words, he physically blocked the possibility of the "Slate" being taken over by a raid or assault.

Because it was such a facility, there was not a single window in the long corridor.

The sound of Nazumi's footsteps pierced the concrete and was absorbed deeper and deeper.

(Every time I come here, it gets darker.)

Visibility in the corridor was extremely poor because several overhead lights were out.

(Ok, like this... Then why don't we swap them one for one?)

The rows of lights that were visible flickered and sparkled.

It was not an earthquake. It wasn't a bad installation, bad circuit connection, or wishful thinking.

The entire ceiling, walls, and concrete floor shone like a nightmare.

At that change, Nazumi, who had been keeping the pace unchanged, staggered.

At that moment, a sharp sound resounded like glass breaking, and at the same time, a blue light overflowed from the place where he stepped. Every time the light, which could be mistaken for glass or ice, spread, the flickering corrected itself and the gray corridor regained its shape.

Such steps of order invading chaos reached their destination without breaking the rhythm.

It wasn't the innermost wall; it was right in front of it. It was a very ordinary simple door set into a very ordinary wall, with a remnant of reed construction or an appropriate floor plan.

Nazumi knocked on the door softly, as if he were visiting a friend.

As usual, there was no response from inside, but he opened the door and went inside.

"I'm coming in, Kokujoji-kun."

An unusually thick wall with a single door merged into the void in the middle.

What was supposed to be a lounge was an amazing sight.

It was not a sky full of stars, but rather a universe with stars floating everywhere without even the ground.

The vast expanse of Heaven's path, filled with star clouds and galactic rivers, was not just visual information to be admired. It was an existence and a phenomenon unto itself, instilled with fear by its overwhelming depth and distance, and imprinted with the operation of precise providence.

If an ordinary person were thrown there, they would be suffocated by madness. In the center of that storm of lights and shadows, Nazumi walked with an immutable rhythm. With each steady step he took, a blue crystal formed like a stepping stone and spanned like a bridge through space. It seemed like a myth that cut cruelty with beauty, and a blasphemy that repainted providence with human actions.

(Today's result is quite good.)

From the top of his straight back, Nazumi looked around him like a beacon. He could tell at a glance to what extent that spectacle, which could be called the bare flesh rule, was in place for him, the "Blue King" who ruled the order.

(However, the aftermath is spilling out... Is it time to clear it up again?)

In the center of the universe where it was difficult to measure the actual distance, there was a figure floating.

Before long, someone who seemed to have noticed the visitor turned around.

A few steps before, Nazumi stopped and spoke from the end of the bridge.

"It's already night outside, Kokujoji-kun."

In contrast to the fresh youth, the one who floated in the center of the universe... The "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji wiped the sweat from his cheeks and breathed out deeply. The brow lines that gave the impression of bravery did not yet show slack.

"No, Sir."

Perhaps because he was at the peak of exhaustion, the rank of the former Japanese army slipped out of his mouth inadvertently. The expression was not only fatigue, but the color of light pain was bleeding.

"Recently, I have come to feel that everything here in the universe is woven from "something"."

Without letting him finish, Nazumi stuck his index finger into Kokujoji's chest.

"If I go back to sleep, I won't be able to understand it."

As soon as he finished speaking, a blue light exploded from behind him on the opposite side of his chest.

As if shot from a gun, Nazumi looked through the brim of his cap and saw a great distortion in the spread of light. When he withdrew his finger from him as he frowned, the light reassembled in the correct position and then returned to his back as a reverse reproduction. Kokujoji had slightly reduced the color of pain.

"Thanks, Sir."

Nazumi ignored the voice and began with the premise.

"This "removal" is nothing more than a temporary fix using the characteristics of the "Blue King" who rules order. It's not a repair to fix something broken. Didn't I explain it at the beginning?"

"Yes..."

Kokujoji, who had no objection, acknowledged his position.

"If your ambitions are broken before you can seize power, your own ambitions, your vassals, and maybe even more people... will be useless."

"....."

After letting his head settle, he asked his favorite question.

"No matter how many times I try to persuade you; why don't you stop pushing yourself to the limit? Is it because you don't have confidence that you can carry the "fate" of others like a "King"?"

"No."

Kokujoji, who had finally extinguished his irreconcilable feelings, responded with a thoughtful but confident denial. He found the reason within what made him do that, and put it into words.

"Because it is necessary."

After saying that, he became even more convinced.

"Because we need more power from now on."

"Does that mean you will acquire greater power to reign as a "King"?"

Like a grading teacher, Nazumi asked the meaning of the words in detail.

Prompted, Kokujoji also delved into his thoughts.

"There may be a reign as a result."

Perhaps in response to that heart, the universe twisted.

Either it opened a hole in the abyss, or it spun a glowing vortex and moved.

"But more than that, I gain power so that I can produce more talented brothers. Sow them like seeds, illuminate and nurture their "gold" with my "gold"... that's what my power is for."

In the midst of his weary face, his narrowed eyes filled with brilliance.

The dazzling and precious radiance of the "Golden King" who controls fate.

He caught it with the brim of his cap, and Nazumi laughed.

"I see, so the reason was not lack of confidence, but the expression of resolve."

Even though he was emotionally convinced that he would never stop, he stabbed at him with a straight face.

"Then at least break the bad habit of falling when you reach your limits. Now that I have my own work to do, I can no longer run into town like an electrician."

"Ha..."

Kokujoji grudgingly greeted and made an embarrassed face.

When he jerked his hand down, the universe, the bridge and everything was dented. Like a bursting balloon, like a cracking egg, light and shadow scattered and melted.

The two slowly descended into the dimly lit room where the miracle had disappeared.

A lump was placed in the center.

A thick block of stone carved with geometric patterns.

A mysterious relic brought from the German Third Reich that collapsed after hardships and was kept strictly confidential there... It was the "Dresden Slate", the source of the "King's power".

That mysterious object, for which ordinary people could not help but feel reverence.

"Come on, let's go back to Nichidokuji and eat."

However, the "Blue King" did not care about the dust and he smiled brightly.

Kokujoji followed the boots, which had already started to create a happy rhythm.

(This man hasn't changed a bit since we met.)

As a man who calmly accepted the power of the "King" and lived in his daily life, which was so different from himself and others, even the frowning face he was looking at, although he was trying to control his mind, he couldn't stop a tear from falling.

(Or is this the "King" figure he wanted?)

Kokujoji stared at the back of the blue cloak.

"Hurry up, Kokujoji-kun."

The person himself, regardless of what others thought of him, straightened his back without hesitation and kept walking. The person he was talking to was behind him, but his voice carried on.

"Chika-san likes to eat with a lot of people. She won't show it to her face."

"Yes, I know."

"Uh, why?"

"Nazumi-dono, you say that every time you visit us."

After the two arguing "Kings" left, nothing moved in the room, only eternal darkness remained.

In July 1945, Kokujoji was summoned back to Japan, exhausted.

The power of the gigantic "King" was overflowing into his body and mind, and he continued to inflict bursting pain. When he went to bed, his body was emaciated and the high fever and excruciating pain did not go away.

After a month, his physical condition finally recovered, but in the meantime, Japan had lost the war. Kokujoji and his vassals were worried about what would happen from there and what they should do. The Army of Occupation would always aim at the "Slate". They were all convinced as a party that won power.

Meanwhile, Kokujoji gradually increased the number of vassals, but did not make any dramatic moves. Their "gold"... the so-called talent didn't mean they could get what they wanted, and it didn't mean they could get what they needed. Some were the kind that wouldn't wake up unless they were polished. Waiting for the right time to use their talents, they worked hard through trial and error.

Then, in mid-1946, a couple visited Kokujoji, who had been training with all his might and repeatedly falling, even though he had noted the rise of a new "King".

Somei Nazumi and Somei Chika.

The two introduced themselves to Kokujoji, who appeared at the meeting place being cautious, and suddenly said:

"I would like to make use of this blue power, but could you give me a reference opinion?"

"Are you the reason why my husband behaved like this?"

On one hand, he was surprised by the "blue" power that was displayed so openly, and on the other hand, as he fought the other's terrifying vigor that made his hair stand out, Kokujoji started with the endorsement.

It wasn't even necessary to confirm the truth, but was it unexpected luck that he was asked to make friendly contact with the "King", or was it a vicious trap? It was natural for Kokujoji to proceed cautiously because the standard of trust was not set.

However, the results of the supporting investigation were simple, and the person in question did not hide the identity of the two people, and even talked about it at length, so it soon became clear.

Somei Nazumi was a former army major who worked at the General Staff Office and was a skilled military bureaucrat who was nicknamed "Katashiya" because he could immediately solve cases in any department. After the war, he belonged to the Ministry of Demobilization, and even when an order for the expulsion of civil servants was issued, the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces addressed him by name and said: "We are going to postpone the dismissal of those that are absolutely necessary to implement the provisions of the directive (demobilization work)". He was a legendary man and he was preserved.

Demobilization was the task of returning 3 million Japanese soldiers who had gone abroad to their home countries. Implementing that task required a high level of expertise, from the surrender of the local army to disarmament procedures and efficient management of ship operations.

It seems that, in the middle of 1946, he suddenly woke up as the "Blue King" while quietly working on his job, which was really the perfect job for a "Katashiya". The person in question solemnly accepted his circumstances, welcomed his wife as the first "minister" (they both disagreed with that title) and immediately visited Nichidokuji.

At that meeting,

"If you're not feeling well, let's "clean" ourselves up a bit."

He also explained the reason why he appeared at Nichidokuji Temple, using the power of the "Blue King" to restore Kokujoji's physical condition.

"I think the other "Kings" are also sensing your raging "Golden" power. You didn't try to get close to me like I do. Since I have a lot of problems, I decided to take a look at what kind of person you are and decide how to treat you."

Anyway, everything went as he was, and he was such a natural man that it would be foolish to suspect the other side. Or maybe he was an eccentric with a truly two-faced mental makeup, Kokujoji thought secretly.

By the way, Somei Chika was also a hero in a different sense, almost as you saw it. They have been together since they were young and got married right after the war ended.

The "Blue King", who rules order, began frequent visits to Nichidokuji Temple with his wife while continuing to work for the Ministry of Demobilization, and before he knew it, he had settled into the position of mastermind of the Kokujoji faction.

Unlike Kokujoji, who had traveled to Europe as a technical officer but was only an officer at the front lines, Nazumi was an elite military bureaucrat in the General Staff Office. Nazumi was able to build a concrete and political plan on how to make Japan prosper with the power of the "King".

In that way, the Kokujoji clan hiding in Nichidokuji Temple began to move with clear political intentions, approached the Japanese government as a bodyguard through the Kokujoji family and Nazumi connections, and gradually increased the number of members while establishing "Tokijikuin". In addition, he led the Japanese government to a line of cooperation with Headquarters, and after secret negotiations with Headquarters taking advantage of the discord with Nanakamado, the establishment of the Fourth Legislative Office of the Legal Affairs Agency within the Japanese government (so, Nazumi was "transferred" from the Ministry of Demobilization to the Ministry of Justice), and the political situation flowed more or less according to its established route.

During those days, Kokujoji asked Nazumi.

"It's unthinkable that Nazumi-dono would make the "Blue King" himself bestow supremacy."

It was a conversation at a drinking party, and Kokujoji, of course, didn't take it seriously.

Nazumi didn't care if he was serious or not.

The answer was as simple and clear as ever.

"Hmm, is a man as smart as you limited by words, Kokujoji-kun? "King" is just a convenient title. We just have to help each other in light of the power that has appeared."

Kokujoji, who was very surprised, once had that distant dream.

A dream that brought together all the "Kings" awakened by the "Slate".

A dream of a new world where everyone helped each other with their manifested powers.

Towards the nearby Nichidokuji temple, Nazumi was driving at the legal speed limit.

Kokujoji, who was in the passenger seat, thought: (Nazumi prefers to drive alone, so he doesn't even give Chika the wheel.).

"Today's errand was the escort of a new Hagure."

Hagure was the name of the Strains in the Fourth Legislative Bureau of the Legal Affairs Agency. Basically, all the terms used in Nanakamado were informal, so they were often replaced by Japanese ones, including research.

Nazumi nodded as he enjoyed the feel of the wheel.

"Yes. Please allow me to return to society or be recruited into a faction, or let me do as I please."

"Is there any sign that Nanakamado is going to directly set it up yet?"

The pitch of the others' voices dropped a bit.

"Not yet, but... I don't think there's anyone watching their prey being snatched with their fingers in their mouths forever. I'll keep an eye out even for attacks in the city, just in case."

After saying that, Nazumi remembered with his own words.

"Speaking of kidnapping, Kokujoji-kun. The other day, I received a strange unofficial request from Nanakamado."

"Strange request?"

"If that is..."

When Chika found out that Nazumi couldn't fix it, Chika's expression turned "slightly spoiled".

"They said to return the hagure you caught."

Kokujoji bowed his head.

"If they ask me to return him... Are the Hagure and the others that Nanakamado recruited like machine personnel? If there is a suspicion of an escape, they wouldn't bother to make a request that would embarrass them, right?"

"It may not be possible from the results of the thought investigation, which cannot be done at the level of individual complaints, a certain number of members must have disappeared all at once, or perhaps in a short period of time."

As he said that, the car slowed down a bit. It seemed that the conversation had become interesting.

Kokujoji said:

"I see. We're just escorts, so right now, only the fourth station of Nazumi-dono's legal system has the strength to catch a large number of hagure."

Nazumi also said...

"Or is it a "King" besides us?"

After a while of silence, Kokujoji took over.

"I heard from Headquarters that Nanakamado is trying to capture a new "King" to oppose us. I left it as a ridiculous rumor, but it's unexpectedly serious, right?"

"Even if it's impossible to capture the "King", do you think they can make a large number of  $\beta$  individuals if they manage to make him cooperate? It's a bit too easy, no, if you get cornered, that's what it is..."

After thinking about it for a bit, Nazumi came to a conclusion.

"Come on, let's put our hands there. Even if we don't go as far as forming an alliance, we should at least put the banner aside so it's clearer."

Hearing that, Kokujoji also frowned.

It could also result in a horizontal shot when poking bushes.

After all, the opponent was... the "Red King", who had a criminal record against the Occupation Army.

"Kagirohi-gumi"... the demon's devilish iron fire field, huh? What would be the help of "Tokijikuin"?"

As usual, Nazumi answered clearly.

"Why did you go to great lengths to create the Fourth Bureau of Legislation?"

Kokujoji lamented his position of not being able to move lightly.

Putting aside the troublesome seat next to him, Nazumi once again drove the car up to the legal speed limit.

In a room in Nichidokuji, in a large wooden dining room, everyone ate a late dinner. It was a lively seat for Chika and Kanta because it was just the time for the replacement staff of "Tokijikuin" to return.

At first, they gathered around the newcomer.

"How do you like it? It's a delicious radish, right? It's from my field, that garden over there."

"Wahaha, you were also hit by Chika-san!"

"Nowadays, it's easy to work as long as you're wearing a hoodie, so don't worry."

"Chika-san, please listen to me~"

The guards of the "Tokijikuin" temple, who were making a fuss about such things, immediately formed their own circles and began to drink, lie down, sleep, sing, and dance, passing their time as they wished.

Chika and Kanta finally calmed down and picked up their bowls.

Meanwhile, Kanta told Chika a strange rumor.

"A black cape?"

Chika placed a large bowl on the table and turned her back to the side.

On the contrary, Kanta said as he mishandled his rice.

"Uh... hey, we're the only geisha in the neighborhood, that's quite a famous story."

A geisha was a self-proclaimed name of Strain or Hasure.

"A disgusting bastard standing in a narrow alley."

The Nangu boy who brought the tea tray warned him that he was a little angry.

"Chika-san doesn't read Kasturi magazines."

He thought that the rude person was trying to attract attention with the subject of a popular book full of erotic, grotesque and bizarre stories, but Kanta was surprisingly serious.

"No, I really left my territory alone, there are many people who suddenly disappear."

Chika was not interested as a ghost story, but as information from a suspicious person.

"How tall is that monster?"

"Hey, listen to the rest too."

"Well, if you say that much..."

At Kanta's request, the Nangu boy, who was actually somewhat interested, also joined the circle in seiza.

Chika insisted.

"So..."

"Um, yes, he is around six feet tall, with a long and slender build, and just as he is called a black cloak, he wears a black cloak on his head. His face turned into a shadow, and it cannot be said if Is that a man or a woman."

"It's quite detailed, but is it normal to see that figure?"

The Nangu boy made a point (ruining most ghost stories), but Kanta remained unmoved. On the contrary, he imitated the gesture of a ghost towards the boy.

"Actually, that is, I guess you could say it's a misunderstanding..."

"What is?"

"....."

Kanta continued leaning towards the young Nangu who was serene and Chika who was narrowing her eyebrows.

"Two geisha, who thought they weren't afraid of some stupid bastard who gets blankets, found themselves in an alley... in that black cloak!"

"What?!"

Faced with Kanta's threat, the young Nangu unintentionally broke his seiza.

Of course, Chika didn't flinch.

"So..."

"Well, one of them was flabbergasted, but the other one was good at making dumbiras and almost cut the black cape off."

"A little rough, but brave. So..."

"That's the highlight." Kanta said.

"Hey, what happened to the black cloak that was about to be cut? As he looked ahead, he ran back and disappeared into the back of the alley with great force! But the geisha who chased him never came back."

"Heh..."

"Why did he bother running backwards?"

Kanta was content to scare the Nangu boy and gave Chika some heartfelt advice.

"I don't understand, but it's true that he didn't come back. You also have "power" right? You and your husband should be careful when you go around the city."

"I understand, thanks."

After politely thanking him, Chika turned to face the table again. In the corner of her eye, Kanta joking with the Nangu boy.

(If the story is true, another Hagure who has the ability to take revenge on the sword-wielding Hagure...?)

Thinking about it, Chika slowly picked up the takuan with her chopsticks and nibbled on it.

## **"MONSTER / BLACK CAPE"**

\*Movie "The Great Labyrinth of Black Cloak and Steel" (1950) ~Calling Asakusa~

"Now then, this 'black cloak' is a monster no one has seen before. Take a look at the strange and exciting interlude with the Great Detective. Come on, the entrance is this way."

Category: urban legend.

Established: late 1940s.

Synopsis: A ghost story about a man in a black cloak.

Characteristics: There are several theories, but the following are generally common.

- \* Wear a black cape.
- \* Sometimes called get (blanket).
- \* Sex unknown.
- \* Six feet tall.
- \* Often confused with other urban legends and considered Hasshaku.
- \* Standing in an alley or between thin buildings.
- \* If you chase him, he will run back and go to the back of the alley.
- \* If you chase him alone, you won't be able to come back.
- \* He's not good with gold accessories.

Observations: After effects, etc.

- \* The boom has been reignited several times and continues to the present.
- \* There are many cases of mischief, such as dressing up and denouncing.

- \* Became the subject of many movies and illustrated story shows.
- \* Later various differences and heresies arose.

## **CHAPTER 2: UNNO YUTAKA**

"Special Attack"... Short for Special Attack Corps. A suicide ram attack is generally referred to as a special attack unit. At the end of World War II, the Japanese army, which was in a difficult situation, made a systematic and large-scale effort to get out of the war situation. On October 20, 1944, the name of the first special attack unit, "Kamikaze Special Attack Corps", could also be called "Kamikaze".

Unno Yutaka was screaming at the empty sky.

"Hey, please wait."

At noon on August 15, 1945 (Showa 20). He had been yelling ever since he was told the war was over, after the radio broadcast at Oita Air Base, where he had no idea what was being said. There were those who cried, those who crouched down, those who were stunned... There were many, but he was the only one who...

"I do not think."

...was screaming.

"I guess we're meeting here to carry out a suicide attack."

Driven by a sense of mission and exhilaration, he was taught that his own emptiness was the same as death, and it all bothered him, but still, from the bottom of his heart, he couldn't help but scream.

"Since I joined the camp, I've been beaten up by shitty people for shitty reasons, but I'm still here to hold on to fly and throw everything I've got to that shitty enemy in the sky... I guess."

He jumped from the barracks into the scorching summer sky and screamed at the place where he had decided to die.

"It's too good to provoke a lot of people and stop because it's over. Like you until this morning, say something nice. What about your beliefs, what about your spirit?"

The boy's cry did not resound like a cicada and disappeared under the sky.

Because he was like that, he was glad when he heard that the lieutenant general, who had been the commanding officer, had decided to launch a kamikaze sortie on his own, saying

that he wanted to follow in the footsteps of a large number of loyal generals who had not yet received a formal ceasefire order.

"That's it. It's about taking responsibility for what you've done."

Without hesitation, he volunteered to accompany him.

Several people who had just woken up from his collapsed state immediately after the broadcast also volunteered to accompany them.

Then, after 17:00 on August 15, the 11 "Comet" carrier-based bombers that could fly at the base flew into the pre-sunset sky with a heart-rending engine sound. It didn't even have a machine gun, it was a kamikaze plane that couldn't be used for anything more than the 80th weight bomb that would hit the enemy.

The sky is infinitely wide, and the sea is infinitely distant. It was a sight that made them forget that far ahead, a brutal American and British fleet was closing in to trample their homeland. They greeted the setting sun.

"Well then, Sun God. We will never meet again."

Before long, night fell, and when the formation flight began to be in danger, they were able to miraculously meet the enemy fleet.

Having avoided the worst possible outcome of a running out of fuel accident, he was delighted at the chance to throw as much as he could, and turned his nose towards the enemy fleet. A tremendous density of flak guided them from the other side. Or maybe one of the wingmen crashed first.

"Thank you."

He thanked the enemy fleet and his wingman and began to descend.

His body floated, and then he was pressed against the seat. Wrapped in those shuddering sensations, his mouth wrapped in a white silk scarf contracted.

(I'm not afraid, I cannot be afraid.) He thought like that frantically, had not any moment for flashing back to his whole life. (It is not fear, I have no fear, laugh, hey come on, laugh.)

The airship's shadow flashed with gunfire, and before he got there, the sudden sound of metal being torn away and the dull tremor of the collision tore through his entire body.

It was hit and the airship was crushed by the shell.

He immediately burned and died.

"Sorry, fuck off."

The words may have been felt and not expressed.

However, there was only the feeling of falling while a machine spinning out of control.

And so, their war ended.

+++++++

Unno Yutaka woke up under the sun that he should have said goodbye to.

He woke up in a clean bed.

He could tell at a glance that he was inside a ship.

"I'm alive... what a shame."

Also, the ship was not Japanese, it was an American warship.

As soon as he thought he had been taken prisoner, he put his hand to his waist, but of course the self-determination pistol was taken from him. Of course, he had no intention of committing suicide.

He didn't know the spirit of living and not being humiliated as a prisoner of war printed by stupid air force personnel. He just thought of grabbing a gun and going on a rampage to the end and dying.

But at that time he had no weapons.

Most of all, he realized that a significant part of his heart had been discouraged by the fact that the suicide attack, which he had faced with such despair, had failed. Maybe he was disappointed in himself for not getting to the place where he was supposed to die.

"There is a gun, at a time like this... either to kill yourself or to go on a rampage and die, was it a talisman to keep you alive?"

It was as if the heat that filled his entire body had disappeared.

Then, in a daze, an officer in a starched military uniform approached him, who did not have any stains on his body. Perhaps they planned to interrogate him or even execute him. The officer spoke to him in fluent Japanese. Somehow, he seemed to think of him as a boy who had been recruited.

"Don't be silly, I'm far from 20 years old, but I'm a full-fledged person."

Even when he yelled back, the officer laughed and excused himself, saying that the Japanese look young.

During the conversation, he learned that the officer had stayed in Japan for a long time as a military attaché, that he had many Japanese acquaintances in the quarters, and that he had learned Japanese at that time.

"Before the war, you mean?"

When he was young, he had no idea that he had just spent time before him where he could get along with the Americans. More than that, he hastened to ask him if he would be executed, but he replied that the war was already over, there was no need to listen to him, and he didn't want to kill him now.

"Now..."

A single word with precise pronunciation, just now... marked the end of the war in his mind.

After that, he spent more than two weeks with the soldiers until the warship docked in Yokosuka. The soldiers loathed kamikaze like madness, and indeed, kamikaze had caused great damage to the fleet in the past, but even so, as a kamikaze pilot, he was nonchalantly treated as a "cheeky kid who slipped into the ship".

"Heh, that one wins, this one loses, so there's plenty of room."

At first, he thought that the reason they treated him that way was because they were happy that they had won the war. To some extent, his assumption was correct, but after a while he realized something else, completely normal.

Any soldier. They weren't brutes who were indoctrinated by their superiors, they were the older brothers. Reluctantly dragged onto the battlefield, the rude and impatient soldiers, or the timid and clumsy, or the hostile and kind-hearted...were not meant to be killed.

He couldn't help but feel that the image of the enemy within him was terribly distorted.

He also learned from an officer (perhaps thinking that the "little warriors" wanted to know the outcome of their battle) that a ruthless reality was one of the main reasons for the soldiers' attitude.

In other words, the final suicide attack from him did not cause any damage to the fleet.

It was because they had no criminal record that he felt at ease.

Even though his pride was greatly hurt, he still acted tough on the spot.

"I don't like being treated like a child, but whether it's an arm wrestling or a fist fight, the odds are 50/50."

After that, for a while, he worked in the kitchen for food, singing nostalgia songs with which he didn't understand the language. In the fist fight at the drinking party, he was "fighting amongst themselves", and he learned broken English. On the contrary, he taught Japanese, and as he dealt with various faces, confusion began to arise in him.

"Hey, did I go out of my way to kill these guys?"

When he received a letter from an officer at his residence in Tokyo, he thought.

"These guys aren't the ones I have to hit with everything I've got."

Seeing the ravages of Yokosuka approaching, he reflected.

"Well then... who are those guys? What is that? Who was that? What was that?"

Unable to give an answer, he got off the warship and asked the officers and soldiers to see him off.

"Thank you."

He said that and said goodbye.

Unno Yutaka returned to Tokyo, alternating between the burned fields and the remains of the fire.

The hustle and bustle of the black market, the hustle and bustle of people, saw a boy clinging to an Occupation Army jeep, heard a happy song on the radio, walked past an ex-military policeman being lynched, and headed for a temporary destination .

There was nothing in the pension in Japan requested by the officer.

To be more precise, only the pillars that had not been reduced to ashes greeted him. Still, he did not give up, asking roaming scavengers and people living in the barracks about the whereabouts of the inhabitants.

"I am alone and have nothing else to do. It is a debt of gratitude for a night's stay and a meal."

He heard many stories as he searched for things that he didn't know if they were dead or alive.

The commander who led them on a suicide attack was criticized here and there.

Most of those who spoke badly were the comrades of the commanders, that is, the leadership of the old army. They unilaterally declared to the dead that if they decided to commit suicide, they would do it alone, that it would be nothing more than a suicide attack by a private army that ignored orders, taking with it young people with a promising future.

"Don't be silly to say something against the man who constantly puts a line on what he has done."

He was angered from the bottom of his heart by that ruckus.

"What, next time you should use that life for the restoration of your homeland. It must have been until yesterday that you took it from a young man with a promising future and ordered him to die."

From the bottom of his stomach, a kind of fever revived.

"Are you ordering me to turn my palms back, value my life, and work hard to rebuild? Don't you think of people's lives as nothing more than a tool that can be used for your benefit? Fuck you."

The heat hadn't gone away.

"The kamikazes did it because it was an order after all, whether they wanted to die or not. The bigger you get, the duller it gets, and you can roar to whatever you want."

Like a buried fire, he kept burning deep inside.

"How long will they continue to give orders to my life and our lives?"

A rumor reached his ears while he was dying with a pain that he could not scratch, even if he wanted to.

It was rumored that the occupying forces would collectively incinerate the Japanese army planes.

His feet turned towards Chofu, the elimination site.

Unno Yutaka grimly muttered.

"Even the execution ground is not that far away."

Under the autumn sky, the darkness increased with each step.

It was all a sad spectacle.

When he arrived at the Chofu airbase, mountains of various sizes had been built here and there.

The wings that once flew through the sky were now mountains of scrap that had been mercilessly crushed.

He knew well which ones were thrown away without even being burned.

A twin-engine trainer with a broken leg, a Type 0 transport plane with its cockpit torn off, a Shiden with its wings torn off... the marks of having been destroyed by human hands, not in combat, were clearly visible. Tires had been removed from many aircraft. According to a nearby resident, it was taken away to be used as farm equipment. There was no need for those things anymore, so what was wrong with using them for something else?

"Ha, I'm losing... it's disgusting."

And then, with a heavy heart, he arrived at the base's large airstrip, where the end was about to begin.

The bulldozer rushed forward and pushed the Type 100 reconnaissance aircraft upside down onto the aircraft next to it. Also, the planes they had brought back had probably been pushed into space, and the twin-engined Type 1 and Type 97 had their muzzles sunk into each other. Front, back, left, and right, Gale and Hien were crammed into a small space.

A Japanese worker scattered fuel between them, which there was no point in taking care of anymore. In addition to the roughly patrolling guards, many other onlookers gathered to watch the victory for them.

Before long, a harsh whistling sounded and a fire started.

He was watching his fate closely.

"....."

Thick black smoke rose up, followed by a dazzling flame.

The planes are slowly roasting.

"Something like this..."

He finally squeezed out a single word of emotion that seemed to make sense.

Suddenly, one of the wings burst open in the flames.

".....!"

The remaining fuel in the fuel tank caused the explosion.

Small explosions occurred one after another, tearing the plane apart.

"Uh..."

The smoke and flames expanded even further, swallowing the form of what had once been.

Before the invisible and disappearing things,

"Hey, please wait."

Unintentionally... he hid his voice, spilling out his real voice.

Like the planes, everything on it was burned, blown up, and smashed.

Forgetting to even blink, his voice continued to spill out as he covered himself in the smell of oil and the soot of smoke.

"Iron Wings, are you going to leave me behind?"

The wings that looked up in admiration mercilessly disappeared into the flames.

Being left behind, he didn't even know where to throw everything he had.

He didn't even want to obey an order that told him to go for a selfish prospect.

Wings, enemies, life, everything that should have existed for him to live was completely lost.

Anger, frustration, and sadness swirled inside him like a storm, burning with flames.

The tears that could have flowed were dried by the flames that burned irreplaceable things.

"All of me, all shining, should have been there."

Dokun... Something pulsed in the distance.

"But everything, I can't help it, I made it somehow."

Dokun... his heart was pounding, and something about it reached him.

"I'm..."

To the other side of the flames, to there...

"As I did?"

He let out an angry roar that welled up from the depths of his heart.

"Turn it off, alright, ooooooh!"

At the top, his senses suddenly expanded.

".....?!"

From the end of the darkness that he went through, the "Slate", the "King, Red", destruction.

Various fragments of theory flowed into his mind, but he knew nothing at all... With only his senses, he knew that the heat that burned him was accompanied by flames. He knew that the flames were overflowing without stopping.

"Why, this guy...?"

The words he addressed to those who interrupted his shouting were voices, not voices, but in a different form. Instead of exhalation, masses of flames dispersed. The open palm in front of him, and the entire body that was looking down, were engulfed in fiery red flames.

It was very hot, but it did not burn a layer of clothing or a single layer of skin.

He was irritated by the hellish disgust of not being able to die

".....?"

Capturing the sensation of being a part of him, he looked up.

He looked up at the sky for the first time that day, and it was floating in the black smoke that was rising towards the gloomy cloud.

It was a gigantic sword that gave off a dazzling red glow.

He muttered as he breathed in flames.

"I don't even care about the wings..."

He didn't like the fact that it was something that connected him.

A startled cry broke out behind him.

It's not a Japanese voice, it was a familiar American voice.

When he turned around wondering what was going on, several US soldiers on guard were staring at him with pale faces.

He vomited from the disgust of being burned alive.

"Fuck it. I'm in a good mood now."

Something hit him in the stomach.

If he only looked at it, he could see one of the American soldiers pointing his cannon at him, which was leaking gunpowder. He thought that he was going to clean it with a gun before. There wasn't a single scratch on his belly, let alone on the clothes he wore.

He felt that the flames had fanned.

"How nice."

He was stirred up, and his spirit was also on board. There were times when he wanted to freak out, even though he knew freaking out wouldn't help anything... Now was the time.

With hellfire burning his wings behind him, he stepped forward.

Although his shoes didn't burn, the ground he stood on did burn.

He couldn't help but laugh at the absurdity of that.

His smiling voice turned into flames and scattered into the sky.

He cried out loud to his heart's content.

Feeling like a nightmare, he jumped on those who would shoot him.

The bullets that hit him did not hold as long as the raindrops.

He learned that, with the power of his fists, he could turn anyone to ash.

However, after waiting for a second, he yelled.

"Hey, you guys!"

After the US soldiers fled, they vandalized the jeep.

As he was convinced, the iron melted, expanded, and exploded.

The surroundings became noisy and US soldiers, in addition to security, rushed to the scene.

Even with hundreds of thousands of machine guns and rifles firing all over his body, he kept going.

At that moment, he advanced as if he was flying a distance that he couldn't reach from far.

He broke the armored car like candy, he saw further, he went further.

"Hahaha! Hey, isn't there a tank?! A warship is fine!"

With his own cry, the faces of the officers and soldiers suddenly came to life.

"Eh?!"

He looked around to see if there was anyone inside the armored vehicle that had been smashed to pieces.

He then he let out a fiery breath in the middle of nowhere, and turned white.

"Oh... what the hell is this fucking dream... I can't wake up."

He turned on his heel and walked slowly amid countless frightened stares.

In the fire that still burned the wings and the rest.

Finally, black smoke swirled in the wind, the flames rose, and the nightmare for the American soldiers ended.

He stepped on the rubble, and when he got to the middle, he exploded under a step and flew into the sky. Leaving behind the flames, he stepped through the black smoke and looked closely at the huge gigantic sword.

It was strangely shaped, neither a machine nor a creature.

"What are you going to do?"

He asked before the levitation of the explosion finished, but there was no answer.

With a snort, he made another explosion in the transition from floating to falling and flew away. He did not set any particular address. He left it to chance and flew as far as he could, but with all his might.

Those who made a fuss on the ground did not notice the star that had fallen from high above their heads.

"This kind of thing... what should I do?"

Unno Yutaka whispered into the empty sky and closed his heavy eyelids.

From somewhere in the past, he prayed for the dream to start again.

Although he knew it would not come true, he kept praying.

December 1948.

The Shizume area, which had been burned down during the air raids, has now formed a decent urban landscape. Of course, a splendid building (even if it burned down) was not enough for the fingers of one hand. All the wooden houses are smaller than the barracks, and the only advantage is the animation.

In the city center, the street stall-style black markets had all but disappeared, except in a few places. Instead, "markets", which are permanent shops lined up in rows of densely packed terraced houses, were common. Most of the shops were crowded restaurants and bars, pachinko parlors, sundry shops, and a slightly quirky dance hall.

Three years after the war, domestic distribution had been revived and shopping was no longer the job of an individual carrying a large backpack between the country and the city. The normal economic activity of middlemen buying ingredients and merchandise in bulk and selling them wholesale to each store was returning to normal.

An organization called "Kumi" was in charge of the operation of the entire market, management of trading rights, transactions with brokers, surveillance patrols, arbitration of disputes, and even negotiations with the government.

His predecessor was a group called Kagushiyashi, who had been in charge of land division (store locations) and entertainment at many local festivals. In the crowded market, there was a group that divided up each section, and while supporting the vitality of reconstruction, sharpening its rival's day by day with the goal of prosperity.

One of them was a group called "Kagirohigumi".

It is an emerging group born after the war, and the tightening of the market was relatively weak. Both the payment collected at the store and the brokerage fee were cheaper than the market price. Of course, kindness was not the reason. On the contrary, the members' arms were ridiculously strong and the controlled area was several times wider than the other groups, making it cheaper for that amount.

The Shizume area was originally a lawless area where many groups created a black market right after the war and fought over territory just like in the Warring States period. There was no patience to look at each other, no reason to compromise, and from bullying like obstruction of business to outright violent incidents, the chain of vices was the daily life of that town.

At the beginning of 1946, the disastrous situation changed completely with the sudden appearance of Furaibo. A wandering man... or, rather, a boy who ate everything on his strength alone.

Starting out as a free food eater at a street stall, sounding like a street fighter, being hired as a bodyguard at a market, and finally starting out as "Kagirohi-gumi" at the end of his fierce to-and-fro with multiple groups, even barefoot he was a fierce upstart in the career. Even after establishing the group, it took him more than two years to deal with other interventions and conflicts, and the former Furaibo was now in the position of a big boss who controlled most of the market in the Shizume area.

The big boss, who returned from a kamikaze attack, was exactly like a kamikaze attack, he was not afraid of death and even wanted to die.

In other words, he was "Unno who was slow to pass away".

There is a normal private brothel and gambling house at the back of the so-called Yokocho (the sign is "Kagirohi Business Association", and the name of the remaining place is "Kagirohi Yokocho"), which opens the entrance of the townhouse in the main street. Relatively speaking with the police... Kagirohi-gumi wasn't too enthusiastic about those things that were easily noticed by the superiors and the occupying forces, but still existed to a lesser degree than necessary.

When the early winter sun goes down and the market is packed with customers coming home from work, the little joint opens up in secret. For some reason, there was a thick plaque with just the name of the store, "Yakumo", written in large letters on the dilapidated shack that stood out from the others. Known only to those in the know, it is the fortress of Kagirohi-gumi.

Now he was receiving an early visit from a rare visitor.

A building with no play in its structure turns into a covered fire pit as soon as you walk through the entrance. Normally, the amusement park, where the bloody-eyed patrons would be excited, shouting "one way, half way" centered on that white cloth, was silently enveloped by a strange visitor. However, the place was not cold.

Rather, it was boiling with a heat that almost burned the skin.

The seats were unusually arranged with the cloth tray in the middle.

A rude visitor sat at the entrance. All of them were a group of people wearing soft hats, suits, and coats, and each of them was wrapped in furoshiki cloth. There was a gloomy

composure without madness or ferocity, which was clearly different from the brats running in and out of the group.

In the center of the group, an American sat cross-legged.

He was a dubious man with round eyes and a deep wrinkled smile, neither middle-aged nor young.

It was said by a man from Kagi-rohi-gumi, who was bending his slender torso completely.

"Thomas Colt... you said that, brother of the Occupation Army, Ani-san."

Rather, that was a strong-looking young man who had a deep voice, a thick torso, thick arms, and thick legs when he sat upright, and whoever saw him could not misunderstand him. The perforated eyes that filled the entire body, the presence of an enormous weight, suppressed the outburst of the young people behind.

Colt nodded with a smile that hid his emotions.

"Yes, Okuma Tamataro-san."

His fluent Japanese gave off a sense of suspicion rather than familiarity.

"According to his family record, he is 25 years old. The only son of the Kanto Okuma group that hired him as a janitor. Through repeated fights, he became a bad friend. After the death of his father, Sayataro, he handed over control of the group to him, and together they became Kagi-rohi-gumi. Commonly known as "Onikuma"."

Okuma's thick eyebrows twitched. As he felt the excitement of the youths, he calmly returned it.

"You seem to know a lot about it. And what are you looking for?"

"Yes, of course, I'd like to ask him to see me. It's a loss for you too."

"Go home."

As soon as he gave up, Okuma stepped on the tray and slammed his fist into his opponent's face. With a one knee stance, a thick fist thrown as naturally as walking.

".....!"

But it didn't make it to Colt.

A translucent barrier that appeared in front of him blocked the blow.

Colt added a small amount of teasing and deepened his smile.

"Wow. Just like information, you're fast."

"....."

Okuma silently ignited his fist as he continued to press against the barrier.

In the center of the dimly lit playing hall, an unlikely light lit both fields red. A group of coats reached for a furoshiki wrap, while the Kagi-rohi-gumi youths raised a dagger or a long wakizashi dosu.

They almost exceeded their limits in a matter of seconds.

"Enough, Okuma."

The woman who was poking her chin out at the back counter stopped him with a loose voice.

"What a great psychic. Isn't that unusual for the Occupation Army?"

Saying so, the woman stared at Colt's power through his round black glasses.

As for Colt, his wrinkled smile didn't break.

"I wouldn't say it's rare... as long as you live in this place... It's common, isn't it, Todokoro Suwako-san?"

"I see; you know me well."

Suwako stood up, tall and slender, approached. Her peculiar outfit, with ill-fitting hair and a worn kosode and long haori, swayed with every step.

Placing Okuma's fiery fist in front of him, Colt continued without hesitation.

"I know many other things. According to the family record, she is 23 years old. Her family died in an air raid. The owner of the restaurant where she first worked in this town. A lover who always accompanies him and who handles the administrative affairs of Kagi-rohi-gumi, commonly known as "Hanakumo"."

"Are you saying that on purpose to make me angry?"

Despite the atmosphere, the youthful beauty of hers smiled like a blooming flower.

It wasn't glee or affection; it was an expression of anger that burned slowly.

Before he even noticed it, many red threads that burned the air spread out from the tip of her hair.

Okuma suddenly realized and raised his fist.

"Bastards, they're coming!"

As he yelled at the youths, he himself collapsed to the ground.

A countless number of red threads were dancing wildly at high speed. Several youths who failed to escape were shot down, and even the "Yakumo" arcade was smashed by a ferocious blow from inside. A thick, tough nameplate rose into the sky.

Though a cry of surprise erupted from the depths of the market.

"What?! "Yakumo" exploded?!"

"Is she in and out again?"

"Who is it this time, boss Unno?"

"Okay, big sister! Find out if there's a fire!"

He didn't see enough of a stir to cause a panic. It was a common occurrence there.

First-time visitors were amazed. If the barrier hadn't covered all of them, it would have been more than amazing. Feeling cold sweat on his cheeks, Colt kept smiling.

"So this violence is as reported."

Saying that, he sharply raised his right hand.

In response, the group of coats unwrapped the cloth that wrapped them. From within, automatic rifles and heavy weapons three times as severe as Okuma imagined appeared. They aimed their tubes at "Yakumo", which had turned into rubble.

Before long, Okuma was the first to pull his thick body out of the rubble. In both arms was a young man who had been run over and passed out. As he took a deep breath, he asked next to him with a serious face.

"Don't do that, Suwako. What part of the earlier tease annoyed you?"

"They call me lover. If you can do that, no one will have a hard time..."

Standing calmly alone on the spot, Suwako muttered with her mouth pouting.

Colt ignored that.

(It was a little different than planned, but I don't mind.)

His target was a single man who should have dated if he had a dispute with his henchmen.

"Geeh, geeh!"

Somewhere in the rubble, a young man coughed.

"Damn, people are sleeping comfortably, why all the fuss?"

Colt was attentive and focused on the person raising the voice.

Someone kicked the galvanized board away and it righted itself. He brushed the dust off the jacket that appeared to be a leaked article.

"Ah! Did you do it again?!"

His physique was unexpectedly small, but his fearless gaze as he looked around him had an extraordinary attraction. A majestic atmosphere that makes you feel that things are different filled his whole body and overwhelmed the viewer.

Not intimidated by him, Suwako blurted out her own words as she did so.

"Shut up, bastard! More than that, he's a customer."

"A guest?"

He searched for a foreign object among the rubble.

Colt, who should have met the attack with determination and strength, felt a slight sensation of dread as his eyes turned to him. He came to mind, unpleasantly, the metaphor of a rat versus a bird of prey.

As expected, his eyes went to the group that was targeting them.

"Okay, let's do it."

As soon as he learned that the customer was his enemy, Unno Yutaka made a quick decision and willingly agreed.

In preparation, he wrapped the white silk scarf that he dug out of the rubble around his neck.

Near the collapsed "Yakumo", there was a vacant lot unofficially managed by Kagi-rohi-gumi. It was a forced evacuation area established before the war to prevent the spread of air raids.

They used it as a battlefield when they went in and out of other places. Even today, Okuma and Suwako were on Unno's left and right, and behind them, there were a dozen youths, and they were intimidating the opponent with his usual disposition.

Today's opponent did not respond by threatening to face each other like a mirror match. In the center of the group carrying sword-swallowing firearms, Colt with a doubtful smile began a sleepy story.

Under the night, voices came and went through the unlit streetlights.

"Once again, I would like to express my greetings to you, Third King, Unno Yutaka."

"What are you saying?"

Even if he was fluent in Japanese, he couldn't understand unfamiliar words. With a doubtful look on his face, Unno's childish face looked even more childish.

Colt obediently added an explanation.

"Third, the one who has the power of the King... In other words, it is a word that legally defines "King". Our country does not have a royal family, so please forgive me for using such a formal phrase."

It was a long talk based on the speculation that it would not be a bad idea to appeal that it was a party that would be forced to cooperate from now on, and that it was different from the group that started a conflict.

However, Unno's understanding was at a stage well before such speculation.

"Why, am I the third?"

"It's just the order in which the existence was confirmed, don't worry about it."

Colt continued patiently, though he was dismayed at his childishness.

"Actually, the Occupation Forces have been aware of your movements since last year. The Strain used in the conflicts in the neighborhood... in other words, like those with the "red power" who defeated the geisha."

The explanation was mixed with subtle falsehoods.

The detection was true, but the information was held within the Nanakamado intelligence agency, and was not reported to its superior organization, Headquarters. Research into essential "red power" was also intentionally neglected.

That's because they have ambitions to extend their power as an armed group. More than anything else, they hated the fact that by carelessly mentioning the "King", the situation would progress and the job of secretly collecting Strains that could be used in battle would be hampered.

"Tokijikuin", who cannot be hated, even if they hate them, launched the "Fourth Legislative Affairs Office of the Ministry of Justice" and began to directly interfere, such as arresting its officials. Situation scenes that had no choice but to move to keep pressing.

Of course, they also had no intention of rushing recklessly.

The strongest ability in American Strain, "Stone Wall" Thomas Colt (a pseudonym), which generates extremely strong barriers, and those who specialize in combat, are obtained through a unique route that bypasses the Headquarters. They gave them the weapons they needed and launched them into that operation. They calculated that they could compete well with the battle record of the "Demon" in Chofu.

On the other hand, Kagi-rohi-gumi had no intentions.

The fight that was sold was purchased at the asking price.

That was the only rule that was not even necessary to establish.

Even now, Unno was empty-minded... If he were to express the actual situation, he would get bored listening to the explanation.

He doesn't stop once a fight starts, but he's quiet until it starts. The reason he doesn't step in and cut the conversation short is because of the bully's way of thinking that it's easier for the other person to just say what he wants.

Then he suddenly realized it.

"Hmm? That's tall... I've seen it somewhere."

A group of people in coats, one of whom had a hat and collar covering his face, shrugged at him.

Okuma also stared at the slightly looming face, and an idea occurred to him.

"A geisha employed by the Agata group, "Ebisu no Kunizo"."

"Ah, you beat me to death... Yes, you switched sides to the Occupation Army."

"....."

He returned the casual greeting with silence, but Unno took no offense.

It was quite common for the world to reject people for awakening to their power, for them to have no choice but to use that power as a food source, or change the river bank depending on whether they won or lost.

Therefore, Unno can only think that the current boss is strict.

"You came to hit me again, it's the guts that I admire."

"....."

The silence returned again.

Before he knew it, Colt had stopped explaining and had his mouth shut.

Thinking that he really couldn't apologize, Unno apologized.

"Oops, sorry. Shall we keep talking?"

"Yes, good."

Colt responded with a sour face, but he actually got a good impression of that boy's nonchalance from the start. Realizing that, he quickly brushed it off and said, "That's the "King's" magic power."

"Let's get down to business."

He dared to speak matter-of-factly with a calm voice, but secretly wishing for success, he began.

"Would you like to join forces with us? You will use the power of the "King" to create a large number of geisha, and we will show you exactly where to use them. If we cooperate, we should be able to obtain even this country."

Although it was a picture from the future that was in mint condition and neglected, Nanakamado took it seriously. It can be said that they were left with only a bet of one or eight.

"Make a geisha?"

Unable to understand the use of the words, Unno tilted his head.

Instead, Suwako guessed and told him in an easy to understand way.

"In short, it's our "Sakazuki Fire Cup"."

"Oh I see."

Unno clapped.

In the Kagihi-gumi, the introductory sake cup is filled with the fire of the "Red King". Only those who were prepared to drink from that much hotter fire could join the family and be empowered along the way. By the way, Unno always drinks the same as the boss.

"Very well, then, do you want to scatter our "cups of fire"?"

"That's how it is."

Colt involuntarily leaned forward in response to Unno's conviction.

"Then it's impossible."

He received a firm refusal. The fact that he still held back from the answer that he should have expected more than half the time was due to his liking and regret.

"Why?!"

Unno looked left, right, and behind him.

"These weird trees are, well, a bunch of troublesome people."

With a troubled and embarrassed face, he showed pride.

"I chose them; they are my family. You can't make Strains for horse bones here."

"Well, that's how it is."

"Why do you say such embarrassing things?"

Okuma responded with a smile, while Suwako relaxed and cursed. The youths in the back also showed their affection for the boss in any way they could.

Just like that family, Colt concluded as he felt obvious jealousy.

"As I thought, it was impossible to persuade you... In that case, I would like you to be prepared for a certain amount of injury."

"It's still rude of you to say it, Colt-san. It's just a matter of doing it or not, right?"

Until the break, Unno urged war to break out.

Without any specifications, Colt raised his right hand.

"Yes, he's out of control."

The group of people in coats raised their mouthpieces at the same time.

Unno, who was standing at the reception, had a twinkle in his eyes,

"Okay, let's do it!"

Okuma, Suwako and the youth were full of fighting spirit.

There was no time for a tense confrontation.

"Come on!"

Immediately, Unno clenched his fist and erupted with bright red power.

Colt reflexively created a barrier and burst open from the front.

"Eh?!"

Before he knew it, Unno's heavy fist smashed into his face and he went flying, jumping to the ground twice before coming to a stop.

With Colt erecting a barrier, Colt's group waited for an opportunity to fire. The moment he waited, he was surprised to learn that the enemy boss had jumped to the place where the commander was. At that astonishing moment, "Ebisu no Kunizo", who was about to turn around the tip of the tube, received Okuma's fiery fist in the middle of his stomach.

Suwako tied a red string to the firearm that fell from Kunizo's hand and pulled the trigger without hesitation. A flurry of shots tore through the crowd in the court, and they scattered in all directions while eating up the foam. Young men ran there, slashing with long doses of wakizashi or hitting with beams to crush them all at once.

In the end, the exchange took less than 20 seconds.

Unno stared at his fist that had no lingering impression and let out a disappointed sigh.

"As I thought, these guys... well... hey..."

Looking curiously at the groaning group of people around him, and at the youths who fell one by one after being attacked in an instant, he gave the following instructions:

"Sorry to interrupt your evening drink, but I'll take care of you at the clinic. Even the brothers in the Occupation Army."

On the way, he noticed that something was flying.

The ten surrounding the open space were not bullets.

It was an anti-tank rocket projecting with a thin column of white smoke behind it.

(This is my favorite!)

His dazzling eyes took in the situation and his thoughts flashed like sparks.

He was probably shot after the two sides collided. The original plan must have been to protect the group with Colt's barrier, leaving only Kagihi-gumi to suffer. Unable to comprehend the situation due to the night fight, went off as planned.

"Hey, look it up!"

".....!"

Not mistaking his intentions, Suwako stretched countless red threads around her.

At the same time, Unno jumped into the sky. Along the way, he twisted his body and gathered strength.

(Don't you have to be prepared for some fires?)

He couldn't afford to adjust the power.

He just let it go.

"Ohhhhhhhhhhh!"

Red flames swirled and circled in the sky near the market.

The interlocking rockets in the searing heat caused one explosion after another.

A roaring sound rushed in from all directions, and those who were in the open space cringed in place. They were saved, but many large pieces of sparks rained down on the night market.

Okuma was the first to get back to his feet, but his expression clouded over at the uproar that had begun to spread out of the vacant lot.

"This is bad."

On top of that, Suwako, who was still crouching down, uttered her voice with a single red thread.

At the end of the thread, Unno in heaven received the voice.

"On the rooftop!"

"I understand!"

From the night sky, he could see the location of whoever fired rockets into the city. On top of the dark thatched roof, there were many duos displaying moves like holding the launcher, loading the next round, and preparing to retreat.

(Hey, it's hard to do.)

Strangely, Unno didn't know what to do.

His attack ripped through the rooftop and burned down the store.

However, if he cleared one set at a time, he would buy them time to load the next bullet.

As expected, Nanakamado was not incompetent either. Although they miscalculated his attack, they had come up with their own plan to fight a disgusting and formidable enemy.

After thinking carefully for more than a second, Unno came to a decision.

(Hey, in this case, just clean up before the fire spreads!)

He kept in close contact with Suwako, had Okuma surprise him from afar, and began to stage a battle, but his voice reached him again. A voice panicked with a sense of danger.

"Yutaka-chan! My strings got blown... Somehow, they're coming!"

"Eh?"

A strange sight was reflected in Unno's field of vision while he was in free fall.

A large number of fireballs fell, creating an uproar throughout the market.

Someone climbed onto the roof and hit the duo.

Or rather, he was suppressing them.

The appearance of wielding a long wakizashi with a terrifyingly elegant movement. He was clearly not a young member of the Kagi-rohi-gumi. He wasn't alone either. Two, three, more.

(Who...? No, what?)

A mysterious group crossed through the rooftop and overwhelmed the collapsing duo one after another.

(Well, if you catch someone, you'll understand.)

Thinking about it, he was aiming for the landing.

"What?!"

Suddenly, a dazzling radiance spread out like ripples. Crystals that were built in an orderly manner covered the surface of the earth, houses, and even people at a terrifying speed.

Seeing that for the first time, Unno's breath took a deep breath.

The glass covering everything suddenly shattered with a pleasant high-pitched sound and disappeared.

When Unno landed in the original vacant lot, the Kagirohi-gumi members gathered around him. All of them, to a greater or lesser extent, were scared and suspicious at the approach of something mysterious.

The one who was most scared was Suwako, who had all the red strings blown away.

The one who was the most cautious was Okuma, who was showing an unusually nervous look.

Unno also felt a strange and unpleasant tickle deep in his chest. Reaching out with both hands, shoving everyone else back a step, he turned toward a certain wide alley.

Beyond the light of the streetlamps, the footsteps of a large but regular march resounded. Among them, especially sharp footsteps were mixed.

(This guy.)

Unno was convinced of what that guy was.

Just the sound of footsteps overflowed with a feeling that should be called a fundamental discrepancy.

Then, finally, the owner of the steps appeared under the dim light.

A tall, slender man wearing a cap, a waterproof cloak, a uniform, and a saber. The atmosphere was calm and the subordinates that followed him were all dressed in blue.

Unno experienced the expression "all the creeps."

He couldn't read the blue man's emotions. He just waved calmly.

"Good night, "Red King", Unno Yutaka."

"You are..."

Unno felt that he had found what he was looking for.

The warmth that had faded in his daily life revived.

His soul exploded violently.

### **CHAPTER 3: OTONO BENJI**

"Black market"... an illegal market. In Japan, it mainly refers to a temporary market where transactions were made at exorbitant prices compared to the official price immediately after the defeat of the war. They were crowded together in urban areas and mainly dealt with food and household items. With the revival of distribution and the abolition of price controls, the number gradually declined and, with a few exceptions, was absorbed into the permanent market system.

Otono Benji slowly raised his head in the mist.

(Again "Musikui".) Note: worm-eaten

At first, he was relieved that it was not coming towards them and it crept in the opposite direction. After doing that, he narrowed his eyes at what it was aiming for.

Beyond the thick fog... where two forces collided.

They fought big and fiercely, dispersing their power.

It was crawling around.

(I have a bad feeling about this.)

Otono took his time getting up. As he adjusted the position of the accordion he held, a murmur like a sigh filtered through the bandages.

"Wait, let's take a look... I just have a bad feeling..."

Otono began to walk, with long, thin legs and small steps.

Someone noticed.

"Hey, Ben-san is coming out."

And he called to those around him.

From deep in the mist...

"Oh, my gosh, the pot was boiling."

"Let's all eat right now."

"It's the end of the fire. Hurry up."

"Even if you don't hurry, I'll catch up with Ben-san."

"This backpack will soon wear out."

"Come on."

"Yes."

A buzz and a crowd responded.

Otono didn't look back and walked forward with long, slender legs and small steps.

Relying on something vague that only he could sense, he stepped into the mist.

"Kagirohigumi" and the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" clashed in a desolate wasteland at night.

On one side, fierce faces that showed fighting spirit.

On the other hand, they tried to act cool in a lineup.

In the center, two men advanced as if in a duel. Combining oppression and amazement, no one could get in their way, no one could get close to them.

Before long, as they walked,

Unno Yutaka blew hot enough to burn the night air and asked.

"A former officer?"

He didn't even ask his name.

He didn't even ask him about his current position.

He didn't even ask him about the meaning of his power.

He didn't ask anything unnecessary.

Somei Nazumi understood his intentions, but responded calmly.

"Yes. Before the war, I worked in the general staff office."

"Is that so?"

The heat was changing color.

Red, always red, the color of anger.

"That's you, isn't that?"

As soon as he said that, Unno's entire body burst into flames.

Nazumi didn't stop walking and answered while he hid his gaze under the brim of his hat.

"Not exactly, but I am."

The absurd answer, it was not clear to be delivered to the other party.

The "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" had already completed an investigation into Unno's background.

In other words, Nazumi had taken over all of the opponent's circumstances. Although he himself never belonged to a department involved in kamikaze operations, it is an indisputable fact that he was a member of the General Staff. But concealment, excuses and silence are not his style.

That's why he responded with absurd words based on the facts.

Besides, he had no intention of giving in to guilt.

He had things to do, so he would never stop walking.

Even now, his footsteps were regular and sharp.

"You're the kind of person who can't speak until you get hit."

"....."

Unno did not understand the reasoning.

Or rather, his reasoning was paralyzed by his overflowing emotions.

He stayed behind, but found someone to hit with all he had.

The answer that brings the man back, the opportunity, the power that he had been seeking for so long...

"Ok, untie the sword at your waist."

It was just a request for the outbreak of war.

He had a low posture like a beast, sneaking up.

As the distance between them narrowed, Nazumi naturally placed his hand on his waist. When he took the saber out of its scabbard and picked it up, a crystalline blue glow engulfed his entire body. Among them,

"It's not like I'm trying to take it easy because I feel a sense of shame or guilt."

An extra word was added that surprised even the person himself.

Unno responded with a kind smile.

"Prey what you want... I'm a fist type."

He closed the remaining distance with one foot.

At the tip of that rush, a fist engulfed in red flames collided with the saber and exploded.

In the explosion that colored the night, Nazumi waved his saber and a blue glow spread, restoring calm to the area.

Unno was not in the blue landscape.

The moment he realized that, Nazumi swung his saber over his head.

In the air, Unno's leg, which was kicking as if he was jumping, collided with the saber again and exploded again. This time, without delay, the saber flashed, but Unno returned it.

At the moment when three explosions occurred in the middle, they faced each other.

A battle that exceeded expectations, with Unno smiling ecstatically.

An expressionless Nazumi hid his eyes under the brim of his hat, perhaps dodging the exploding flames.

The red power and the blue power collided, but they never mixed and burst.

As if regretting the distance that they had taken, they collided again.

Unno scattered red flames, turned them into cannonballs, and threw them at Nazumi.

Nazumi clothed himself in blue crystals, knocked down the cannonballs, and returned to tranquility.

The opposing forces strengthened each other, filled the space and finally saturated.

Red and blue lights spread out in the night, enveloping the "Kagirohigumi" and the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" who were watching the battle.

And, the power saturated from him became a spark that split the night sky, revealing it in the blink of an eye.

A show of power with an overwhelming presence.

A manifestation of terror with the tip of his sword stuck in the ground.

Two giant swords, red and blue, with both sides.

In order to avoid a series of explosions, both the "Kagirohigumi" and the "Fourth Legal Affairs Office", who had descended to a corner of the plaza, were engulfed in the light of their respective "King". The surprise passed quickly, replaced by confusion at a sudden surge of energy.

Tamataro Okuma opened and closed his palms to fully enjoy the feeling of power.

"I see."

He took a big step forward and fired a flaming punch at a nearby blue suit.

Iyoda, who had his fist thrown...

"Uhieh?!"

As he raised a pathetic voice, he drew his sword in an instant and received the attack.

He was well below his "King", but it was enough to shake the air.

Both parties, who were thinking of their own changes, came to their senses.

"Idiot! What are you doing?!"

First, Hoizumi yelled and drew his sword.

Then Rokugo and Toneyama attacked.

"Hey!"

"Ha!"

As Okuma jumped back, Nizuka and Hentani came closer.

"Are you safe, Iyoda-san?!"

"I, well, you accepted it, just now."

Hakizawa, unable to draw his sword, helped Iyoda, who was on his buttocks, to his feet.

"Hey, get up~"

"I-Iyoda, unharmed..."

Adding Iyoda, who was muttering out of habit while rolling his eyes, the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" formed a line.

On the other hand, the "Kagirohigumi" also gathered around Okuma and showed their overflowing power with their fists and weapons.

His step to join the battle of the "King" that was still going on.

"That's all!"

"Guys, stop!"

The scolding of the two people in front of them stopped them.

Somei Chika stalked out of the center of the formation.

"Now is not the time for such fights!"

Todokoro Suwako pushed through the bastards and stepped forward.

"That guy is really on a rampage, it's not a stage for little people to appear!"

The two women collided in the eyes for a few seconds.

Without even expecting that, a red stray bullet flew out.

Chika immediately hit the ground with the butt of her naginata and screamed.

"Below!"

Regardless of the faction, everyone in the place complied.

A blue barrier developed around the naginata and stopped the stray bullet's explosion.

A few seconds after the flames finally died down, Chika's knees relaxed.

Just one shot, just a few seconds, it was too strong.

Suwako stood up and said:

"Here!"

She purposely yelled so that even the blue clothes could hear her. While she was at it, she grabbed the wobbly Chika's hand and ran.

They all followed her and barely escaped the fierce battle.

"Oh, thank you."

Suwako didn't look at Chika as she thanked her. She cursed the man who made her do it and she just ran.

"That bastard will be terrible later!"

After a few seconds of tightrope walking, they slipped into a barely comfortable spot, behind a bench at the end of the lot. Suwako and Chika exchanged smiles after checking each other's clothes.

"You're doing it, right?"

"No, not yet."

Chika responded with sincere remorse and sat down on the ground. She put the naginata next to her, straightened her back, and saluted again.

"You're Suwako Todokoro from "Kagirohigumi", right? My name is Somei Chika."

"A pleasure."

On the contrary, Suwako carelessly stretched out her long legs and asked pretentiously.

"Are you the lover of the Somei who is fighting with us?"

Chika responded firmly.

"He is my husband."

"Uh, how nice."

"Hey."

Okuma inadvertently rushed towards Suwako, who collapsed without thinking.

Chika ignored him and kept talking.

"As for my work, I serve as an underboss to help him. We are the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau". It is an organization that cracks down on what you call Ichigeimono."

"Hmm, you cleaned the guys on the rooftop, so that's the suppression."

"What? Is that true?"

Okuma was surprised by Suwako's unexpected testimony and asked.

Chika nodded calmly and honestly without showing off.

"That is also my task. I came here with the intention of fighting you, so the current result is a matter of course."

"Hmm, well, it doesn't change that I was saved, and I'd like to thank you for protecting me at that time. Thank you."

At this point, Suwako didn't show off and thanked her honestly.

Such a personality made Chika feel good and she smiled slightly.

"I'll guess."

Okuma, who was deep in his thought, opened his mouth.

"Is it related to the movements of these guys that you guys came?"

His gaze went to Thomas Colt and "Ebisu no Kunizo" lying at his feet. Realizing that Unno was about to go insane, he brought the gang with him as he fled.

Okuma is quick to act and quick to think. From Colt and Chika's environment, he had a rough idea of the situation.

"These guys said that we should join the Occupation Army. The reason they seemed strangely impatient was because they were competing with you."

"It's going to be a political story, so I can't talk about it carelessly."

Chika's explanation lacked clarity for the first time.

"Honestly, I didn't think the conversation would go this far. I don't know if it was unexpected for Nazumi..."

Suwako didn't answer immediately, but looked over the bench. A glimpse of Unno's expression in the midst of the war, his expression clouded with danger overflowing with joy.

"It's been a long time since he felt like this. It's a dark laugh that seems to be possessed by something when you guys arrived at my house."

After saying that, little, weak...

"Finally, here with everyone..."

She expressed her emotions.

Okuma, who had the same thoughts, asked with a slightly heavy voice.

"Your husband is strong, right?"

"Yes. He won't break easily."

Chika affirmed that.

Beneath the two swords, the two "Kings" collided.

The wait and see was over, and they continued to increase their powers.

This attack was blocked, so let's hit it with a stronger blow.

If he also pushes this defense, then let's defend it even more firmly.

Switching between attack and defense, taking a surprise attack and hitting him head on, as he repeated this, Nazumi realized that his timing was out of step. He noticed it and was very offended.

"I see... I understand why even with the power of the "Blue King", I can't do well, I can't help but slip."

A pleasant voice laughed at the displeased voice.

"What are you talking about?!"

Nazumi explained as he repelled all the fist attacks with his saber.

"There's always the fluctuation that the devil suddenly appears and rages, so it can't be done perfectly."

"If you are going to speak, so that the other party can understand... Say it!"

With more force, he drove his fist.

Several barracks behind the locked fist were torn off in a shock wave accompanied by flames. The area where they were fighting and the adjacent market were already empty. When it became clear that they were going back and forth with the boss, who was also a

formidable opponent, they were all gone. It was already customary, it was treated as a disaster, and those who had dispersed to other compartments were only preparing to extinguish the fire while holding their breath. Fortunately, Nazumi's power extinguished all the subsequent flames, so there was no concern about the fire.

As told, Nazumi uttered words that the other party could understand.

"Because there is a person like you..."

He struck with his saber.

"My calculations are going crazy!"

Unno was dragged and pushed back.

"Ha! I'll teach you words that can be said in one word!"

From there, he pushed back, hit it, and proceeded.

"You're in the way!"

Nazumi turned around and prepared for the next attack.

"So, take my word for it... I'd like to say it, but there's a real problem."

"Eh?"

He did not understand the position of the suspicious Unno. He stayed alert for a conversation.

"Finally, I have "this time". After all, we couldn't talk until we'd hit each other."

"You are a bastard who speaks in a tiresome way."

To keep the mood of the blue clothes (he didn't remember his name) in the fight, Unno continued with his words.

"I don't have ears to listen. I don't even want to ask questions."

"What was that?"

The two, who never clicked, crossed paths forever.

"I just took a deep breath... to gain even more power!"

As he said, the flames that engulfed Unno's body gained momentum.

It was misunderstood, Nazumi became more offensive.

"I have no intention of interfering with you. Rather, it is the opposite."

"If you turn into a corpse, I'll listen to you! After crushing me, speak by yourself!"

"You really are annoying."

Nazumi was even confused by Unno's unwavering fighting spirit.

This was his first battle with the "King". He didn't want to admit it. Still, he was optimistic at the start of the accident. Assuming that he was an opponent of the same rank as him, he guessed the skill and saw through the peculiarities of the movement in the crossover. As always, a shogi game that charts the winning streak.

However, this "Red King" completely destroyed his board and his calculations.

Nazumi's guess and insight weren't wrong. Nazumi was far superior in skill, and Unno never changed his movement pattern. His sophisticated martial arts skills which trained from Chika were forced to leave neglected gaps many times.

However, Unno never gave up. He even gained heat and strength with each powerful blow. Like a cauldron from hell leaking enough lava to crack. Nazumi began to push slowly.

Unno approached with a crazy smile, Nazumi recognized him as a serious threat.

"Not yet, not at all!"

"It's not something to carelessly say "so it will be"."

However, he did not believe that he would be defeated. As he fought, he continued to analyze opponents who exceeded his expectations. He was convinced that there was no way that as the "Blue King" he couldn't do it.

This man, Unno Yutaka.

"If it's you, the red that overflows from me will be dyed a single color with blood, flames, and the sun of this day!"

A kamikaze pilot who survived.

Emotional outbursts stemming from suicidal thoughts.

If he were to interpret the phenomenon before his eyes lightly, that would be the case.

(However, there is a sense of incongruity.)

It should be easy to deal with someone who's been dumped.

It's just that he was moving forward without thinking about self-destruction.

Unno was clearly different.

When he jumped, when he was attacked, when he burned with power, none of it had the lazy peace of a death seeker. On the contrary, he felt a strong desire to be inspired.

(Yes, his will is there.)

In the midst of his thoughts, Nazumi took a key.

(His acts aren't based solely on emotion... they are mediated by a strong will.)

At first glance, it appeared to be a runaway race left to the emotions, but deep down there was an unshakable core and strong will. Otherwise, it would be impossible to master the power of the "King" and compete with Nazumi.

Nazumi tried to figure it out.

(Isn't it the other way around? He Aroused intense emotions with a strong will...)

He cut off his thoughts in half.

".....?"

The first thing he noticed was his strength.

There was a hole in the ordered blue space.

"Eh?"

A bit later, Unno also noticed.

There was a distorted dent in the red power that was dispersing like a raging wave.

Both of them involuntarily directed their gazes towards the hole, the dent, at the disgusting sensation they felt for the first time.

Then they stopped.

That direction was none other than the embankment where the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" and "Kagirohigumi" hid behind. It seemed as if it could be confused with the row of houses in the crude barracks, full of holes.

A tall body swaying in the alley, wrapped in a black robe, something like that.

Otono Benji had nothing to brag about to others.

He was nothing more than a mediocre soldier whose only merit was his bulk.

Due to his large complexion, he was easily detected by the veteran soldiers and group leaders, and being scolded for every incident and beaten for no reason, his companions around him were happy to say, "Thanks to you, I'm saved."

On the battlefield, he went with others, withdrew with others, that's all he did. So at least they wouldn't let him die. The only memory he had on the battlefield is that he was running blindly with a loud voice.

Except for the final battle.

One night, a night raid was ordered against a US military port facility that appeared to be located beyond the dense forest. That night the clouds were thick and it was very dark and he couldn't see anything. That is why the order to attack was given.

By the end of the war, all units were running low on ammunition. Commander told them to save it, but no one from their side told them how to fight. He didn't want to ask again and get hit again. His sole purpose was to prolong immediate life.

In dark night raids, the policy was to sneak up on the enemy camp until the last minute and return fire after the enemy opened fire. The veteran soldier stated, "Enemy forces will lose their nerve when under covert action.", but everyone knew it was just a matter of conserving the bullets until the enemy fired on them.

And in the dark.

Otono's squad advanced while stepping on the muddy ground.

They decided the direction from the starting point of the assault, and they should all have advanced together. Though they couldn't even see the tip of their own nose, nor could they confirm their position by calling out to each other.

If the approach to the US military post was discovered, the US military, which had no problem with bullets, would rain down machine gun rounds, or even shells from tethered destroyers.

When he thought about it, it had already started.

Gunshots flashed in the distance, and the sound came later.

He didn't want to hear the shrieks of machine guns and the screams of his allies.

There were voices of gunfire and death, and there were also voices of fighting spirit to charge the enemy camp. Relying on those little flickers in the distance, the first thing Otono did was check if there were any squadmates around him.

But he couldn't see anyone.

He was hidden in the dense forest and was not visible? Was he the only one who took a long step? Did he fall behind by being a coward? Or maybe he went in the wrong direction. But still, he couldn't see anyone.

Otono was caught in sudden fear as the iron rule he had relied on until now was violated in the middle of the battlefield. Searching for another person's figure, he inadvertently raised his hunched body.

At that moment, the sky was filled with pure white light.

The US military fired flares.

If that happens, the "covert action" of the Japanese army will no longer make any sense. Snipers and gunners could shoot whatever they wanted... even the idea was naive.

An airfield was attached to the port facility, and the US military had already offloaded a corps of fighter jets there. They assumed that the purpose of the night raid of the Japanese army, which had no other motive than to retaliate, overestimated it would be operated by elite flying squadron they kept it for "trump card". The angry squadron launched a counterattack and began dropping bombs in the jungle with the intention of hitting the Japanese fleet.

After that, it turned into hell where the Japanese army was driven out.

The US military, which did not even confirm the position of the target one by one, kept throwing bullets, artillery shells and bombs in the direction, or rather in the area, where the enemy was supposed to be. A series of battles in the Pacific had taught them that the Japanese army would charge, even if it was a single soldier. There was no way to be careless or forgiving.

The memory of Otono after the depression was vague. Nothing dramatic would have happened. Survival itself might have been a miracle, but it was also the result of paying a heavy price.

When he came to, he was lying next to a corpse.

No, they put him to bed at a first aid station for wounded and sick soldiers.

It was just the result of the surrounding soldiers turning into corpses.

Otono couldn't move his body properly. Severe pain shot through his entire body even when he was still, even if he moved even a little. It wasn't the kind of gunshot wound he'd received several times. It was excruciating pain, more torturous.

He wondered what he would look like now that he was carelessly wrapped in cloth. He knew it when he saw the arm he raised with resistance.

His arms were dotted with severe burns.

The same severe pain from that arm covered almost his entire body.

Even if he tried to scream, his body wouldn't allow it.

Even the tears he shed leaked out of the corners of his eyes, hurting himself.

Otono's consciousness fell back into darkness.

That was the only thing he could do now.

Otono was sent back to the mainland, and while he lay dying in a sanitarium, the war ended.

Neither the burns, nor the high fever, nor the weakness could take his life.

But that was it.

They quickly threw him out of the sanatorium because he was not missing any limbs. He barely paid his pension as a wounded soldier, but his permanent address was lost in the air raid along with his family.

The war was over and they would no longer be led to death.

But that was it.

All that was left was a large burned body covered in bandages.

That body couldn't do anything.

He couldn't laugh out loud with the joy of being back.

He couldn't even cry bitterly with the sadness that he wouldn't come back.

Even if he had emotions inside him, he couldn't express them.

A sharp, convulsing pain continued to grip his entire body like a torture tool.

The world left him like that without mercy.

Immediately, the word "postwar" came to be used as a synonym for the future to be pursued, while "before the war" was used as a synonym for the detestable past.

The world was desperately trying to get rid of the traces they risked their lives for... Otono could do nothing but watch such a spectacle.

(I am not complaining.)

Yes, Otono thought. Everyone wanted to get rid of that past. Instead, now you have to live, and there is also a place to live. It was great.

However, he could not go on. In the pain of the past, all he could do was snuggle. It was just sad and frustrating.

"I have no intention of complaining..."

Yes, Otono spoke.

He spoke slowly so as not to irritate his sore skin.

Then slowly, as time passed, one day he saw an accordion on the black market. Judging from the soot-covered boxes and items lined up, it looked like they were excavated from the burnt-out ruins.

(How do you play this thing?)

Before being drafted into the army, he was a banquet entertainer in a hall.

Jester enlivened the atmosphere to the sound of the geisha sisters playing the shamisen. He was forced to improvise a lot. He deliberately played awkwardly on the shamisen to make the sisters stand out. He smiled in pain as he remembered the days when he was rebellious and unruly, when he would step foot in a rogue

"How much is this thing?"

Before he knew it, Otono was speaking loudly.

He recalled stories of other wounded veterans playing instruments on the street and at fairs. Hand games that can be done alone, such as harmonica, guitar and violin, or earn pocket money.

As an act of pity, he turned a blind eye to them, but since he had obtained them, they were of no use to them. Not knowing how to play, he held the accordion in his arms. Sized for a Westerner's physique, it was perfect for a large frame.

(Isn't there someone in Shinbashi who has touched this?)

Seeking a posture that would cause as little pain as possible, he stretched out his arm unnecessarily and pressed down on the keyboard appropriately as he began to walk.

There was no need to rush, just take his time.

Anyway, there's nothing else he could do.

"I wonder if I can touch it too..."

For the first time since he was injured, Otono felt like giving it a try.

Otono ended up on a certain black market by chance.

The shops were lined up and people were gathering over most likely his hometown, there wasn't even a trace of town road left. Now that he was in that form, he would either sneak into the crowd or wait for the moment when the number of people had decreased, but he had nowhere to go. He stopped because it hurt a lot to keep walking, that was the only reason.

It was right after the defeat in the war, so there was no store that looked like a store.

A blue-roofed amateur market with stalls where you can put straw mats on the floor, or if you don't have any, put leftover door panels, and sell and buy goods on top of them. Even so, it was still bustling, and the people coming and going were full of the vitality of life, living in the present and connecting with the future.

At first, unreliable cables were used for a small amount of light, and there was no room for the radio. Or rather, there was no radio on this black market. Instead, Otono performed the popular song.

It was an accordion that could only be taught the basics of the basics, and it was a clumsy playing that only traced the scale, but everyone wanted the sound. Otono also reminisced about the old days and played folk songs, if not lightly, then at least with joy.

(I don't know what will make me happy.)

The electricity was soon turned on and a radio installed, transforming the shop into a simple stall, but Otono remained the same, sitting on the edge of the black market and slowly continuing to play the accordion.

"It's nice to have something to do..."

The people who had opened the store in the beginning were long gone. They found another job, went home, or drowned. Either way, the black market was no place to stay. All the products they handle violated the official framework. There was no limit to the amount of frustration caused by the postwar chaos. The capricious repression often drastically made the face of shops changed.

Even so, there were some exceptions. The old man who supply wheat flour, the boy who carried the load, the old woman who cared the fire, the older brother who was the bouncer. Otono, who played the accordion on the other side, was one of them.

They were all people with nowhere to go, they were homeless.

They had no place to return to, no one to trust, and no new life. These were people who could not keep up with the "post-war" that was changing at tremendous speed, and were caught between the past and the future.

Keep me confused a little more.

Until I decide something.

Until I find something to decide.

These were their weak appeal, not even able to say as a hope.

However, the "post-war" vitality did not have time to worry about them. Those who stood still were left behind by those who moved, and it seemed like an even bigger obstacle. There was no way to complain to anyone.

The time was still 1946 (Showa 21), the year after the defeat in the war. One late autumn day when the row houses were drowning in an untimely mist.

Several trucks entered the black market. It was loaded with workers; whose purpose was to demolish the black market. Without any proper explanation, the demolition started as if it were a matter of course.

It was not illegal.

The lawless side was the black market, and there was no legitimate reason to protest. He found himself an owner of the land, built himself a building, moved to another place, and when told to do so, he had no choice but to obey in silence.

Nobody resisted.

Even the bouncer couldn't help if the other party was a worker. If it is not a dispute between members of the yakuza, the small security mechanism will intervene, that is, the police or the Occupation Army.

Everyone on the black market was lost. The barracks that had finally been built were torn down with sledgehammers, the rubble was piled up and transported. The people there stared at the scene, unable to do anything.

His place of residence, which had been turned into a vacant lot, stretched out like a vision with its edges vaguely dissolved in the thin mist and pale afternoon.

Otono stared at this sad wasteland,

(And nothing can be done, everything is gone.)

Slowly, with long, slender legs, he began to walk with small steps.

He tried to hold on to what he had left behind, even a little.

With long thin legs and small steps, the best he could do at the time.

"But... just a little bit, it's not right..."

It was not his intention to lead.

Even so, the people left behind followed him out of nowhere. In the thick fog, in the haunting fog. They were protected, they were hidden.

"I just wanted to stay there for a while..."

For the first time, the sound of the accordion, which until now had been played happily, took on a sad tone. They disappeared into the evening mist, where it was not even clear whether there was light or darkness.

They did not notice the gigantic gray sword that was floating in the sky before it disappeared.

Before long, rumors began to circulate.

On a day with thick fog, a black market appears right after the defeat.

A famous urban legend in Tokyo has been whispered about for a long time.

The so-called "Kirinoichi Shopping Street".

There was nothing definite about the awakening of Benji Otono, the "Grey King".

Nazumi and Unno felt it regardless of their knowledge of the gossip.

A tall body swaying in the alley, wrapped in a black robe... it was dangerous.

As usual, Unno...

(Suwa! In the distance...)

He realized after he screamed.

The thread with Suwako, who was always connected to him when he went in and out, was cut that day. The one who cut it was none other than himself who was in a frenzy.

(Damn!)

Before regretting it, he ran.

Kicking the ground with explosive power, he towards something that was behind "Kagirohigumi". He turned his back on Nazumi that he was supposed to hit with all his might, completely selfish.

Unno's apprehension was correct.

Okuma who has quick eyesight was the first to notice something in the alley.

"What?!"

At the same time that he was shocked, he turned his body backwards to punch what he felt was "dangerous" with his fist. His action...

"Stop, Okuma!"

Unno, who flew like a cannonball, barely got ahead. He repelled a large body. At that moment, he inadvertently faced something from the front...

(What is this guy?)

He caught him wide-eyed, but he couldn't understand it.

Only the "nothing" that seemed to sink into the depths of the world was blurred, with no end in sight. The illusion of the black clothes was due to the blurring of the "nothing" that not even light could bring back, shining vertically. And there was one more thing that affected his perception, albeit slightly, it made him think that he was a human being.

"It's a row of teeth wriggling."

"i yo wo."

Several chipped and dirty teeth spilled out fragments of words out of "nowhere".

A rebellious anger welled up within Unno, who was shot through with an indescribable chill.

(Screw you, man!)

Just before he raised his voice and fisted him, a pod unfurled over his shoulder.

The blow that pierced through the teeth without the slightest hesitation came from Nazumi who was standing behind him. Without moving his expression, he hid his eyes behind the brim of his cap and the "Blue King" slowly stabbed his saber without pulling it out.

Adding to the anger of being left behind, Unno also struck out with his fire fist at the "nothing". Slightly below the row of teeth, at the place where a person's stomach would swell, a powerful and uncontrollable punch from the "Red King" exploded.

The "nothing", which had received the combined power of the two "Kings" that had shaken the heavens and the earth until now, did not tremble or move. On the contrary,

"Kuh?!"

"Ah, bastard?!"

Both Nazumi and Unno were attacked by a strange sensation. From the scabbard stabbing, from the clenched fist, the force did not disappear, but was absorbed by the depths of "nothing".

For the first time since they became "Kings", the two of them shuddered inside and out at the sense of weakness they had first felt. With their remaining strength, they drew their scabbard and fist, and jumped back together.

Then Chika snapped.

"Nazumi-san!"

She had everyone in the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" form a tight formation. A few days ago, Kanta Chiezaki told them about the "monstrous black cloak", so they avoided carelessly placing themselves. The voice that called was a scolding in the form of asking the director for instructions.

Nazumi, who was receiving everything to the fullest, gave instructions with a smile.

"As expected of you, Chika-san, wait with caution!"

On the other hand, Suwako tied a red thread to Unno and yelled out loud.

"Yutaka-chan, look around you!"

"Eh?"

Unno, who had regained her spirit, looked around without hesitation and understood the meaning.

From the junction of the row houses and the narrow alleys to the spaces between the rows of houses, the "nothing" seeped in as if surrounding them. Even darker than the darkness of night, they gave the impression that they were about to overflow.

"Okuma, gather the bastards around Suwako!"

"Oh, come on!"

Beside him, Okuma, who was on his buttocks, jumped up and ran towards "Kagirohigumi".

Unno looked straight at the rows of writhing teeth.

"te te da."

Like a nightmare, it was still spilling bits of words out of "nowhere". The wobbly posture of him seemed to be about to jump, or it seemed that he was shuddering.

In the middle of the vacant lot, the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" and "Kagirohigumi" gathered to stay away from the leaking "nothing". There was no space to show the distance between each other. For the first time, they saw an opponent they couldn't get through with the headmaster's flash or the boss's fist.

Chika, standing in the front row in her blue clothes, raised her voice so that both sides could hear it.

"According to the rumors, the "black cloak" shouldn't come out of the alley, but it's not a situation where you can let your guard down."

"I guess there's a party here that would drive a creepy passerby crazy!"

Suwako, who was surrounded by her minions, yelled back.

Everyone who gathered suddenly thought of the "party" that matched the voice.

Or rather, they intuited it as the nature of "vassals" who were authorized by a "King".

What happened to the psychic who disappeared in the alley?

What if what he had just seen was food?

Fear gripped them.

Nazumi, who was still facing the rows of writhing teeth, called out to him.

"What do you think?"

After a moment's hesitation,

"About what?"

Standing side by side, Unno returned without looking back.

Even at that stage, Nazumi continued his analysis calmly.

"About the identity of this monster. A real ghost or an intelligent artifact? Or a physical phenomenon, or a psychological hallucination? Or is it the same as us?"

"I'll beat him, so see for yourself later."

Likewise, Unno didn't even try to listen.

Furthermore, Nazumi calmly pointed.

"After experiencing the above phenomenon, are you going to continue the reckless resistance?"

"Shut up, just hit harder."

Also, Unno got hotter and blocked him.

Suwako threw a rock after him.

"Hey! If you're doing that, you're an asshole!"

"It's not like you, Nazumi-san!"

Even Chika chided.

There was another person there.

"That's right. It's better, to stop."

A relaxed voice sounded out of place.

"It is going to eat, all and all."

Someone's unknown voice came from quite opposite side of the row of teeth wriggling.

There was no intensity to the extent that it resonated, so discreetly you could hear it.

Chika, Suwako, and Okuma looked around, but they couldn't find the owner of the voice.

"Soon, it will gather its strength in front of you two and push you..., you know, so I guess you are all holding on, but..."

He took a moment to catch his breath.

"The people in the back will also be swept away by their stupid eating."

".....!"

At that point, Nazumi finally lowered his stance by half a step and looked around.

A square with few lampposts.

The "nothing" sprang from the gap.

Another mysterious spectacle passed on the edge of his vision.

It was the night mist that vaguely obscured the twilight of the streetlights.

"Come here, run away."

A voice came from beyond the mist.

"If you coming in my mist, I can dodge you from it."

Nazumi made a quick decision.

"Chika-san, please follow that person's voice!"

"I understand, everyone, stands down! You too."

Chika also carried the naginata on her shoulder and ordered the surroundings, and urged the people who gathered.

The "Kagirohigumi" who was urged to do so also knew that it was the correct answer.

She knew it, but she couldn't move without orders from her boss.

Even if Suwako told him along the thread...

"Yutaka-chan."

"....."

Unno remained silent and did not reply.

Even if Okuma asked the boss in a rough voice.

"Unno!"

"....."

Furthermore, Unno stubbornly stared at the squirming teeth.

In his heart, he muttered in frustration.

(I know he is not this monster...)

The change in the situation did not keep pace with the excited emotions. Even though it was a long overdue open fight, it was botched by adding an extra thing or two.

(Why should I flinch for it?)

Better yet, he would go on a rampage so everything would go crazy.

Such a temptation to balance things that were set on fire.

"You should be able to withdraw."

Nazumi calmly splashed water on his mind.

Beside him again, he pointed his saber at the writhing teeth and continued, hiding his eyes behind the brim of his cap.

"You are feeding your emotions with the power of your will. Because you decided to throw everything at me, that I am a perfect enemy, so you have put your whole body and soul into this, right?"

"...In my belly, you willingly try to make sense of it."

Unno muttered as if he was squeezing him.

"As I thought, you a bastard who doesn't like you anywhere."

Nazumi was unapologetic and answered honestly.

"I am also very, very reluctant. Reason and intellect are meaningless when you make that decision."

"Who knows."

Even as he spat that out, Unno felt a thread connect him.

Suwako no longer said anything.

She waited behind him.

"....."

He looked ahead again. It was extremely doubtful that he could feel anything when he brought down that squirming teeth out of "nowhere" and was hit. Even the disgusting blue next to him wouldn't hit him head on in that situation. He missed the opportunity to do it.

"....."

Just a few seconds to make a new decision, with burning anger and frustration. Unno easily turned his heels to the sidelines. Towards the corner where the night mist swayed, he ran like a hare.

"Bastards! Run!"

"Good grief."

Nazumi also slowed down and gave chase.

With Chika jumping fearlessly, the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" followed, followed by Okuma, who led Colt's group, and Unno, who led Suwako on his back.

Finally, Nazumi who was guarding the rear rushed into the mist.

"ko ta de."

All that was left in the open space was the murmur of gnarled teeth.

When the swords of heaven were eliminated together, the slime of "nothing" soon melted into the darkness of the night.

Shock, frenzy, chaos, all without a trace in the wind.

"Kirinoichi" is found, as the name suggests, in the night mist. He could dimly see the stalls with straw mats spread out on the floor, a rarity these days, and people milling around them under the bare hanging light bulbs. The voices that came and went swayed, disconcerting the visitors with an ambiguous sense of distance, as near or far.

In such a city, in a plaza that could be the inner part or the edge, the "Kagirohigumi" and the "Fourth Legal Affairs Office" divided into several groups, surrounding a pot placed on a charcoal brazier. Everyone was dipping their chopsticks into the town's self-proclaimed specialty, "Nan-yara-nabe" (short for "What's on it?"), to replenish their mental and physical fatigue with nabe.

Otono was in one of these relaxation circles.

Or rather, they were mixed.

The attitude of the people surrounding the pot was completely transparent.

"I became the "King" right after the defeat, when I finished taking care of the remaining business of the General Staff Headquarters. When I was having breakfast, I said to Chika-san who was sitting across from me: "As promised. I survived the war. Let's get married."

Not to mention Nazumi, who talks bluntly as if he's giving a sermon.

"What are you talking about, stupid?"

Unno with a face of chewing bitter bugs that were not in the ingredients of the pot.

"So, did you get it!?"

"Yes, because I promised. It was the best condition for us to survive."

Suwako, who lashed out at the conversation, and Chika, who responded calmly.

"If you don't want to fight, you might eat as well."

"....."

Okuma, who calmly handed over the bowl, paid no attention to the appearance of Otono, who was covered in bandages. Only Colt received the bowl as it was given to him, it may be because he was so depressed that he couldn't even afford to do like as everybody...

(After seeing such a monster, maybe I'm not a big deal.)

Even he looked down on himself, they were all so natural.

Nazumi continued.

"Yes, that kind of consent..."

"It was always exactly the same "yes"."

Chika's correction followed.

"The moment I got permission, I came into contact with that "Slate"."

Unno vomited in a bad mood.

"So what are you talking about? You want me to call you a lucky bastard?"

He looked at Otono as if he was asking for his consent.

Nazumi also ignored Unno.

"The good is the good... I think that the "explosion of desire to build a new time" that I sustained caused the "Slate" to react. It is also said that the other "Kings" are the reason for his mental image."

He looked at Otono as if asking for an answer.

Otono himself did not react to any of them. Or rather, he didn't know how to react and remained silent. Originally, he had no intention of being this close to them, nor did he intend to have a complicated conversation.

Right after he helped them to escape from that "nothing".

Before he knew it, he was able to use the mysterious mist, guiding the group to where "Kirinoichi" was, which he had established nearby.

He would hide them in that hiding place until he was sure the "nothing" that was crawling around was gone. But he had nothing else to do with it.

With that thought in mind, he sat with his back against the city gate post (it was just a wooden stake left in the vacant lot), playing the accordion with a casual look on his face.

"Oh, Ni-san. Thank you for letting our boys escape."

"You are the "King" of the Gray Sword. Nice to meet you."

Otono, who did not want to reveal his true identity, was shocked, but his legs did not have the strength to immediately escape. All he could do was remain seated and replied with a confused manner.

"Oh, why do you know?"

"Well, somehow."

"That's because everyone is a "King"."

The group that was supposed to let them pass also stopped around the three of them, so he had no choice but to lead them. It was out of desperation that he decided to spend the time waiting around the hot pot together.

As the townspeople prepared the pot, he received an explanation from Nazumi, and learned that he was apparently the "Grey King" Benji Otono.

However, the impression...

(It's also quite pretentious.)

That's what it meant.

Regardless of the facts, Otono thought that his capacity (what he could do, what he wanted to do, what he could hold, and what he wanted to retain) was "very small."

Even if he knew it was just a title, it was terrifying. He couldn't even think it was a joke to stand shoulder to shoulder with youngsters who could boast of themselves as "Kings", let alone fight against anything.

For him, the mist was not a weapon of war. All he needed was a modest fence to protect the people who connected their days here in "Kirinoichi".

The young people treated Otono as something normal.

"What about that "mental image"? It's a story that neither I nor this Ni-san knew about."

"That's not enough, so I'm going to explain. I hope you don't break the story."

He rushed into the refereeing of the gaze.

"Ok, ok, you two."

It wasn't his style at all.

After thinking about it, Otono rethought:

(Is that so?)

Suddenly, he remembered the old days when his voice and his body bounced, and he felt a pain in his chest.

Instead of a bitter smile, he asked with twitching cheeks.

"I have something to do with it too, you say?"

"Yeah, I wouldn't say it's irrelevant. That monster called "Black Cloak" is based on the same laws as us... it's one of the 'Kings' who was born according to some kind of mental image."

Hearing Nazumi's words, the movement of the chopsticks around the pot stopped for a moment.

Unno snorted and stuck his chopsticks into the pot, and the piece of carrot got caught.

"Eh, is that the same as me? What kind of joke is that?"

Nazumi dipped his chopsticks into the pot and found a piece of corned beef.

"You should also "somehow" understand that your power was absorbed. Judging by the passion in his voice, he also has a will. That... is someone..."

Okuma, who picked up a mochi-like object, and Suwako, who filled her mouth with potatoes, looked at the chief with a grim expression.

"A monster that eats people, is it a person?"

"It's scary that I couldn't put my fists through it."

"Don't worry, I'll beat you next time."

Groundlessly, but firmly, Unno promised.

Next to him, Colt was muttering to himself as he held a bowl that had piled up unnoticed (everyone was pushing stuff they didn't want to eat into the pot) in his hand.

"What we've dabbled in... how far away is the "King"... isn't it beyond human control?"

Chika, who bit into takuan, asked her husband with a sense of crisis.

"In other words, someone started targeting not only Hagure, but also the "King"... Do you have any plans to counter it?"

"No, nothing."

Nazumi reluctantly gave in to his wife, but it's not like there wasn't a plan.

"However, I believe that by exploring the mental image I mentioned earlier, we will be able to identify the characteristics of the "Black Cloak" monster and how to deal with it. So..."Grey King" Benji Otono."

His gaze turned and he caught Otono head on.

That force made Benji's big body cringe.

"What...?"

"You were able to lead our retreat. In other words, capture the movement of the "Black Cloak", right? If you don't mind, I'd like you to tell me the reason."

Nazumi took off his cap and bowed his head.

"What? After all you depend on Ni-san for that measures?"

Otono gently accepted Unno's sarcasm.

"I don't care that much."

"Please."

Saying that, Nazumi took a calm listening stance.

Although he didn't want to follow his example, Unno's sheer interest silenced him.

Everyone's attention was focused on the circle of the pot.

Otono flinched, his lips cramping as he prefaced.

"Because I'm like this... I can't speak fluently."

This time Chika bowed her head next to Nazumi.

"Take your time."

"....."

Even with such courtesy, Otono began to speak.

"...This mist is like a part of me. It seems to be a convenient thing that I can sense the movement of the person who entered and confuse them."

Seeing is believing, the mist gathered on the bandaged palm, forming a ball of pure white.

In the air of astonishment, Nazumi analyzed the phenomenon.

"I see... So, the power of the "Grey King" is detection and disturbance?"

"Well, I wonder if that's what it is."

Nodding, Otono literally scattered the ball in his hand.

"However, it must have been around autumn, on the edge of the mist... "Musikui" began to appear. It eats my mist as it passes, leaving holes in it."

"If it's like our "power", it'll eat anything..."

Unno remembered the feeling of being sucked in and clenched his fist.

Otono nodded again.

"Every time I get bitten on the edge, I run away in a hurry, but... "Musikui" writhes all over Tokyo like a snake, so it's really scary to find it again and again."

Then he looked at the two young men.

"But tonight, I felt like a huge mass with great force was flowing into... I think it also felt the two of them collided."

"It tried swallowing us in a big chunk?"

"The first event, that happened today, was a clash between "Kings"... the time when you woke up as a "King" but no sword appearance was seen, because that was nighttime?"

He slowly nodded three times.

"That's all I can say... Did I help you?"

Nazumi and Chika once again expressed their gratitude with a beautiful bow.

"More than enough information. Thank you for your cooperation."

"Thank you for taking the risk and helping us."

Otono couldn't take it straight.

"Kindness, no."

He lowered his eyes as if he regretted it.

"What would happen to him if he ate a power as big as you two? I got scared, so I came to check on him. That's all."

Then, Unno spoke with a warm voice of goodwill.

"If that's all, don't bother saying "Come here, run away"."

".....!"

He raised Otono's line of sight.

His eyes were a little more stern than his voice, but he was still smiling. If the other person hadn't been hurt, he could have hit their back.

Both Suwako and Okuma smiled, bowed their thick bodies, and thanked him.

"Well, actually, I was saved... Thank you."

"Don't forget your kindness."

Finally, after confirming the appearance of his subordinates, including "Ebisu no Kunizo", who seemed to be uncomfortable with other circles, Colt murmured something into his mouth.

Otono, who couldn't stand the things that sprouted anymore, decided to separate.

"We are fine now... it seems to be gone."

"That's right, Gosso-san!"

"PAHN", making a sound and join his palms together, Unno stood up neatly without regretting any remnants.

Seeing that, the "Kagirohigumi" also left their seats.

In response, Chika said, "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau."

The Colt team also secretly tried not to stand out.

Finally, Nazumi stood up and handed over a business card.

"With your power, you should be able to deal with it, but if you have any problems, contact the "Fourth Legal Affairs Office" here. If you want, we can put you in public protection, along with the people who live here. Honestly, in a time when that is lurking, it is more dangerous to stay away."

Otono received the business card, but did not stand up.

"Thank you."

While he was sitting, he slowly shook his head.

"But I... will protect these people who can only stay here."

No one denied the way of life of the "Grey King" there.

The mist melted in the morning sun.

They were released in an unknown open space.

As if waking up from a dream, or having passed through their throats, "Kagirohigumi" and the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau", who grasped the situation, immediately faced each other as if they were breathing. The "Red King" and the "Blue King" standing in front of each other also collided with each other's gazes.

But it did not lead to a confrontation.

It was a big problem for both sides to lose their tempers in the fog, but in this case, it was because there were people physically getting in the way between the two camps.

It was the Colt group sent from Nanakamado.

The tense tension lasted only a few seconds.

"Give up, don't."

"Ebisu no Kunizo" was the first to raise his voice and sit down.

Then the other people sat down one after another.

"I quit too."

"Oh, that's enough."

"Not worth it."

Some took off their characteristic coats before sitting down, others sat upright as if waiting for an intervention, and others went out into the open. All of them had lost their composure from the night before and have reverted to their original form, the bodyguards who run tricks on the outskirts of the city.

Among them, there was a person who was stunned.

The American who led them was Thomas Colt. The deep, wrinkled smile that still floated on his head gave him the impression that it was just that kind of shape, and he could tell at a glance that it was painful bravado.

Nazumi stepped away from the formation and stepped forward to speak.

"So, I'll take care of you here, ok?"

Colt was facing the day after tomorrow.

"Go ahead, as you wish. The losses due to the inability to counter the "King's" strength are within the assumptions of the plan. Nanakamado will switch to another option."

As he spoke fluently, he shrugged. His expression, particularly stern, was still distorted by the gloomy tone of his voice.

Nazumi guessed, but he didn't say anything and kept talking.

"Do you want me to send you back... to the commander who caused the disturbance, to the intelligence agency?"

"It would be troublesome if I, an American, were detained, right? Nanakamado is now politically cornered and has lost his composure... The "King" that they have been so afraid of for so long that they did not touch him..."

Colt looked at Unno.

"It's completely reckless, to the point of ramming him. On top of that, if they found out that I was also detained by the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau", it would be a nuisance to everyone and they would pull a lot of desperate tricks."

Unno, who received the gaze from him, caught the gist of the indirect conversation.

Colt wasn't threatening to escape alone.

Rather the opposite...

Thinking about it, Unno took a step closer to the person he was impressed with.

"Even if you go home, you won't be fine, Colt-san."

"Still, I can't help but go home."

His fake smile was mixed with a touch of genuine emotion.

"If someone who faced the situation had to report it in detail and make an appeal... as expected, we shouldn't interfere with the "King". And, above all, the danger of that "Seventh King"."

Seeing how determined he was, Unno smiled at the other person with the same level of depth, but with genuine emotion. He puffed out his chest and said proudly.

"Yes, then do your best."

"Thank you."

Colt put on his dirty floppy hat and gave a little bow.

Nazumi let out a breath.

"I wish you wouldn't decide for the two of us."

Unno looked at the rude person.

"Are you saying that you are against it?"

"No, Nanakamado is more likely to listen to Colt-san's explanation than a warning from us, a hostile organization."

"Then don't be stupid and useless."

"No matter what you do, confirmation is necessary."

Among them, Colt, who had a wry smile on his face, began to walk slowly.

"I'm sorry I wasted your time."

He sent his repentance through his back.

"I return to Nanakamado because, as an American who has awakened to power, I have nowhere to go. Because I work as an intelligence agent there, I am exempt from being mobilized for a spy war against the communist bloc...all my actions are of self-protection."

However, Unno does not tolerate condescension.

He patted his back as he left with a sonorous voice.

"You have a life in front of you to regret or burn it, you can do what you want."

Colt stopped for a moment.

"....."

However, he walked out into the morning sun without looking back.

Lastly, he lightly waved his hand in embarrassment.

### **A MAN WHO WANTS TO BECOME A CROCODILE.**

Oh.

I will become a crocodile.

My mother told me and my brothers.

Crocodiles usually hide in the dark and deep bottom of the water.

Shut up and do nothing.

When it goes down, it floats to the surface and eats things around it.

Anything you can get your hands on.

When it is full, it sinks back to the bottom of the water and sleeps.

Shut up and do nothing.

Don't piss me off

Do not hurt me.

When he gets angry, he rages at the bottom of the water and summons a storm.

They're all screwed.

Due to his tenacity, when he suffers, he goes after the person who hurt him.

From sea to land, anywhere.

Don't piss me off

Do not hurt me.

That's why everyone is afraid to get close.

So I'll turn into a crocodile.

Silently, do nothing, eat your fill.

#### **CHAPTER 4: IKU AND THE BIRIBIRI GROUP**

"Homeless". A child who does not have parents or guardians and who has not settled. In Japan during World War II, there were many war orphans who lost family members in war fires and their homes burned down. Among them, most of the children who lost their place to go became homeless drifters. During and after the war, their lives were extremely difficult and many of them became involved in criminal activities.

The "Kagirohi Trade Association" market was bustling as if the commotion from a few days ago had been forgotten. On that isolated vacant lot, the "Yakumo" gambling hall is being rebuilt under the leadership of Tamataro Okuma.

"Bastards, I'll finish it before opening time!"

A loud cry that made even the thick billboards that were up tremble.

Although it is called a rebuild, it is not a complete creation. As long as there is enough space for people to gather, such as a game room, the deal is done. It was a random hasty construction to build a house that was as small as a shack. The new "Yakumo", which no one remembers what generation it is, has already completed the frame and is in the process of installing the roof and walls.

"I understand, big brother Okuma!"

"Thanks to the boss and sister, I am used to erecting pillars and thatched roofs!"

"Don't say that, if they listen to you, you'll have to start over."

Rude, hard-working people are inefficient and unpredictable despite their good humor, but their environment is cheerful. The reason why many of them don't feel terrified when witnessing mysterious monsters is because they feel comfortable living from day to day, and more than anything, they trust their boss, who has declared that he will defeat them next time.

From the ceiling to the front of the wall, work voices flew.

"Are the blue clothes still keeping watch in front of Yokocho's gate?"

"Ah, they still go back and forth with Danbira in hand."

According to what they heard from the older sister of the blues, the monster appeared because the powerful boss and the guy in the blue hat collided. So it seems that it will probably be safe if both sides back down after sharing the pain. As explained, the boss, who had turned off due to various incidents, simply withdrew, and the blue hat also turned its back and left. At the moment, it seemed unlikely that the blues would go in or out, or even encounter the monster. It seemed that peace had arrived.

Each person had a different way of perceiving such results.

"Heh, even though the monster has been quiet ever since, they've had difficulties every day."

"You better be careful. I'm sure you feel the same way about blue clothes."

"What? In front of you, you are not afraid, are you?"

"Oh? What is it?"

Not satisfied with the exchange of voices, he rolled up his sleeves and pressed their foreheads against each other.

"Who is scared... Ouch?!"

"Nga?!"

Okuma's fists attacked in quick succession. Blocking the sunlight with their thick bodies, the two of them crouched in the shade with their heads in their hands, and a loud voice fell over them.

"Move your hands instead of your mouth, layabouts."

"Hehe!"

"Sorry!"

Okuma looked at the two people who were scattered, and then looked at all the work.

(It should be back to normal before today's opening.)

After thinking about it, he felt a stab in his throat like a small bone.

(I wonder if it will really go back to normal.)

It's not just about conflicts with monsters and the blue clothes.

Okuma wasn't amused the fact that some kinds of "King" or imposed good manners are getting in the way with straightforward gait of his proud boss.

In the neighborhood where the sound of work can be heard, there is a Suwako canteen. This whimsical restaurant (the only sign is "meshi") has a reputation for being cheap and filling, but the taste is average. It is also known as the place where Unno Yutaka stays

when his usual hideout, Yakumo, is destroyed, and is seen from the outside as one of Kagi-rohi-gumi's strategic bases.

Actually, it was just a place where Suwako let him eat free food and Unno would lie down in a small room in the back. For the former, it was an important space where they could recover the relationship they had when they met. But to the latter, that is unknown thing because he hadn't even hinted at it, let alone talked about it.

Now it's Suwako's turn to feed him free food. In the middle of the small shop, Unno is stuffing his mouth with okara sushi at the counter. As the name suggests, it is a dish that cannot be said to be a dish that only puts ingredients on a piece of okara, but it is a specialty of this restaurant.

The side that is allowed to eat is hated and slaps him in the mouth.

"Only the topping has improved."

\* Okara Zushi; a type of sushi that used Okara(soy pulp) instead of rice, with topping a fish marinated in vinegar. It is local food in Chugoku-Shikoku region.

"Shut up and eat, you bastard."

The usual show of cutting rebukes from the feed side.

It was supposed to be usual for Suwako to rest her chin on the counter and look at the stubborn Unno, but since that night, she felt a bit strange.

"Yutaka-chan."

"What?"

With his mouth open, Unno replied.

Suwako lifted her chin and used the courage she had built up over the course of several days to ask.

"Are you ok?"

"....."

Unno munched his okara sushi in silence. Secretly thinking...

(I wonder if it came out on the complexion, it's gross.)

He still hasn't resolved his feelings about meeting another "King".

Of course he wasn't intimidated. It was uncomfortable knowing that the anger and desires that were supposed to be him were embedded in something else. Besides, not being able to sort out his feeling like that was very unpleasant. With holding such a stone weight, he couldn't laugh optimistically, or stop thinking and run.

Ignoring all of that, he might have been able to become stronger.

However, when he ate at that restaurant, he felt a little less competitive.

That's why the answer wasn't clear.

"How is?"

"Yutaka-chan, aside from me, that sort of thing... were you aware that there are some really cool psychics out there?"

Suwako isn't afraid to reach Unno's core when they are alone in this restaurant.

Unno also responded to Suwako, who did so as honestly as possible.

"As for the guy with the blue hat and Otono-nii-san, I didn't know until I met them. But the other person..."

"Um, the monster with the gapped teeth?"

"No."

After a brief denial, Unno paused to put his feelings into words.

"I've felt many times that somewhere far away... well, deep..., there's a guy reaching into the river and trying to catch the current."

There was something that came to Suwako's mind.

"Even if that's the case, the guy with the blue hat said something like that when we parted ways..."

"....."

Unno didn't even hide his displeasure from her and remained silent.

After dismissing Thomas Colt, just before Kagihiro-higumi and the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau withdrew, the guy in the blue hat (the husband), the Blue King, pretended to make a casual postscript and offered some history.

"This is a test, but are you willing to meet the "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji?"

And of course Unno... "No."

He just returned a word over his back as he walked away.

(That's right, I can't stand doing what that bastard says.)

Thinking of that, Unno reached for the okara sushi again and saw that Suwako's face was filled with anxiety. Its meaning was easy to understand. Or rather, the kind he himself had.

There is something big that you don't understand.

It was the feeling of existence beyond the words "Slate" and "King" that Nazumi said.

It was a terrifying power that haunted him, that if he could feel it and touch it, it would be irreversible.

That's why Suwako is afraid from the bottom of her heart of him.

For Unno to meet the "Golden King".

Being carried away by something big and mysterious.

That's why Unno said it clearly.

"I do not go anywhere."

"Yes."

Suwako's face, who answered in a low voice, turned pale and bright.

Unno felt embarrassed by the situation and tossed the pickled okara sushi into his mouth. As he muttered and chewed, he opened a mouth again with hatred.

"You're not good at grabbing at all."

But he will never say that he like the taste. So that Suwako can see his feelings in his smile. Of course, the answer is short.

"Noisy bastard."

+++++

Daikaku Kokujoji, the "Golden King" who normally refrains from going out, sometimes makes exceptions.

That was the meeting with the president of the ruling party, who was escorted by him and "Tokijikuin", and this time it was a special trip. The destination is a villa in the suburbs owned by the governor.

In a large site in the mountains, it is commonly called "Oyashiki" witlessly. In part, it was a signal to avoid telling details, including the owner.

In a simple but elegant Japanese-style room facing the courtyard, the two faced each other over celebratory dinner with sake.

Kokujoji was wearing a suit and was sitting up straight like a statue.

The president was dressed in a kimono and sat loosely crosswise. That wasn't because he was arrogant, but because he received a gunshot wound from a thug during his time as a diplomat before the war, and couldn't sit on his knees for long periods of time.

The president said in a calm voice that he didn't seem like a tough face.

"I heard about that, Kokujoji-kun."

"Hah, it seems that he is the "Seventh Person". As a result of discussions with Director Nazumi, we have decided to call him "Colorless" for the time being."

Kokujoji responded with a mild explanation, but that is not the issue the president wanted to bring to the table. For him, "Slate" and "King" were things to talk about next to reality.

"I see."

After slightly nodding, the original topic was brought up.

"By the way, it seems that Nanakamado's work unit was present at that time."

"...That's how it is."

Kokujoji, who guessed, felt ashamed of his immaturity for misreading the focus.

Only the "King" and his empowered ministers could perceive the strangeness of the unexpected "Seventh" as an imminent threat. For ordinary people, it was natural that they had little knowledge or interest.

(At this rate, the way forward will be in jeopardy... study up and take heart.)

In today's reality, in other words, what is important to the president is the "political significance of Nanakamado, an intelligence agency, using force at his own trial.

"I heard, that they even fought a street battle against the "demon" in question."

"Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau arrived just in time and we were able to contain the turmoil within one area of the market. The workforce has also managed to capture almost everyone."

"A person seems to be sent back to them."

"Hah, an American commander. Director Nazumi will probably serve as a check or a warning to Nanakamado, but it will have little effect."

As expected, Kokujoji was surprised by the accuracy of the information he was given, even when he communicated without hesitation. In just a few days, from what source did he get the information? He has been swimming through the turbulent political world for nothing, and has reached the post of president. Kokujoji was impressed by his speech technique, which didn't make the other feel hard.

(This is the "Gold" that he himself have prepared and polished...)

The president is not a servant of "Tokijikuin", nor is he attracted to any talent.

Or rather, Kokujoji had yet to add to his vassals a single politician who had become his sympathizer. This is a measure to ensure that "Tokijikuin" gets involved in the political world from the point of view of a collaborator.

That "Slate", like it or not, creates a side to rule and a side to be ruled. Furthermore, instead of "mentally and physically acknowledging" social status and biological abilities, it "gives structure to the functions of kings and ministers."

The EX- $\alpha$  individual and the  $\beta$  individual are not the same at all.

There was a huge difference in the functions and overall power of the two.

The problem is not how do they feel that, is the fact as that is.

In a post-war society where distrust and hatred of authority burn, and, moreover, in the ideal democracy that Headquarters tries to establish, this "structure" placed under others provokes resentment or even more indignation. Of course, it would be even more so if someone with high social status, such as a key politician or the head of a conglomerate, couldn't always get the talent he wanted.

The reason why Kokujoji keeps his former subordinates as comrades-in-arms and dedicates himself to behind-the-scenes work is to make them seem like a powerful but closed small professional group. (It is also based on the same reasoning that Nazumi established the "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" as a department with a legal foundation.) Even if they were wrong, they should not have been made to think of themselves as beings privileged above people... as the "transcendent ruling race" that the German Third Reich dreamed of.

Still, ever since "Tokijikuin" rose to prominence despite being behind the scenes, sharp-nosed politicians, ex-servicemen, surviving liberal activist, and even charlatans of the like have contacted Kokujoji to become his vassals. There have been many attempts, even more cases of faster attacks and kidnappings to seize power from the "Slate" or "King".

Humans are creatures that greedily seek power.

Especially now, when society is full of gaps and opportunities.

These realities made Kokujoji well aware of the dangers of hastily introducing the deadly drug "King", which was in the midst of trial and error, now in post-war, here in Japan.

Therefore, while sympathizing with the regime, they did not merge, and while showing their intentions, they did not issue orders... This position was firmly held by the "Golden King" Daikaku Kokujoji and "Tokijikuin". And it was precisely because he continued to stand his ground that he was able to gain the trust of the political world.

At this time, he can even have a secret face-to-face conversation with the president of the ruling party, who is not even his vassal.

"I see."

The president gave a slight nod again and casually filled the cup with sake.

"I agree with you."

Kokujoji did the same and filled his own sake cup.

"What is the trial material?"

"Although it has some privileges and power, it still feels like an intelligence agency running too wild. I tried looking in various directions to see if there was a backup behind it."

After half, the president wiped his cup at once, perhaps to moisten his throat or to make a decision, began to speak in a calm voice to Kokujoji who was waiting for his words.

"They frequently communicate with Atsugi."

"Atsugi?"

Kokujoji felt suspicious.

In the city of Atsugi, Kanagawa Prefecture, there is a large airfield for the occupation forces requisitioned from the former Japanese army. Immediately after the war, many squadrons were deployed, but by the end of 1948, it had become a supply base for the occupation forces in the Kanto region, and no military forces were stationed there.

"That place is under the jurisdiction of none other than the Headquarters, and even if you say Occupation Army, it is just logistical support..."

As he answered, Kokujoji thought of something strange.

In Atsugi, there is a large-scale facility that doesn't look like a supply base.

It was a "radar site" radio detection facility for the detection of sword-shaped "Schwert" Kouki, which the occupation forces hastily set up for fear of a mass uprising by the Japanese people in response to the "Chofu Incident".

In reality, this facility was useless. He ended up showing that all the sword-shaped "Schwert" Kouki that appeared after Red, Blue, Green, and Gray did not show any reaction to the radar. The reason why the facility still stands is due to both the practical aspect that is useful for air traffic control of the Occupation Forces, and the psychological aspect that is a symbol of confrontation with the unknown.

Kokujoji had investigated these items as being related to the "King" of him, but from the conversation with the president, he suddenly began to worry about a certain item. Slowly he spoke.

"If I remember correctly, the electrical probes placed there were under the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Defense, not the Occupation Forces. Engineers sent from the country of origin are also managing maintenance."

"Yes. That is very important."

The president nodded three times like a professor giving a passing grade.

"It appears to have been removed from the Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency "ARPA" in response to a request from Headquarters to send in the latest state-of-the-art equipment. It is the people there who are in charge of maintenance."

After a pause, his calm voice turned heavy and low.

"Officially, most of them were reorganized last year, and they are the intelligence officers of their home country."

Kokujoji was surprised and accidentally put down the cup.

".....! Are they from the CIA?"

In the era of its predecessor, the Strategic Intelligence Agency "OSS" (although it was only three years ago), the Central Intelligence Agency "CIA" began to fight with the Headquarters over the advance of their base of operations in Japan. a destiny whose activity was sealed.

Since then, the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral General, dislikes "rogue spies", and has not tried to interfere with Japan. It was supposed to be, but it was only on the surface.

His undiminished anti-communist sense of mission and desire to expand his power secretly spread the roots of the conspiracy to Atsugi's neighborhood, or even to Nanakamado's throat.

(Nazumi also reported that Nanakamado was "exporting" psychics for anti-communist spy warfare... certainly, the recipient could be no one other than the CIA.)

Kokujoji finally found the reason of unusually bullish attitude of Nanakamado.

"So Nanakamado is trying to survive after our country regains its sovereignty by communicating with the CIA in the United States and cooperating in the re-advancement?"

"Nanakamado's intentions are probably like this."

And then the president spoke calmly about the core of the crisis.

"The nature of this matter is much bigger and deeper. Most worrisome is that the Pentagon is involved in the camouflage operation. There is only one person in the world with power that can make them allies of the CIA."

".....!"

Kokujoji guessed with a shudder, but didn't mention the title.

With the president's understanding, he added the most alarming information he had collected.

"The Department of Defense is sending a light aircraft carrier to and from Yokosuka under the pretext of carrying materials to Atsugi. Half a year has passed. It seems that the overbuilt ships from the previous war are being used as transport ships."

The tone of voice that he did not believe on the surface of the information was the meaning of the information.

"When we bring in materials, we line up the cars to watch the roads where there are no attackers. For some reason, most of these staff members are Japanese. What do you think of this situation?"

"The convoy... is probably practicing marching along the way, disembarking and deploying to military installations."

Kokujoji first thought of a former soldier and then of a "King".

"Japanese pretending to be guards are believed to be people with 'exported' skills in the past."

"In other words, the CIA is preparing a unit of talented people in our country, separate from Nanakamado."

"The reason they are using the Japanese is that they are doing everything they can for the local powers, and they are sure to get rid of them."

The president was calm, Kokujoji was strict.

"Hm, it's a way of doing things, similar to an intelligence agency."

"Nanakamado's original plan was to secure a piece that would guarantee the superiority of Headquarters, in other words, to secure our "King"... or perhaps make him cooperate."

After a calm exchange without changing the tone of their voices...

"However, they, who should have sent out the elite soldiers, were completely defeated by the "King" and were not able to get his cooperation. Even so, there is another goal in daring to use a unit of talented people."

"If it's the second best measures, they won't hit the same enemy twice... then,"

After sharing and researching, checking and analyzing, the two of them naturally came to a solution.

Even with that conviction...

"The next best thing is a sudden armed rebellion..."

The president involuntarily smiled wryly at the eccentricity of the resulting solution.

"It's like a coup before the war."

"It doesn't matter if it's successful or not, the goal itself is to create a riot in Tokyo. It would be nice if it could be used as a basis for criticizing the Occupation Army's current occupational rule, especially its ability to maintain public order."

Kokujoji was able to see through the brutal fashion of the time, where politics was intertwined with conspiracies and tyranny.

The president also calmly pursues the dangers affecting Japan's national fortune.

"The continental United States is participating in this operation to strike a blow at Headquarters which is too arbitrary. The overall goal is to create an excuse to reduce the excessive authority given to Headquarters and push Japan back into an anti-communist bulwark."

The old politician smiled wrinkled when he realized that all the cards were in his hand.

"I see, it's a nice photo."

With a smile on his face, he became furious.

"But I won't forgive them."

"Yes."

Kokujoji is also short and sharp and he agreed.

An air of tension filled the air between the two of them.

Kokujoji was the one who moved the fastest and stood up without panicking.

"Please leave me your phone. I will urgently take countermeasures with the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau."

"No, I'm the one who will call to."

The president, who took the thought of him one step further as a politician, stopped him. He explains before asking.

"An armed rebellion is different from a popular uprising that can only be stopped by dissipating the accumulated heat. It is an operation based on a political plan. Furthermore, both the initiative and the execution come from the intelligence agencies."

"Eh?"

Kokujoji, who couldn't understand the meaning of his explanation, took the form of an attentive listener.

The president admonished the young man who thinks he is fit about the dynamics of politics.

"In other words, if it turns out that he can't carry out his plan, it's the kind of thing that loses the foundation of the rebellion and puts an end to it."

"Do you have a measure to prevent the outbreak in the first place instead of suppressing it?"

"It's not as difficult as calling it a measure."

His smile, still filled with rage, glowed with murderous political maneuver.

"However, by making a proposal with the above reasoning, we can take away the bases to activate it."

"Proposal... what, where?"

The president, showed his "gold" to Kokujoji.

"Dismantle the intelligence agency, Nanakamado, to the commanding general of the occupation forces."

Saying so, he clapped his hands to call the butler.

In fact, a phone call was not enough. As soon as an appointment for negotiations was made at the Dai-ichi Seimei building in Yurakucho, Tokyo, where the general headquarters are located, the president returned to Tokyo in a safe driving car.

"Until I'm gone, give the quarterback time to reflect. A phone call is a message that says 'I'm going to make a proposal like this', and it's a grace period to make a decision. I am a gentle man, so I will go home at a slow pace."

That's what it looked like.

Kokujoji did not accompany him, but according to the guards who were sent in his place, the negotiations in the commanding officer's office were completed in a very short time.

Then the next day at noon.

Immediately, Kokujoji received two notices. The first was a document from the Department of Public Health and Human Services containing the Directive of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces (SCAP Index Number, or SCAPIN), as recommended by the Governor.

As written...

"Notice: 1. There is no intelligence agency under the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, Headquarters, which controls the Japanese people by any special means. 2. The Research Institute for Infectious Disease Control (at the Nanakamado City) will be decommissioned and withdrawn as of tomorrow in accordance with the achievement of its intended objectives. 3. Tasks 2 will be handled by the Metropolitan Police Reserve, US Army 1st Cavalry Division and the US Army's 97th Infantry Division."

It made no sense even to those who didn't know the circumstances, and it was extremely harsh for those who did.

In summary...

Nanakamado will be dismantled after its existence is officially denied.

The research institute where has been their base of operations will also be demolished, leaving no trace.

Not only the police but also the Occupation Army will be involved in the implementation.

That's what it meant.

You could see the marshal's anger as much as the president's, if not more.

(Not unreasonable.)

Kokujoji thought.

The United States has just forced Headquarters to change its policy of rebuilding Japan as an ideal democratic nation. It would be strange not to get angry if he knew that a conspiracy aimed at further reducing the authority of Headquarters was afoot at a time when the humiliation had not cooled. (As for the marshal personally, after the crushing defeat in the presidential election half a year ago, he was deeply involved in rebuilding Japan.)

The fact that the negotiations with the governor were brief also shows the extent of his anger.

Driven by ambition, the Nanakamado intelligence agency faced the end of punishment.

Regardless of what they thought, they were just an unofficial branch of the Occupation Forces, with all the authority given by the Headquarters. As long as their authority is revoked before the uprising, the intelligence agencies' ability to carry out their actions... in other words, the ability to force their way through the outside world will be gone, with one exception.

And due to the dissolution of the organization guided by the Japanese side, the troops prepared in Atsugi lost sight of the reason and the opportunity to move. If an armed rebellion is a political plot by an intelligence agency, it will be even more difficult to move lightly in uncertain circumstances. The prepared combat power became useless.

Above all, this order is also a signal to confront the home country that "Japanese Headquarters and the Japanese government have become aware of the plot". The situation has already moved to a phase where both parties are playing bargaining both implicitly and explicitly. Whether the result is a restoration of relations or an escalation of conflict, the turn of active force will not come for the moment.

The political apocalypse is coincidentally decisive.

Nanakamado's future was completely closed.

However, they are left with one more option that will not lead them into the future.

An act that is nothing more than a sterile and perverse struggle.

The option was to use the existing force to explode.

If they thought about it with calculations and reasoning, it was almost impossible to take such an action. There was no longer any prospect of reversing the situation, no matter how they used the forces they had, they could not expect the support of the CIA, and the credibility of the Headquarters had eroded.

Yet even so, for humans... especially for an organization that is entrenched in only one direction, impossible behavior often becomes a last hope. If violence is the only card left, the illusion is stronger.

In case Nanakamado did turn out to be like this, Headquarters prepared a second copy, a document from the Second General Staff Department (intelligence agency representative).

According to the document...

"Notice: 1. Request the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau to supervise the dismantling and removal work of the Research Institute for Infectious Disease Control (in Nanakamado City). 2. The commands and orders for dealing with people with capacity to induce and maintain anomalous phenomena will be in charge of the director of the same office, and not of the National Public Safety Commission. 3. All responsibility for actions in accordance with the notification falls on this headquarters."

It was an official dispatch request to confront the psychics organization directly from the Occupation Forces Headquarters.

In other words...

"Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" will be in charge of responding to the outbursts of people with capabilities.

They would not care about the higher ranking organization and would act according to the judgment of the Chief, Somei Nazumi.

Whatever happens, the Occupation Forces Headquarters will take responsibility.

That's what it meant.

This precedent will determine the position of the organization, such as the nature of the duties carried out by the Legislative Office of Legal Affairs, its superiority over other police organizations, and the maintenance of an independent chain of command.

Anyway, everything was ready.

Calling out will be tomorrow.

There was no time for political maneuvering.

Even setting up a counterattack would be dangerous.

The Metropolitan Police Reserve Corps (predecessor of the Metropolitan Riot Police) and the Occupation Army will be in charge of dismantling and removing the facility, and if a person with capabilities moves, the "Fourth Legal Affairs Office" will delete it. Atsugi's forces are politically neutralized and there is no threat of intervention.

"Everything, no omissions."

The president said by phone during the preliminary consultation.

Kokujoji thought so too, and actually responded in agreement.

But...

(Is that really so?)

Somewhere, he had the feeling that something was issuing a strong warning. Assuming it was the "Golden King's" intuition, he didn't know where or what made him feel that way.

If he dared to raise a concern, it would be the matter of "Colorless King", but if it weren't for the huge power clash between the "Kings", it should be nothing more than a threat from a street passerby.

Even if Nanakamado mobilizes all the remaining ability users and challenges in a battle, he doesn't think they'll be able to develop a fierce battle that would make "Blue King" Somei Nazumi manifest "Schwert" above his head.

(Someday, the power of the other "Kings" will have to unite to deal with the "Colorless", and they will have to take it seriously... but, in the morrow, there should be no curtain for that to happen.)

Faced with a fate that has yet to be understood, Kokujoji had no choice but to confirm the current situation.

The president will take measures to control the situation, the marshal will make the difficult decisions, and the "Blue King" will take over the actual work... these measures are being carried out without delay and without fail.

The situation was supposed to proceed as planned.

There is nothing to worry about, it is fair and safe.

Both the era and history march orderly on the basis of reason and rationality.

Until the arrival of the "King" of change, who destroys and disturbs all those inevitabilities.

The last day of December 1948.

A long day for everyone, the first difficult step of regeneration is approaching.

On that day, there was a storm across Honshu and unseasonable lightning was also observed on the Sea of Japan side. Even in Tokyo, a heavy drizzle that made the cold seep into the bones made the landscape seem smoky since the morning.

Although the conditions were the worst for outdoor group activities, the high morale of beginning a great task defied objective facts. The staff of the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau, who were about to be sent to work, had diverse backgrounds and personalities, and the breakfast room was busy and noisy.

Those who interact carelessly,

"Iyoda-kun~, give me the salt, salt~"

"Yes, here you have. Why do you put salt on rice every time you see it?"

A person enjoying a meal,

"Today's food is also really delicious."

"Hmm! Chika-dono's miso soup is exquisite!"

"Oh, that's right... the manager's pickles are delicious too."

Those who talk about work,

"We don't have practice at the dojo today, so it would be great to go out and have something to eat!"

"Normally people don't like to be shipped, but..."

The people gathered in the small dining room looked like young people who could be found anywhere, they were no longer wearing blue clothes or carrying swords.

Their title as members of the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau is a legal system and they do not actually work for the Ministry of Justice. The office where daily work was carried out, the living space where people slept, they were all located in a corner of the former state guest house that displayed Tsubakimon's luxurious appearance... or rather, it was in a building in the corner.

Next to the simple entrance, which only looks like a back door, there is a plaque with the name "Ao Mamoru-sha" written in Somei Nazumi's handwriting, but in reality, this building was used as an office and living space for the exclusive servers of the guest

house. Permission to use the main building has not yet been granted (although it is clear that they will not be able to handle the current number of staff).

The dining room is so transparent that you can enter directly through the outside door and the adjacent kitchen is only separated by a curtain. It was a very simple installation for service, separate from the kitchen for guests.

Somei Chika, dressed in a triangular sling and a Japanese kappo uniform, emerged from the kitchen.

"Today's dispatch is likely to be a long battle with those with abilities. Be sure to maintain your strength!"

Everyone responded in unison, worthy of the loud cheers.

An old woman called softly to Chika from behind.

"That's enough, so Chika-san, please enjoy your food."

She gave her a tray with breakfast in a natural and discreet way.

This old woman is not only the guardian of "Ao Mamoru-sha", as Nazumi calls her, but of the entire guest house.

She has been protecting the state pension since the war and, even after her husband, who was also her colleague, died in prison at the hands of the special high police, she continued her work with calm and dedication. She led a small group of servants and kept the entire vast state guesthouse beautiful, and she possessed a mysterious ability that even Nazumi admired.

Chika bowed to the respectful woman and accepted the tray.

"Yes, I appreciate your words."

Of the members of the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau, only Nazumi and his wife travel from their nearby home. When they have to leave early like today, they usually have breakfast there, which they usually do at home. Chika not only eats, but she also helps the manager cook, so there will be one more food item for breakfast the day she comes.

This is the reason why the morale of the youth has increased considerably.

Chika walked behind them and sat in the reserved seat in the back, facing Nazumi.

He had already eaten his breakfast and there was not a single grain of rice or a drop of miso soup left. The tray had been pushed aside and a thick pile of books was piled between them.

Chika was a little taken aback.

(I wonder what kind of job it is.)

She has not heard that there was work to be done before being sent.

Beyond that mountain, Nazumi seemed to rise and reveal his face.

"Thanks for the food."

"That was a bad job."

After calmly responding to the polite voice, Chika asked.

"Nazumi-san, what is that book?"

If you look closely, you will see that it is not the usual bundle of government documents or an assembled file, but a collection of poems or Chinese classics. Apparently it was taken from the library of the State Guest House.

"My "Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau" also wants to have some kind of behavior or words that express the links clearly, so I've been looking at various documents... but it just doesn't fit very well."

Chika could easily imagine the worried face on the other side of the stack of books. Not only that, but she was also able to see through two or three levels of deep worry that were swaying like a fine mist.

"Do you have any concerns that will distract you from today's deployment?"

He wouldn't be surprised if someone could see through him now.

Rather, with the joy of being seen, Nazumi revealed his true feelings.

"I'm sure the plans and arrangements are perfect. But for some reason, I just don't feel like I can finish it..."

"Are you saying that when that "Red King" appears, the calculations go wrong?"

"The only thing I can say is that it is close, but different. When the matter reaches the "King", the mystery that governs that "Slate" is not clearly solved... and I feel very bad."

The superhuman irritation in her husband's voice.

With a single word, his wife returned him to the human horizon.

"Isn't that good?"

"Huh, is it?"

"The power of that "Slate" and the "King" are definitely things that exist in the floating world. As with anything else, isn't it okay to be in a bad mood because you can't get things done?"

"....."

On the other side of the stack of books, Chika could easily imagine Nazumi's no-nonsense face examining his opinions. The questioning tone of voice she had imagined returned.

"That is what it is?"

"That's right."

Chika dared to say it simply.

After a brief pause, Nazumi added.

"...I'm not convinced, but I understand. Chika-san."

"As you say."

"Your food is getting cold, please eat it quickly."

Chika took off her sling and put her palms together with a smile.

"Yes, Itadakimasu."

The unnamed intelligence agency was located in Nanakamado, Tokyo.

The facility's predecessor was an international Christian general hospital. Fortunately, the chalk building, with its magnificent bell tower, was saved from air raids and immediately after the end of the war it became a valuable medical center accommodating a wide variety of patients.

However, some time ago, it became the headquarters and research facility of an intelligence agency, with a fake sign reading "Infectious Disease Control Research Institute", a thick iron gate, and a high fence with a tap.

Today you could say that it has become a reality.

All the powers that had been established by them were revoked by official notification.

It was supposed to be done, but there is still debris moving around inside the room.

The noise was especially noticeable in the westernmost rooms on the top floor. It was established when the organization concentrated its personnel and functions there, and it is a command post that controls both internal analysis and command, as well as external reception and transmission.

The windows are covered with thick concrete, preventing the passage of wind and light. An electrical panel representing the Kanto region is installed on the wall and continues to display the movements of the objects being monitored. The tense atmosphere inside the room was created by those who operated the screens, those who provided information for their operation, those who received and transmitted information from outside, and those who reported and made adjustments derived from it.

Behind them, from a raised floor, a military-looking American gave instructions one after another.

"Keep all the generators running, okay, everything!"

Before it expired... his title was Director of the Extraterrestrial Intelligence Agency, in other words, Commander of Nanakamado.

"Never let anyone hang up on Atsugi's "Demodori"! If a conflict really breaks out, they will be looking for an opportunity to unite! No matter how trivial the data is, send them all the information to stimulate them!"

The scene was neither brave enough to be called anger, nor fierce enough to be called frenzy. In other words, it was a delusional movement that arose from the impatience of being cornered.

"Yokosuka's "Yaseppochi" hasn't come out yet?! Just one word is fine, keep calling until he answers! As long as we have the facts of the answer, we can negotiate with the CIA and the Pentagon as accomplices!"

Then, one of the engine members brings in a report containing new information.

After reading it, the chief engineer threw it away violently.

"Don't bring weather information! What do you mean the rain will turn into snow?! Today we are different from before! We are in a position to attack here...!"

After shouting, the chief engineer was shocked.

Everyone at the command post looked at him with worried faces.

As an intelligence agency, they are about to do something completely different than what they have done so far... gather information, capture targets, cover up operations, illegal experiments, etc. They were about to be forced to do so.

In other words, the act of undermining the systems and organizations that established them, and even the national structure.

Even if they had US backing (as the chief engineer insists), it was too risky a gamble to be taken lightly. Even so, the reason why they can barely maintain unity to the point of choosing to entrench themselves under the command of the chief engineer is due to their own status as intelligence agents.

That is...

"Listen, the person who knows the secret of an unprecedented phenomenon has become useless. Surrender and you will be detained by Headquarters, you know what will happen!"

This was because everyone was passively accepting the chief engineer's insistence that it had already happened for the umpteenth time.

"We will be accused of various clandestine jobs that will be imposed on us and handed over to our country of origin... At best, we will be deported and imprisoned, and at worst, we will be used as guinea pigs for investigation!"

Despite such instigation, there was no one in that organization who was clean and innocent enough to accept surrender. The fuel for their out-of-control behavior was the fear that "if they moved away from the side of manipulation and investigation, their position would be reversed".

Members of the intelligence service who spent their days committing shady deeds and even had a sense of pride in their actions attempted to crush them because Headquarters did not consider them that important, in fact, they looked down on them. The thought did not occur to them that their punishment would be lighter if they did nothing unnecessary.

Having no choice but to hide their feelings, they returned to their work.

The chief engineer, who had subdued his subordinate, turned his suspicious and hostile gaze towards the electrical panel on the wall.

The flashing light bulb on the map indicates the location of the convoy approaching the center, Nanakamado. It didn't seem like there was much time left.

"Tch."

After clicking his tongue, he gave new instructions to the two people behind him.

"Colt, help the doctor select interceptors. Anyway, quantity is more important than quality, okay?"

"Yes!"

One of them, Thomas Colt, responded with a salute, but there was no tension in his voice or his movements.

Despite the failure of the recent operation, and although he complained to the chief engineer about the danger to the king and others, he was able to remain head of the execution unit. This was because there was no one in the organization with more character and ability than him. In short, the previous operation was a crushing defeat for Nanakamado, who took it too seriously and lost the main strength of their active forces.

Colt himself suffered a crushing defeat to the point that the chief engineer no longer cared and, although as expected, his efforts to persuade Colt to cooperate failed. Although he felt ashamed, his feeling of boredom was not only due to his debt to these organizations.

There is no plausible theory that Nanakamado is advancing a pointless rebellion or that they are trotting out a Japanese Strain for that purpose. However, ever since that battle with the "Red King" Unno Yutaka, a word came to his mind from the bottom of his heart.

(What am I doing?)

As a "talented American" with no place to live, as an accomplice to Nanakamado's various actions, he must have had no choice, and he must have understood and agreed with him. Still, for some reason, he was captivated by those words, and the more he thought about them, the more he lost his inner strength.

Or, on the contrary,

"Come on, Colt-kun."

After receiving the order, another elderly Japanese man named Doctor put on his white coat and left the room. Even in that situation, he was still triumphant and led the way down the hallway with legs like dead branches.

This person was a scientist who was recruited from the former Ninth Army Technical Research Institute (also known as Kyuken or Noborito Research Institute) on the condition that he would be exempt from prosecution for war crimes, and was the main Strains researcher. in Nanakamado. He is also the leader of the analysis team that created a temporal structure from the initial "too conceptual and I don't know what it means" stage and systematized and theorized it to the point of forming a combat unit based on Strain.

Colt couldn't understand his attitude.

Although he was in an obvious situation, there was no difference from his usual situation. Maybe he just doesn't feel the battle that is about to begin, or maybe he has a strong spirit that never forgets to dedicate himself to his duties... or is he optimistic that the results of his own investigations will guarantee his safety, no matter what the result is?

Despite his confusion, the Doctor continued through the house, which serves as his garden, and soon entered a section that smelled of chemicals.

It was a detention center for Strain, with almost the entire floor taken up by a series of small rooms.

A person who is too fierce or too cowardly to be used. Someone who is strong or too weak to be used. Those who cannot be classified, those whose investigation and trial have not been completed, are allowed to stay for the time being. The last trump card left for Nanakamado, who has lost his main force, is the "interception personnel candidates in an emergency situation", who can be forced to follow them at gunpoint from the rear.

Normally, it was the rule to carefully evaluate the use of personality skills and aptitude before requesting cooperation, but in the current emergency, it is impossible to worry about such a pretense.

The Doctor continued forward, ignoring the countless looks of fear and resentment that peeked through the thick acrylic board. At the same time, he pressed the buttons under the room number one after another.

Each time the button is pressed, the red indicator light changes to green. That was the signal that "mobilization was possible", and the escort team was supposed to take him downstairs immediately.

Colt heard the Doctor murmur.

"No. 311, common, capable of killing, with a history of injury, good. No. 312, common, capable of killing, no history of injury, good. No. 314, common, non-lethal, with a history of murder, good. No. 315, Beta, has the ability to kill, has a history of murder, good. No. 317, without lethal capacity, has a history of injuries, good."

He looked away, feeling somewhat horrified that he seemed to be judging others calmly, even cheerfully, without referring to anything.

And there,

"No. 322, common, no lethal capacity, no history of injuries, bad."

A surprising verdict came.

There was someone who couldn't press the button.

Feeling a strange sense of relief, Colt looked towards room 322.

He looked at him and couldn't help but ask.

"D-doctor, is this child...?"

The Doctor, already making a decision several steps ahead, stopped and responded with a lack of interest.

"Hmm? No. 322 has the ability to generate electricity at the level of static electricity. She doesn't have the physique or physical strength, so she won't be of any use."

That judgment was completely correct.

Sitting in the middle of the room, cowering in fear, was a girl who wasn't even old (Colt had a hard time estimating the age of this skinny girl born in Asia). The marks of crying were clearly visible on her haggard and dejected face.

"Who are the parents of this girl?"

"She's a vagabond. I've made inquiries, but she has no family. The report says that the Strain group that attacked a US military transport vehicle did not manage to escape. Number 327, has the ability to kill, has a history of murder, good."

As he answered Colt's question, the doctor resumed his judgment process.

So far, several cases of Strains children have been confirmed. Most of them are locked up, hunted like monsters, or used by unscrupulous adults... in any case, they are said to be in even more dire circumstances than ordinary children.

Basically, Nanakamado doesn't see them as objects of use. The reason for this, of course, is not morality or love, but the fact that children with abilities are generally weak and have no value beyond statistical research. Still, for a while there were some people who advocated that they should secretly protect those children, but this is the current situation.

"....."

Colt, who had come into contact with the girl as a real human being and not as a series of characters on a sheet of paper, instinctively reached into his pocket and pulled out a bar of chocolate. Food that was normally used as bait to obtain information on corners was thrown through the food container. The girl looked up slightly.

"Do your best. You might be able to get out in a while."

He said that in clear Japanese while putting on his best fake smile.

Although the girl understood the meaning of the words, she did not seem to understand what he was trying to convey. All she could do was stiffen and look at him with suspicious, teary eyes.

"Colt-kun, what are you doing?"

"Oh, nothing."

When he responded to the doctor standing before him, there was a heavy impurity mixed with his fake smile.

(Seriously, what am I doing...?)

As if leaving his words and actions behind, Colt quickly left.

The girl who was left behind didn't even reach for the chocolate, she just lowered her head and called out to her.

"Iku-chan, please help me..."

The name of a very, very strong "Queen" who will help them.

+++++

There are rows of power transmission towers in the western suburbs of Tokyo. Under dark clouds and drizzle, a girl stood on top of what appeared to be a group of sotoba trees devastated by the cold.

She is not a beautiful and strong figure.

She has a young, dirty face and a forward-leaning posture.

She was around 10 years old and was wearing a tattered trench coat over her thin, petite body, but for some reason she has the hood down over her back. The way her chin jutted forward, along with her flowing hair, gave her the appearance of a wolf searching for prey. Both eyes peeking out of her bangs are closed.

It is not a peaceful dream.

It was a look of concentration and a deep expression.

And...

"...!"

In an instant, lightning exploded beneath her feet.

The girl simply opened her eyes without showing surprise or fear.

Her large eyes scanned the horizon where the electrical cables were strung.

"I found it."

A gigantic and complicated circuit diagram was constructed in the moaning girl's field of consciousness. It is a model of the area's transmission network, including the electrical cables under its feet, with the vibrations and flickering of it. She knows the strength and weakness of electrical currents, and even the content of communications.

What she found was a name that was nothing more than a communication.

"Someone gave a lot of importance to Miya-chan..."

Even now, there are people who continue to send information about people's names, characteristics and powers. Among them was the name of the friend she was looking for. Other information proves that she is definitely a friend who was taken away by the occupation forces.

The girl's forward-leaning posture leaned further, gathering strength to jump.

Just when,

"Huh, which one?"

She didn't know which side captured her friend, the one sending the message from the east or the one receiving it from the west. As she gathered more strength, she concentrated on that communication and investigated further.

Most of them were words she had never heard before, but it was easy to guess their meaning from the excitement in their voices and the way they structured the language (although she didn't know the words taii or suisoku).

The sender desperately seeks help and persistently relents.

The recipient seems reluctant and rarely responds.

The girl struggled to find out what role her friend plays in these communications, although she is anxious.

In communications sent from the east,

"Please send me as many talented people as you can as soon as possible!"

A voice shouted.

There are a lot of talented people on the receiving end in the west.

She is sure that there are many people with abilities, that is, there must be some friends who were taken away.

That's right, the girl who makes decisions based on reflexes instead of careful consideration wasn't wrong...

The girl turned her head towards the west.

"Let's go everyone!"

In response to the howl, dozens of shadows rose from the field below the power transmission tower. They were all skinny, dirty kids about the same age or younger. On those sharp and carved faces, there was a sense of fierce power similar to that of the girl.

A hand rose out of nowhere.

When everyone on the field raised their hands, the girl on top of the steel tower did the same. She's the only one who doesn't just raise her hand. She was raising her index finger as if to stab the sky.

"Come on!"

In an instant, lightning descended from the dark clouds, accompanied by thunder.

The explosive power of lightning erupted from the girl who raised her finger at the top of the group to the children below who raised their hands, connecting everyone with green sparks and electric shocks.

"Biribiri-dan, shuppatsu!"

And with that, the girl gathered all the strength she had accumulated and began to run.

As if she were flying, gliding on electric wires lying in the air.

The children who were on the ground are attracted by the strength of their bond and go together.

The "Green King" Tsunogui Iku and "Biribiri-dan" destroyed maintenance and disrupted stability, and they were completely wrong. However, it was a storm-like departure that made the shock that much greater.

On a gloomy morning under stormy skies with mostly freezing rain, residents near the Research Institute for Infectious Disease Control evacuated. They loaded their few household belongings into a large car, carried them in furoshiki wrappers on their backs, and, holding hands with their families, walked frantically toward their designated evacuation destinations. There were complaints from many people that it was too late to evacuate, but if it were a message from Headquarters, it would be undeniable.

At first glance, it seems reasonable for Headquarters to say:

"This is a precautionary measure along with sampling for infectious diseases".

Despite that, a large number of police and even the Occupation Forces were sent to establish a strict blockade. Everyone couldn't help but wonder about the truth that was openly kept secret.

Some of the demobilized soldiers understood that this blockade line was prepared for movement from the inside, but at the same time they noticed the serious looks on the faces of the American police and soldiers guarding the area, and they remained silent and did not want to get involved.

The evacuation, which had since sparked various speculations, and the deployment of personnel in jeeps and trucks, which had been transported upriver, were completed at noon. It was so cold and rainy that bonfires were even allowed in several places.

The Research Institute for Infectious Disease Control where Nanakamado hides quietly.

Police and American soldiers surround the chalk building, which is surrounded by a high concrete wall and has a very bad reputation among local residents. They formed an orderly formation even in the rain and placed their gun barrels on piles of sandbags, but they advanced no further. Its only function was to build a siege and capture fugitives. That was decided the night before at an emergency strategy meeting.

Similarly, the number of personnel responsible for the invasion and suppression was determined by the Fourth Legislation Bureau of the Ministry of Justice, headed by the "Blue King" Somei Nazumi, who had clarified the confusing meeting. Even including Nazumi himself, there are only nine people with that ability.

The nine of them lined up in front of the main gate of the research institute, holding umbrellas.

The row of umbrellas, some restless and others motionless, watched the ceremony to prepare for the formality of the execution. A messenger from the Second General Staff Department, armed with an order from Headquarters, rang the bell, a ritual that may seem modest but is also a decisive declaration of war.

There was no answer to the doorbell.

The messenger pressed the call button and read the document.

When he finished saying that, if they didn't comply, they would be executed, that is, forcibly seized, he ran out the door like a rabbit.

The messenger stood in front of the "Blue King" in the center of the row of umbrellas and greeting.

"Report! No response from external organizations! Request from the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces Headquarters! Since the order was clearly violated, the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau will quickly enforce it. That that's all!"

Nazumi folded his umbrella and placed it at his feet, then responded with the correct fold.

"Accepted by the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau."

When the messenger left, a row of umbrellas folded their umbrellas one after another and placed them at their feet.

While catching the raindrops on his hat, Nazumi looked around the research institute.

"It seems that they have no intention of prolonging the negotiations and gaining time."

While her husband looks at the board, Chika helps him read by talking to him.

"What kind of winning strategy do you plan to find in this desperate situation?"

"That's right. If they wanted to engage in urban warfare, they would have launched it before the siege was completed."

As he smiled and enjoyed the conversation with his wife, Nazumi immediately got to the point.

"In that case, the operational posture is interception and the target is the assault force. That is to say, we are the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau. Since we are the biggest nuisance to them, we must be exterminated within their base as soon as possible."

The staff members on both sides responded lightly depending on their courage.

Nazumi continued with a smile on his face.

"I think the goal is to create a stalemate with the surrounding forces that have already settled. What they fear more than anything is that the talented forces in Atsugi will not be

able to arrive. That's why they want to crush us, the opposing force of reinforcements that come, with their first move. If we can crush them, we can use it as material to move Atsugi."

As the game progresses, the pieces of the puzzle come together one after another and the players' intentions come together. So far, he didn't have the overwhelming feeling of foreboding or unease that worried him in the morning. The reading continued with great clarity.

"When reinforcements arrive, we will concertedly break the siege, both internally and externally, causing unrest in Tokyo. They will then negotiate with Headquarters or the Japanese government for a pardon on the condition that they withdraw their troops. Then they return in triumph home with their glorious war results and political achievements as souvenirs... Well, the best scenario would be something like that."

He then added with a smile on his face.

"Of course, that's impossible."

Chika added more to prevent her husband from becoming irreverent.

"Never forget that the other person also has the power to cancel the impossible."

"It was certainly premature."

Nodding solemnly, Nazumi stepped forward.

The officers once again straightened their backs at the act prior to the order.

But for some reason, instead of the usual orders, a long explanation came.

"Today's deployment is a monumental moment for us, the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau, which has been officially entrusted with full authority to deal with individuals with the capacity to induce anomalous phenomena by breaking the chain of command between the Occupation Forces and the Armed Forces."

The staff, including Chika, were attacked by a bad feeling.

His especially logical explanation was determined to be an unavoidable incentive, even indirectly, to influence someone from a logical perspective, "something that is difficult to accept immediately".

"Right now, so to speak, is the place to reveal it... This morning during breakfast I came up with a gesture that would demonstrate to the viewers that I am willing to commit crimes against people with abilities, and also show them the model of order that must be maintained."

As expected, a proposal came that they couldn't immediately accept, but from which there was no escape.

"From now on, when we prepare for battle on the field, we will all draw our swords in order shouting a certain number. Following my order, each person please respond with their name and report having drawn their sword. Now, let's go "

The "Blue King" gave the orders, with the air of a cheerful driver and the voice of a stern superior.

"All members draw your swords!"

"To the order..."

Somei Chika, who was the deputy commander, or, in other words, the one who had to take the lead among the "vassals", was guarded by the staff and, although her cheeks were flushed, she followed orders. As soon as she picked up her naginata that she carried on her back, she put the sheath on her waist.

"Somei Chika, battou!"

With a loud, mesmerizing sound, she swung her drawn naginata and smashed the stone onto the ground.

Behind them, a scream escaped from the surrounding troops, exactly as Nazumi had anticipated.

Then, the last member of the station, who had been hesitating, finally moved after receiving an elbow in the side.

"I-Iyoda, battou!"

This time, his voice and his movements were moderate, so he was silent from behind.

With the assistance of both the good and the bad, the staff continued doing the same without hesitation.

"Rokugo, battou!"

"Hakizawa, battou~"

"Uh, uh, Nizuka, battou!"

"Hoizumi, battou!"

"Hentani, battou!"

"Toneyama, battou!"

After watching with satisfaction as everyone drew their swords, Nazumi slowly, but with a masterful movement, revealed the white blade.

"Somei Nazumi, battou!"

Naturally, he took a step forward and the station staff followed in line.

Because Nazumi was advancing at a regular pace,

"We're also working hard on creating other things, like extended front-end speeches. Look forward to the future."

For some reason, no one responded to proposal number two.

When the execution began, the telephone lines leaving the research institute were cut simultaneously in several places. They probably have backup lines buried underground and radio communication equipment, but the effectiveness of the measures is not the issue. That was a response to the enemy's declaration of war, which they ignored, and a signal for the start of the battle.

Next, the main door was hit by the stone tip of a naginata accompanied by blue power.

The thick iron gate was torn free of its bolts and fell onto the stone pavement of the front garden. When the glow of the earth's tremors faded, only the waves of freezing rain remained. There was no sound of movement in the barren front garden leading to the front door.

"As expected, there was no deployment of forces outside and no firing from inside. I guess it was a stalemate after 41 moves. As I thought, the real battle will only begin after we rush inside."

As he looked around from behind his hat, Nazumi gave them his final instructions.

"Originally, I would send the sword-shaped Radiant Schwert to strengthen them, but I don't want to irritate the "Colorless". I would like it to be a true test of skill."

The "King's" assessment was that it was possible to control the area with those nine people.

The confidence of the "vassals" in the evaluation of this "king".

They both took steps without hesitation and finally stopped in the middle of the front yard. It is a perfect place to observe the board, offering a panoramic view of the interior of the entrance, both ends of the house and even the bell tower above. After looking around,

"First move, reach the observation point... I will leave command to you from then on. Be careful."

Without bending down or bending his stretched back, he confided it to Chika,

"Yes. You should do your best."

Chika also looked forward and resolutely returned a response to Nazumi.

Then, leaving Nazumi in his place,

"Come on!"

The horizontal line resumed execution with Chika giving the order.

The tension in the formation increased with each step and finally, at its climax, eight people lined up at the entrance. The two wooden doors that once housed a general hospital are large and tall, and greeted them with an eerie silence.

Chika, as vice commander, looked left and right.

Although everyone was nervous to some extent, they did not hesitate.

After lifting her chin back in a slightly satisfied manner, the vice commander of the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau issued a sharp order.

"Run!"

"Yes!"

"Come on!"

Hakizawa and Nizuka each kicked in the two doors, throwing everyone inside.

Before they could fall to the ground, the tremendous gunshots from inside would blow them to pieces.

To annihilate the intruders, countless bullets fell from beyond the barricade installed in the entrance hall, not only from pistols, but also from automatic rifles and machine guns. Furthermore, invisible shockwaves, blows, and cuts came like an avalanche.

To confront it head-on, Hentani and Toneyama erected a solid blue power shield.

"Wow, this is the first time I've seen the entire shield shake!"

"The impact of the "force" is greater than that of a bullet."

As they stopped to take cover at the entrance, swords imbued with power silently approached from behind the thick stone pillars to their left and right.

Immediately, Iyoda and Hoizumi killed them.

"Wow?!"

"It smells elegant!"

At the same time, Chika hit the two people falling directly on top of her with the flat part of her naginata, knocking them down. After confirming that the unconscious people had collapsed inside the mantlet, she asked Rokugo, who was staring at the center of everyone.

"How is?"

"There are no signs of bombs or gas."

Before he could say that, Hakizawa and Nizuka stepped forward and moved the position of the mantlet forward.

"Iyoda-kun, you are very strong in real life."

"Hey, two tablecloths are formed!"

The collision between the bullet and the force became even more intense.

Ignoring that, Hentani and Toneyama pressed harder and harder.

"Prevent shielding, advance further!"

"Secure the cutting position."

Once the shield was erected a short distance from the barricade, Chika gave an order.

"One, two, three, take it!"

Iyoda was first, followed by Hoizumi.

"Gaaah!"

"Keep formation!"

Following them, Hakizawa and Nizuka,

"Come on."

"Oh, wait."

Following them, Rokugo, Hentani and Toneyama as well.

"Keep pushing!"

"Understood!"

"Come on."

They jumped onto the barricade one after another, and fortunately, they were able to hit the barricade, expanding their control area from the front to the left and right, and then to the surrounding area. Finally, Chika, who had been setting up a shield at the rear, silently entered the barricade and obtained a bridgehead to control. There weren't many interceptors lying around inside, maybe they evacuated as they approached.

(After all, the other party is not exempt from measures either.)

Chika looked around her, preparing herself once again.

Located at the rear of the entrance hall, an empty hallway extends to the left and right. In each case, similar barricades were erected along the long road, with white swords and gun muzzles flashing.

This time, the officers prepared for the next attack while hiding behind barricades.

Rokugo, the security guard, shouted.

"Left hand, heavy weapon!"

A brief whistle was heard and bursts of rocket flames erupted from beyond the shield placed outside the barricade. The common sense that it's not something to shoot indoors seems to have lost its meaning in this situation.

"Prepare for a surprise attack by the talented!"

Chika perked up and stood like an unbreakable pillar in the center of the barricade.

(So far so good... now I'll gather the ingredients for Nazumi.)

Nazumi watches her efforts from the front yard.

(Heavy weapons, again from the west, 34 moves.)

To be precise, he was observing the battlefield and trying to understand the factors that made up the battle situation.

The initial location of the force, the behavior of talented people who seem to have a squad commander behind them, the direction in which they will retreat when attacked, the direction in which reinforcements will be sent, the density of the fire that they rain and the weapons of the interceptors. The types of weapons used are not only those of the battlefield.

(Grenade from above, 35 moves.)

The plan of the general hospital before its renovation, the appearance of the research institute after its renovation, the slight pipes and unevenness exposed in the wall, the route of the canal to drain ice and rain, the construction of the front garden and the damage to stone pavement. Until then, he mentally lined up everything that could be verified.

(Wave of attacks by talented people, 36 moves.)

In order for the actions that take place on the battlefield to be possible, it becomes clear what kind of structure the buildings must have and where the people must be. When that becomes clear, you will have the entire war situation in your hands.

And now,

(Reinforcements on the left side of the atrium. The pillars cannot be removed, so even if it is renovated, the structure will remain the same. The route of the bullets, the position

of the barricade, the stairs to protect and the use of gas now. Chika-san, are you okay? 37 moves.)

All the phenomena were intertwined and the puzzle was completed.

In other words, reason and phenomenon have been clearly separated.

(Is that where the command post is?)

Nazumi looked from under his uniform towards the west end of the top floor.

The walls were exactly the same as the others, with the windows covered in concrete and disguised as shutters.

However, all battles occur around that area and they move to protect it.

Nazumi turned towards that, keeping his back straight. Due to the sharpness of his movements, his rain cape spread for a moment, pushing away the freezing rain particles. The regular steps began.

(Approach, 38 movements.)

In his mind, the "King" begins to count his own movements.

This was proof that the mission was in its final stage.

Finally, his steps began to gain strength and a blue crystal step formed beneath his feet as he stepped on them with an unchanging rhythm. Before long, he reached his destination, facing the west end wall of the top floor, without any hesitation or confusion.

(Accomplished, 39 movements.)

He held his saber upright in front of him like a guard of honor, then brandished it three and four times before returning to the same position. The thick concrete wall was cut into a blue line and collapsed inwards.

(Cut, 40 moves.)

The scene in the dimly lit room... electrical panels that had been smashed and sparks scattered, information equipment lined up all over the place, and the engineers looking at him stiffly proved that his assumption was correct.

The "Blue King" stared at them, throwing his saber forward and announcing his sentence.

"Forty-one moves, you are paralyzed. I recommend you all to surrender."

But,

In the end, when Nazumi visually checked the board, he should have immediately accepted the surrender. The expression of the man, the chief engineer, made him feel very uncomfortable.

"Ah, "Blue King" ...!"

That harsh but trembling voice had a tone of desperation much darker than expected.

When Nazumi saw that, that feeling of foreboding and disgust suddenly came back to him from the depths of his heart.

Something was wrong. It was large and misaligned.

The chief engineer revealed to him the true nature of the discomfort.

"Is this... also... your doing?"

After saying that, Nazumi finally caught on to what he was pointing out.

A large communication device that had probably been chewing on it just now.

From that speaker overflowed the noise of the battlefield mixed with noise.

Nazumi had heard that the communication was coming from inside the house where a battle was taking place, but the truth was different.

[I urgently ask for help! I urgently ask for help!]

He understood it only from the word he received.

The interlocutor was not there.

[We are being attacked by a group of strangers!]

The person seeking help comes from a completely different place.

Apart from that institute, there is only one other partner with whom they could collaborate in that critical situation.

In other words, they were the source of support for Nanakamado's rebellion plan.

[I repeat, this is the Atsugi base!]

It was the Atsugi American military base where the talented troops were stationed, which was supposed to be the side that was supposed to provide support.

[We are being attacked by a group of strangers! I urgently ask for help!]

A cry of despair shook the atmosphere in the room that was supposed to have surrendered with a fever of restlessness.

[The Japanese skill corps was wiped out! What are those brats?]

[They're coming, they're coming! The door will break!]

Behind the transmission, the sound of metal being struck began to rumble irregularly. It sounded like someone was playing the drums recklessly, ignoring efficiency and regularity.

Of course, the first thing that ran through Nazumi's mind was "Colorless", but something wasn't right.

(Did he drive to neighboring Atsugi Prefecture? What about the children?)

That doubt created an unpleasant hum in Nazumi's heart that he had never felt before... even when he was fighting with all his might against the "Red King" Unno Yutaka or the strange monster "Colorless King".

A whisper, similar to the feeling you get when you turn something over.

Meanwhile, the level of panic on the other end of the communication rose through the roof.

[The radar site that fell due to lightning has been restarted! The Hoigaku moves on its own!]

[You're an Idiot!]

[Is he! That color "green"...]

The voice stopped suddenly.

A sudden silence descended upon the command post.

The chief engineer and the engineers were stunned.

For them everything is over. That was the end.

However, for the "Blue King" Somei Nazumi, it was different.

Now that things were being cleaned up, something was starting to happen.

There was no point in giving up.

There was another player who turned the entire board over.

[..."Green"..." ]

A voice came from the speaker, as if in response to Nazumi accidentally spilling it.

[Where?]

Nazumi felt the voice, or rather the medium, and felt the pressure running through his entire body.

The voice was not only emitted from the large communication device with which the chief engineer communicated.

It was broadcast from all the communication devices installed in the command post.

(No way, this communication... is not allowed!)

The established order will be ruined.

Faced with so much certainty, Nazumi felt lost for the first time.

It seems like he couldn't understand it all at once.

[Miya-chan, where are you?]

The voice that reached him was that of a small child.

[Whoever knows, answer me... I am...]

That voice said the decisive words.

[Oh... "Green King" ...]

The turmoil of that day had barely begun.

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That day, Daikaku Kokujoji had been sitting in a certain subcommittee meeting since morning.

He didn't want to get caught up in other things on a day when they had an important dispatch for the King and people with abilities, but as long as he has one foot in this world, there are many duties that he has to fulfill. This is especially true if it is an important official mission, such as accompanying and escorting the president of the ruling party.

The reason for the subcommittee meeting was a motion to punish a member of the ruling party for misconduct, and since the conclusion of the punishment was clear, the decision was made quickly. However, after that resolution, a private draft of the statutes circulated within the party. After reading it, the president wordlessly handed it to Kokujoji, who was standing next to him.

Kokujoji was secretly surprised as he looked at the document, wondering what the escort was doing.

"Security system project for party members."

The agenda was trivial, but extremely important. The party wanted to officially incorporate "Tokijikuin", who had been treated as an outside collaborator, into a part of the party organization.

In recent times, the ruling party administration has finally entered a period of stability and is now negotiating with the General Headquarters on the path to complete peace and withdrawal from the occupation. At this time, the opaque relationship with private

organizations such as the pre-war extra-parliamentary group needs to be clarified. There is no point in trying to expand the strength of the party.

Even within the organization, the words were full of artificial rhetoric, saying that the organization would gain more success if he became an official official.

When Kokujoji turned his attention to him, the president let out a ridiculous snort and shook his head slightly. In other words, it is a surprise move by a rival faction within the ruling party that he has no knowledge of. With the ruling party's dominance in the political situation almost firmly established, the rival factions seem to have had enough leeway to carry out unnecessary political maneuvers.

The purpose of the recruitment must have been to take control of "Tokijikuin", who had been controlling the political world from the position of bodyguard, formally incorporating them into the ruling party. Even within the dominant faction led by the president, there are many who wish to use "Tokijikuin", who possesses supernatural powers, more conveniently. As the opposing factions discuss the draft, they will compile these requests and turn them into the opinion of the entire party. If it becomes the will of the entire party, it cannot be ignored, and if it happens, it will be an opportunity to undermine the president and take control of the party... There may be other considerations.

He can't believe it was a coincidence that they submitted the draft that same day. It's like they're going to put pressure on the leader of "Tokijikuin", who will prioritize protecting the president over a serious case of talented people, that they're going to put him on the table and pressure him into submission?

(I see, humans are truly insatiable creatures.)

Kokujoji was smiling like it was no one else's business.

(Although only three years have passed since the destruction and death that tore the country apart.)

Until now, "Tokijikuin" has tried to avoid being absorbed by its greed and stay out of political conflicts. However, the trend of the times may gradually make it no longer possible to do so.

In the future, regardless of whether they are involved or not, as the world stabilizes, interference from those who desire power will increase. The situation in which they are becoming the reason for the conflict demonstrates this.

Power moves people and creates a flow just by being there.

It is like a cluster of stars that he expanded through his daily training.

(I never expected the beginning to appear so quickly.)

That draft is only a small part. The power that has been lost in the postwar chaos will become more visible as it settles. It's time to think about making a change.

The sensation of being faced with a proposal for which he had carefully searched for the answer invaded him.

The proposal is,

(How should we "Kings" be treated?)

Will it remain hidden in the background like before?

Or will it turn around and appear?

(If not, is there another way?)

Although it was a proposal, it did not seem that the direction would be easily determined.

After all, he didn't even recognize the faces of all the "Kings" who should be punished.

While he was lost in these thoughts,

Unexpectedly,

[Where?]

A voice came from the radio installed in the chamber.

Not that it was time, he didn't even have time to think about it.

It is as if the proposals he has discarded, such as caution, now face a harsh reality.

(.....!)

An almost physical shock, incomparable to the moment he saw the draft, passed through Kokujoji.

Hearing it for the first time, perhaps a child's voice, unleashed a power unique to them that no one else can use.

[Miya-chan, where are you?]

(You, no way.)

In the noisy chamber, only Kokujoji had a hunch about the situation.

Even when the staff hastily fiddled with the radio switch, the voices continued to come out. Before he knew it, all the speakers inside and outside the chamber were emitting the same loud voice that no one else could stop.

[Whoever knows, answer me... I am...]

(I guess everything is ready... now, finally!)

An indescribable feeling of euphoria warmed Kokujoji's heart.

It was no longer worth hiding it.

Everything will appear as it is.

What will this bring for him, for them and for this country?

He must accept this along with them and confirm it.

He stopped doubting a long time ago.

Since that comes, he will accept it with determination.

Suddenly, Kokujoji stood up to say the decisive word.

[Oh... "Green King" ...]

(The last one... "Green King"!)

He had to go to them.

In order to determine if it is a desired miracle or not.

Or, to turn it into a desired miracle...

"Kokujoji-kun."

After hearing the familiar title, the president finally turned to look at him.

Kokujoji, who received his gaze, spoke with a smile.

"I will respond after considering the draft."

The president noticed that the man who answered seemed to have grown larger.

He is not big enough to be belittled and repressed.

He was so big that he naturally looked up and turned his back to him.

The burly man took a deep breath and the entire assembly hall burst into loud applause.

"To those in the House of Representatives who want us, know this! We are both a sword and a flame! You can see the full extent of this, so prepare to swallow it all!"

Before the lingering effects of the impact from his cheeks to his stomach wore off, his large figure had disappeared from the chamber.

This time, the remaining president smiled as if it was no one else's business.

DESDE AQUI

Unno Yutaka hates rain.

Therefore, on days when the weather is not good, he usually spends the day resting at the back of Todokoro Suwako's cafe, or resting at the back of the "Yakumo" game room. Unno, who was resting at the back of "Yakumo" that day as usual, suddenly stood up and walked out through the back door.

The direct reason was...

[Where?]

The radio that was beside his bed.

[Miya-chan, where are you?]

Even if he hit it or broke it,

[Whoever knows, answer me... I am...]

It was because that continued raising the voice.

[Oh... "Green King" ...]

With a bat umbrella, he walked as if he was kicking the bitter icy rain.

Then, a member who was following closely behind joined him.

It was Todokoro Suwako, holding an umbrella.

"Even though I said I wasn't going anywhere."

A hard look emerged from behind the round black glasses.

Embarrassed, Unno pouted even though he was the culprit.

"That's not what I meant. I'm sure you understand."

"You said that? That's not even true."

Another person began to tease and follow them.

It was Tamataro Okuma, dressed in an uncomfortable-looking raincoat.

"There are people who believe in the phrase "don't fly" and it's cannonball."

"Don't make any noise."

"There's a lot of noise."

At times like this, Unno and Suwako would answer in unison.

Okuma let out a sigh and asked again.

"So you know where you're going, right?"

"There's going to be a commotion anyway, so let's go there."

Suwako was very taken aback by the terse and messy answer.

"Were you planning on just walking in the rain until then?!"

"He's a boss who always looks out for you, see?"

Okuma was equally taken aback, but handed over the newspaper he had in his pocket.

After receiving it, Unno drew his attention to the area circled in red. The headline of the small article read, "Traffic restrictions in the vicinity of Nanakamado City due to the extraction of infectious disease samples from the Research Institute for Infectious Disease Control".

"Nanakamado, umm... Colt's house?"

Without taking a moment to think, Unno's feet turned in that direction.

The two followers also had their destinations arranged.

"That's the only place where there's going to be commotion today. Traffic regulations will require people to pay before entering and leaving."

"Well, I guess the young lady and her blue-hatted husband will be coming too."

Unno walked away, kicking away the freezing rain.

"Don't talk about that bastard, he's really bad."

Although he had a premonition of a battle, or even a conviction, his steps remained the same.

The next two people were the same.

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In Tsunogui Iku's memory, there is a flame break.

She doesn't remember what was supposed to be on the other side of that flame.

The woman she is today began with that fire, wandering through the scorched fields.

The fact that she was burned during an air raid was discovered by others much later.

At that time, she wandered around with a vague sense of loss, as the endlessly hot flames annihilated everything in their path... including her memories.

The only thing besides life was a name.

A name tag was sewn onto her clothes, which were riddled with tiny holes caused by the sparks. The small piece of cloth that testified to her existence had the words "Tsunogui Iku" written on it in furigana, probably because it was difficult to read. Or perhaps it was a beacon for parents and children to find each other among the burnt ruins, but it was never used.

Along with her memory, many of her criteria for judgment had also disappeared, and her face was expressionless.

At that moment, she was incapable of experiencing feelings built on some sort of foundation, such as feeling sad for the person she had lost or angry at the person who had provoked her.

The instincts of a living being, of being hungry and thirsty to connect with the present, and fearing the danger of oneself who has no way to protect oneself, ruled everything in her small body.

Even after the flame that caused the rupture had turned into a wasteland of extinguished charcoal,

She continued to walk aimlessly, hungry, thirsty, and scared.

No one else had the energy to help her.

Above all, it was not a particularly unusual hardship.

It was quite normal, except for the memory.

Many children lost their parents and were orphaned.

In a tense situation on the brink of defeat, there were very few ways to save orphans like her damaged by the war. There are very few orphanages that are public protection facilities and individual households are doing their best to keep their own families alive. It would have been better if only children could be evacuated, and it was still the same day to day where they evacuated to eat or not.

Orphans who were burned in the air raids flocked to makeshift communal dining halls or died in the field. On very rare occasions, some children found adopters, but in reality they were only a handful, or rather almost no one. Most of them just wandered around, got lost, and ended up at the edge of the place.

After many days, she finally reached one such abyss, the underground passage of Ueno Station.

It was a narrow, winding concrete underpass that connected the burned-out JNR Ueno Station to the Keisei Line's Ueno Koen Station, and served as a makeshift evacuation center for people who had nowhere to go. Of course, that hadn't been publicly

acknowledged. Due to several large air raids, the number of homeless people numbered in the hundreds, even thousands, and society was at a standstill, with no one able to do anything about it.

10% to 20% of the homeless people were children, and she ended up living like one of them. Although they called it life, it wasn't that of a normal human being. They slept in unsanitary and unsafe spaces, crammed into places where it was difficult to even lie down, and they survived by running soup kitchens and begging, and when that wasn't enough, they resorted to illegal means... to put it bluntly, they resorted to criminal acts. The targets were mainly people coming and going from Ueno Station, sometimes people from far away who were rebuilding the ruins, and sometimes nearby neighbors who slept and woke up together in the underground passage.

"I can't help it, what else can I do?"

In the stagnant darkness of the underground passage, she heard someone muttering.

In such a place, where everyone's hearts were filled with resignation at the thought of losing their human relationships, Tsunogui Iku was rebuilding herself and continuing to live.

There is a girl who has a keen eye and keen intuition.

Such rumors began to circulate among the vagabonds of the underground passages a few months after the Empire of Japan, which they did not care about, suffered defeat and collapse.

At first, she was simply someone who knew a secret place to store leftover food from a US military facility, and for a short time, that place filled the stomachs of the few people who followed her until the parliamentarians chased them away.

Soon, people who had not only witnessed the incident but also cooperated with it began to share their experiences, such as locating a supply storage area that had been cleverly hidden by a blackmailer and unearthing several underground warehouses buried among the burnt ruins.

Ultimately, by predicting from the police's movements that a raid on an underground passage (squatter raid) is taking place, she gains tremendous trust from those who believe her and escape.

The girl's name is Tsunogui Iku.

Judging from the clothes she was wearing, that seemed to be the case.

She could be about ten years old. In addition to the person in question having lost their memory, homeless children are usually malnourished and underdeveloped. Guessing from her emaciated appearance was unreliable.

She was small in appearance, with a hunched back, and had a habit of slightly thrusting her chin forward. It was whispered that she looked like a beast, with her large eyes peeking out from her long, unruly hair.

When this strange-looking girl was asked the reason for her unusual intuition,

"You know it's going to happen when you see it."

She explained it concisely and difficultly. It is said that she is able to have a vague idea of what will happen based on what she sees and how she will move from there.

Iku was often approached by people who thought that even if they couldn't understand her, there was value in using her, but unfortunately Iku didn't have the social skills to be "used for good". At this point, she shows no interest in collective action, and in the above case, she didn't encourage others to do anything. Those who followed or heard the story willingly participated in the spillover.

All she does is search for food, eat, defecate, and sleep. She secretly wanders around the city during the day and returns to the underground passage to sleep at night, repeating the same behavior. It was truly the life of a beast.

The other things began to increase little by little, and it was at the time when people began to flood into Tokyo again that she began to see obvious changes.

The trigger was a common occurrence.

The child sleeping next to her died of hunger.

It was not her friend, it was a child who somehow had a fixed position next to her and sometimes did not have it.

The children who often walked astride them were dying of hunger.

It was a child whose face she did not know well, and who always slept on the way to her usual bed.

The child who spoke to her without giving her anything died of hunger.

It was a child who only thought she was noisy and had never exchanged a single proper voice.

Children were dying of hunger.

Similarly, adults were dying of hunger.

It was a common occurrence, but the rate of occurrence was accelerating.

From the fall of 1945 (Showa 20) to the following year, the year of Japan's defeat in the war, there was a food shortage that was even more severe in Tokyo. Defeated countries have limited reserves and do not matter as they did during the war.

Furthermore, immediately after the defeat, Typhoon Makurazaki swept through the Japanese archipelago, destroying fields across the country and causing the worst crop failures in the Taisho and Showa periods. Even food distribution to the general public was suffering a reduction.

Furthermore, people returned to Tokyo, where air raids had ceased, and demobilized soldiers arrived as well. The city of Tokyo, which had always been a large consumer area, was experiencing rapid, uncontrollable population expansion.

The population did not increase naturally due to development, but was due to a sudden influx of population. There was no way production or supply could keep up (after this, Tokyo's population would increase by 1 million people in just one year).

The balance that had kept the vagrants barely alive, surviving the day by eating or not, was shattered by this food shortage. All kinds of people faced food shortages, and the homeless people down below were forced to starve, unable to get food even if they begged and soup kitchens were disrupted.

At first, Iku showed no particular reaction to the starvation of these other people, but soon she realized that it was becoming difficult to get food and that there was a limit to what she could do with a little intuition.

She began to have relationships with other people.

She learned to talk to people, she began to act and work together.

Still, all she could do was spread out a little, but in that small space there was a chance to find life... to put it more plainly, there was a chance to find food.

From her experience, she has seen many adults who think that children's weaknesses are an opportunity to take advantage of them, and who want to wear them out and throw them away, but the only ones who can work together and share the results are children of the same generation.

Over time, Iku and the dozens of homeless people who gathered around him became well-known in the neighborhood. Sometimes they died, ran away, or got separated, but they were never killed.

Homeless people do not understand difficult issues. They often acted on impulse or mood rather than logic. Among the jobs offered to them, Iku chose one that even they felt they could do.

Basically, they work in groups of several people and mainly do simple jobs like traveling around the city in Batya (waste collection business), selling newspapers, collecting trash cans, and shining shoes in a row. Homeless children were often suspected of stealing, so they could hardly work in a shop (although in some cases the suspicions were true).

In illegal activities, they often acted as transporters, secretly transporting rice and other goods thrown from trains to black markets to evade inspections. They were highly valued by black marketers because they never ran away with their belongings, never fought in secret, and were often obedient if given food.

In this way, Iku and the vagabonds around her began to resist the cold winds of society to a certain extent, but change came from an unexpected direction, leaving no trace.

The blind old man who taught Iku enough words to hold a conversation was killed. He was unknown to no one, never talked about himself, and had just appeared in a corner of an underground passage, but the Ueno yakuza glared at him and thought he was the mastermind who was manipulating a group of vagabonds and sucking their delicious juices.

Speaking of the interaction between the old man and Iku and the others, they talked about various things and received a small amount of food in return, but that was all, but there was no way for an outsider to know the actual circumstances of their interactions. For the yakuza, it was just a matter of removing the nuisance in order to remove the convenient.

After inflicting irreparable injuries on the yakuza who had approached them as their new boss, Iku and the vagabonds around her suddenly disappeared from the Ueno underground passage. These incidents... the murders, injuries, and disappearances were too much to erase, and people soon forgot the memories of the strange girl.

It was the summer of 1946 (Showa 21).

The months leading up to the breakup seemed to be going well.

Iku and his friends, who had literally become vagabonds with no place to live, set their sights on the barely surviving fields in the suburbs, rather than the urban areas of Tokyo, which had dried up due to food shortages. Following Iku's instructions, the children hid and penetrated the darkness, where their guard was relaxed, and were efficient and thorough, ruthlessly stealing the crops, which were valuable under the current circumstances.

They became bands of thieves and continued to plunder the outer limits of Tokyo from east to north, north to west... and finally reached a dead end. The police, taking the increasing damage seriously, formed a vigilante group together with the former local police (a part-time fire department that was disbanded by headquarters, but reorganized as a fire department the following year, in 1947). This was because they were organized and took strict precautions.

Iku's intuition was correct. She knew where the crops grew, and she also knew that the vigilante group was keeping a close eye on that area, and that if they ventured there, they would definitely be caught.

But she couldn't do anything else. There was no power to change things. Like other vagabonds, her young and wild mind couldn't even think of anything else.

They simply stopped targeting the fields and focused their attention on their next looting target.

Distributed in the western part of Tokyo, this is a place where rations for soldiers, luxury items sold to XP shops, and daily necessities are collected.

In other words, it's a base warehouse for the Occupation Forces, a subordinate unit of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces Headquarters.

They had no idea how great a risk they were taking.

The first five cases went as smoothly as before. Following Iku's instincts, they sneaked through security and gaps, and looted many things without being seen. The children were delighted by these processed and sweet foods, unlike agricultural products.

But that was all. They could not imagine what kind of reactions their actions would provoke, or the mechanisms they would unleash, outside of "out there" where they were looking at the moment.

By late autumn, relief supplies from well-known Asian relief organizations, the so-called "Lara supplies", had begun to arrive at the warehouses of the Occupation Forces. These are not just literal relief supplies, but are politically important tools for the Japanese government, which is facing a food shortage. There was no way they were going to let those few warehouse raiders have their way with those items.

The Headquarters decided to use the entire organization called the Occupation Forces to subjugate the mysterious bandits. The strategy was to leave the warehouse, which was predicted to be the next target, unguarded and reduce the circle of troops surrounding the area. That's it. Just like in the previous war, it was a sumo yokozuna match in which even the slightest discrepancy was crushed with great force.

The characteristics of the robbers analyzed by the Occupation Forces were that they were incredibly thoughtless, contrary to their excellent infiltration techniques.

They raided the Occupation Forces' warehouses scattered from the north, one after another and periodically (this is the period when the children have eaten all the food they have stolen). The behavior was easy to predict.

The sixth attack occurred at the planned time and place. The operation went off without a hitch and the robbers, pursued by the troops surrounding them, were cornered in a corner of a grass field.

A cold rain fell on a dark night.

The last words the old man muttered when asked who stabbed him:

"Now that I know, what will I do? There's nothing I can do about it."

There's nothing she can do.

Tsunogui Iku hated that word.

She felt like those words were robbing her of the strength to live.

Many of those who spoke those words died before her eyes.

That happened to an old man whose name she didn't even know.

About the old man who died in blood and mud,

There's nothing she can do,

She didn't want to say that.

At that moment,

Even though she was forced to participate in a massacre with other homeless children,

She desperately tried to never let those words enter her mind.

The rain made everything go crazy.

Iku's intuition doesn't work unless she checks with her eyes whether it's a moving object or person.

The encircling troops of the Occupation Forces, who were stationed far away from the decoy warehouse, had no way of knowing about this situation, but in the end they opted for effective action. All the troops were forced to stay indoors, hating the cold rain. Anyway, from now on they will have to walk in the rain no matter how much they hate it. Furthermore, the operation started after midnight. At least until then, everyone was warming themselves in front of the stoves with a bottle of sake in hand.

Iku and the others didn't know that and headed for the target warehouse, thinking that they had escaped the safety net as usual. Iku herself could smell a hint of unease in the air, but she didn't stop her attacks. That's because they had already eaten all the food they had on hand. They believe that things will turn out well next time, so they have no extra savings. Days filled with successful experiences had secretly stripped the wanderers of their sense of caution.

And so the strategy to subdue the warehouse raiders was launched.

First, superimposed on the sound of the rain, the sound of countless gunshots echoed in the dark night.

When Iku saw the gunshots, she instantly realized.

(Sounds, gunshots, noticed, soldiers, occupation forces, many.)

Realizing that, she shouted to the homeless people.

"Run away from here!"

The surrounding homeless people grabbed nearby food and chased after Iku, who was the first to run. Normally that would have been enough to get away with it, but this day was different.

At regular intervals gunshots could be heard behind the rain.

A cold wall of fear rose wherever they ran.

Every time her path was blocked, she ran away in another direction.

After repeating that dozens of times, the children realized.

Before they knew it, they heard gunshots coming from all directions.

When they finally hid in a corner of the grass field, they found themselves completely surrounded. To ensure that the bandits never escaped, the occupation forces continued to pursue them with gunfire.

The action the children were required to take in response to that siege was to surrender.

All they had to do was raise their hands and stand in front of the surrounding troops.

The occupation forces had no idea that all the bandits surrounding them were children.

The reason the Headquarters carried out the subjugation operation in the first place was that Lala's supplies were meant to help people like them who were in a state of starvation. Or perhaps simply letting that thin, dirty figure stand in front of the base gate would have given them enough food for a day.

But they didn't do that. That's because they were only thinking about looting.

In the first place, the option of surrendering didn't even cross her mind. There was no chance to gain knowledge.

To them, the occupation forces that kept firing guns were nothing more than an enemy that would kill them if they didn't run away.

To the opposing occupation forces, what's hiding deep in the grass is nothing more than filthy thieves gathering for relief supplies.

She couldn't do anything about it and things ended up like this.

Finally, many children, unable to bear the pressure of being surrounded and the gunfire, ran out of the grass without hearing Iku's restraints. It wasn't the slow steps of surrender, but a frantic and fierce run.

The occupation forces, who had originally been ordered to shoot at the bandits, aimed their guns at the children without hesitation. There was no way they could observe the other person closely in the dark and rain. The way a figure ran out of the grass seemed like nothing more than a desperate counterattack by the robbers.

The children turned into beehives one after another and sank into the mud.

After these gruesome encounters all around, the occupation forces began to slaughter them. Since there are no signs of them offering to surrender, there is no need to hold back. The plan is to shoot them all there, so there will be no one to stop them now. The soldiers were even more motivated to put an end to it quickly due to the gruesome nature of the incident.

The bullets pierced the rain, shook the grass, and reaped lives.

In order to avoid this death passing over her head, Iku lay down in the mud and continued to struggle desperately.

She found no way to escape.

She didn't know what to do at a time like that.

Still, it didn't mean it couldn't be helped.

She didn't want to give up her strength to live.

She didn't know the reason for the obsession.

("One hand"...)

She just didn't want to die.

More than that, she wanted to be alive.

She came from beyond the confines of the flame and possessed within her the power to live. It was just a bit of intuition, but that abnormal power had certainly kept her alive until now.

And she overcomes it again.

What she tried to accept on the other side of the rift.

("Come"...)

She had almost accepted that she couldn't do anything about it.

Along with the words told to her by the person she lost in the fire.

To live in the present moment, she breaks away from the ordinary.

From deep within the cold rain and dark skies a new force emerged.

It glowed green and turned into a flash of lightning.

("Live"...)

The moment she was struck by the power, Tsunogui Iku felt the truth flowing into her. At the same time, there was also something moving along with that principle, something developing beyond the Slate lying silently somewhere.

Instead of printing out words, she felt a huge and complex system.

In a surge of power, she grasped the flow that formed everything from the other side to that place.

Now she knew how to call someone who can do that.

"..."Green Queen"..."

After obtaining the power to live, the "Green Queen" first used it to "graft". She enveloped the vagabonds lying in the mud in her current. A tremendous electric shock ran through the land, giving the twenty people who were still alive the power they needed to make the most of their lives.

These scenes were hidden by the night, rain, and grass, and were never seen by the besieging forces. First of all, they no longer looked at the ground. They all looked up, dumbfounded.

In the dark night sky, a huge green sword shone brightly against the cold rain.

Even after the siege was broken by a sudden flash of lightning and allowed the bandits to escape, the soldiers of the occupation forces remained trapped in a strange dream. It wasn't long before the Heaven's Sword disappeared, and the cold rain showered their faces, and they finally realized the fact that their plan had failed.

The next day, regarding the sword that appeared in Japan three times and the paranormal phenomena that accompanied it, the Headquarters officially announced that it was a mass hallucination as usual, and further imposed a gag order to prevent the spread of rumors.

From the circumstances of the interview, it was clear that the incompetent guy who worked as a warehouse raider had obtained powers similar to that "demon". The Headquarters, which was in charge of maintaining public order, had no choice but to fear the arrival of a new crisis, but it turned out that these fears were unfounded. Like the "demon", the new sword master did not seem to have any intention of showing his fangs to them, at least on the surface.

However, surveillance and search had to continue. Although an examination of the operation revealed that "the warehouse raiders were a group that included many children", this did not reflect the (extremely unpleasant) situation at the location where "only the corpses of the children were left behind". It is nothing more than rhetoric to improve

appearance, simply paraphrasing the situation at the scene. In the end, no other clues were found that could be useful in the search.

Above all, after the operation, the raider in question had disappeared.

It is true that, if you have such supernatural power, there is no need to go out of your way to steal.

He must be hiding in the darkness of the world, secretly plotting a plan worthy of using his power.

So, the Headquarters thought about it logically and remained extremely cautious.

But in reality, it was a complete acceptance.

That night, Tsunogui Iku woke up as the "Green Queen" and continued to rob the surrounding area with vagabonds in tow. What she gained through tragedy and awakening was a feeling of remorse for her careless plundering, and not a psychic's mission to provide a general outline of the plan.

With the sense of scanning and grasping things she gained as the "Green Queen", she was able to more clearly recognize where things were, how they moved, and where they were transported to. She then began to use that power to formulate elaborate robbery plans.

Existing supply warehouses, truck beds parked during transportation, wooden boxes piled up behind liquor stores, discarded items from accounting books, and stock that managers had forgotten about and left to rot. From there, she secretly stole an amount that would not cause any stir.

The Headquarters feared that they were hiding in the darkness of the world, but in the end, they were just children who wanted to eat as much as they could, no matter how far they went.

Lightning had begun to strike frequently in the western part of Tokyo.

Immediately afterward, the food disappeared without anyone noticing.

It was infinitely small, and those were all phenomena caused by the "Green Queen".

They secretly called themselves "The Biribiri Group". The twenty people who survived that night of murder are strongly united and lived together. No one escaped for about two years, until they caught a little girl sleeping on a blanket in a truck.

Iku has now jumped into the world to help that person.

There is no calculation. If she thinks she has to, she will not hesitate.

There is no fear of seriously exerting her "Green Queen" power.

The "Blue King" Somei Nazumi entered, or rather cut into, Nanakamado's command room, and understood the situation from the screams overflowing from the communication device and the "Green King's" few words.

(The "Green King" who attacked Atsugi's base and his group are searching for a person called Miya-chan.)

The moment he understood, he destroyed all the communication devices in the room with a flash of his white sword. Nanakamado's side must not allow the "Green King" to leak unnecessary information, whether out of distress or frustration.

Then, Nazumi entered the room and approached the person who seemed to be the chief engineer. However, in order to avoid unnecessary questions and answers, he did not forget to point the tip of his sword at him.

"Where is the key?!"

The questions became abstract as he took a few steps further in his understanding.

Even the chief engineer, who answered with a blank look, didn't understand.

"Key?!"

"It's a person called Miya! Is he an engineer, a witch, or a geisha?"

"I-I don't know! It's true, it's true!"

".....!"

Realizing that there was no deception in his tense expression, Nazumi grew increasingly impatient.

(This is the worst timing.)

Yes, he was unusually anxious.

(That tone of voice was trying to get a response through intimidation... In other words, the "Green King" was angry.)

Since the communication was from the Atsugi base where the rebel troops were stationed, it's highly likely that the "Green King" will target Nanakamado, a sophisticated intelligence agency located in the same hole. Soon, he and his group will attack in the freezing rain. From the brief content of the communication, elements such as children, women, forcefulness, and promiscuity could be extracted. He couldn't imagine him as a person who would settle the score with an unconditional conversation.

First of all, it is necessary to take control of the person called Miya and set her up as a negotiator. Still, five minutes is a good chance for a peaceful ending. If they allowed the arrival of the "Green King" as it was, they had no idea how many problems would arise

during the search process. Of course, the Fourth Legislative Bureau of the Ministry of Justice exists precisely for this kind of emergency, but that's not the problem.

(He must not participate.)

If the enemy is so strong that he has no choice but to bring out the glow of a sword (Schubert), like in the battle with the "Red King" Unno Yutaka the other day, he might summon that monster again. That was the biggest problem. At that time, with the help of the "Gray King" Benji Otono, he was able to pass through without incident, but he doesn't think his good fortune will continue next time. He didn't think he would lose (he was also an arrogant King in that regard), but it was physically and politically dangerous for him to show his true intentions as the "Blue King" in such a complicated situation.

(This person is useless, so what else can I do?)

Nazumi turned the focus of his thought away from the chief engineer who pointed at him with his finger and took a broader view of what was there. From among the principles and phenomena that have been worked out up to this point,

(We need a collaborator who knows the inner workings of this place in detail and can have a conversation with them.)

It will only take him a moment to find the piece he needs.

"Where is Mr. Thomas Colt?"

"What? Ugh!"

He pushed the blade an inch towards the chief engineer, whom he asked again.

"Where is Mr. Thomas Colt?"

"Oh, I should have taken the doctor to the underground bunker."

"Please call him, there should be an indoor broadcast."

"Okay, someone..."

The voice of the chief engineer, who was following instructions, was cut off by the arrival of something.

Nazumi thought he was moving things as quickly as possible, and that's exactly what happened.

However, the existence of a "King" has the power to destroy such ideas and reality.

Tsunogui was the "Green Queen".

Atsugi Air Base is located about 40 kilometers west of Nanakamado.

A green lightning bolt shot out from there, scattering sparks.

It wasn't the "Green Queen".

It was a boy considered a vassal and a member of the "Biribiri Group".

A small body wrapped in lightning abruptly cut through the air and finally landed on top of a telephone pole. As he bent his knees like a monkey and reached out one hand towards the telephone pole for support and the other towards the rainy weather, the lightning around him became even more intense. The green power traveled along the cable and extended eastward.

Finally, when his power reached its limit of expansion, a new person rushed out from the base. The jump followed exactly the same trajectory, and just before colliding with the first person, his body began to slide. Riding the lightning, he went eastward. When he reached the limit of extension, the second person also applied force to the cable and stretched it.

As the second child finished, one by one, the children of the "Biribiri Group" slid their bodies towards the beam, transmitting their power and stretching it. When the last person was able to follow their movements, the total length of the electric wires transmitting the force had reached a kilometer. Nanakamado was still far away, but it didn't matter.

This is because what the vassals have prepared so far is nothing more than a taxiway or runway prepared for the "King" to head east. The preparations are complete and the time has come to travel the laid out path.

An extremely large beam shot out from the base.

The moment it traveled on the green energy extending from the top of the wire, it was guided and accelerated, passing over the heads of the subjects at high speed. At some point, it gained momentum surpassing that of a cannonball and flew away with its vassals in tow.

Naturally, the destination is east.

The other side of the communication he picked up was Nanakamado.

It had been less than five minutes since the previous question.

The loudmouthed "Green King" Tsunogui Iku arrived amidst the chaos.

Nazumi felt it coming from the freezing rain.

"Okay, someone..."

The chief engineer suddenly cut off the voice.

Right after that, something crashed to the ground.

Nazumi immediately knew what that something was.

Not only was there a crashing sound that shook the air and pieces of concrete flew, but there was also a flash of green lightning. The edge of the lightning spread out and burst into the freezing rain, leaving sparks and sounds.

Nazumi jumped from the collapsed roof to the roof just beyond, hoping to control the situation as soon as possible or, if possible, end it without missing a shot. When he came down, he saw a large hole in the center of the rooftop, an elegant bell tower rising higher, as if it had been hit by a cannonball.

From the depths of that large hole filled with lightning,

"Eh?!"

A figure, smaller than he expected, leapt towards Nazumi.

A girl whose appearance could be mistaken for that of a beast. The "Green Queen", Tsunogui Iku, did not speak or utter her name in battle. She will just have to strike him with all her might without hesitation from the start.

Nazumi barely managed to stop the small palm that tried to grab his face, but with a grip strong enough to crush rocks. When he came into contact with the lightning, an intense electric current ran through his body.

"..."Green King"! What you seek..."

Despite the pain, Nazumi still called out to her, but Iku paid him no heed.

When Nazumi tried to turn around, the palm of violent force was approaching once again.

"Eh?!"

This time, instead of blocking it with his sword, he dodged it with his body.

Iku didn't even have time to land, kicking the ceiling and attempting to grab it three times.

Nazumi watched her persistent attacks and began to understand the new factors that were shaping the battle situation.

(She's not going crazy somehow, she's clearly aiming for me.)

If you think about it calmly, it was a strange story.

She suddenly set Nazumi as her target and fights with all her might.

First, she should check if he's related to that situation and then ask, "I'm looking for Miya-chan." That would be the normal way. She didn't ask who the other person was, didn't tell him what her demands were, and attacked Nazumi she had just found with all her might from the start, which was foolish even for a child.

The "Blue King" was confused by the girl who didn't allow him to easily understand.

The "Green Queen", on the other hand, also had her own criteria for judgment.

Adults don't listen to what the vagabonds say and even refuse. Therefore, after gaining power, she decided to defeat the strongest of her opponents first. By doing so, hierarchical relationships are recorded and conversations can be established for the first time with less rejection, lies and deception.

In other words, the "Green Queen" thought that before she could do anything, she had to defeat the "Blue King".

Although she did not know the other person, she felt that way.

(This guy is the strongest here..., so I'll beat him.)

Nazumi couldn't understand those thoughts, but he knew that Iku had no intention of talking to him.

As long as he understands that, he'll feel relieved.

(We can control each other before they release their sword glow (Schubert)... no, we have to.)

The sword was abruptly swung and blue power overflowed throughout his body.

(First, I'll block the electric discharge and buy time to unlock my power.)

His consciousness increased in concentration and he began to have a broader view of the war situation.

The agility of the opponent who attacks without interruption is abnormal.

The interval between attacks is too short. There is almost no reserve in the continuous movement of jumping, landing, standing, and jumping again. Although her physical abilities improved like a superhuman, her maneuvers and trajectories were often impossible according to the laws of physics.

Due to this feeling of unease, Nazumi searched for a logical coherence. That is the act of "cutting", as he puts it. He tried to use not only his eyes and brain of observation, but also his sense of swordplay that Chika taught him and his power as a "King" to understand the phenomenon before him.

Immediately after that, Nazumi came to a realization.

(It's not an illusion.)

Within his wide field of vision, he saw the freezing rain pouring down, the dazzling lightning flashing, and beyond that, several figures passing by. Those small figures were constantly moving, with the two combatants at the center.

(The children... are they subjects of the "Green King"?)

During the battle, Nazumi understood the principle of action of Iku and the "Biribiri Group" in a short period of time. By comparing it to the current situation, he had finally "revealed" their tactics to the truth.

(I see, it's a group operation that makes use of a wonderful "power".)

Around 20 of them, led by the "Green Queen", formed an induced current force field to aid their movement. The lightning didn't disperse in vain. It was a battle garden built by the vassals to make the "King" dance as they pleased, allowing her to accelerate, decelerate, and bend freely.

(The characteristic of the "Green King" is that it connects with others.)

Nazumi was satisfied that he had "solved" a new principle, but that had nothing to do with the quality of the battle. Even if he had revealed the truth, he wouldn't have found a way to overcome the situation he faced.

On the other hand, Iku and the others were steadily advancing towards victory. Every time the captured prey showed the behavior of breaking through the force field, Iku would block the front, attack the back, push left and right, and shake it up and down.

By blocking those attacks, the prey, Nazumi, is pushed back to the center of the group, or, in other words, the center of the force field. He was forced to fight on a narrow rooftop against an opponent who displayed overwhelming agility.

(Isn't it time to praise this as a good strategy with well-organized principles and methods?)

A stronger blue glow enveloped Nazumi's entire body as he smiled fearlessly.

"Ah!"

It seemed like his goal was to cum, and a flash from the upper deck was shot towards the space he avoided. The blue power that returns everything to order cut through the electricity and created a path within the force field. At the same time, he stomped the ground with his boots and escaped from the rooftop. Without risking the carelessness of flying through the air, he ran down the blue crystal step and stood in the front garden of the research institute.

(With so much space, you can see the entire siege.)

Soon after, the "Green Queen" and the "Biribiri Group" descended upon him, scattering lightning, glaring down at him arrogantly as he readjusted his stance. A king who doesn't hesitate to fight, and subjects who are willing to give it their all. She was a brave figure made of pure hostility and command because she was a child.

After all, they don't hold a conversation with their opponents.

Iku immediately pounced on him, and the children scattered and surrounded Nazumi.

Nazumi, on the other hand, looked for a clue to defeat that tactic.

In other words, aside from Iku, he had begun to analyze the behavioral patterns of the children around him.

It's a simple operation on the surface. He evades Iku's attack and returns with a blue slash. However, it seemed like a desperate counterattack at first, but he soon regained his stance and his counterattacks became more precise.

Iku also noticed it immediately, as she had control of the entire force field. Behind his dodge, a blue slash was aimed at the child around him. The accuracy gradually increases and it will hit the target in a few more crosses.

(If I keep fighting this guy, it won't work.)

A hunch that had never gone wrong triggered a danger signal in Iku's mind.

Her decisions are always immediate.

This bright blue adult will not give up unless crushed with maximum force.

Action begins with decision.

Suddenly, the force field current concentrated at her feet. There was a green explosion and she jumped.

Nazumi took an Ukedachi stance, thinking it was an attack on himself, but the direction of the jump was completely different.

The place where Iku rose was directly above, in the middle of the sky where freezing rain was falling.

Hiding is the "special characteristic" of the "Biribiri Group". The induced current force field surrounding Nazumi was actually not circular. It was shaped like a spiral, or more specifically, a long vertical tornado. In order to escape the excess current of the "Green King", which spreads enormous power, it always rose up in a whirlpool. Then, at the point where the excess current rose, it transformed the cloud directly above it into a certain structure. It became a colossal cloud that continued to accumulate electric charge.

At the command of the "Green Queen", who was floating in the air, the out-of-season colossal clouds let out a solemn and divine wail. Pointing in the direction of the force was a gigantic sword-shaped glow (Schubert) that glowed green and appeared before he knew it.

"Thundering Jutsu."

A lightning bolt filled with hundreds of ordinary forms fell under the guidance of the "Biribiri Group".

Nazumi cast aside his thoughts and protected himself with all the power he could exert at the moment.

"Guh!"

The entire lobby of the research institute was shattered by the electric shock and the explosion of the atmosphere. Numerous wrinkles and collapses appeared at the front of the house, and the tall concrete wall collapsed without a trace. Not only was there a roar that almost broke the eardrums, but also a strong shock wave that even the surrounding troops were shocked.

Nazumi was alive.

(Was it me who was drawn into the open area?)

A thin layer of smoke enveloped his entire body, but the shield of the "Blue King" was barely able to protect him.

(She was able to detect the offensive and defensive tendencies in just a few minutes. How sharp she is.)

A voice that takes priority over everything jumped into his consciousness, which had been absorbed in the analysis of that moment.

"Zanshin!"

Don't relax,

Don't lose attention,

A word that expresses the knowledge of martial arts, a voice that has been beaten many times in the dojo. There was no need to ask who it was, but Somei Chika, wielding a naginata, was issuing a loud voice from the ruined entrance.

Nazumi reflexively brought his consciousness to the foundation of reality and analyzed it.

".....?!"

The attack had not ended yet.

The gigantic lightning bolt did not let all of its power flow into the ground, but instead stayed as much as possible within the circle of the "Biribiri Group" surrounding it, trying to unleash the final blow within the siege.

Nazumi ran.

The power he used in the previous defense could not be recovered in that instant, but he was not afraid or anxious. That was because Chika was wielding a naginata. Nazumi was confident and even believed that his wife in that form was invincible.

Therefore, he was running straight towards her.

Chika will not betray her husband's trust. The others do not know.

"Lightning bolt!"

The halberd was swung down with all of her soul power. The blue power released from the sword was direct and strong, as if to show the user's true nature, and struck from outside the encirclement.

The ring of electricity was completely severed, destroying the stability of the force field.

The ring that housed an enormous amount of power scattered sparks and flew into pieces, and the children bounced off each other with their powers.

As the current flew turbulently, Nazumi finally escaped the encirclement by stepping on the blue force in a straight line. Standing next to Chika where he should be, he finally let out a sigh.

"Thank you for your help, Chika-san."

"You're welcome. By the way, Nazumi, is that the "Green King"?"

"It seems so."

Before the two could see, Iku was calling out to the "Biribiri Group" that had scattered in all directions. It seemed like it would be some time before some of the astonished people returned. Calling Iku himself might lead to a rematch, so Nazumi only spoke to Chika.

"I let Kouki (Schubert), who looks like a sword, out, I'm just ashamed of my inexperience."

"Not at all. If you were to show me two of those things, that's what would happen."

"Two?"

When he heard that, he noticed that there was also a gigantic blue glow in the shape of a sword (Schubert) floating above Nazumi. It seemed as if he was being pressured harder than he felt. His feelings of shame and anxiety about the situation doubled.

Chika verbally attacked her husband.

"Failure is a natural part of being human, just recover without worrying about it."

Nazumi looked at his wife who was attacking him with words.

"Really?"

"That's right."

After stating that, she gave him a belated report as vice commander.

"We've captured the main area. Shall we gather the personnel here?"

No, Nazumi lightly shook his head.

"I'll take care of this. Chika-san, please contact Mr. Thomas Colt, who seems to be in the underground bunker. Ask him about a person called "Miya"... she's probably a child like them. I want everyone to look for her. Only then can a dialogue be established with them."

"...The "Green King" is a child who can't hear."

Chika gave a loud salute as if to cut off her grief and went inside.

Suppressing the urge to send her off, Nazumi once again faced his opponent.

Iku, who was wary of Chika, immediately began to move as her figure disappeared. Once again, the lightning became more and more dazzling and enveloped the children. Nazumi couldn't help but smile bitterly at his direct and brazen actions.

(Clean up quickly.)

He doesn't believe there is another trick as powerful as the lightning bolt above. She must be a little upset that she couldn't kill him. It wouldn't be impossible to exploit that weakness and bend it.

(Fortunately, her power has been restored by bringing out the Sword-Shaped Radiance (Schubert).)

Nazumi stepped forward to make up for it.

(I mostly grabbed it.)

Both the "Green King" who pounced on him and the "Biribiri Group" surrounding him fought for too long and exposed much of their strength. This is probably the first time he's fought such a long battle.

(No wonder, the fight between kings is... difficult.)

Recalling the fight with a bandit, a faint feeling of "disliking" came back to him.

However, in any case, Nazumi had that experience.

Iku and the "Biribiri Group" don't have that.

He doesn't really like it, but experience makes the difference between winning and losing.

Intertwining with the "Green King" fighting in the center,

The footsteps of the "Biribiri Group" moving,

Nazumi was able to read the reality of the force field of both of them.

Observation leads to inferences.

(Wasn't this tactic originally intended to be implemented in a wider area?)

His guess was correct.

Her combat experience is limited to meeting Hagure several times in the two years since Iku became the "Green King". At that time, she only used a weak "Dazzling Jutsu" once, and the circle was kept far away from each other, and the induced current force field was also slightly deployed.

Now it's the other way around, and the children are closing the distance and deploying a powerful force field to fight against the powerful enemy known as the "Blue King". As a result, they were often swept away by the strong power of the "Green Queen" and left exposed to attacks from within. Cooperation is not as perfect as it seems.

These children, who have lived alone, have no guidelines or aspirations for their studies. The current induced force field strategy, which could have been the most powerful if it had been refined, had been neglected until now, when Iku encountered a strong enemy, relying entirely on his own individual strength.

(Well, thanks to that, I can also achieve a victory.)

Nazumi gathered the elements he had read up until now and used them in his own battle.

"Now it's my turn."

The stance had changed.

Instead of dodging and countering the opponent, he moved towards attacking and setting the stage himself.

Iku sensed it, but her methods remained the same. She has been at her best from the beginning. She has nothing but her full potential. The endless battle she was currently fighting was just to buy time until she could unleash the second "Rumbling Jutsu".

Suddenly, Nazumi made a move.

"Ha!"

At first glance, it was the same slash as before, but it wasn't just a slash. It was his first chance. It's the same with cutting the force field, and with that in mind, he used his second sword to slash in the opposite direction.

A boy was right between the two sharp vertical slashes.

Nazumi quickly approached the boy, who suddenly broke away from the force field and had stopped moving. While the opponent was confused, he pressed the hilt against his opponent and pushed him away.

The boy, who received a strong but non-lethal blow, rolled out of the force field with the whites of his eyes exposed.

Nazumi shouted to provoke the opponent and also to corner him.

"One!"

(I missed it.)

Iku was extremely excited and grabbed him even tighter.

However, that rough behavior no longer translates to Nazumi. He enveloped his entire body in blue power to avoid the electric shock, dodging it like a thin layer of paper, and then used one sword, then two swords, and slashed at another person. He pushed the boy away again, causing him to faint. It was a series of movements that looked like a dance.

"Two!"

(Hey, he's gone.)

According to Nazumi's calculations, if he separated the five from the siege, the "Green King" could also be attacked.

As each person diminishes, the induced current loses its sophistication and the speed of the impulse decreases... but she did not choose to flee. She came here to rescue her friend. She made that decision not based on logic or calculations. That's why she doesn't think about anything else. She had no choice but to continue fighting.

Meanwhile,

"Three!"

(Ah, he fainted.)

"Four!"

(Ah, it leaked.)

In addition, the number of people who left their places increased and the control of the force field became visibly questionable. Iku was irritated that her thrust was not as powerful and had no direction, but she still did not try to stop the fight.

Nazumi pushed the next fifth person away and at the same time prepared in his mind and body the final blow that would make him win.

(The only way to incapacitate her is to hit her with a dangerous spike... Chika might get angry at me for being too harsh on a child, but there's no other choice.)

Then,

"Five!"

(Oh, it's wet... I can eat it.)

The other person who had been waiting for the power to subside... rose up, as if seeping from the cracked ground.

He could be mistaken for black clothes,

He couldn't see the depths, there was no end,

Another person who exudes a feeling of "nothingness" that seems to sink forever.

He extended his twisted rows of teeth and swallowed the weakened "Green Queen" in one breath.

## **CHAPTER 5: TIME OF HUNGER**

"Demobilization"... Also known as "repatriation". This refers to the disarmament and return home of Japanese soldiers who have served overseas, or the process of doing so. Because of fears that the remaining troops would become a resistance force in the area and the need for a rapid withdrawal of opposing Allied forces, military personnel were given priority to return home over civilians. Some of them were detained in Siberia and their return home was delayed for several years. The total number of veterans exceeded three million.

"Atsugi Air Base is under attack by a mysterious group of paranormal beings".

By the time this urgent message was received, a transport ship had already sailed from Yokosuka, with no time to assess the situation, let alone provide relief. The ship was registered in the United States. The ship was advertised as a converted light aircraft carrier, many of which were built during the last war and frequently shuttled between the United States and Japan. This was a common story after the war.

However, anyone who served in the navy of either country must have noticed a discrepancy between reality and history. The reason for this is the strangely thin flight deck, which for some reason has not been removed, and the enormous size of the hull, which is as large as a full-fledged aircraft carrier. In short, it was a ship that looked like neither a transport ship nor a light aircraft carrier.

Furthermore, this supposed transport ship left in a hurry, just under 30 minutes after receiving the emergency report. This is because the time is too short to reach boiler pressure, meaning that the ship is normally moored maintaining pressure. It was an extremely abnormal operation that would not normally occur.

However, for the ship's crew, or rather its commanders, the anomaly was natural. No matter what happened, they could not in any way allow those rogue paranormal beings to come into contact with that ship.

No matter what, absolutely.

That is why the Captain made the decision to set sail immediately after receiving the emergency report.

Yes, actually... although it may be a bit obvious to say, both the "ship" and the "captain" are only on paper. The ship was a special vessel under the direct command of the Department of Defense, and its captain was a colonel in the United States Navy. The crew is almost entirely made up of naval personnel.

The intelligence agency "Nanakamado" only recognized the ship as a camouflaged transport vessel carrying a unit of paranormal beings to be mobilized for their secret plot. Only the chief engineer suspected that the ship could also be used as an information gathering vessel for the CIA, but, considering his own plans, he turned a blind eye.

However, the truth is far from that.

It is true that there were several high-ranking Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agents on board, and they had their own section on board to collect and analyze information, but this was only one aspect of their mission. The mission given to them by their home country was extremely important and one in which they could not afford to make any mistakes.

They retreated to the sea, where interference from land would be impossible, while continuing to gather information.

Atsugi Air Base has already been lost, the radar installed there is out of control, and it seems that the psychic troops stationed there have been completely wiped out. The long-feared demon-class psychics (monsters that could even neutralize heavy weaponry) had finally bared their fangs at the occupying forces. And now, all of these supernatural beings have gathered in Nanakamado, in the heart of the city, and are competing against each other with their "Sword-like Brilliance (Schwert)" floating in the sky of Tokyo.

How far will this conflict spread?

They are very careful in investigating the situation.

The chief engineer of Nanakamado was informed that their code name was "Skinny".

It's not just the name of a team of top CIA officers. It was also the infamous nickname given to the entire top secret mission in the home country, "Option 3", that his team was in charge of.

It's an abominable name that can never be honored.

Before he knew it, the freezing rain had turned to snow.

Nightmares overflowed from that pale white curtain.

It violently rose from the ground and swallowed the weakened "Green King" Iku in one gulp. The "Colorless King", clad in an infinitely sunken void, swelled.

Black smoke rose into the sky and nothingness, resembling drops of ink spreading over water, pushed away the falling snow.

The outline that pushed away glitter, large hands appeared and thick legs stretched out.

A wavy and sinuous silhouette was beginning to take shape.

The tip tilted and pointed towards the sky.

(No.)

The "Blue King", Somei Nazumi, was the first to understand the meaning of the scene and expressed her sense of crisis.

"Sever your connection with the King right now and escape!"

The voice reached the servants of the "Green King". It came but they were unable to move. Everyone stood frozen, trapped in a nightmare that grew and engulfed the supposedly invincible King.

Before their eyes, the tip of "nothing" that looked up at the sky opened up and turned into a jaw.

In an instant, the lightning that had spilled out of the "nothing" as a remnant of what had been swallowed grew brighter.

Or rather, it was condensed to draw them in.

The strange "nothing" enveloped the members as if it was sucking in all the scattered energy around them. Before they had time to scream or even regain their senses, the entire "Biribiri" gang disappeared into its maw.

A loud rumble was heard, indicating a rupture in the air, and only silence remained in the snow.

As Nazumi stared at it, the "nothing" grew even larger.

(This isn't just a case of being a loser, but the power of the rightful "King" chosen by the "Slate" has been absorbed by him along with his limbs... Despite being so cautious, he has done so without hesitation!)

Although he felt angry at himself for not being able to cleanse it, his thoughts still flowed calmly.

The "Colorless King" had shocked even the other Kings by simply gobbling up the stray dogs, and now even the "Green King"... the situation was no longer something that could be contained by a police mobilization. This would be the most feared thing: a head-on

confrontation between two Kings on the outskirts of the capital. In the process, or as a result,

(Who, where, what do they intend, how and when will they act?)

He ended up in a situation where he had to investigate every movement that arose. As he threw himself into the task of sorting the huge and complex pieces of the world into the desired direction,

(More than fun, first and foremost...)

Nazumi then regained his composure.

Or rather, he returned to his senses.

In front of him, the "Colorless King" was looking up at the sky, but then, with a thunderous roar, he sank both his hands into the ground. Or rather, he put both his front paws into the ground. Nazumi finally captured the full image, which was previously difficult to grasp due to its large size.

(A beast over 50 meters long... no, a reptile or an amphibian?)

Eerie eyes that cannot be focused,

A ferocious jaw lined with countless sharp fangs,

Four thick legs extending from a thick body,

A long tail that is both powerful and sharp.

They were woven together like shadow puppets, out of "nothing". A green beam erupted from his open mouth, flickering and sparking like a snake's tongue. Nazumi didn't know why the "Colorless King" had taken that form, but at a glance it was clear what he was trying to do.

He was about to leap towards him, close to the ground.

It's astonishing size took up half of his body in the spacious front yard of Nanakamado. The pressure of that movement would have been enough to cause a normal person to faint, but Nazumi was able to withstand it head on. The way his sword remained motionless in his stance clearly demonstrated his calmness of mind and body. With each breath, the blue glow grew denser.

(It's not the size or weight that's scary.)

As snowflakes filled the field of vision, the massive black body of "nothing" tilted.

Amidst colors reminiscent of a watercolor, the silence was about to be broken for a few seconds.

The enormous weight crushed the earth and flew towards the only blue thing.

Both of its front legs were stretched out as if it was begging for something.

If it could reach it, the Nanakamado house guarding its rear would be blown to pieces.

"Ah!"

However, with a flash of will, Nazumi was stopped by the firmly placed blue shield.

The earth shook, the wind blew, and the snow was gone.

Crushing the tip of the burden with his own blow, the "nothing" was still leaning against the wall. Nazumi, staggering towards it and clinging to it, caught the body of the 50-plus-meter giant near the wall and stared at it from under the brim of his hat. Not at the giant enemy, but at the shield he himself had raised.

(What's scary is the ability of the "Colorless King"....!)

The incredibly sturdy shield of the "Blue King" began to wobble. As if it was absorbed by the hollowed-out edge of "nothing", the area was slowly eroding from the point of contact.

(Our powers just don't match up well.)

Though that was the impression he had, the analysis continued endlessly.

(Anyway, I was able to catch it for now... it wasn't the usual shield-based one, but something different...)

As he began to search, at the edge of his vision, beyond the snow, something strange came flying towards him.

(.....?)

It was a rotating rectangle.

However, the rotation immediately stopped.

To be precise, several red threads were touching the edges of the square, preparing to fly away.

The rectangle stopped rotating and slowly fell towards the top of "nothing".

As the distance shortened, it became clear that this was a thick iron plate that was being placed at a construction site.

It was a perfect fit, as if it were a joke, as the iron plate was placed against the "nothing"'s head, or rather against its cheek.

A fist filled with concentrated red power slammed into the iron plate.

"You're really tough, you bastard!"

The red power passed through the metal plate to its cheekbones.

Suddenly, the "nothing" was hit on the side of the face and its massive body was thrown to the side and fell to the ground.

A man stepped on the rising rumbling of the earth.

"Haha! I guess I can hit him like this."

After taking off the shield, Nazumi called out to the man who was acting like a child.

Of course, there were no words of thanks for the rescue.

They are dissatisfied with the fact that the trial had been brought forward.

"That's something I wanted to do three moves in advance."

"Shut up, you're too loud! In a fight, the one who strikes first wins!"

The "Red King", Unno Yutaka, roared as he blocked the heat from the blow from his right fist with the palm of his left.

The shelter beneath Nanakamado, a huge warehouse that had been reinforced and converted into a shelter, trembled gently. The unreliable lighting flickered and the non-combatants and wounded gathered there looked anxiously at the ceiling.

One of them, Thomas Colt, the commander of the Nanakamado combat unit, lowered his gaze and continued to speak.

"Are these tremors also the result of the battle between the giant monster and the "Blue King" you spoke of?"

In front of him was the deputy director of the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau, Somei Chika, who nodded.

"According to the report I just received, that's correct. It seems that the battle has already advanced beyond the stage of our goal of "persuading the Green King"."

"But do you still intend to follow the "Blue King's" orders?"

"Yes. As long as the orders are not withdrawn. That person's ideas have a degree of validity that goes beyond the understanding of ordinary people. First, I will contact this person called "Miya" and take another look at the status of the battle. Would you be willing to cooperate?"

Hearing that, Colt nodded easily.

"We have surrendered. Of course we will obey."

There is no point in resisting any longer. The chief engineer's plan was foiled and the fighting forces were suppressed. Above all, something far beyond those small matters was developing outside. The monster that had been devouring these paranormal beings was shaking its huge body and attacking them.

Colt looked at the remaining engineers gathered in the shelter.

Everyone in the shelter, both Japanese and American (including the doctor who was keeping everyone quiet to avoid complicating things) agreed with the silence. They are different from the agency heads who will lose a lot if they are dismissed. Even after their defeat, they still have a tomorrow they must face.

(I wonder if I will have that tomorrow.)

As he thought this, Colt picked out from his memories an image of the person he was to lead into tomorrow.

"I have a feeling that I might recognize that girl called "Miya". Let me show you the way."

Although he felt pain at the thought that no one but this woman would see him as he left the Strain detention center, he still led the way. Contempt towards the villains was something that even they desired as punishment.

To show them her trust for accepting his surrender, Chika ordered two of her entourage to accompany them.

"Thank you for your cooperation. Let's go, Rokugo-kun and Hentani-kun."

"Understood."

"Yes!"

However, their progress soon came to a halt.

A man stood at the entrance of the only shelter.

There was no sound, no presence, and no weakening.

Chika naturally let out a warning sigh and realized what was going on.

What it means for him to be here now.

She asked in horror.

"You're from "Tokijikuin"..."

"Yes."

The man, wearing an old national uniform, was carrying a wired communication device on his back. With the receiver on his back,

"I would like to be briefed on the current situation."

The explosive words were spoken in an incredibly calm voice.

"The "Golden King" will soon enter the battlefield."

As the aircraft carrier heads out to sea, the "Skinny" section installed inside it broadcasts the latest developments in the battle between the "Kings" taking place in Tokyo.

Heavy snowfall forced the monitors to get close enough to be exposed to the aftermath, but this was not a major problem. They are all Japanese who have been hired and trained locally. A high salary will keep them there.

The real problem was the fighting taking place on the ground.

A gigantic monster, perhaps 160 feet long, suddenly appeared and went on a rampage, shaking the earth. That alone was an incredible, nightmarish event, but there are people who are fighting back.

On one hand, there are demons that are infamous among the occupation forces.

On the other hand, there is the suspicious head of a newly created security force.

Only a few people, including the leader of the group of supernatural powers that attacked Atsugi Air Base and forced the aircraft carrier to depart, are causing unrest. It was even suggested that the monster might have been a mutated version of the same guy.

A world that everyone recognizes as normal.

There is an abnormal power that runs rampant and can easily override it.

Each of them is the work of a single individual.

And that was the real problem.

In today's world, it is unacceptable for powerful individuals to request the disruption of society at will. Furthermore, the "power" held by "kings" is not a power built by social institutions and is not accompanied by restrictions. It was direct power and violence, not limited solely by the will of the individual.

And that was why they were watching it.

Is it something that should be used?

Is it something that should be eliminated?

Either they can stay alone, or they can conspire, or they can come to an agreement...

They continued to send observation reports back to their home country, where a decision would be made on how to respond.

Neither the US government nor the Central Intelligence Agency took into consideration the intentions of Nanakamado, the local intelligence agency of the occupied country. The pretense of agreeing to a clever deal was merely a bait to get them to gather as much detailed information as possible about the Slate and the King.

All they need is the information to make a decision.

Ever since a king was lost in the Atlantic three years ago, the US government has been doggedly and meticulously observing from afar the burnt ruins of post-war Japan as a new testing ground.

The intelligence agents of the home country, including "Skinny", had discussed countless cases of people who had regained power, with the "most powerful person on Earth who is not a King" holding the title over their heads.

And today,

A situation has presented itself that fits into one of those cases.

At least that is what they determined.

They wait and continue to transmit more information back home.

A response from the only person in their home country who was above them.

He gave the go-ahead to carry out the secret mission "Option 3".

The tension of witnessing a historic event.

It is not tension from what is happening now.

The incident is about to occur.

It is they who wake it up.

The huge body of "nothing" fell on its side, raising a thick cloud of light snow that had begun to accumulate.

Ignoring that, Todokoro Suwako and Tamataro Okuma rush towards the two kings.

"Yutaka-chan!"

"Is your arm okay?"

Unno squeezed and released his hand, testing its strength.

"Of course! The foolproof plan was a great success and that guy was crushed like a paper balloon."

"He wasn't crushed. It seems he collapsed due to the impact."

Nazumi's quick correction made him frown.

"It's so detailed, every single thing."

Pretending not to notice, Okuma bent his sturdy back and broke whatever honor his boss may have missed.

"Blue Hat Man, are you okay?"

On his back were three thick construction iron plates, each of them as thick as a tatami mat. That seems to have been what helped Unno's earlier attack.

Nazumi also has a cool attitude when talking to anyone other than Unno (though he is secretly confused by the strange nickname).

"Yeah, thanks for the help."

"Who's going to help? The only thing left is an annoying guy getting punched in the face..."

"This isn't the time to do this, you bastard!"

When Unno responded with a nasty remark, Suwako slapped him hard on the shoulder.

Indeed, this isn't the time to do it.

The "nothing" lying on the ground slowly began to rise. The roof tiles of the burned houses were scattered everywhere and the tilted buildings were pushed to the side and collapsed.

The surrounding forces, which had already put some distance between them and the Nanakamado site, disappeared even further in the falling snow, and the entire area became vague and misty like an illusion, with the exception of anything created by the movement of the "nothing".

As Nazumi prepared for a new attack, he called out two people in particular and one more as a bonus.

"I'll explain it briefly. As you may have guessed, the "Colorless King" eats those who possess power. He just devoured the girl who called herself the "Green King" and her group, and has become what he is now."

Both Suwako and Okuma have quick minds. They immediately understood the situation.

"You and your friends are in the building behind, right?"

"I see, that place is filled with blue-clad men and Colt's men, and that monster is chasing them... it's like a bear in front of a beehive."

Unno also hears and understands, but he pays no attention to it.

"The punch worked, now it's time to kick."

A rumbling sound shook the three people in astonishment.

The "nothing" that rose black in the depths of the snow was slowly moving away into the distance.

"Eh? Did it run away?"

Unno's prejudice,

"No."

As if in a hurry to get the first place, Nazumi immediately denied it. He tilted the brim of his hat and narrowed his gaze.

Beyond the snow-covered landscape, the huge body of the "nothing" was passing by, moving at an incredible speed.

"That's bad. Instead of attacking head on, it's trying to find an easier direction to attack."

"You're not going to lose sight of that size and those footprints... hmmm?"

Okuma said, but when he looked around he realized something.

The heavy snowfall made it difficult to see even two hundred meters ahead, and even the footprints of the giant "nothing" were obscured. It was getting difficult to reach a clear position.

"Snow at a time like this? I know, should I try searching with my thread?"

"That's not good, what if something happens and you get swept away?"

This time, Unno immediately rejected Suwako's proposal.

Nazumi, not wanting to waste time arguing, proposed a second-rate solution.

"Instead of arguing here, let's split into two groups, one in front of the house and one behind the house."

In the midst of this dire situation, Unno finally nodded.

"Okay, you're the tail."

"You're the one behind this."

He just couldn't get along with Nazumi.

"Who wants to sneak around behind closed doors now?"

"This is supposed to be my position, right?"

Before Suwako could speak a second time, he asked, "Is this the time to do this?"

"To your left, coming from the nine o'clock direction."

A relaxed voice was heard, out of place in the situation.

".....!"

The two kings jumped in the same direction as if bouncing.

Unno muttered,

"Okay!"

"Here it comes."

Nazumi caught the approaching shadow across the brim of his hat.

At exactly nine o'clock, a huge "nothing" appeared in his sight, breaking through the curtain of snow.

Like a giant disc, aiming at the tip of his nose,

"Ooooooooooryaaah!"

Okuma used his incredible strength to throw a metal plate.

Next, at Unno's obvious command,

"Now!"

"Good!"

Responding with a strong smile, Suwako shot out a thread of red flame.

The tip touched the edge of the iron plate, delicately adjusting the trajectory of the fall.

This time too, the metal plate fell perfectly into a position blocking the charge directly in front of it.

(Good.)

(It's exquisite.)

Only inwardly did they agree.

Unno kicked out with red power all over his body.

"Die!"

Nazumi struck the sword with a thick layer of blue power.

"Aaaaahhh!"

Almost simultaneously, they pierced through the metal plate and smashed it into "nothing".

In addition to his own burden and weight, his huge body received an extremely powerful blow from the front, sending him flying in the opposite direction. His neck was bent at a strange angle. It would have been a fatal blow to any normal living being.

The second noise was heard, a rumble that not even the snow could hide.

Sensing that they had achieved their goal, the two Kings each laughed in their own way, and then, realizing that they had coordinated their reactions, they spat out their own laughter.

"Hmph, don't go around. Your kicks are a bit sloppy."

"That's what I say. I have to avoid your weak legs when I swing my sword."

And there was another person.

"Come on, come on, you two. Now's not the time for that, right?"

The only sound he could hear was the same relaxed voice from before.

Perceiving his tone, which was open and tolerant of people's opposition, both of them softened their tone.

"So you are brother Otono after all."

"I'm glad you came, "Gray King"."

From the mysterious sight of a thin mist floating through the snow came the hesitant reply of the "Gray King", Otono Benji.

"I'm not here... it's scary, so I'm just watching from afar."

"But it was still a great help. Thank you for your quick instructions."

"With the combined strength of my brothers, that monster will be a piece of cake."

There was a hint of embarrassment in the young men's voices as they spoke.

"I'm not there, but there are about ten strange people hanging around. They're all carrying huge walkie-talkies and even dangerous-looking guns."

"Hmm, there shouldn't be any reason for Nanakamado to move now... I wonder where they're from."

"Who cares? Anyway, that will be after we blow that bastard up."

Both of them looked towards the snow in frustration.

The silhouette of a winding hill was barely visible. The "Red King" and the "Blue King", two paranormal beings with extraordinary powers, attacked it multiple times without mercy, but the "nothing" showed no signs of stopping. The neck, which should have been bent, straightened again and green sparks lit up at the top again. It didn't seem to stagger from the blow nor did it show any signs of running away in fear.

It was just a way to endure it, but it wasn't working.

This fact hurt the pride of both Kings to some extent, and also made them very aware that the monster was also a "King", but of course they never revealed even a trace of their true feelings in front of the other.

Unno said to Suwako and Okuma who had met up with him:

"That bastard is still going strong. Don't let your guard down."

"Gray King, could you please continue searching for the enemy?"

Nazumi was left in the hands of Otono, who was nowhere to be found.

"Yes, I will try."

As they nodded in response, Suwako and Okuma looked puzzled (realizing that Unno will probably be too lazy to say anything), trying to explain why the "Gray King" was also there.

At that moment,

"The vice-principal reports to the principal!"

Chika's voice echoed from the speakers of the Nanakamado building, which was still in operation.

Nazumi's face instantly lit up and Unno grimaced in disgust at the sight.

"The individual in question has been secured!"

Up to this point it was going as Nazumi expected.

But the voice continued.

"We have accepted the new proposal and are preparing to move the individual outside! I need support!"

He stopped giving Unno the smug look he was about to give him,

(A new proposal? Transfer of the individual?)

Nazumi began to investigate the strange reports.

The person in question was "Miya", whom Nazumi had ordered Chika to protect and contact. Although there is no hope of persuasion anymore, if it is available it can be used to gather information and seek solutions.

That was true, but it seems that a new proposal has been made regarding "Miya". Taking them outside was a bold move, but if Chika agreed after learning of the situation, it must have been in line with military logic.

Above all, there is only one force that can come up with a proposal at this time...

(It is not my style to act without knowing the content of the proposal, but it is much better than continuing this useless exchange of blows.)

Nazumi decided to ask the person beside him.

"Isn't it enough to provide support by myself?"

"Don't be silly, you're trying to attract some bastards. That would be the perfect opportunity to beat you up."

Unno really has a keen sense.

Although he didn't understand the meaning of the words, he immediately sensed that something was going to happen.

Suwako and Okuma were already excited by the idea.

"Do you need help with something, Chika-san? I'll help you."

"The boss seems to be in the mood too."

And then, at the end, as Nazumi tried to make him understand, Otono suddenly muttered.

"There's someone here."

Everyone felt as if that word had been the trigger.

"That guy right there."

On the other side there was nothing, green sparks flying from the top of his erect neck.

Standing in front of Nanakamado, they couldn't see past the falling snow.

However, they knew someone was coming.

The "Blue King", the only person there who knows the visitor's true identity, he waited.

Not to meet him. He was waiting to see what kind of attitude he would have as he joined the fight. After having been extremely careful to keep the Slate and the King hidden from the public, he finally came to light. Because he was calculating and wanted to take advantage of the incident, or because he couldn't contain his burning ambition, or because

he saw that he could no longer hide and moved to eliminate him quickly... the "King's" "fate" would be decided by his reasons.

And,

Many troublesome thoughts were banished.

A clap that shouldn't have been heard rang out.

That clear sound pierced the entire scene.

He spread his hands widely and forcefully, palms together at eye level.

Following suit, the falling snow split to the left and right like a stage curtain.

All the kings present caught sight of the figure in front of them.

Once that was done, he looked intently at each person in turn.

He, the "Golden King" Kokujoji Daikaku, spoke loudly.

"Finally we are all here. Come on, let's talk."

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It was a completely unexpected call.

A man was about to make a decision.

Last month he was re-elected to a second term as President of the United States, overcoming overwhelming odds (the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers also ran for the same election, but was defeated miserably at the party convention).

He had an unusual career path, having been promoted from vice president to president following the sudden death of his predecessor, even during his first term before his re-election, which was said to be the biggest upset in history. Moreover, he took office in April 1945, a month before Germany's surrender and four months before Japan's surrender, in the midst of a state of emergency that also involved the direction of the post-war system.

The position of vice president at that time was essentially a minor one, and during the time he held that position he was neither on the front lines of diplomacy nor informed of important issues of national policy. His sudden appointment as president in that situation was something of an unexpected thing for him.

He vividly remembers the contempt he received from those around him during that time. The accomplished heads of state who have moved the world, the sinister and evil government ministers, and the stubborn military leaders who did not like being told what to do... all treated him as "an amateur who had suddenly burst into the poker table".

An example of this disrespect was the "Flying Ghost Ship" incident.

He is said to have tried to persuade the owner of the ghost ship, a defeated scientist who called himself "King", to come to the United States, but failed. In that incident, the policy was decided while he was out of the matter, as he was not informed of anything and he himself was not even allowed to converse with the other party. Although it bothered him at the time, he can now look back on it with dark pleasure.

At that time, the scientist said in a conspiratorial tone:

"From now on I will not side with any country and I will not give this "power" to anyone."

And...

So, now, three years later, what are the results?

It was a fact known to everyone that what the scientists were saying was complete nonsense.

The source of this power, the "Dresden Slate", was managed to be smuggled into Japan by a simple lieutenant who was pardoned by the Allied forces, allowing the production of supernatural beings in the ruins of that defeated country.

All those present at the meeting who ignored him and discussed plausible things failed to seize "power". The reason they did not blame him for their failure, as they did with the "Flying Ghost Ship", is simply because the United States does not officially recognize the existence of supernatural beings.

He is the only one who knows that the policy of considering Japan as a testing ground is just a hindsight excuse used by those who missed their chance. When they realized it, the number of supernatural beings had increased to the point that it was no longer possible to eliminate them secretly. Not only that, but they had also gained influence and power of action, infiltrating even public institutions. That was the shameful reality of the situation.

However, these mistakes and misinterpretations played in his favor. By correcting the mistakes and covering up the misinterpretations of those who had underestimated him, he was able to achieve true leadership as President of the United States.

One of the results was the takeover of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers occupying Japan... a self-proclaimed hero and showman obsessed with the occupying nation, was probably naively satisfied that he had "won the intelligence war" by preventing the establishment of a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) branch in Japan, but it ended up benefiting him greatly in the end.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was bound in intense resentment toward HQ, due to HQ's firm message that "the handling of Sword-related matters in Japan will be supervised by HQ, and the home country must not interfere beyond its means", and to counter this, the CIA sought to forge stronger ties with the local government higher-ups.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, he aided, protected, and participated in Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operations against Japan... eventually gaining a leadership position. Needless to say, the main target and focus of his operation was the prey that had escaped from those who had previously sidelined him and failed... the "Slate" and those with supernatural powers.

It's not that he simply desired that special power.

As long as the effect was the same, it wouldn't have mattered if it was something different.

Anything that can become a new global strategic force to replace nuclear weapons.

More than three years after the end of World War II, the US plan for international control (or control, in other words) of nuclear weapons based on the first-mover advantage had long since collapsed. No one would hesitate to develop weapons that would give them an advantage. Every country that can do so is eager to develop and deploy nuclear weapons.

Among them, the Soviet Union was an "enemy" that required special vigilance. While other countries were still in the stages of information gathering and basic research, this greedy jackal-wolf nation was on the verge of manufacturing and testing a real device (in fact, the Soviet Union's first nuclear test was carried out in August of the following year).

In other words, the super weapon that "harnesses the fundamental power of the universe", on which the United States invested enormous efforts and budget in order to gain a decisive advantage in international relations, has suddenly, in just a few years, been reduced to a bargaining tool pitted against each other, similar to various inventions of the past.

Moreover, the conflicts currently occurring around the world as a result of post-war regime construction are extremely incompatible with nuclear weapons.

If it is obvious that people will not easily decide to use it, the effect will be even less.

What is needed now is a smaller but stronger force.

It was for these reasons that he turned his attention to the power of the "Slate" as "the next step after nuclear weapons".

A mysterious power that modern science has no idea how to explain.

Although it is a very personal thing, it is an overwhelmingly great power that an individual can possess.

The United States said so, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) continued to look for ways to obtain it.

Over the course of three years, observations of supernatural beings progressed and information was accumulated.

Some of them were taken out of the country and used experimentally in the espionage war.

At the same time, they assumed various scenarios, prepared for contingencies, and continued to watch carefully for opportunities, and finally that day, an unusual but promising case had finally arrived.

It was a case where a powerful psychic "King" had caused harm to the occupation forces and their subordinate psychic units, and even led to a battle between two "Kings" in the center of Tokyo. The gathering of important targets was confirmed.

Depending on the case that comes, the operation will enter the execution phase.

Compared to the meticulous preparations, the operating procedures were extremely simple.

Eliminate all the "Kings" that have appeared in Japan, and with the results, request the cooperation of "the only remaining person".

That's all.

Even calling it a conspiracy is an extremely crude and presumptuous tactic, but in negotiations where demands are imposed through the use of force, or in clearer terms, intimidation, even such crude intimidation is a form of acting. The more the "remaining" King perceived power to be threatened, the greater the impact would be when he was brutally annihilated. And there is no better means than nuclear weapons to crudely eliminate an entire King.

Eliminate all of Japan's "kings".

This was caused by a third nuclear weapon hidden on an aircraft carrier.

The code name for the secret mission was "Option 3".

The victorious nations reaped the benefits of the grace and chances that had been lent to the defeated nations.

This is how the occupation that lasted three years would later be remembered.

Along with the newly acquired "power" of the United States.

Even from the perspective of the United States, the inadvertent bombing of a city in an occupied country not at war, and the third massacre with nuclear weapons, would surely provoke harsh criticism, but it would not be difficult to decide to ignore it.

This is the United States.

Even after the end of the war, conflicts of all sizes, including colonial independence movements, continue around the world. Countries with their complicated ties and conflicting interests are unlikely to be able to unite to make effective condemnations.

This, with regard to the United States of America.

Rather, it will be a strong warning and demonstration to those countries that the United States does not treat nuclear weapons as a taboo and that they remain a real option if necessary. Without causing harm to others.

Above all, the intention behind this murderous act is unlikely to be understood by anyone other than the leaders of the United States.

Although there were discrepancies in policy with the home country, the occupied country was undergoing a smooth reconstruction and the country was destroying itself.

To an outside observer, this would seem like nonsense or even inexplicable madness.

However, it was that period of confusion and turmoil abroad that the United States suffered through.

The situation was brought under control while other countries, even the Soviet Union, were unsure of its intentions.

Specifically, after the nuclear bombing, they unearth and secure a "Slate" that was kept in strict secrecy in the burned-out suburbs of Tokyo. Once this was accomplished, the only thing left to do was to inform the "sole remaining person" of the following.

"Surrender yourself to the technology to control the "Slate" in your hands."

And.

This is different from the previous "negotiations", which were carried out without any preparation. It was an "intimidation" that shattered the illusion of the "Kings" that the other party had relied on as their power. The fear and panic of whether it would really go that far would surely open the clam's mouth.

They did not believe in the strength of the principles of "the sole remaining person".

Rather, they despised scientists as a species.

People who believe that the world can be explained by formulas and theories are generally ignorant when it comes to dealing with the complex and strange reality... or worse, they don't know what to do. They are all ignorant people who lock themselves away in universities and research institutes with their peers and avoid the natural responsibilities that come with living in human society (such as optimizing budgets and demanding results).

As a result, scientists easily tend to resort to naive idealism and fantasy that are not based on reality. The traitors who leaked important secrets about nuclear weapons development to the Soviet Union were not only thieving spies, but also many scientists who were driven by foolish ideological beliefs.

One of them, who did not understand the gravity of the situation, had a brilliant idea without losing face: "Let's call on the Soviet Union to share information in the realm of peaceful uses." This he did shamelessly, even though he was in the middle of research on weapons of mass destruction with American personnel and funding.

He despised the scientific species for being primarily responsible for dealing with reality.

If you show this kind of guy a real punch, he will give up and surrender.

The "only remaining person" barricading himself on the ghost ship will likely face a similar outcome.

It was at the end of these largely prejudiced thoughts that he was about to give the order for the secret mission "Option 3". Not even an hour had passed since the telegram was received.

He called his aide and expressed his decision in words that could not be misinterpreted.

And then one word: do it.

Murderous plots are set in motion by personal ambition, calculation, and discomfort towards others.

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"Talk?"

Although he didn't make a sudden, loud noise like Unno Yutaka,

(With this raging monster?)

Nazumi was also shocked.

Nazumi knows that he is not a lukewarm person who dogmatically seeks reconciliation. There was no way he didn't understand that this carnage was a turning point that would decide the fate of all Kings.

But still, he didn't understand why he would start an argument.

In the middle of the main street, a figure stands in the deserted, snowy landscape, the white curtain raised. He is wearing black khaki Japanese clothing with gold detailing at key points and is not carrying a sword. Only his feet are protected by practical long leather boots.

"Have you removed the snow?"

"Is that what your wife was talking about...?"

Okuma Tamataro and Todoroko Suwako were also stunned by the scene, which looked like the beginning of a real play.

They could barely see him, with a huge nothingness between them.

That was not the case.

No matter where they were, they were clearly visible, with a presence that could not be ignored. Nazumi, Unno, Suwako, Okuma, and from his point of view, Otono Benji and, above all, even the "nothing", were watching him.

As if their eyes were captivated by something dazzling.

His tone was stern, but he exuded a strange joy as he confidently introduced himself.

"My name is Kokujoji Daikaku, the "Golden King"."

And then Kokujoji immediately questioned.

"Who are you?"

It was already too late to know who he is.

"Where do you come from and how do you live?"

They wonder what is necessary to decide the future of their "King".

His vision, staring into "nothing", overlapped with his former dream. A silver dream, before he became "King".

In the dream, stars twinkled in the black sky that separated the silver-white world from the other world.

Now, as the snow begins to fall again, the Kings are reunited.

The dream and the image overlapped in his senses and transformed into certainty.

Seven people.

These are all the "Kings" created by the "Slate".

That was why he had to ask.

To grasp the full picture of the logic that incorporates them.

What kind of person is this "someone" before his eyes?

"Now answer me, "Colorless King"!"

The monster of "nothing", or perhaps "someone" who was asked, the "Colorless King", nodded his head in confusion. It was as if the beast was probing something, as if it was asking a question in return.

But before long, aside from that,

"....."

The human part slowly seeped out from the depths of "nothing".

"...hand..."

They were fragments of words that had spilled out from between his writhing teeth, just like that night when he had appeared as the mysterious "Black Cloak". The fragments gradually took on meaning, like bleeding colors forming an image.

"That's right."

And then the words were revealed in their entirety.

"Help me, I'm hungry and I feel like I'm going to die."

Kokujoji narrowed his eyes in pain.

It's not just about the meaning of the words.

At the same time, he captured the essence of the monster.

He knew this because he was the "Golden King".

(This "Colorless" is clearly different from the other "Kings".)

Within the giant monster, there is no feeling that someone has been swallowed, nor that the swallowed person's power is creating anything. Simply swallowing it would result in nothing.

(No... it's not that lukewarm... it's trying to swallow all the power that the "Kings" (us) have shown, the traces they've left behind, and the things they've accomplished, and take them to that other side of "nothing".)

Understanding the essence leads to understanding existence.

(I see.)

This monster is not someone who can accomplish something by consuming the power generated by the "Slate". The reason it seeks power is to return the scattered power to nothing once again. They were beings that could be described as a reaction against reality, sent to eliminate all evidence of the existence of these supernatural beings from this world.

Kokujoji was shocked to be the liberator of the "Slate", and also horrified to be one of the Kings.

(Does that "Slate" not only give power to people, but also expel those who threaten that power? Should the last "Colorless King" be seen as a test or as the embodiment of judgment?)

Whether it was designed that way from the beginning or the "Seventh" had simply been unlucky enough to receive such power, Kokujoji had no choice but to accept it.

He could not join forces with that pitiful monster.

That was incompatible with the six "Kings".

(I see.)

The complete truth he sought was crueler than he had imagined.

(That dream will never come true.)

A dream in which all the "Kings" gather together and create a paradise in this troubled world.

Gold, red, blue, green, grey, colourless... and one day, silver too.

That was the desired future, the miracle that had come about thanks to the "Slate".

He intuitively knew that he had just been crushed.

(But it's strange.)

However, Kokujoji did not succumb to pessimism or depression.

(I don't think I'll let something like that stop me.)

On the contrary, the more the strong waves of difficulties shook him, the more he felt a tenacious life breathing within him.

The forces that make that happen are neither complex nor special.

It was a crude and completely primitive idea.

We have to live.

It was a carefree and above all realistic situation, which did not make him look back or bow his head to the ground. Just like right now.

(Even though the dream I have longed for has been shattered, I still want to move forward.)

We have to live.

Whether consciously or not, everyone lives this present moment hoping for that... and the "Golden King", Kokujoji Daikaku, is no different.

(Next... let's take the next step and seek a better future.)

Carrying his past steps on his shoulders, he will move forward towards the present, facing his future steps.

He will add another resolution to the ones he has made dozens, even hundreds of times.

That spirit and soul turns into a stern yet cheerful voice.

"In that case, there is no point. Let's fight."

He turned his gaze from the sky to the earth.

As for the monster, it simply stood there, as if it were still lost in a nightmare.

(So how did it come out?)

As he thought about that, a fine mist began to gently surround him.

From deep within, Otono's timid voice resounded.

"That seems rather unexpected, but is the discussion over, my lord?"

Kokujoji didn't seem to mind the strange honorific he received from him and simply laughed.

"Yes, we've talked enough and we understand each other. We have no choice but to fight."

(What a funny boy.)

Otono was a little taken aback by how different the impression he had of the "Golden King" was from the one he had heard from Nazumi. He was taken aback, but also intrigued to know what it meant.

Kokujoji, on the other hand, continued with vigor.

"You must be the "Gray King", Otono Benji. Nice to meet you."

"Thank you. If you want to whisper something to me, I'll be happy to help."

Otono let himself be drawn in and gave him a pat with his hand, but then felt a long-awaited pain from the tightness of his burned skin. "That's not like me.", he said with a wry smile before getting to the point.

"During our discussion, it seems the other party has completed their preparations."

Kokujoji looked at the monster charging towards Nanakamado. Although they said they were ready, the Red and Blue members seemed to be arguing about something (though it was only the two Kings arguing).

On one side are the "Red King" Unno Yutaka, Todokoro Suwako, and Okuma Tamataro.

The other group consisted of the "Blue King", Somei Nazumi, and Somei Chika, who seemed to have joined them during the discussion.

A thin girl who appears to be "Miya" is tied to Chika's back. Although she is scared, she seems to be prepared. She doesn't seem to be trying very hard, just keeping her eyes closed and holding on tight.

"The man in the blue hat said, "All we need to do is have this girl join us, so I took it upon myself to make the arrangements." The ones in blue are the ones carrying the balls, and the ones in red are the ones acting as decoys. Is that okay?"

"Very well. I'll try to change things up as much as I can. After we meet, you'll have to give me some time to explain the plan to "Miya". That's all you need to know."

"That makes sense."

The fog cleared with the answer.

Feeling a hint of joy in his voice, Kokujoji's cheeks relaxed involuntarily.

(Sorry... but I'll keep going.)

After apologizing to the "Colorless King" for unintentionally excluding him from the group, he stepped forward in high spirits, ready to go on.

Towards a stronger, more desirable future.

It's not perfect, but it's still worth achieving.

Towards a future where they can work together with the dreams and kings who believe in that.

Hearing Kokujoji Daikaku's message, Unno Yutaka and Somei Nazumi nodded.

"Yes."

"Understood."

As soon as they handed it back to Otono, they turned their backs and ran away.

"Come on, guys!"

"Chika-san, let's go."

They argued over who would go to the right or left of the monster, but in the end, they naturally decided to turn their backs. Unno, Suwako, and Okuma are on the right. On the left are Nazumi and Chika, and Miya is being carried on her back.

Since those following them didn't care which one it was, there was no further discussion.

"Chika-san, be careful."

"I'll try to lure them as much as I can, but be careful."

Suwako and Okuma spoke to him casually.

"Yes. You should be careful not to get too involved."

Chika, who answered clearly, even seemed friendly to her companions.

"Don't be so hesitant!"

"Chika-san, please don't leave me."

With that unpleasant impulse, the two factions separated.

The "Colorless King", who had been lost in stupor ever since he answered Kokujoji's question, also reacted to his prey's new movements. His long, snub-nosed neck leaned forward, and green sparks shot out from the corner of his mouth.

"I... am..."

Perhaps a remnant of what happened before, fragments of words spilled out from the sparks. Rather than a voice calling out to him, it was a vague, sad sound, like a distant call that echoed endlessly.

"Yes."

Accompanied by that sound, the monster's head spun wildly.

Without aiming at any of them, the "nothing" simply reacted to what passed before its eyes.

The result of the odds bet was blue. Nazumi, Chika, and Miya carried on her back.

He had neither the intelligence to think nor the will to threaten. Like a moth to the light, the giant began to move.

Taking the opportunity, Kokujoji shouted loudly.

"I'll listen to you, tell me!"

"I'm hungry."

The monster stood for a moment, added another voice, and then took another step into the blue again.

Behind him, Unno, who was keeping his distance in the opposite direction, shouted.

"Over here... monster!"

At the same time, he threw out a fist-sized piece of debris. The debris is imbued with the power of the "Red King" and pierces the sky with a force surpassing that of a cannonball. In the wrong direction.

"This isn't control!"

Suwako coiled the rope she had laid out in advance along the area, changing the trajectory of the bullet.

The debris curved sharply from the side and hit the monster squarely in the neck. The scorching explosion was absorbed by the "nothing", but the physical force of it shook its body and made it stagger along with his voice.

"Please give it to me."

Unno was satisfied that it had worked to a certain extent.

"I'm counting on you!"

He shouted happily. He didn't notice Suwako walking away with an indifferent face.

"Okuma, ball!"

He shouted.

"Okay."

Okuma grabbed the debris like an experienced catcher.

"Even Eiji Sawamura would be jealous... I'll throw a fastball!"

He probably threw with terrible form again.

This time too, Suwako twisted her fingers with one hand to correct the trajectory.

The debris shot out from below at an angle, slicing into the monster's cheekbones from the opposite direction. The giant body wobbled, then finally bent its front legs at the knees and sank to the ground.

"Did you see that?!"

Ignoring the boss who was raising his fist, Okuma looked past the fallen monster.

Deep in the rising snow smoke, the shadows of two people, one big and one small, can be seen running with good posture.

"Looks like they managed to get past us."

And then, Unno snorted,

"Is it possible that a monster like this can do something? Well, I guess that's a relief."

Suwako muttered as she half-relaxed.

"Idiot! Chika-san and I have a child together?!"

With the two of them on his shoulders, Okuma leapt.

Right below them, a monster's tail, as thick as a train, passed by at an incredible speed. The surrounding rubble and the few remaining houses were blown away and scattered by the wind.

"Oops!"

"Eek?!"

Okuma ran off, taking with him both the cheers and applause.

"He took the bait, let's run away!"

Behind him, the monster turned, swinging its massive body and tail around. Not only that, it leaned forward. A voice calling for help echoed from the mouth that seems to have a dislocated jaw.

"I'm hungry. Give me that."

The monster began its fierce pursuit, fixing its gaze on what it wanted.

A little ways away from the snowy landscape.

"Don't run away, monster!"

"He's coming, he's coming, ahhhh!"

Hearing a commotion mixed with heavy footsteps, Nazumi and Chika arrived at where Kokujoji was.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

"Miya-san, you're safe and sound here."

"Thank you."

The pair felt a strange sense of unease at that familiar figure, who only gave them minimal attention back.

It seemed as if he was looking up a little taller than usual.

Has he grown a little?

(And somewhere, too...)

Before he could get a clear answer, Kokujoji bent down and knelt on one knee. He got to eye level with Miya, who's lying on Chika's back with her eyes tightly closed, and spoke to her. Not with false kindness, but with true reliability.

"Welcome, Miya. I'm Kokujoji Daikaku, I'm also a "King"."

"Just like Iku-chan?"

Miya timidly opened her eyes and looked at her opponent. The shoulder straps are untied and she stands weakly. When Chika gently put an arm on her shoulders, she felt safe enough to be able to speak, but even that was a matter of a short time.

After all, a giant monster was rampaging nearby.

Away from the three of them, Nazumi was standing guard.

(Should we put a shield on her to make her feel safer?)

That was what he thought, but considering his earlier guess, the "nothing" reflexively pounced on the "powerful person" who caught his attention. Putting up a visible shield would probably only attract more intruders.

And so far, the "Red King" and his two members were doing well. They staggered and stumbled, they fled and raged, even though they struggled and fled, they were still able to control the monster.

(Well, if they don't do that much, it's not worth trusting them with anything.)

After setting the bar higher than the sky, Nazumi gave himself a passing grade. On top of that, he keeps his eyes peeled for any monsters that might suddenly take an interest in him.

Behind him, Kokujoji began to explain the gist of the operation.

"As you may have heard, your King and her companions are currently being held captive by that monster. Can you help us rescue them?"

"Can I help...? But I'm the least sensitive to electric shocks out of all of us..."

The girl replied in a weak voice, so he spoke directly to her.

"Alright, let's all work together."

Suddenly Miya stopped complaining. It wasn't because she had any doubts about saying something so bold to someone. It made her think that, if they worked together, maybe they could pull it off. Before she knew it,

"Yes."

He even replied, "Yes."

Chika asked, putting an arm around Miya's shoulders, hoping to help her with the conversation.

"But how exactly?"

Kokujoji nodded and continued his explanation. At first, it's a general explanation to help the girl understand, and then gradually moving on to actual actions and things to keep in mind, and confirmation of what Miya has noticed, before finishing in no time.

(Is that the plan?)

(Is that really possible?)

After hearing the whole story, Chika and her husband were almost stunned.

They both thought that a more realistic and common sense plan had been prepared. Because of the great trust he had in Kokujoji, he had not asked for details until the last moment, and yet he was proposing such an absurd operation as a plan... but strangely enough, he had no desire to object.

The confident way he explained evoked the hope that "maybe it is possible" and the strength he himself currently harbors. A strong desire to take on the challenge of "maybe we will succeed".

Both spouses couldn't help but think the same thing.

(Something has changed in him.)

Was Kokujoji Daikaku really such a bold and unrestrained person?

Without even a moment to check, the "Golden King" took action.

"Come on, Miya."

As he said that, he easily lifted the small body onto his shoulders.

Miya was neither frightened nor worried by that almost violent act, but instead clung to the head of the person who offered to join forces with her. With all her heart, wanting to help her "King".

Kokujoji cried out, increasing the feelings he had received and making them stronger.

"Otono Benji, are you here?"

"Yes, my lord."

From deep within the fog beside him, Otono replied as if he were an old acquaintance.

"Tell Red that we will attack now."

"Yes."

When the fog cleared, Kokujoji spoke to Nazumi and his wife, who were standing on either side of him.

"Please join forces."

Chika took out her naginata and replied briefly and clearly.

"Yes."

Nazumi, who was lightly holding the sword, had several implications.

"Yes, let me see for myself."

The three of them kicked up the snow and ran off.

Up ahead, deep in the falling snow, the battle between "nothing" and "red" continues.

Unno, who didn't like pointless fights, was getting quite angry, but still didn't lose his temper because he had received a message from Otono saying, "A fight is going to start now.". Although he didn't have any basis for it, he had a feeling that something interesting was about to happen and was eagerly waiting for the moment to act.

Suddenly, that premonition manifested itself in perfect form.

"Unno Yutaka! Hit him with all your might!"

Kokujoji's loud voice shook the snow.

The tone of his voice wasn't a cold order.

Like a fire, it was a passionate encouragement.

In essence, he's saying, "Go ahead and do it.".

When told that, Unno didn't hesitate to respond.

"You have a good eye, shining gold!"

His heart, his eyes, his body, everything ignited in an instant.

"Okuma! Suwako! To the crown!"

He roared and leaped into the air, transforming into a ball of fire.

Both Okuma, who threw the iron plate when asked, and Suwako, who was spinning the red thread, were happy, perhaps even more so. He is no longer a lost and desperate child on the run, but a bossy and courageous man without limits.

(Good job, Unno! Don't overthink things.)

(Hit him in the forehead, Yutaka-chan!)

Unno's fist came crashing down towards the target the two had prepared, the metal plate that was perfectly placed on the monster's head. A sword-like red light flickered in the snowy sky, and from its tip fell a bolt of lightning that could be mistaken for a shooting star.

"Ohhhhhhhh!"

The monster was knocked down, exactly as he wished, with a thunderous blast of air. The heavy blow that came from above caused his neck and limbs to bend and twist like a thrown string puppet.

Kokujoji ran forward and called out to someone above his head.

"Miya, now!"

"Ah..."

Miya, who was being carried on his shoulders, froze for a moment in fear at the sight of the monster crouching in front of her as she opened her eyes... However, seeing that green sparks were still coming out of the giant head hitting the ground, proof of her King's status, she raised a finger.

"Lightning!"

Her desperate but weak cry produced a faint electric shock on her fingertips, just as she had confessed.

Then, a moment later,

"Sharp!"

Kokujoji unleashed his fierce fighting spirit. At the same time, he steadied his feet, pointed two fingers at the monster, and channeled the power of the "Golden King" into it.

Miya, who had been stroking the air in vain, began to emit a surge of electricity.

Not only that, it turned into a powerful lightning bolt that produced an avalanche.

The moment its tip came into contact with the sparks coming out of the monster's mouth,

"Iku-chan!"

Miya jumped before he could urge her on, shouting again.

Kokujoji also seized the opportunity.

(It connected!)

He grabbed the lightning bolt with both hands.

"Okay, back off!"

At the command, Nazumi and Chika extended their hands toward the green torrent that flashed.

(Seriously.)

(That's impossible.)

It was done.

There was no numbness or heat and he was able to firmly grasp it like a rope.

In case of ingestion, tie a rope and pull it out.

That was the whole story of Kokujoji's plan to retrieve the "Green King". Although the Somei couple are extraordinary heroes in different directions, he naturally conceives and carries out illogical acts that still irritate him.

"Pull back! Pull back!"

Naturally, he also made the same request to Unno and the others, who were watching in amazement at these heinous acts as they pulled the torpedo rope with great force.

"Join us! Save the "Green King" and the children!"

Of the three who woke up after hearing that, Unno was the first to jump aboard and grab the rope.

"Haha, what is this?!"

Okuma and Suwako, who were following him, were also frightened.

"Well, if it's heavy work I guess I can manage it."

"If you ask me to help a child, I have no choice but to do so."

He put on the same expression as everyone there and took a step back.

Miya was resting her foot on the end of the rope, Kokujoji was holding it like a weight in the middle, and Nazumi and his wife were up front preparing for the monster's counterattack; everyone was pulling on the rope with expressions of incredible strength and incomprehensible amusement.

Even after a fierce battle, they still put all their strength into the tug-of-war with the monster.

It's so serious and so ridiculous.

Even for the "Red King" and the "Blue King", who had wielded incredible power until now,

"Get your act together, blue hat! Follow the example of your wife with strong roots!"

"You're too noisy, why don't you put your extra energy into the rope?"

The "Gray King" spoke bitterly from deep within the fog.

"It's a pity I can't participate in all this chaos."

It was the first time he had seen something so strange.

However, there was one person among them.

"In that case, support us with your voice and heart! Even that will give us strength!"

Only the "Golden King", who replied cheerfully, showed no signs of confusion. That's because he is the only one who acts based on a single conviction. The mindset that is the source of how supernatural beings can manifest their powers.

"Be free, be tough, be optimistic!"

Kokujoji shouted that.

"We can do anything!"

Putting it into words may seem trivial, but it will have a huge impact on an era that will define the future.

"Be like that and act with that in mind!"

It was not a coincidence nor something that suddenly came to his mind.

That was the result of his daily efforts to discover the laws that govern the raging waves of light and shadow in the vast expanse of the sky, where clouds of stars float and rivers of silver flow. But it was also a completely unexpected discovery.

What he had felt to be the epitome of truth, what he had tried to grasp in every detail, the overwhelming spectacle that his own power had projected, was actually nothing more than a design. The important thing was not to "look at it" but to "move it". Now, every time he exerts his power, the laws and truths he perceives do not "move", but rather change by "setting them in motion". With the intervention of the will, that scene can become anything.

It originates from himself and exists by himself.

Freely adjustable.

If we think about it, the King's power has always been to "move" things according to his own will.

To exert one's own power to the fullest is to freely create laws, truths, the world, and the age.

Once he realized that he was using his power to the fullest of his own will, the gears clicked into place and everything started moving.

Yes, Kokujoji understood.

There's no way that wouldn't be fun.

If he decides to do things that way and keeps going, the path will open up.

"Now, back off! Back off and get the kids back!"

As he uses his will and strength to get things done,

"Come to think of it."

Otono shouted in a somewhat casual tone.

"I'm the one who's here to watch, so I guess I shouldn't be the one to say it."

"What?"

Although he was aware that he was becoming talkative, he couldn't help it and started asking questions frankly.

"Even though this is the time to gather the power of the swords, you still haven't unsheathed your sword."

"Mmm."

Hearing that, Kokujoji simply looked up.

Beyond the falling snow, high in the sky a red and blue glow in the shape of a "sword" (Schwert) could be faintly seen. Those enormous crystallizations of power, pointing their tips towards the ground, were supposed to be proof that the King was exerting his full strength... but just as Otono had said, the golden sword was not there.

"That is a good question."

Kokujoji answered without showing any sign of offense.

"Playing with a ratio of "three against two" is a bad move. To be sure of victory, one must play with a ratio of "four against one".

".....?"

"And for that reason I must win this tug of war!"

Otono did not understand what the story was saying, but he did understand one thing. As the man in charge of mediating the situation, it was noticeable in the atmosphere of his voice and the enthusiasm that permeated his heart.

"Haha, I see."

The essence of what he wanted to know was the source of the joy exuded by the man called Kokujoji Daikaku.

"You really love doing things together, my lord."

And then "everyone" heard what he said.

Hearing that, everyone pulled harder.

However, there was one person among them.

Only one person who couldn't join "everyone", his enemy, the "Colorless King", was resisting the power that was trying to pull the "Green King" out of his own body. He clenched his limbs so tightly that they dug into the ground, clamped his mouth shut to prevent green sparks from flying out, and put all his strength into the tug-of-war.

But,

"...kid..."

That resistance was finally reaching its limits.

"...ugh..."

It wasn't just physical strength, but the power of the three Kings telling him "this is how it should be" (and the modest encouragement of one of them) that finally produced the desired scene.

The base of his neck, which had been stretched so far that it seemed like it was going to be torn off, began to faintly glow with a green light, and that light was gradually drawn towards his throat. Something was coming out of his mouth. The voice escaping from the edge of his closed palate had become denser and had taken on a sad tone.

"Where...?"

The end came suddenly.

A lightning rod with sparks coming out of his closed mouth,

The green light headed further up from his throat.

The moment the two touched, the entire skull of the monster exploded into pieces. Attracted by a strong "force", the girl who was the source of the lightning attack, and the children connected to her, were thrown into the air.

Taking advantage of the momentum, hundreds of white fragments flew out from the monster's neck. Those white things buried in the snow are human bone fragments. That was the end result of those with supernatural powers being secretly swallowed by the monster "Black Cloak" and their powers being completely absorbed.

Before that could happen, the "Green King" Iku Tsunogui and the Biribiri Gang were rescued, and instantly dragged towards the end of the rope, as if escaping death.

Miya, was the one who fell the hardest on her butt from the effect of the rescue.

"Iku-chan! Everyone!"

The girl opened her slender arms to welcome them all, but naturally it was too much for her and they all fell face down into the snow. At the same time, the green power protecting those who were swallowed disappeared. The children, already unconscious, fell onto the snow.

The only one who remained conscious was the "Green King".

"Miya-chan..."

She leaned her small body on the chest of her friend that she had finally found.

"I was watching from inside... Thank you..."

Her haggard face clearly showed signs of fatigue, but she was still smiling.

Miya smiled back at her King.

"Yes. Everyone here helped me."

"Everyone here" she was referring to welcomed the "Green King" by sitting on their butts, instead of standing up and bullying her.

Nazumi who had been fighting with her just moments ago now let out a rare sigh of relief.

"It seems we can finally talk calmly."

"What a carefree thing to say. I'm not done fighting this bastard yet."

As he spoke, Unno, who was also sitting cross-legged and resting, lightly punched him.

Kokujoji asked beside him, watching the situation intently.

"What do you think, Otono Benji?"

"Yes, it seems it's time to put an end to this."

Hearing Otono's voice, Chika, Suwako, Okuma, and the others also looked towards the monster. The three of them had planned to grab the children and retreat if the situation worsened, but it seemed that the King and his companions were more relaxed.

Deep within the snow that continued to fall, "nothing" crouched as if a concentrated darkness had indeed lost its power.

"Where is it...?"

Although a mournful cry could be heard coming from the base of his neck where his skull had been blown off, there was no sign of him regenerating. Not only that, even the outline of the giant body was gradually fading away and starting to shrink.

"Where did you go...? You're gone."

His voice, as if trying to make his pain understood, grew weaker as he continued to speak. Soon the voice stopped and the body disappeared. It was as if he was convinced of that.

"Where did you go...? Don't leave me behind..."

Finally, the voice would reach its final stage of agony and the poor "Colorless King" would fall and die.

It was supposed to be like that.

Suddenly,

Kokujoji Daikaku, Unno Yutaka, Somei Nazumi, Tsunogui Iku, Otono Benji... even the "Colorless King" who was about to disappear had noticed it. Realizing this, he looked up at the snowy sky.

A huge "force of destiny" comes from high in the skies, which will dramatically change the existence of everything that exists on this earth, in this country, and even in this world.

After receiving the President's telegram, the "Skinny" section immediately put "Option 3" into action. A modified B-47S high-altitude bomber, dubbed the "Versifire", took off from the carrier toward the sea and began to rapidly climb to bombing altitude and turn to enter the bombing course.

The only thing that was reported to the regular crew members was that this was a secret operation. From the beginning of the operation, they were one of two select bombing teams (the other being the "Trash Hands" team) that had been rotating through top-secret bombing training in the United States, Yokosuka Naval Base, and the Pacific Island region, and were some of the best bombing experts in the entire Carrier Air Wing.

Although they were forbidden from landing in Japan or having access to any information, they had a vague idea of the mission direction based on the content of the bombing training, but the bombing target was kept secret until the start of the operation.

Even when suddenly the special crew member who appears as a passenger, a Marine colonel in charge of handling the atomic bomb, told them that the location was "right in the middle of Tokyo, Japan", they showed no particular reaction.

They are professional soldiers and have been trained to follow orders. The most important thing is the special assignments, promotions, and vacations that are earned through missions, and rebellion or dissent from superiors is never even considered.

In order to be able to return home as soon as possible, they carry out the tasks given to them.

The ideal is to be able to fully demonstrate the results of their intensive training.

That was what they had in mind.

The true nature of Hiroshima and Nagasaki continues to be concealed, with the exception of a few accusations, by press censorship and propaganda, but even if they had known the truth, it probably would not have made any difference. Replacement crew members would simply have been recruited. To them, Japan was just another landscape to behold from the harbor.

Of course, they showed no interest in the long speech given by the Navy captain, who was a special crew member, about the historical significance of this secret operation and how it would contribute to great achievements for the United States and the capitalist world as a whole. For them, bombing was just one of their daily missions.

After a briefing on the objectives of their bombing raids, the only thing they did before the final inspection of their aircraft was to offer a devout prayer in the prayer area set up on board the aircraft carrier.

The "Versifire" they were piloting began to circle over the Kanto region smoothly, just as they had practiced. The area was covered in stormy snow clouds, the worst possible weather for a bombing raid, but the plan remained unchanged. The real objective of the bombing raid is a situation where supernatural kings gather in one place. There was no way to postpone or cancel it.

Since this mission cannot be scheduled at a specific time, they were provided with state-of-the-art equipment. This is not a conventional visual optical sight, but a new type of radio-guided radar sight.

The bombing raid was directed by locally hired Japanese operatives, who were positioned in a wide area surrounding the battlefield. It was this radio guidance device that Otono mistook for a "huge radio".

Of course, these people never imagined that an atomic bomb would fall in the center of the circle they were forming. All they could do was shiver in the snow, complaining about the heavy burden they were told an observation team represented.

As they turned, the "Versifire" completed its radio guidance adjustments, then lowered its altitude and entered the bombing path. It was a completely unexpected event, but the red and blue "Sword-like Shine (Schwert)" floating low in the sky was directly in front of them, welcoming them like a guiding light.

During the descent, the bomb bay doors opened and the atomic bomb was released.

The third atomic bomb dropped on Japan, "Skinny Guy", which gave the section its name, was thin but several times more powerful than the previous ones and fell into the snow clouds as if it were being absorbed.

If it had been the "Silver King", it would not have been more affected by the destruction than a gentle breeze.

If it had been the "Golden King", he would have raised his fist and sent the object flying high into the sky.

If it had been the "Red King", he would have jumped up and kicked the atomic bomb back onto the aircraft carrier.

If it had been the "Blue King", he would have raised a solid shield to protect those beneath him.

If it had been the "Green King", he would have been able to neutralize the explosion with the power of alteration he unleashed along with the lightning.

If it had been the "Gray King", he would have enveloped it in a thick layer of mist and banished it to the vast expanse.

But now,

The "Colorless King", hungrier than anyone else, took the bait before anyone else.

The giant body, which had almost lost all of its thickness, stretched out into the sky like a thin, sharp needle. To satisfy the hunger he desired more than anything, he wanted to devour the piece of "power to change fate" that had fallen from the sky.

That power (the atomic bomb), "Skinny Guy", activated a barometric reactor by means of a spring-loaded timer, which opened all electrical circuits at an altitude of 2,000 meters, causing the detonator to receive a signal from a radio-controlled induction device on the ground, and then the neutron generator went into full operation at the optimum altitude for massacres.

The nuclear fission chain reaction released enormous amounts of neutrons and heat.

For a moment,

It was sucked into the "nothing" that stretched out like a jaw.

The "Colorless King" swallowed all that destructive power that could change destiny.

Everything that should emerge instantly caused the "nothing" to expand like a balloon. The expansion became a pseudo-explosion, splitting the air and sending violent tremors through the air. That was repeated two or three times, perhaps like the vomit produced by swallowing an immense amount of energy, or as a final resistance to the reality of the atomic bomb explosion.

Either way, the result of the "predation" created an extraordinary spectacle.

This was completely different from the mushroom cloud that should have appeared.

Appearing low in the sky was a gigantic sphere that could be mistaken for a completely black moon.

Its expansion and violent tremors scattered snow clouds over a wide area, bringing back the blue sky of winter and the midday sun. In the distance, where the drifted snow glistened in the sunlight, a huge red and blue glow in the shape of a "sword" (Schwert) dominated the sky.

Everyone in the suburbs of Tokyo saw it.

The intoxicating fantasy or the terrifying nightmare.

With the explosion, a clear sky appeared and suddenly a "strange object from this world" appeared.

(That has now changed...)

Kokujoji did not rely on logic, but experienced it with his own eyes.

The Kings, who were looking in the same direction, also realized the same thing...

The people recognized his "power".

With that realization, the world changed.

The various inexpressible certainties, including the existence of the bomb (or something like that) that had caused this, could not be logically digested nor sublimated into emotion and were instead returned to the reality that had changed in one fell swoop.

The sphere of "nothing", which even absorbs light, fell once again, having been devoured with the "power" it desired.

As if it were a giant bird's egg being laid, it landed with a thunderous roar and raised a thick cloud of dust.

Naturally the Kings on the field took a few steps forward.

Of course, it's not for the sake of welcome.

This is to protect the people behind them from what's coming. Unno is the first to become a shield for his subordinates, Nazumi naturally becomes a shield for Chika, Iku fights back despite being exhausted and becomes a shield for her companions, and Kokujoji boldly becomes a shield for everyone.

"Tch... That bastard took something dangerous and has now come back to life."

Then, from the dust that was clearing, it emerged.

This monster was indistinguishable from the four-legged lizard that had been fighting until just now.

"That "bad thing" is something I'm curious about, but I'll only pursue it after I've overcome the immediate threat."

It walked slowly, making a rumbling noise.

The kings noticed and raised their gaze higher and higher.

"What is this?"

He looked down from beneath the thin, transparent "Sword-like Radiance (Schwert)" floating between red and blue, with his head at a height of perhaps fifty meters.

The monster stood up.

"What an unbridled test that is imposed upon us! To be told that we must overcome even this..."

Something beyond normal identification, like a reptile or an amphibian. If you just look at its features, it could be an ancient dinosaur. But what is actually happening is something even more impossible.

If they had to choose a word from the classics, perhaps they should call it "monster".

The monster let out a roar that struck deep within, incomparable to the weak throes from before. The world has already changed. Common sense does not protect them from anything. Abnormality attacks relentlessly.

Faced with an unimaginable situation, the group failed to read what was normal for the monster. Although they knew that its jaws were open and aimed at them, they couldn't imagine what would come next.

However, they were able to act pretentiously at the right moment because they were faced with hostility and murderous intent.

Hostility and murderous intent began to swirl within its jaw.

Seeing that, which they had never seen before, Unno and Kokujoji, who displayed their battlefield instincts, cried out.

"What?! Something's coming!"

"Disperse!"

Screaming, he ran out to act as a decoy for "something dangerous", though she didn't know what it was.

Half a second after the two,

"No!"

Nazumi, who had predicted the worst possible situation, took a firm stance. As he checked Chika's position, he quickly sheathed his sword and gave instructions in a voice that left no room for argument.

"Gather around me, quickly!"

"Hurry up, I mean."

Suwako anxiously looked around. She gets into dangerous situations every day and can sense when an emergency is approaching simply by the tone of his voice. Thus, she scattered the red threads in all directions and tied up the Biribiri members who were still lying in the snow. That was the end. She finished it, but she still needed one more step.

(The force that draws everyone in immediately...)

Iku was holding her hand.

"Thank you."

As she said that, green lightning flowed along the threads, reinforcing the force and attracting all of her allies with incredible speed. A shocked Okuma, Unno, Kokujoji, and others ran to catch them, and Iku herself hugged the frightened Miya.

As if it was her duty to check on the situation, Chika shouted loudly.

"Everyone, stay safe!"

"Understood."

Nazumi who returned, concentrated his energy and formed a spherical shield to protect everyone gathered there.

Another half second later,

A storm of hostility and murderous intent erupted from the monster's mouth. Normally invisible in the sunlight, the irregular, high-pressure air churning through the air scattered a diffuse glow like pure white flames everywhere.

Its destructive power could not be compared to that of flames.

After hitting Nazumi's shield, it staggered and wavered for more than ten seconds, and the white flames had pulverized everything they touched, from the road to the houses and overturned vehicles.

When the monster saw the blue shield disappear from below, it changed direction and began to move away. The rumbling sound caused by its long strides carried with it the "sword-like light (Schwert)" from the zenith and moved away into the distance.

At some point, the red and blue "sword-like (Schwert)" glow also disappeared, under the empty sky. A blue shield rolled out from a corner of the ruins, where pieces of wood and stones were piled up. It wasn't an intentional hiding spot. It was repelled by the high pressure of the white flames and was buried under the rubble.

The shield was suddenly released, and everyone who was safe was thrown out. Incidentally, the ground that made up about a third of the sphere's base also crumbled, like a vestige of what existed before the destruction.

"Damn it, that bastard... Hey, are you guys okay?"

Unno, who had already clenched her fists, said to Okuma and Suwako, who were sitting on their butts.

"Somehow."

"Ouch... that was horrible."

Meanwhile, Nazumi noted with relief that no damage had occurred to the Nanakamado facility. The monster also left in a different direction. It seemed like it had consumed enough energy and was satisfied. After those thoughts,

"We're obviously safe, but are you okay, Chika-san?"

He called out to her with an indirect gesture.

"Yes, thank you."

Chika had already recovered and was examining the remains.

The rock-like lump in her hand crumbled into pieces with just a light squeeze.

"Rocks and wood are as fragile as soybean pulp... What is this?"

An unexpected person answered that question.

"A voice that desires, a voice that is afraid... that is the power that combines the two."

Iku was consulting with Miya to make sure that her friends were safe.

"The entire time I was inside him, I could hear him screaming."

From a limited number of words, Nazumi instantly constructed a logic.

"Hmm, so that power was a type of telekinesis... an attractive force that draws you in with desire, and a repulsive force that pushes you away with fear, a chaotic mix of both contradictory forces that was then unleashed... perhaps we could call it a "super contradictory line of force"."

"This is no time for excuses!"

Unno, who seemed completely unconcerned, shouted.

"Let's go after that bastard right now!"

So he urged Kokujoji excitedly.

"Hmm? What's wrong, "Golden King"?"

"....."

There was no response that would have been expected if he had been hit any further.

On the contrary, he stopped dead in his tracks, staring at the back of the "Colorless King" as he walked away.

(How fast the world is changing.)

He was overwhelmed by the sheer speed of the event, but he still retained the excitement from before, the feeling that his "Kings" were "moving the world", or rather, it was because they were carrying it along.

No matter how "strong" one is, can they really maintain this speed?

Or perhaps it is precisely because they possess "power" that they are required to run so fast.

Something that came from above, something that was devoured, something that was devoured and transformed... the things that transformed and attacked one after another are now, with no time to waste, about to overflow into the ordinary world.

(Leaves the evacuation zone... soon after, combat with the siege forces begins.)

The deserted evacuation zone, shrouded in snow, was a shell of common sense, isolated from the rest of the world, no matter how rampant the supernatural powers might be. Now then, that can be easily crushed as well.

(We must quickly withdraw the besieging forces and evacuate the civilians in our path.)

The overflowing transformation threatens to engulf everyone.

It is no longer just the visual impact of seeing a black moon.

The direct violent threat of the "Colorless King", who had transformed into a monster, was drawing near.

(We, no one but ourselves, must take action to stop it... but is it really okay to let this "power" flow out and use it in front of the people living in this present time? This is a "power" that can arbitrarily create laws, truths, the world, and the era.)

Reality pushes him forward mercilessly, not allowing him even a few seconds of hesitation or serious concern.

Now, a word from the "Green King" called for a change.

"Don't let him go."

"What do you mean by that, Iku?"

Sensing the girl's intelligence, Kokujoji asked seriously.

Iku clumsily got to the heart of the matter.

"Once he reaches the sea, he will relax and let himself go."

And the sense of crisis was clearly conveyed.

"If he were to unleash it, all the force holding him back would pour out."

Nazumi translated her words again.

"In other words, when the "Colorless King" reaches the sea, for some reason he will feel relieved and release the emptiness that makes up his giant body. Then, the power that was swallowed up in the sky will begin to overflow."

That "power" that made the sky explode... They had no way of knowing the exact nature of the object that had been swallowed by the "nothing", but the extent of its threat was imprinted in their minds. What if it premiered on the coast of Tokyo Bay?

A chill ran through everyone who heard the story.

Kokujoji is forced to act in the face of harsh reality and time-bound circumstances.

"Otono Benji, are you okay?"

"Yes. I'm glad I didn't muster up the courage I didn't have and didn't approach you."

A voice emerged from the fog surrounding him, as if it were a normal place.

As a former officer, Kokujoji asked the former soldier.

"You were listening, right? Can you accurately calculate the direction he's traveling in?"

"Wait a moment... Hmm, it seems he's heading directly south. I think he's going to skirt the moat from Tokyo Station to Ginza and reach the mouth of the Sumida River."

"Okay, thank you."

Saying so, he clasped his hands and called a man from "Tokijikuin" who was wearing a communication device. He picked up the receiver and requested the operator to connect him to the emergency line. After a short wait, he got ready.

(Anyway, for now we must take practical measures.)

Naturally, the people around him also watched the development of events. No matter what they did, they all understood that to face that monster they would need the combined strength of the Kings, just like in the tug-of-war earlier.

After a short pause, the call was connected.

His opponent is the person with the most power he can control... the chairman of the ruling party.

Without much ado, Kokujoji made a reasonable request to protect the citizens, and also asked that preliminary steps be taken so that they can fight the "Colorless King" at will.

"As stated earlier, the battle situation is serious. Please evacuate all civilians on the route immediately."

But,

"....."

For some reason, the President did not immediately respond to this request, which was supposed to be urgent.

".....?"

Kokujoji, knowing that his partner is far from clumsy, waited for a response, though he was perplexed.

After a few seconds, probably a period of deep thought, the question arose.

"By what authority?"

"Eh?"

Kokujoji couldn't help but respond in an idiotic voice.

The President reiterates his statement once again, making sure to carefully consider what he is saying.

"What authority do you have to interfere with the emergency command, I ask?"

Kokujoji's confusion only increased. He also knew that, in an emergency like this, he was not the type of person to waste time arguing... or so he thought.

"Now is not the time to get hung up on formalities..."

"It is very important."

The President's tone remained unchanged. He took his time and enunciated each word carefully.

"A country is a mass of such shapes... We cannot and should not take any action based on someone's opinion without any official authority. Let me ask you again, what is your position?"

Kokujoji finally noticed that deliberate confirming tone.

The President was forcing him to have that urgent conversation with some "very important" intention.

He spoke carefully, making sure his voice and answers did not sound careless.

"A private bodyguard of the ruling party."

"That is not enough at all."

The President's words were blunt.

"We cannot protect the country by just protecting the politicians."

That was not an insulting remark. It was a harsh reality.

Kokujoji understood that and had no words to respond.

"We are, first and foremost, an occupied country. There is someone higher up who should take action."

The next words were:

"However, you see..."

Suddenly, he let out a faint smile.

".....?"

"The authority that should take action, the Headquarters of the occupation forces, is currently busy preparing for the withdrawal. It seems that Yurakucho is on that road. The marshal was the first to withdraw and has not reported his whereabouts. It seems that they are wary of any outrageous acts that take advantage of the confusion. It is a little sad to hear this from their benefactor."

Kokujoji still couldn't understand what the president was trying to say in his long speech.

The story continues.

"In other words, now that there is a vacancy, our government of Japan has no choice but to act independently. However, at present the country doesn't even have an army. There is really nothing we can do except issue an evacuation order..."

Among them, there was a word...

(Vacant?)

Kokujoji felt a strange sense of unease.

It is a phrase that means there is no king. He was probably comparing the Marshal, who was the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and effectively ruling Japan, to a king, and using that as an analogy to a situation where there was no one in command, but the

President should have known without a doubt that the members of "Tokijikuin" were chasing him.

If there is another meaning, it could be political, that the highest chain of command has fled.

".....!"

Suddenly, a flash of lightning appeared within the "Golden King".

"If in an emergency situation like this, a political upheaval was to occur, and even the marshal was unknown, our Japanese government would have no chance of survival. This is especially true if the opponent is a violent organization with deep roots in the heart of the government."

Suddenly, Kokujoji began to feel an unexpected palpitation.

This was no time to fret or hesitate as if it were someone else's problem. He realized that he himself was part of a changing world and that precisely because he possessed power within that world he was a King.

(Everything is speeding up a lot.)

The plan had already been in motion for some time.

He had also been preparing for whatever was to come.

However, there was no concrete date as to when that would happen.

It was the goal of a distant dream, something to be achieved within ten or twenty years.

(This is what "change" means... or rather, "change it"?)

Now it is not just a dream.

Actually, it is within his reach.

The key to making that happen was pure will.

They wield their power according to their own will and create laws, truths, the world and the era freely.

The time had come to do so.

Too soon, too inevitably.

Kokujoji asked quietly.

"Since when are you aware of our intentions?"

"It's been a long time. Although I used it for my own convenience, I was always afraid."

Contrary to what he said, the President's voice sounded amused.

He added with a laugh.

"Until I can determine the power of that "Slate" and who you are as a person..."

"Thank you for the kind words."

The President continued, pretending to be a deliberately strict teacher.

"This is not something I entrust to you based on your mood or personal feelings. It's too big for that."

"Of course."

"That light in the sky... What do you think of the light that has turned you into a monster?"

This is what led the President to choose his current path.

Kokujoji replied as he recalled the core of the situation.

"I don't have any proof, but judging from the situation, I think it was a nuclear attack from an aircraft carrier that was in Yokosuka... or at least ordered by the mainland United States."

"I agree. The United States of America has taken such an outrageous action... that it is unforgivable, regardless of its existence. As a resident of this country, this cannot be tolerated."

"Yes."

A clear and concise agreement is returned, along with an honest and sincere wish.

"And so, to protect myself against the violence and senseless acts that will surely continue in the future, I bet on you. I believe that you are the only one who has the "power" to entrust our country to."

"....."

"Now, give orders to your guards and do what must be done. Let us protect our country from harmful intentions and nurture it under the sun of ever-increasing prosperity. Kokujoji Daikaku... no, "Golden King"."

"...I understand."

Kokujoji Daikaku's tone of voice as he replied had changed.

It had transformed into that of a master who would not cower before anyone.

"At home we take control of the country and at home we conquer the enemy. Come and observe our skills."

"Please."

The call was disconnected.

Kokujoji called out in a calm and cheerful voice to the group who watched in amazement the events unfolding.

"Just one more call, give me some time."

He calmly gave orders, this time connecting to a different emergency line.

"To all members of "Tokijikuin". Immediately execute "Armed Uprising Plan 5"."

It was an order to overthrow and take control of the current state, the occupied country of Japan.

There is no need for a pompous military parade, as has happened in some past cases. The numerous supernatural beings that had originally been stationed as guards at the heart of the government and in key departments have now turned their attention inward. With just that, the suppression would be completed quickly and absolutely. Even when attempting to take control, a minimal number of personnel is sufficient.

Furthermore, the fifth plan was the most extreme, involving not completely concealing the paranormal powers and using all available force to suppress them. Within an hour, the nation's vital interests would be in the hands of "Tokijikuin".

The targets of the plan to take control include both Houses of Government, the Prime Minister's Official Residence, the private residences of important cabinet ministers, the National Public Security Headquarters, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Headquarters of the National and Prefectural Police. The targets to take over by deploying forces included the suddenly vacant Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, some embassies, newspapers and broadcasting companies, American military bases, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, and the National Fire Agency.

"Also, once the situation has calmed down, in addition to reading out loud the standard "National Guidance Statement", it will also be verbally announced that the natural disaster in question is a nuclear bombing by the United States of America. After that, in coordination with the relevant ministries and agencies, you will quickly evacuate all civilians from the enemy's path. I hope that every member of your team will work tirelessly to accomplish that. That's all."

In short, there are only five or six.

That alone will decisively change the character of the nation.

However, for Kokujoji, that is just a hidden story.

There are still many important issues that they themselves must address.

"I'm sorry for keeping you guys waiting."

Now much larger, Kokujoji turned to look at the faces that were waiting for him.

No longer were there ordinary people who were overwhelmed by the speed at which the world was changing and hesitated to use the "power" they possessed. The person before him was a "King" who was willing to take responsibility for changing the world, a powerful ruler who was fully aware that from now on, "they are the ones who will change the world", and who stepped forward with confidence.

To usher in a new era, the "Golden King", Kokujoji Daikaku, issued the order.

"Come on, all that remains is to defeat him!"

The monster kicked the besieging force's tanks and advanced.

The monster continued to advance, crushing an abandoned tram.

(Why are you afraid when you see me?)

(Why do you see me and run away?)

The view from above came to his mind.

Looking up, he found face after face filled with surprise and faces trembling with fear.

Backs and backs appearing, then backs and backs running away helplessly.

His thoughts were interrupted and he began to vaguely understand the meaning.

(Oh, right.)

(I turned into a crocodile.)

His vague consciousness was tinged with joy.

(You don't have to be afraid of anyone! You don't have to be afraid of anything!)

(I turned into a crocodile.)

The giant feet began to move faster.

Heading straight towards his destination.

(Oh, what happiness!)

(I want to sink deep into the water quickly.)

(I want to sleep peacefully and still.)

Looking down from high above he could see a flat blue sky.

The vast ocean can be seen stretching out to the horizon.

(I'm already full.)

(I'm not hungry, I'm not hungry.)

He moved his legs as hard as he could.

He no longer has to be afraid of what lies beneath his feet.

(Then all you have to do is escape into the dark, deep bottom of the water.)

(Then no one will be able to touch me.)

Anything that stands in the way of his progress will disappear with a single shout.

They make way for the one who has turned into a crocodile.

(Because crocodiles are scary.)

The monster stomped on the shattered remains and moved forward.

The monster heads towards the sea, where it will find peace.

Only the Kings pursue the monster as it heads towards the sea.

The reason is that the battles ahead would be too much for it. Because it was a fact, no one objected, but Kokujoji still received reinforcement from an unexpected person.

Chika was seeing off her husband.

"Victory alone is not enough. You must make sure that everyone returns alive. In particular, be prepared in case something happens, Nazumi."

As Kokujoji was overwhelmed by his spirit, Suwako and Okuma also joined in.

"That's right. The war is finally over and it would be terrible to die in a place like this!"

"I can't believe that's what the Yakuza (us) say. Well, I agree with you that we shouldn't die."

Miya also said, taking Iku's hand, saying that she would accompany her to the fight.

"Iku-chan, when you return, you'll give me lots of delicious food to eat. So..."

"Yes, I'm fine."

Iku is honest.

"If you wish it, Chika-san, there's no chance of that happening."

Nazumi is exaggerated,

"That's something you can only discuss after you've accomplished it."

Unno replied to each of them coldly.

To these people, Kokujoji gave a firm guarantee:

"I have no intention of forcing you to be reckless. That strange flame just now..."

"It's a contradictory line of force."

"That sudden attack by that superhuman line of force put us on the defensive, but this time it will be different."

"Do you think we have a chance of winning?"

"It doesn't matter if it's logical or not, we're just aiming for a great victory."

"Well, what about you?"

"That's right."

"You seem quite optimistic. Do you have any special cards up your sleeve?"

When Otono asked, Kokujoji answered with certainty.

"Yes. The conditions are set. No matter how I absorb that explosion, if we can catch up to it before it reaches the sea, our victory will be assured. This is because the "power" of the "Golden King" makes it possible."

And so the Kings set off.

Just as Kokujoji had declared, there was a feeling of great victory.

A new gray "Sword-like Shine (Schwert)" appeared in the sky.

The first to make contact with the monster, or rather look down on it from above, was Otono Benji, the "Gray King", who could see and hear freely from afar through the fog.

(The flatterer, on the other hand, got carried away and reached his limits.)

He couldn't help but find it funny.

It seems he's weak against that "Golden King".

Before he knew it, he had gone from being hidden to being dragged into a battle with an incredible monster. Otono still couldn't fully accept that reality.

(This fog was meant to hide me, to hide us, but that was all.)

The fog rose up surrounding the monster. That was to hinder even a little bit of its advance and create an opening for the other kings to approach. It made him think again how funny it is that you never know what might be useful.

The Kings' attack will begin soon.

It must have been a very beautiful and spectacular sight.

This is one wild party he can join.

(Well, that's just for now.)

As a former gangster, Otono understood that his current, uncharacteristic behavior was the result of him being carried away by the momentary excitement of the festival, and that he would have no choice but to leave once the festival was over. Like a scar, there is no place for him in the dazzling next era they will build. He did not ask for it.

He disappeared into thin air.

(The snow clouds have spectacularly dispersed... Now it is time for the fog to quietly disappear.)

As for him, he just wants to be able to continue running "Kirinoichi", a hideout that provides a brief place of rest for people who have nowhere else to go. That was his right, the lifestyle of the "Gray King", neither dissatisfied nor satisfied.

From behind the white curtain, the monster's voice roared like a foghorn, and somehow penetrated into Otono's heart.

A new green "Sword-like Shine (Schwert)" appeared in the sky.

Below them, the "Green King", Iku Tsunogui, was flying at lightning speed along the power lines.

Behind her, the three "Kings" Kokujoji, Unno, and Nazumi were being guided by an induced current. If the distance is short and there are few people, electromagnetic acceleration by allies is not necessary. She was able to fly on her own.

There are two reasons why Iku joined this battle.

One reason is simple and clear, to return the favor for being saved, she and her friends the Biribiri group, from the "Colorless King". The other is due to a unique intuition.

(If we can defeat it, everything will be fine.)

That was her intuition.

She knew that the monster, the "power" it possessed, was the final obstacle blocking the path they all walked together. On the contrary, the three people accompanying them and the other one watching and listening from afar may be companions walking the same path, even if their walking style is different.

(Screaming all the time.)

Iku could feel the pain and sadness in the voice of the "Colorless King".

(I've been listening to him all this time.)

She felt sorry for him and even wanted to cry.

(But he will lead us all into darkness.)

The "King" of change, who seeks to destroy and disrupt the present, will not recognize that.

The girl who aspires to live in the new era to come cannot allow that.

(I don't want that.)

Iku preferred the "Golden King", who was cheerful and direct, who set his mind to something and kept moving forward, and who never seemed to give up, than to say "it can't be helped".

Iku and the three Kings jumped at the strange sight of a fog that cleared.

A new blue "Sword-shaped Shine (Schwert)" appeared in the sky.

Freed from the induced current, the "Blue King", Somei Nazumi, danced in the mist with the momentum of his sudden approach. He dodged the giant body of the monster that appeared nearby and advanced in the direction he was heading.

(Now we just have to wait for the signal...)

After thinking that, he realized that even he was eagerly waiting for the "Golden King" to make his move, and a wry smile spilled from his face. Before he knew it, the former lieutenant had always surprised him, and it seemed that he had also begun to have high expectations of him. As he slowly drew his sword,

(He probably doesn't need a "cut" anymore.)

He was glad that Kokujoji had finally become a "King".

With just a hint of bittersweet loneliness.

After doing that, he completely changed his mental state.

(Watch out, guys, things are going to get tough from now on... after all, they've taken over a country.)

The current situation is that they've simply taken advantage of the confusion to occupy the core. No matter how overwhelming the military power of "Tokijikuin" is, political intrigue is another matter. Until they can establish power as a fait accompli and gain complete control over national affairs, they'll need to keep winning battles both domestically and internationally and making adjustments between big and small, hard and soft moves.

(The chaos of the early days has made things more difficult, and we're back to square one.)

The "Blue King's" role as the protector of order may not be over yet.

Nazumi suddenly felt like this.

(In that case, all I have to do is wait for the time to show my true potential while slowly "cleaning" the world.)

There are countless things he and they need to do, such as rebuilding the system, establishing laws related to paranormal abilities, and negotiating with various parties to accomplish that... but, before anything else,

(Seriously, I'm rushing.)

The "Blue King" decided to get to work on his current job, the extermination of the monster ahead of him.

A new red "Sword-shaped Shine (Schwert)" appeared in the sky.

The "Red King", Unno Yutaka, had dissipated the induced current and landed in front of the mist, looking a little displeased. For a moment, he felt that the series of events was pleasant and exciting.

Fun, happy, wonderful things... every time he encounters all that shine,

(Is this okay?)

The feeling of guilt stabs him deep in the heart.

The battle against the thunderous monster deep in the fog is absolutely fun, charming, and wonderful.

It was because of that that Unno felt the pain that was stabbing deep in his chest grow stronger.

(I was left behind, so I decided to throw it all out and let out everything that was boiling inside me... Wasn't that what you decided, Unno Yutaka?)

He couldn't say that he got carried away by it without even realizing it.

He went to that battlefield of his own free will.

When he came out, he thought that he was going to beat up the black-cloaked monster that was playing with his minions. That wasn't wrong, but the truth was that Unno had been unconsciously hiding a part of it.

To put it more plainly, it was about beating up the black-cloaked monster "along with people like him who thought he was left behind". He secretly thought of brother Otono

and the nasty Blue Hat... and then he added the shining gold and the Biribiri children, and he felt that they were "the same" as him. That was the reason why that present moment was so fun, happy and wonderful.

Now Unno clearly feels that hidden part. He can't help but feel that way.

(That's really too bad.)

Only one person, the black monster that wandered in the fog before his eyes,

(If my voice had reached you, perhaps you would have understood... since we are both "the same" person who narrowly escaped death.)

Unno was able to speak in the dimness he had originally decided upon.

And then, hearing the great voice of the "Golden King", Kokujoji Daikaku,

"Clear the fog!"

A sixth bright golden "Sword-like Shine (Schwert)" appeared in the sky.

As the voice said, the fog dissipated and the "Colorless King" within appeared, having arrived at the very center of Ginza. The sudden sunlight and even a golden glow illuminated the giant that stood above the main street.

And suddenly, the giant's body swelled even more.

Rather, it became thicker, larger, and stronger.

The monster, now three times larger, stared at the deserted city that had been evacuated and let out an even more powerful roar.

But,

"What the fuck, you bastard!"

Unno's friendly kick was accompanied by a powerful red force that bounced off his back. The blow, like a mass of heat that crashed into him, surpassed the absorption limit and caused a huge explosion on the surface of the body of "nothing".

To a spectator, it seemed as if Unno had kicked the gigantic monster away with a single kick.

In fact, that is precisely the case. It was a sight that almost seemed like a joke.

"It's not so much my understanding, but rather my senses simply can't keep up."

Nazumi laughed wryly and raised a wall-like shield in front of the falling monster.

The shield was taller and wider than before, and the blue glow was denser; not only did it easily support the enormous weight falling towards it, but it also repelled it.

The monster was kicked from behind and bounced off the wall in front of it as it fell, truly at its mercy. Given its size, it appeared to be moving slowly, but in reality it fell at an incredible speed.

Furthermore, Kokujoji was waiting for him where he had collapsed.

"Hmph!"

A perfectly timed bang exploded with a golden glow.

The light was overwhelming and a delayed tremor in the air unleashed a violent wind that even blew away the street lamps.

The monster flew through the air at a speed several times faster than it had fallen. After an unusually long period of time in the air, it rumbled like an eruption, kicking up a cloud of dust and crushing the clock tower along with the building below, then collapsed.

Amidst the lingering sound of a slight tremor, too dangerous to be called a glow, and the remnants of a great earthquake, a mist arrived near Kokujoji.

"Oh, I see."

Otono does not hide her excitement and speaks loudly.

"Indeed, we need to do this 'four against one', not 'three against two'... that golden sword is the rich man's trump card that will bring us a great victory."

This is the characteristic of the "Golden King's", "Sword-like Brilliance (Schwert)", "Great Enhancement for All Supernatural Beings". Anyone within this range of effect, whether King or member, friend or foe, will receive the benefit. It was a power that could not be used carelessly in situations where supernatural beings, especially kings, fought each other.

"Actually, adding the 'Colorless King' would make five, and with you and that guy it would make seven... the ideal would be for everyone to unite, without opposing anyone, you know?"

"....."

The muttered message seemed like a reply, but it was not, and the yakuza, sensing the subtlety of the situation, remained silent.

And then, accompanied by a flash of lightning, Iku appeared. She said it with a smile, satisfied with her strength.

"The people who couldn't escape were left abandoned outside, three blocks away from the main street."

"Thank you, Iku-chan. And you did a great job, Otono Benji."

"Yes."

"Thanks to that sword, the range and sensitivity of the mist have increased, so it's no problem."

At Kokujoji's request, while they were fighting the monsters, they were busy searching the city, which had been designated as an evacuation zone, to see if anyone had been unable to escape and to help them escape as far as possible if they found them. After that was done, Kokujoji turned to address everyone again.

"Alright, let's decide this here! Everyone, do whatever you want!"

The four kings replied,

"Hehe! You don't even have to say that!"

"Just be careful of conflicting lines of force."

"Understood."

"I'm just an insider, so I'm not going to wait patiently for a great victory."

Under the six-colored glow "like a sword" (Schwert) the final act of the "Battle of the Six Kings" as it is commonly called in the Secret History unfolded.

The "Colorless King", who had sunk into the ground under his own weight, pushed aside the rubble and stood up. This time, he will not be able to take the initiative with a surprise attack. Moreover, at the vertical tip, within the roaring jaw, a whirlpool of power was swirling.

(Strange, I want it.)

(Don't come, don't come.)

A huge, contradictory, superhuman beam of force erupted from the gigantic mouth, carelessly sweeping through the streets of Ginza, razing them without a trace. The monster's rampage spread throughout the area like a destructive force.

On the contrary, the kings scattered around him did not join forces...

As soon as the contradictory lines of force ceased without capturing their prey, each attacked as he wished.

One leaped with the force of not wanting to let go of the first shot,

"Get out of here!"

He punched his jaw, which was almost closed, into the air with a bright red iron fist.

There's no way a monster made of supernatural "power" would suffer a concussion, but the impact itself caused its massive body to tilt. The monster staggered, taking one step, then another, following the unnatural sway of a high-rise building.

(Why aren't you afraid of me?)

(I turned into a crocodile.)

Next, Iku stood in the middle of the main street, spreading her arms out like an orchestra conductor, then closing them again.

"A truly powerful technique."

The small induced currents she placed all over the place drew an immense amount of energy from the downed electrical wires throughout the devastated city. It transformed into a rope and a glowing green net that bound the lower half of the monster's body.

Nazumi was amazed by the girl's skill,

"You already learned tug-of-war? What a girl!"

Deciding that a shield wasn't necessary for the moment, he focused his strength on the sword. After determining everyone's position, he cut it down with a single slash. A blue light that followed the path of the sword ran down the monster's right side to its left shoulder, and its left arm fell off.

(How strange.)

(Why?)

Though it let out a landscape-shaking scream and writhed in agony in its bonds, the monster instantly began to regenerate its left arm. And then, a dazzling golden light shone from those sunken, wide-open eyes.

Kokujoji rushed towards the lightning net.

(Is it okay to defeat it? The bomb inside is...)

"That's not enough. I'll use all of your power here, it poses a threat!"

Approaching the monster head-on, Kokujoji took a deep breath, gathered his strength, and then slammed into it with a golden explosion of a punch. One punch, two punches, five punches, ten punches, and more, and more, and so on.

The monster struggled within its bonds, writhing and leaning back, gathering all of its remaining strength. A line of contradictory force... the power that erases everything with the cry of "desire" and the cry of "fear".

(Strange, they don't run away.)

(Why am I so hungry...?!)

Directly above him, Unno launched a red kick that emitted a power that surpassed the power of a nuclear bomb.

"I'm the one who must do it!"

Similarly, directly below, Nazumi waved his blue sword and changed its properties to attack.

"No, it's me."

He struck his jaw from above and below, crushing him.

With their exit blocked, the contradictory lines of force have nowhere to go and release their power on the spot.

After a moment,

The upper half of the giant monster's body was torn in half.

Kokujoji screamed as he saw his thick armor, hardened by fear, shattered.

"Who are you, human?"

(I'm hungry...)

It's not just about answering the last mystery left from the battle so far.

"Come with us! We hope you can come with us!"

(I want someone to connect with...)

He never gave up on his ideals and threw himself at them with his hand outstretched.

"With just that you should be able to do it too!"

(Very scary, very scary.)

The essence of existence,

The negative power it carries,

The intention behind the "Slate" that was sent out,

Even though he understood everything, he still extended his hand.

However, the "Colorless King" never took it.

+++++

He was not born into a particularly good family.

However, they were a decent family because they could work every day and earn a living.

However, after he was drafted into the army, only bad things happened to him.

After going to war, scary things were added to the unpleasant things.

Still, it was better while fighting.

After the country lost, it became hell.

The entire unit surrendered, but they were not allowed to return to their homeland.

They were put into freight cars like cattle and transported to the far north.

There was nothing, there was nothing, just the detention center.

There they made him work.

They wore short shoes that broke easily,

They huddled together in a tent that didn't even have a floor.

They survived each day on bread crumbs, salty soup, and millet porridge.

They were made to work until they were completely exhausted.

Anyone who was hurt died.

Anyone who destroyed something died.

Those who did not have enough nutrition died.

Those who were exhausted died.

Some even decided to commit suicide.

Some died while trying to escape.

He could not even move the spoon.

"I'm hungry... give me... that..."

There were days when he desperately asked for help and managed to survive.

Everyone was desperate to work,

Everyone was desperately trying to survive.

But, if that were not enough, he was beaten.

A committee was formed that advocated a democratic movement.

The United States loves war, the Soviet Union loves peace,

He started shouting something like this.

If I cut wood, trim it and load it into my car, I can earn a living.

That was all he needed.

But, if that were not enough, he was beaten.

Soon, some of them began to act out a hair-raising court case.

Exposing reactionary elements, making self-criticism and mutual criticism,

He started shouting something like this.

If I cut wood, trim it, and load it into my car, I can make a living.

That was all he needed.

But, to top it off, he was beaten.

In those days, something very important happened...

Human beings were worn out.

And then how much time had passed?

The man who brought his former superior officer to trial,

The guy who wrote a letter of thanks to a Soviet leader,

Thanks to having people like that in the same workshop, he was able to return home.

Before returning to Japan, he was going to join a certain party,

"Participate in the revolution in some way."

A big shot forced him to make a promise, but he forgot everything on the evacuation ship.

He was very happy to be able to return home alive.

However, as soon as he arrived at Maizuru, he was arrested.

The people who were with him ran away, leaving him alone.

"Where did you go...? Don't leave me behind..."

His body had already deteriorated, so he couldn't run away.

Apparently, among the items left behind by those who fled were some suspicious books and documents.

Suspicion of redness, etc.

Was he a spy too?

The occupation forces interrogated and beat him, but he didn't understand anything.

He was escorted to Yokosuka,

When he was about to die, he was thrown into a support center in Uraga.

In the end he didn't know what was wrong and what was forgiven.

After a while, the support center was closed and he was expelled.

He wanted to return home, but since he was arrested immediately after landing, he had practically no documents.

Demobilization certificate, repatriation certificate, etc.

There must have been something there, but there was nothing he could question.

He didn't know where the people who took him were.

The man who was shouting on the street corner that he would let them go home somehow resembled the committee member.

So he was too scared to come closer.

Maybe they would betray him again, like they did some time ago.

They might label him a traitor and leave him to his fate.

So he was too scared to come closer.

He survived with what he had left and what they gave him.

In the end he got there.

Sometimes he picked up trash that other people had thrown away,

There were also scary creatures hanging around, so he couldn't get out.

Among them,

He couldn't move his body anymore.

He was hungry.

He wanted some food.

But he was scared.

What could he do?

He didn't know.

He was hungry.

Everything would be fine, he wanted it.

But he was scared.

Next,

He might die.

But he wanted it.

But he was scared.

"Help me... I'm hungry... I'm going to die..."

His voice didn't reach anyone.

That was all.

Too scary. Too scary.

+++++

It had been about an hour since the monster disappeared.

At dusk, the Kings finally arrived at the epicenter of the incident.

The sea breeze smelled of fish and the dock was dilapidated and messy.

"I never thought someone like him could figure it out from just an insider's point of view.  
This is also that sword... oh, wait."

Otono stumbled on the unstable walkway and Kokujoji had to help him. He insisted, uncharacteristically, on showing him around on foot and laughed sheepishly beneath his bandages.

"I'm sorry, my lord."

"What?"

Kokujoji made a short trip back.

It wasn't a suitable place for a pleasant conversation.

These are so-called floating settlements, with boats of all sizes populating the shoreline, from houseboats consisting of flat barges with cabins on top, to small boats with tents and even floating barrack-like structures.

Originally, the railway line only reached as far as the mouth of the Sumida River, passing through Tsukishima and Kachidoki, but after the war it continued to extend southwards,

absorbing overworked workers, homeless people and even thugs. This was part of the image of the time.

They visited near the southern end.

It was an area like a pontoon bridge connecting the area to a small island off the coast.

The vast, desolate area is a collection of dilapidated shacks that could disappear on a stormy night.

It was dusk and the shadows on the boat were deep. The area below the gangway is also submerged in stagnant darkness, filled with the sticky sound of water. The small island in front of them was half submerged in water, surrounded by a field of tall reeds and rushes, and not a single light could be seen from the windows. It is rumored that this place, commonly known as "Ashinaka", is conveniently used as a meeting place for illegal transactions.

Without paying attention to the suspicious terrain, Unno took the lead with two or three boats.

"Is there some guy hiding in a place like this, brother?"

"Yes, he always came from the south and returned to the south, that was what I felt every time I saw "Mushikui". I was sure that he had taken the form of a snake and crawled out."

On the other hand, Otono, who has a small and unreliable gait, calmly replied.

Nazumi, who was watching from behind, summarized the information he had heard so far.

"The truth is that all the shapes we faced were just the outstretched hands or swollen mouths of the "Colorless King", and he himself had been here the whole time... Though it's hard to believe at first."

"Maybe that's so. Most of the energy was being used to explode, but it felt like a small fragment was being sent far away."

Beside him, Iku muttered as she hopped on the rotting bow of the ship like a small bird.

Skilled at grasping the structure of things, she combined her own experiences and sensations, Otono's explanation, and Nazumi's interpretation to get a rough idea of what the "Colorless King" was like.

"He was so afraid of the power he had consumed that he was reluctant to accept it. He was very hungry."

Sadness made her small, hunched back even rounder.

Nazumi added more information.

"In other words, while as a living being I desired it, as a human I rejected it. The power he had consumed while he was the monster "Black Cloak", was probably only enough to sustain his life, the bare minimum."

In the twilight, a brief moment of silence passed.

"The others who were devoured only had their lives nibbled away, so it was a waste of their lives. But then we got serious and punched him, and he was the one who was knocked out first."

Unno spat in disgust.

"Even if he hadn't fought us and had reached the sea... this entire pier would have been destroyed, wouldn't it? I wonder why he was starving and suffering."

Otono was pouring out his kindness as he said that.

"Unlike us, the "Colorless King" wasn't capable of holding a proper conversation. All we knew was what we felt when we first met, and there was no way to know anything more than that. Nor was there any way to know what kind of "King" he was."

Nazumi was sad that he hadn't found a solution.

"What I felt... is a poor boy who can't be with anyone."

Iku was concise and used few words.

"I was very afraid of the bonds that came with power."

Then Kokujoji spoke with a sad look on his face, squeezing the hand that had been denied to him until the very end.

"But human life is based on connections. If he is alive, then I am still..."

The Kings, who have had much to do with death, know that such hope is slim.

Yet even so, no one laughed at Kokujoji's naivety.

Finally, Otono turned his gaze to a ship.

"...It seems we have arrived."

It was a small, rickety vessel, with barracks on top and looking similar to a pleasure boat.

It is surprising how it does not sink with such a shallow draft and being submerged in water.

"Me first."

Unno crossed the board first, keeping a watchful eye around him.

But naturally, there was no movement, neither inside nor outside.

The sound of the crashing waves and the stench of floating garbage were the only things that decorated the hut in a gloomy manner as the twilight deepened. Everyone stood in front of the entrance, which was nothing more than a hanging straw mat.

Kokujoji and Otono had already noticed that by this time.

"....."

"Hey Iku-chan, come here."

Otono, as an adult and as a person, tried to stop the girl, but...

"It's okay, I've gotten used to it."

Iku shook her head. She could tell that too from the stench of rotting garbage.

Unno frowned.

"That's not something a child should say."

"Come on."

Nazumi encouraged without pushing.

And so, the six kings were finally gathered.

He was dead, leaning with his back against the wooden wall at the back.

The face visible beneath the long, unkempt hair was abnormally thin and devoid of flesh. The same could be said for his completely thin, rag-wrapped body. There were no gestures or expressions to suggest any kind of will. There, it was as if life had been cut short, and it was the kind of death that could be seen everywhere, a face of death they were familiar with.

The true identity of the mysterious "Black Cloak", the man who had become a monster, the "Colorless King" who had devoured a nuclear bomb and wreaked havoc, was found starving to death in the back of a completely empty room, without a single morsel of food in sight.

Iku didn't feel bad about the situation.

His appearance was normal for today's society.

"The same as everyone else."

"Ah, it seems we kings can die as humans too."

Considering his own circumstances, Otono even felt grateful for that.

Unno apologized to the man on the other side of the death he missed.

"I'm sorry, we were the only ones having fun."

"What would have been the right answer... or is this even the right answer?"

Nazumi saw death before his eyes as yet another problem piled up and needed to be solved.

After hearing the voices of everyone present, Kokujoji finally stepped forward in front of him.

He searched for the right words to say.

(Will your death not be in vain?)

It was different.

(Is it thanks to you that I was able to get this far?)

It was different.

(What would have happened if we had met before?)

It was different.

Having been drawn into the events caused by the "Slate", having prolonged a painful life and death because of it, having forced death and destruction that were never his intention, he has no intention of attributing it all to fate, or judging it in terms of right and wrong. Because facts are just facts.

The time for falsely asking for forgiveness is long gone.

He decided to be honest about what he was carrying inside.

These are...

"Why?"

All plausible reasoning was suddenly shattered by an overflow of emotion.

"Why didn't you take my hand? Why didn't you try to make everyone happy?"

What came out of his mouth was a selfish attachment to the dream he was trying to create. It was a one-sided denunciation of the other person who had not tried to create together with him the desired mystery, the desired miracle.

The other kings present looked in amazement at the distressed state of the "Golden King" when they saw him for the first time.

"If you had taken my hand, I could have taken you with me!"

The dead "Colorless King" remained silent.

But still, the "Golden King" continued to express his feelings.

"Why didn't you come with me? Why did you die alone?"

It was an angry cry that sounded like a wail.

"I don't even know your name!"

It was a wail that sounded like an angry scream.

The kings, all of them different in terms of where they were born and raised, their personalities, aspirations, ages, and occupations, all wanted to hear the thoughts... not logic, but emotions... that were conveyed in the voice of the man known as Kokujoji Daikaku.

A fierce battle between the supernatural "Kings",

Political turmoil in occupied Japan played out behind the scenes.

The manifestation of "power" that decisively changed the world.

That little feeling gained after all those twists and turns is the true achievement of that battle. Without even realizing it, it was the seed of a Fusang tree that would send out branches and leaves to future generations.

## **EPILOGUE A: FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE**

The US government was not left small in its dismay.

Their optimistic and haughty vision of the future (or rather the President's) was based on the premise that they would carry out the outrageous act of carrying out an unannounced nuclear bombing of the capital of an occupied country when they were not at war.

This goal was not achieved and instead ended up being consumed as part of the battle waged by the "supernatural King". They stumbled from the start and carried out an atrocious act that went beyond common sense, and ended up revealing to their opponents their weaknesses both politically and warlike. The details, by the way, came from naive local agents whom they were trying to eliminate along with them.

In their dire state, they wasted time in heated debates ranging from a full-scale invasion and reoccupation of Japan to a separate peace treaty that would recognize Japan's independence without consulting the Allied powers. What they feared most was that the monsters, having neutralized even their nuclear weapons, would launch a counterattack against the United States. They did everything to make that happen. The sad thing is that he was aware of it.

This panic and dismay reached its peak when the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, whom they had unilaterally assessed as helpless and

fleeing the situation, refused to accept the order from their home country to "gather all troops occupying Japan". If other Allied nations, snooping around for the truth of the situation, discovered that the United States had lost control of their local headquarters, their political reputation would be damaged.

As a result of these circumstances, the US government, paralyzed by fear, lost control of the situation.

From that moment on, they could only hear and see information coming from Japan across the Pacific Ocean.

On the other hand, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, whose local troops were still in the midst of the incident, had no intention of following the panicked home country's reckless actions. The Supreme Commander decided that a hasty military action would be counterproductive in Japan's current situation and that a moderate response would be prudent, considering the future.

Furthermore, and quite understandably, all members of the Headquarters were furious at their country's outrageous act of attempting to exterminate them and their "King" with a nuclear bomb. The Headquarters' true feelings were, "Who would listen to your misguided orders? Be thankful that no one is rebelling."

However, these feelings are still just feelings, and the Headquarters is handling the aftermath with the calmness that comes with being involved in a desperate situation. At the moment, "what steps should be taken in future negotiations" is being discussed. Their opponents are the Japanese government and the "Golden King" who has taken advantage of the chaos to take over the country.

Changes by the Japanese government, or rather "the nation of Japan", were minimal.

The supernatural guards who once stood outside the gate were now inside.

That was all.

That alone dramatically strengthened Japan's position. This is the opposite of the traditional approach of requesting cooperation from people with special abilities. It is possible to accept almost unlimited requests for cooperation from people with special abilities.

However, the requests of "Tokijikuin", a group of supernatural beings, and their leader, the "Golden King" Kokujoji Daikaku, were not particularly harsh or forceful; rather, they were tolerant and reasonable from the perspective of resolving the situation. Using the trust, it gained through that series of actions, "Tokijikuin" gradually increased the level of its interference in both the military and the government, gradually moving toward leadership and even orders.

A black moon appeared, clearing the clouds, several swords floated in the air, and a giant monster destroyed the city... there was a dreamlike succession of strange events occurring

one after another; Knowledge of these events was settled as a tacit understanding, thanks to the double-effect measures of tighter reporting restrictions and the manipulation of rumors on the streets. This general policy of "society's stance towards supernatural powers in general" would remain unchanged in the future (including the unusual term "monster" that would later become popular as an urban legend in the wake of that incident and be established in films).

Although the institutional position of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers remained intact, it lost much of its influence. The unfavorable assessments of his home country were objectively fully justified, so there was little reaction from the people themselves. They moved most of their functions from their headquarters, the Daiichi Life building, which the monster had cut in half on its way, to the American military base in Atsugi, which they had officially leased, and left only the commander-in-chief and a few staff members in Tokyo to act as liaison officers. This small organization is historically known as the "Supreme Commander Headquarters of the Late Period of the Allied Powers".

At the same time, the Supreme Commander of Japan subsequently issued an order to redeploy the Japanese occupation forces (Occupation Forces). The prefectural military administrative offices located throughout Japan were merged and reduced in size to higher-level organizations, the Local Military Administrative Headquarters, and surveillance and control within Japan were suddenly reduced. Although prior to this measure the military occupation action had become almost a mere formality, the yoke of being an occupied country was still greatly eased, both physically and psychologically. This trend of reducing the size of the entire organization through its integration into higher organizations will continue in later stages.

While this process was taking place, the US government was finally able to breathe a sigh of relief upon learning that the supernatural "kings" had no intention of retaliating against the United States. However, the nuclear bombing came at a high political price, both on the part of the Japanese government and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The main achievements of this are the ratification of the system changes being implemented under the leadership of "Tokijikuin", the continuation of various forms of assistance, and the negotiation of favorable terms for the restoration of sovereignty. The US government reluctantly agreed to these demands, on the condition of continued cooperation with the communist forces.

On the other hand, the Japanese government did not demand independence in the name of peace, which was what was most feared. This was because the basic policy of "Tokijikuin" was to avoid as much as possible any action that might cause friction with the Allied powers (excluding the Soviet Union, whose conflict with the Western bloc was deepening by the day). The most desirable scenario would be for Japan to "start anew as an independent nation that is part of the Western bloc, under the supervision of an ally in the United States". Around the same time, talks also began on the creation of a national defense force, a key measure to achieve that goal.

Amidst these political and military trends, there have been almost no instances of the use of force by the "Tokijikuin", which is backed by the Japanese side. As an example, a small number of people with supernatural abilities were deployed to deal with the confusion caused by the withdrawal of local military administrations. The only time they made a big move was under the direct command of the "Golden King".

This occurred during the takeover operation of the "Nanakamado" intelligence agency.

This little-known intelligence agency, provisionally named "Nanakamado" after the place where it was located, was the source of the incident, but in the end it gained nothing and quietly dissolved without making its existence known. The feared backlash had already been thwarted in the fierce battle that had just begun, and no one was willing to put up any resistance now.

The director of the agency and other key members were arrested and deported to the United States. They were not severely punished, but were instead used as reference persons to obtain information related to the "Slate" in their home country, but it is unclear whether they were happy with that. Later documents only include the name of a man named Thomas Colt, who acted as a liaison between the US government and "Tokijikuin" and frequently traveled between the two countries.

The site of the intelligence agency, formerly the International Hospital, was taken over by "Tokijikuin", an official advisory body of the Japanese government, and turned into its largest base within the city. This was not to boast of conquest, but simply that it was more efficient to reuse the intelligence facility in its entirety. After several decades, this facility was demolished due to disrepair and a huge base called "Tower" was built on its site.

Meanwhile, all research equipment related to paranormal beings was moved to a separate facility. It was a political department created at the request of the United States, which wanted to share a minimum amount of information about paranormal abilities, and outwardly it was labeled "Chemotherapy Center". In this joint research project, Japan and the United States will not seek to clarify the core of the issue, but simply to broaden the definition of what we call what we currently have in front of us.

The only exception was the man who became the director of the facility, who was passionate about researching paranormal powers. Although the era in which intelligence agencies were free to conduct experiments on humans had come to an end, this man known as Doctor in Nanakamado did not give up. His name is Mizuchi Kosuke. Over the course of several decades, as this political department transformed itself back into a paranormal research institute, he and many of his students, including his grandson, would secretly and quietly channel the current of darkness.

It was late 1948 and the aftermath of the incident was still brewing.

"Tokijikuin", which was negotiating with the U.S. government, suddenly began to provide a large amount of information related to the "Slate", the disclosure of which had been requested for some time.

The provision was subject to a condition, but the "Tokijikuin" side took the puzzling stance that it was their responsibility to fulfill or not the condition, leaving the U.S. government perplexed.

However, upon examining the information, the U.S. government realized the abominable intentions of "Tokijikuin".

To put it succinctly,

"They probably won't understand it anyway."

That's what it meant.

The Nanakamado intelligence agency was not alone in dismissing the documents it had confiscated from the Third Reich, saying they were "too abstract and they didn't know what they meant". The same was true in the United States.

No matter how much information you have, it's meaningless if you don't understand the fundamental principles.

In accordance with the hateful intentions of "Tokijikuin", the US government was forced to fulfill one of the conditions attached to the agreement. That is, to hand over all relevant information to a certain person.

The person has been under the protection of the United States as a refugee for several years.

A scientist of the former Third Reich and owner of the "Flying Ghost Ship".

His name is Adolf K. Weismann.

A few days later, Weismann received this huge amount of material on an airship, and with such ease that it seemed as if his previous silence had been meaningless, he began to give lectures to government leaders and brilliant minds from various scientific fields who had been summoned to the event. Moreover, the contents would not be made public to anyone. They would not be able to understand it.

At the same time, an airship circling over the Atlantic Ocean changed its course to the west. Government leaders seemed naively pleased that they were planning to join forces with the United States, but within days of the conferences, the military issued a disconcerting warning. The problem was that there was no airport in the dirigible's path.

Eventually, the airship that had entered the United States from the east coast of America continued west and reached the west coast. Government leaders, realizing Weismann's

intentions, were astonished and interrupted his conference with a series of attempts to appease, intimidate, plead, order and request, but to no avail.

When they finally left American airspace, Weismann casually said,

"If you don't like what I say, why don't you try it on our ship like you did in Japan? If we want, we could even use the new thermonuclear bomb we are currently developing."

The president and other top brass standing in front of the communication devices turned pale.

Weismann did not have any specific information about the thermonuclear fusion bomb, commonly known as the "hydrogen bomb". He was simply making a guess that any scientist could understand; it was impossible for the United States not to have researched an advanced form of the atomic bomb. However, this literally explosive statement raised suspicions among government leaders, and the conference participants were subject to harsh questioning about leaking classified information.

Only Werner, his old friend and one of the others, understood that it was just his mischievous humor, the mischievous humor he sometimes displayed, but he also knew that even if he said it, there was no way anyone at the political and military level would understand it. Werner accepted Weismann's "face before the American scientists", although as an exile he found it somewhat bittersweet.

More than that, Werner had something on his mind.

Those were the words he muttered just before cutting off communication with United States.

"Just like before... the dreams I had on the "Slate" are there."

It was a sad voice, as if a memory was pouring out.

To Werner, the "Slate" is nothing more than a power source to produce superhuman weapons, but what on earth could a genius with such intellect be dreaming about? He was completely unable to comprehend the vague idealism of the lectures he attended.

Still, there was something about that message that was captivating.

Werner's thoughts unconsciously drifted toward the western sky.

The airship had departed, far away, across the Pacific Ocean.

A country called Japan.

A country that still bears deep scars of defeat.

And then something happened that Weismann dreamed of.

A ray of pure curiosity flashed in Werner's heart.

## **EPILOGUE B: THE GOLDEN AGE**

Large and small shapes were rapidly ascending the grassy hills, swaying in the wind. The large figure leading the way was the "Golden King", Kokujoji Daikaku, and the small figure following him was his attendant, the young Nangu.

The boy did not understand. In the middle of an important meeting, Kokujoji received an urgent message from somewhere and suddenly ran off. The boy instinctively followed, but all he could do was keep up with his strong legs. Standing beside his master on the hilltop, he let out a deep sigh.

"Daikaku-sama, what the hell is going on?"

"We received a report that a German airship had entered our airspace. We cancelled the takeoff, but it happened just as we expected."

Kokujoji, whose breathing and posture showed no signs of alteration, looked up at the blue sky beyond the hill.

There floated a silver airship.

"It seems to be a friend..."

A strangely shaped object passed by at a low altitude and seemed surprisingly close.

If it weren't for the soft sound of the propellers, the scene would have seemed like an illusion.

Young Nangu could guess something about the master's background.

"You mean when you were in Germany?"

"Adolf K. Weismann... He is also a "King". Despite having a brilliant mind, he was a man who only expressed the dreams of a child."

There was something proud and sad in his words.

"In the end, that man also can't let go of the "Slate". Although he despairs and wants to look away from everything, he can't help but see the result of the dream he started."

Young Nangu suddenly realized something.

Kokujoji was unusually talkative, and the way he frowned and stared showed that he was a real man.

"You see, Adolf K. Weismann? I don't have such optimistic dreams like you. I don't think all powerful people choose to dream happy dreams... but..."

Or the head of the Kokujoji family, or the leader of "Tokijikuin", or the supernatural being the "Golden King"... but it was a young man named Kokujoji Daikaku, making a sincere promise to his friend.

"I will become the ideal king. So just watch."

"....."

It wasn't the loyalty he had felt until now, but something else that made the young Nangu kneel down. Although at first glance it may seem contradictory, only in this way could he help the young man fulfill his promise to risk everything for his friendship with him.

"...Daikaku-sama, please add me to your tribe."

Silently, but forcefully, the boy made his own promise.

"To achieve your goal, you will need companions to serve as your hands and feet."

That is also different from the system established by the "Slate", a closer connection.

That was a new form of bond that Kokujoji also held in his heart as part of a larger framework.

Even so, Kokujoji expressed hesitation in putting all his effort into it.

"But... even if you are from a branch family, you are still the eldest son."

"It is such a trivial matter that it is of no importance."

The young Nangu focused on it and dismissed his doubts.

"If the ties surrounding me are an obstacle, then I will throw away my name and individuality here and now. I will proudly become your pawn."

After a moment of silence, Kokujoji spoke.

"...I have received your determination. Together with me, become the foundation of this country."

As the boy bowed deeply, strength welled up within him. As a phenomenon, it was proof that he had been welcomed as a servant of the "Golden King", but to him it meant something much greater.

Then a sarcastic voice came out that sounded both impressed and judgmental.

"Oh, so young master Nangu has finally decided to serve you as a servant."

With an unwaveringly regular gait, the "Blue King", Somei Nazumi, walked up the slope of the hill. He cast a piercing glance over the brim of his hat toward the airship flying through the blue sky.

"Your arrival strengthened your bonds."

"If you make a decision and move forward, there is no reason for others to say anything."

Somei Chika, who was standing next to him, looked the boy in the eyes and smiled.

The boy was also strangely calm as he expressed his feelings in words.

"If I may be so bold as to say... I'd say I'm more of a family member than a servant."

"That's true."

Kokujoji replied briefly and with a hint of embarrassment.

On the other hand, Nazumi found a completely different level of value in those words.

"It's a good name. In a democratic country, the word "servant" is difficult to use, so we had a hard time deciding on the terms. In the documents for America, we translated it as "Clan"..."

"Hey, shining gold!"

As if to cut off the petulant voice, the "Red King", Unno Yutaka, charged after him.

"Don't call someone and then suddenly run off in a panic."

Okuma Tamataro, who was following him, noticed something flying in the sky.

"So that's the reason you ran off. Because of that airship, of course."

"It's a rather ridiculous way again... Chika-san, I had the rice that was served at the meeting wrapped up for me. There's a nice, warm breeze today, so let's eat here."

Next to her, Todokoro Suwako handed her something wrapped in a furoshiki.

The meeting was their original purpose for that day. At Kokujoji's invitation, the five kings and the core members of their group met for the first time since the incident. Of course, this wasn't a casual or leisurely conversation, but rather more important discussions, but the current situation was a result of the actions of the organizers themselves.

Chika herself preferred a formal style, but now she realized that this would no longer be a formal discussion. However, she couldn't imagine those two casually sitting in the same seat.

"Thank you. But..."

Suwako laughed at such concerns.

"It's okay, it's okay. This useless guy gets excited when he sees flying things."

"Shut up, that can't be true!"

After they laughed at him, Unno made an unpleasant comment, refusing to accept defeat.

However, his gaze was firmly fixed on the airship in the sky.

And finally, in a relaxed voice, the "Gray King", Otono Benji, joined in.

"Well, it's nice to be under the sun from time to time."

Today he was walking especially slowly because he was carrying an accordion.

Miya, dressed in a fresh green dress, was holding his hand.

"I want to bring some food to everyone in the facility..."

The "Green King", Tsunogui Iku, was a few steps ahead of them and called out to them while brandishing the teapot he was carrying.

"Somei Chika, I want souvenirs for everyone."

His movements were so abrupt that his dark green dress fluttered wildly. Both girls were well-dressed, but their messy hair and posture revealed a hint of awkwardness that was still new to them.

Chika found them quite adorable and responded with a smile.

"I understand. I'll ask in the kitchen later."

"Good job!"

"Hooray!"

The two girls jumped around Otono.

"Haha, this thing seems to be having fun, like a bird or a butterfly."

Otono narrowed his eyes and began to improvise on the accordion.

Everyone present, including the two jumping girls, listened intently to the melody that was playing.

Today, perhaps due to the whim of the player, there are no sad tones.

None of the "Kings" present disturbed the sound.

Even if one was missing, even if one was hidden, the six Kings finally appeared together in a single scene, in sacred peace. Kokujoji felt that such a gift was somewhat rare.

"Let's decide quickly before eating."

He hoped that the wind blowing through the grassy hills would carry the sound to the nearby skies.

On that day, January 20, 1949.

Some agreement was reached between the five kings. This is not an authoritarian restriction like that carried out in the name of the organizer, the "Golden King" Kokujoji Daikaku. It was a promise made between comrades who united under the guidance of the "Slate" and together defeated a threat. It continued for subsequent generations with a gradually increasing number of elements added and came to be known as the "Hitofutamaru Agreement" after the date it was concluded.

The First Ruler, the "Silver King", Adolf K. Weismann, continued to travel the skies of Kanto in his airship, the "Himmelreich", contemplating the development beneath him and the ideals and realities his friends were building.

Until a certain incident in the 21st century brought him to Earth, there had been almost no instances of him meeting other Kings, and as a unique existence, he was also known as the King of Heaven and the Lonely King. It is said that he met Kokujoji Daikaku only a few months before death parted them.

The second sovereign, Kokujoji Daikaku, the "Golden King", would shine brightly over the country of Japan and nurture it with great strength for over 70 years. As a ruler, he was selfless and had no interest in personal glory.

His power, combined with the military might of his subordinates, "Tokijikuin", was so great that he was feared as "Imperial Lord" by some government leaders and high-ranking officials; however, he ultimately remained unknown to the general public.

During the same incident that occurred in the 21st century, he passed away, entrusting his future to the "Silver King".

Minamiyagi Taro served as a confidant to the "Golden King", and also contributed greatly to the establishment of the "Rabbits", an elite unit of "Tokijikuin". He himself served on the front lines as one of the unnamed "Rabbits", and continued to accompany his master like a shadow until his death. After his death, he cooperates with the "Silver King", and amidst the events that cause chaos in society, he strives to maintain the order that he himself helped establish.

The third sovereign, the "Red King" Unno Yutaka, has been wandering around the country since the incident, crushing the chaos of supernatural beings scattered throughout the country. These outrageous and exhilarating antics became the subject of a popular film series called "The Extraordinary Traveling Crow" during his lifetime, and played a role in the rise of Japanese films in the 1950s and 1960s.

Moreover, he stopped going to Tokyo and left the management of the Kagiroyi Group, including its disposal, entirely in the hands of Okuma Tamataro. He had never been on an airplane in his life.

As "Hanagumo", Todokoro Suwako spends her life chasing Unno Yutaka, only to fall out with him and return to Tokyo. She also appears in all of the films in "The Extraordinary Traveling Crow" series as the main heroine, with a different character for each installment, making that an important role that can serve as a stepping stone to becoming a popular actress. She was never actually officially married to Unno Yutaka, but there is record of them having a daughter.

The "demon bear" Okuma Tamataro continued to support Kagihirohigumi, a Tokyo group that was abandoned by Unno Yutaka. When the post-war period came to an end, he disbanded the gang, founded Kagirohi Sangyo Co., Ltd., and became a businessman dedicated to contributing to the local community. He has also served as a director and advisor to other companies, president of a regional bank, and president of a credit union. In "The Extraordinary Traveling Crow" film series, he is often portrayed as a former friend and a villainous genius.

The third real power, the "Blue King", Somei Nazumi, serves as the Director of the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Justice and is also devoting his efforts to formulating the Anomalous Phenomena Management Act. In particular, the expansion of the special clause for "cases where acquired powers have been lost" and the social reintegration program have been of great help to people caught in the natural disaster of supernatural powers for generations to come. As one of the most dedicated contributors to Kokujoji Daikaku's national reconstruction efforts, he also kept his mark relatively in the public eye.

He and his wife Chika had a son and two daughters. Naturally, he graduated on the same day as his wife.

Somei Chika served as the deputy head of the Fourth Legal Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Justice until her later years. Her dignified and valiant appearance is said to have greatly contributed to creating the impression of the "Blue Uniforms" cracking down on supernatural crimes. She also worked hard to improve the skills of her staff, establishing several dojos on the office premises and personally instructing them in martial arts. She had a son and two daughters with her husband, Nazumi, and neither of them live a life in which supernatural powers are involved.

The fifth sovereign, "The Green King", Tsunogui Iku, studied hard at an orphanage connected to Kokujoji Daikaku. After graduating from university, she achieved outstanding results in the field of mathematics, becoming the first woman in the post-war period to win multiple international awards in that field.

After being taken under protection, there is no record of her publicly using her supernatural powers as the "Green King", and she also holds the extremely rare title of abdicated "King". As she grew older, she lived in lodgings with both the Okuma family and the Somei family, and whenever something displeased her in one, she would move to the other, repeating the peculiar behavior.

After leaving the orphanage, Shimauro Miya had a variety of work experiences before returning to the facility as its manager. There she worked to expand and improve the facilities and spent her life protecting and caring for the orphans. Neither she nor the other members of the Biribiri gang who have since left the nest have any history of publicly using their supernatural powers.

She maintained a lifelong friendship with Iku Tsunogui.

The sixth sovereign, Otono Benji, also known as the "Gray King", disappeared after the incident. The story of the Kirino City shopping district was only mentioned as an urban legend until the 1970s, after which the rumors died down.

Many kings are said to have had contact with him, but his existence has never been truly proven, and his life or death remains unclear as the time for the appearance of the next "Gray King", Otori Seigo, draws near. Kokujoji Daikaku is said to have confirmed his death immediately afterwards, but there is no clear record of that in the documents.

During the period of rapid economic growth, the small island of Ashinaka in Tokyo Bay was reclaimed and expanded as part of a bayside development project, and has become an artificial island so rich in nature that it is hard to imagine its former state. When "Ashinaka Gakuen" was founded, the shrine, which was the only facility on the island, was moved deep into the artificial forest. This shrine had not received any invitation from anywhere, and the name of the main deity that should have been recorded in the shrine's history was left blank.

The deity enshrined there is an unknown god, whose name and origin are unknown.

Under the mysterious "Slate", numerous kings have appeared and disappeared.

The Seven Thrones have sometimes remained empty for long periods, sometimes been attacked in secret, and sometimes brought about overwhelming disasters... and in the end, their masters have never been reunited. It was only much later that Kokujoji Daikaku realized that they were not beings who had banded together to accomplish something, but were simply the embodiment of the ever-changing nature of events.

However, on that 20th of January 1949,

At that time, when everyone was trying to rebuild things on the ruins of the burned fields,

It was a golden age for them, when they could dream of a bright future.