



ゲームー^①たちは布石^{しんわ}を継いでいくそうです

NO GAME NO LIFE 8

Table of Contents

Prologue

Chapter One — Anti-war tactics

Chapter Two — Unfair victory (Handover)

Chapter Three — Incorrect answer

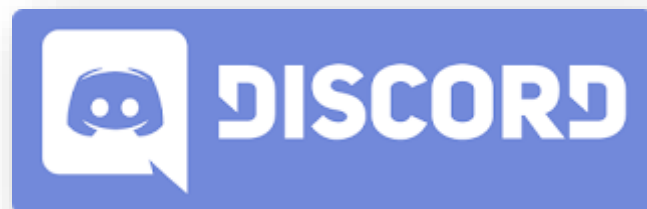
Chapter Four — Correct answer (Who are you?)

Ideal ending

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……また、失敗するの？

……ああ、失敗するかもな。

『だがあんたと同じ失敗だけはしねえ』



「……一度だけ……」

——後生でございますマスター

私に勝たせて頂けませんか……

……一度だけ……今回だけ、
どうか……どうか——っ」



——カツポーンと。

巫社大浴場の桶の声、らくえん 原点回歸の響きあり。

「依り代、依り代
「仮定」どうやら現在
——楽しいようじゃ」
『……ほおけ』



Prologue

Continue

If you had to die for the sake of the world, what would you really do?

There was once a girl who was urged to make such a choice. To save the dying world, the girl had to die. Suffering, in conflict and with tears flowing, she chose, and announced to god. “I want to save the world; the place where these important people live, and the person I love”. With this tragic resolution in her chest, lips trembling and unsteady steps she walked in front of god. She chose her own death, however.

“I will die instead of her”

A man held her back and walked in front of god. He was one of the important people she chose to save even in exchange for her own life. She loved him, and he loved her. To her beloved god asked:

“Are you not scared of dying?”

But he answered with a smile, as long as he could die for his beloved...

“There is something I fear more than death”

And thus, basking in the acclamations of thunder, the man died. And that world was saved. Shedding a single tear, the girl that was left behind said:

“Let’s live his share too in the world he saved”

Using such a worn-out line the story ended as if it were a good one. However, two siblings looked at this ending with an unamused gaze. While looking at the credits rolling in the game’s screen they thought.

‘Something I fear more than death’ huh, I see. But why did no one say:

“Aren’t you forcing that thing that is scarier than death upon your beloved?” to the man who said that and died instead of the girl?

I see he is one of those “self-sacrificing” types. It is a template of someone who sounds good no matter what and receives cheap tears using beautiful words.

A black-eyed black-haired boy with a distorted smile that shows his distorted personality and a red-eyed white-haired girl, making a frown that showed her bad mood, thought together: Just with the death of one protagonist it looks like the world can be saved.

Hundreds of millions of sacrifices can be exchanged for just one, and the cute girl didn’t die either. It is actually wonderful. An overwhelming cost-benefit ratio. A very good enterprise! Well then, how would the girl that was left behind think about that?

The man concluded by himself that it is something scarier than death, that means that he pushed the terror of living by sacrificing her beloved to the girl. ... didn’t that man run away by dying? What kind of feelings would the girl that bet her own life to save that man have? The siblings that thought that looked at each other and got the same impression. That coward. I see “self-sacrifice” is only a manner of speech.

It is just egoism, putting it in another way no one will complain. That is because the one that she should complain to... no, the one that she must complain to isn’t around anymore. The siblings though that “Which one should die?” was not the choice they were supposed to make.

“Die together”

Or

“Live together”

These were the only two options they were supposed to have. It was just egoism after all. If you are going to devote yourself to something, you should do it thoroughly and persist till the end. And if by choosing to “Live together” the world is destroyed, then... It is fine to let such a world be destroyed.

You think that this is irresponsible, right? However, let’s refute that. To do that let’s ask ourselves, who or what is responsible? With their love and courage, they were able to prolong the life of the world that was originally going to be destroyed... all right. However, you shouldn’t take for granted the kindness of strangers, they are just human after all.

To begin with if we are talking about responsibility, isn’t it the responsibility of the one that made that world?!

Then, how about thinking about it like this: Originally, the world was supposed to be destroyed, therefore, wasn’t it actually according to plan if it ended?! All along the world was mysteriously going to end one day, is it really inconvenient if it ends now?! Therefore, isn’t it okay if they laugh together and continue running towards the ends of the earth until their last moment? Those that would complain and say that is egoism... I’m sorry but I reject them. That is because both those that want to complain, and those that are complaining will disappear together with the world!

“But even with that...” The black-haired boy had this thought while laying down his younger sister that had fallen asleep. If I had to die for the sake of the world, what would I really do? Myself, or my younger sister, which one of us would die? I have to say that is out of the question. Die together? That is preferable, but I would like to decline. Then, live together?

That is the most desirable option, right? However, even if it is that is just temporarily running away while saying “The world is just going to be destroyed anyways for an unknown reason, stupid!”

Surely... she wouldn't laugh, right? He thought while stroking his little sister's hair. Saving the two of them together with the whole world is what they are supposed to do. Then, without a single sacrifice obtain everything... The method for that would be... The young boy gazed at his sister's hair, and made a bitter smile filled with self-deprecating feelings. There may be no such thing in this world, he thought.

■■■

It has been 38 days since the game started. The spiral land floating in the sky... that is the board for the game of [sugoroku](#) constructed by the Old Deus. Since the beginning it was an existence caused by aberrant principles, however right now. On top of square number 296... A phenomenon that made those principles transcend even more was happening.

“Ufu, ufufu～ So～ra～?”

The voices of 3 people resounded inside a cave dimly lit by candles.

“Of course, this is also according to plan～right? ～Please say it is♪”

“Hm, if that is what you want I'll say it... As if I'd be so stupid that I'd put together such a plan!!”

“Nii... This is... not the turn system... and instructions are not being given...”

With two dice, she became 3.6 years old. The redhaired little girl, Steph's dry laugh.

With one dice each, they became 1.8 and 1.1 years old. The babylike Sora and Shiro's screams.

And the shocks and resounding sounds that seemed to announce the collapse of the world, continued.

"Plus, it is an [RTS](#) ! Are you out of your mind? Are you an idiooooot?!!"


Screaming, he closed his eyes and thought: What kind of joke is this?

"... Calm down. First, we have to understand the situation, or nothing will begin...!"

With thoughts that seemed like they would freeze if he lost focus, Sora squeezes out some words. Jibril's "challenge", he reflected on that, it was, "With more than two persons, immediately agree to swear by the pledges to a game presented by someone other than the targets of this challenge, and win it". We were made to swear by the pledges to that, and to begin this. A game modeled after the Great War from the past.

First, we need to grasp the situation we are in, the rules that were laid down. Sora looks at his surroundings. They were surrounded by naked bedrock, it was a dark and narrow space. A single "map" was spread out on a desk that was placed right in the center. But it was an old-looking, beaten up "map" with faded colors. It was printed on white paper.... Correction, it was painted over in black. The essential topographical information was barely depicted. Instead of that, on top of the black-painted, parchment-like map there was a UI that looked like it came straight out of a computer game. Moment by moment it displayed information about the game.

"1st of July 184 B.T. 03:45"

Probably that is the notation for the age before the pledges came into effect, Before Testament. "Units" were shown with a triangular shape, "Cities" with a  shape, etc.... Using that information, he

understood that the small cave where they were located probably was the “Capital” shown in the center of the map. Apart from the area around the capital and the “Scouts” that were doing reconnaissance, it seemed that there was no other method to display the terrain on the map. Also, on the side of the desk there was a lot of paper and a pen. Somewhere a little further away, there was a beaten-up wooden box, a “mailbox”. It looks like you can make the “units” move by writing “Commands” in these papers and mailing them.

Looking worried about the incessant attacks coming from outside, Steph stood up and said:

“I-I’ll go look outside for a bit OK!?”

“W-Wait! Let’s try to send a unit that has weapons, let’s send out scouts with added weapons.” Sora said, and posted a “command”.

Each second we perceive is equivalent to eight hours of the time displayed on the “Map”. If this cave is the “Capital”, the player space, then, the outside... it is suspicious that it might be possible to go inside the game, however, if you went out who knows what you could come across. He tried touching the unit displayed on the “Map” with his finger, and the unit’s information was displayed.

Age, gender, etc. Information similar to combat ability is not present, that is extremely unkind. In any case, using the displayed “ID” to identify the unit, he posted the order. As soon as he did, the axe holding unit took off, if 1 second is eight hours, then it took off at 28800 times the normal speed. It passed through the exit at a speed you can’t even see and stood on the field.

“...Nii, if you give the scouts weapons... their mobility, will fall... is it not a waste...?”

“HAHAHA my sister, that is your brother’s wisdom!” In response to what his sister pointed out, Sora simply shook his head and said “Good grief”

“It’s possible we might encounter the other races, right? If you don’t increase their survival time, usually you can’t attain informa...”

But immediately after that. The weather changes, a wind that can be felt even inside the cave blows with a wheezing sound, and in that moment, the unit that exited the cave a few seconds ago was annihilated from the map as if it was melting snow. “.... What was that?” he touches the map on top of the desk and confirms the display. “Spirit corpse wind” Is written.

“It’s a good thing you didn’t go out, huh”

Sora said to the frozen and pale Steph. Wait a second.

“Heeeey!? What is up with this filled that has lava squares and that blue instant death!?”

The screaming Sora comes to a conclusion. No, something like a conclusion: Jibril, who talked to us with dead eyes as if she didn’t know us announced it from the beginning. He just didn’t want to recognize that truth, but now he had to accept it. That seriously, this is not a joke.

Gritting his teeth, he touched one of the “Units” on top of the “Map” and pinched out. As soon as he did the unit’s field of view was projected into something like a screen that appeared midair inside the cave. The unit’s field of view, namely the scene outside the cave. Towards that disastrous spectacle, while everyone gasped Sora put on a forced smile and said with a trembling voice:

“... Haha, this is the “Great War”? oi oi, stop saying things that are mostly lies.”

That is absolutely not something like a “war”. No matter what kind of post-apocalyptic fiction it may be, it’s paradise compared to this. If Sora and the others had to choose a word from their vocabulary to describe that, only one would be appropriate, it was “Hell”.

... ‘I see’, he thought. This is a game that reproduced the “Great war” from the past. It seems this is a so-called strategy simulation game. As soon as we accepted Jibril’s “Challenge” a whole world was born on top of square number 296. Did this space expand infinitely? Or did it shrink? I don’t know the exact theory behind this, but it looks like the whole planet was reproduced inside a 10X10 kilometer square.

That scene was... a red sky covered in ash and ravaged by the fires of war that were wrapped around the whole planet. Even now, from the ruined sky that looked as if it was going to fall, the blue “Spirit corpses” were endlessly raining.

The wind that killed that human unit with a single hit is a mixture of “Spirit corpses”, dust and ash. It changes into “Black ash” that is like snow that doesn’t melt, and covers the ground as far as he can see.

Furthermore, violent and devastating attacks and lights were still hitting this wilderness that was already like a cemetery. That was what was making those big sounds and shaking the cave incessantly since before. In other words that light was the war between the 16 races, the exceed, before the pledges forbid violence. Each time the lights and sounds flash the sea and the land change like a kaleidoscope...

This infinite natural disaster is the “Great War”? What a joke. “Just how did Imanity survive this inferno...!!”

He tries screaming that, but he understands... Jibril has no reason to lie. Therefore, this is the “Great War” the era that humanity survived

in the past. Additionally, according to Jibril's predictions history says that "Humanity could only end".

"There is no way, right?! A combat unit evaporated just by breathing the air!? Then..."

As if to match Sora's screams, the sky flashed once again. The landscape on the map that barely projected anything changed. Was the "scout" affected? The image that was being projected stopped and blacked out. "This is not a strategy game right!? I can't strategize and I can't fight shit, can I?!" He tries screaming that, but he understands.... That that is only natural.

I do not know exactly how strong the 16 races (those unreasonable bastards) are when they are not bound by the pledges. However, Jibril was able to split the ocean with 5% of her power and withstood a direct hit from a hydrogen bomb without any injuries. Even if a few hundred million humans swarm her there is no way humanity could inflict even a grazing wound, that is a self-evident truth.

"...Nii e-even so... if we gather a death stack...(TL note: a death stack is an RTS strategy in which you put a ridiculous amount of units in a single space, they can basically kill anything) with a one-time attack... we might be able to pull th..."

"Against the guys that can teleport!? Against the guys capable of attacks on the scale of altering the earth's crust?!"

As another attack flew by, Sora pointed at the "Map"

"The landscape changed again! We can pull through with a one-time attack? A stray bullet will annihilate us together with the capital!!" Sora thinks. According to Jibril this is "Shuvi".

I see, all right. Then let's try to think about this "Shuvi". Our own civilization is bound by the "Ancient", while the other races are modern and have hyper-efficient units that can laugh scornfully at us. They can use nuclear attacks to destroy facilities, and change the

landscape with no penalties. It might be possible to fire them continuously. Difficulty level MAX, a tribe of goblins, but our tribe has no arms or legs. It is impossible to build bonus granting things like wonders. Actually, we can't even build common facilities.

Anyways, all civilizations started "already at war". If we establish a city badly, and it borders on another race's territory, a death stack will rush us. Fighting is suicide, on top of that, the victory condition is: "The fall of the enemy capital" only. If our capital ever gets pinpointed it is almost certainly an instant loss, the opponent is a Flugel (Official cheats) after all. On top of all that, they have to play a "blind run". ...How is that? With just that, it is already a difficulty level that has never been, nor will ever be seen. Apart from some masochistic gamers, it is a product that would surely cause angry complains towards the makers.

But even those are not a big problem. The absolute worst rule, the finishing blow is below:

"If you lose you commit suicide"

Yes, even if you overcome this amazingly impossible game, and brilliantly acquire victory, your prize will be "Jibril's death" ... and that's it. That we will receive some dice as a bonus... what about that? Thus, Sora finished carefully analyzing the circumstances of this game's aberrant difficulty, and asked himself: "Can we win?" He answered himself: "There is no way we can win"

"It is just a game to see which one of us dies! There is no way to win!!"

Sora explained what would happen after they won the game. Towards the screaming Sora, who had an angry face like never before Steph timidly said: "I-In that case! I-Isn't it fine if we renounce our rights?!" That's right, she proposed the rule that shouldn't be mentioned. "E-Even if I lose all my dice I will not die,

right!? You also said that as long as someone reaches the goal it would be fine right!! In that case if we let Jibril reach the goal...”

That’s right, the possibility of renouncing your rights, that rule. Transferring all your dice to someone as well as revealing the method to win against the Old Deus from Sora’s side. Only in that case no lives would be taken. Sora answered Steph’s proposition with a simple “Ah, that’s right” in his mind. Even if they lose all their dice, their Mass Existence Time, they would just lose their body and become spirits. Therefore, he couldn’t deny that asking Jibril to win would be okay. Plus, it’s true that if it’s Jibril she would probably be able to reach the goal. However.

“She is going to make Blank accept defeat by threatening us by using her own life as a shield?...”

“...You’re joking... are you asleep?... or is it... a bad joke...”

Plus, even with that, one person will die, even in the best-case scenario. Sora took a seat, put his hands together and looked down. In that kind of atmosphere, Shiro, and even Steph couldn’t say anything. But, as if to wait for Sora’s answer, they stood breathing silently..., and after a few seconds, no maybe it was a few minutes? After what might have even felt like a few hours he finished his long thinking, and raised his head.

Because of the malice that clung to him and to his distorted and fierce smile, Steph had to swallow a scream.

“It is a simple thing... Jibril is saying: ‘If you want to win you have to kill me’”

Sora announced, or thought, whatever the case it looked like it was not a joke. It seems that Jibril is demanding we do this for real, without any lies or bluffs. Also,

“She’s underestimating us... she’s basically saying, ‘if you don’t think you can win go ahead and renounce your rights’”

She politely went out of her way to prepare such an insurance just for us.

“Isn’t she first class... Shiro, let’s do it” Sora said.

With murky black eyes he slowly stood up, while Shiro looked for his true intentions.

“Let’s go meet her lowly expectations”

“..... Yes, I understand.....”

Did she understand the intention hidden in there? She gave a solemn, and resolute nod.

“How did humanity survive the Great War? Was it?”

Muttering, Sora and Shiro sat on the gathered chairs, faced the map, and grasped the pen.

“As she wishes, let’s show her plenty...”

“A-Are you really doing it? That is to say, are you really going to win?!” Steph said.

She was the only one concerned about Jibr.... No. Originally, she asked if there was any chance to win. To that, Sora and Shiro answer with dark smiles.

“It will be an easy win. I can win this kind of Null game even with my eyes closed.”

“...suuuper easy...”

I don’t know what intentions Jibril had when she made this game. However, whatever they were, at least we know she thinks she has to win against us. She’s saying that if that cannot be granted, then she will kill herself. Like the hand he was supposed to take. Originally there was just one. That’s right, Sora laughs darkly...

■■■

At the same time, on square number 308. A very young beast was standing stock still in front of an image that was being projected into empty space. With two dice remaining, and a bit shorter than usual was a girl with fennec ears.

“Wh-y... why the hell is everyone doing this desu!” Hatsuse Izuna howled at what the screen was showing.

Seated on an ink line that was floating through space, cold and inorganic, but giving off an overwhelming presence, was the Old Deus. She didn’t know whether she wanted to ask her something or to blame her. From the beginning this was a game of sudoroku against an Old Deus, wasn’t it? She thinks, as silence returns. And yet,

“Why did it become a situation where we have to let someone die desu?!”

But the Old Deus didn’t answer to her blaming. No, there was no need to answer. What she was projecting was the answer. What the Old Deus was projecting was the natural conclusion. The game where the loser becomes a sacrifice between Sora’s team and Jibril. Kurami and Fiel, who took advantage of the chaos to try and steal the Eastern Federation. And the one who used even them so he could use the Warbeast’s sacrifices as foothold to force other sacrifices, Plum.

Whether inside or outside the game, they were in situations where nothing would end until someone became a sacrifice. The one who put that together wasn’t the Old Deus that Izuna was blaming. It is a situation they themselves created. She comes to this conclusion in silence.

“A strange question. Thou. An accomplice. A co-conspirator. Why dost thou ask?”

She looked like she didn't blame her. What's more, she showed no disappointment, nor despair nor desire.

“The concerned Old Deus hath the obligation to fulfill all of the winner's demands.” God speaks dispassionately, as if she doesn't know the meaning of losing hope.

“Planning to usurp an Old Deus' rights is a foolish desire. It is inevitable that thou cometh to this conclusion.”

“.....”

We planned to steal everything from God. We were the ones who started everything. Feeling like it is implied to be their own fault, Izuna takes a breath... In that case, even if we reach this sudoroku's goal, what will this Old Deus do? Izuna thought.

The Old Deus looks at Izuna as if she didn't have absolutely any interest in her since the beginning, with eyes so lifeless that you can't even feel coldness in them. No matter who, if they desire profit, this is what happens. In order to obtain something, you have to steal from someone else, that is a simple truth. Towards her eyes that seemed to announce that, Izuna just lowers her head without saying anything...



■■■

At the same time, outside the game.

Eastern Federation's capital. Somewhere in Kannagiri Island.

Peeking from the window of a certain hotel, there was someone looking up at the spiral land that obstructed the moonlight, at the game of sudoroku created by the Old Deus.

Whether inside or outside the game, people are upset and struggling with confusion, impatience, and fear according to some stratagem. In a different place.

"Nnn I don't really understand, but the Elf fleet came ~. It's very boring, though ~"

She announced with an exhausted tone and a voice filled with nervousness. That shadow pulled a single piece of paper from a pile of documents, and nodded. It looks like the circumstances really came together, she thinks confidently. It has been 38 days since the game against the Old Deus began. It became a situation where everyone betrayed, deceived, stole and killed each other. It became like that simply because everyone desires profit.

In order to acquire something, there is no other choice but to steal it from someone else, that is a simple truth. If you think about it normally that's what happens, it is as obvious as saying that if you trip you will fall.

It is okay to not think normally. She announces that, the intentions of those who entrusted her with that paper.

The current situation was just as it was written there, not a single word or sentence differed. Peacefully, and feeling a little cold, the shadow left the inn carrying a heavy backpack.

"Hey! Inside the back pack again? Who do you think I am? Heey!!"

While the contents of the very heavy backpack filled with water assert themselves, she reflects upon the question that those that entrusted her with that paper asked themselves.

‘If you had to die for the sake of the world, what would you really do?’

“If I could save the world with that, there is no choice but to die”

They answered themselves, however, they gave a bitter smile.

“In that case, if the world is not saved I would die in vain” And they continued.

“It is only a slight difference if the number of sacrifices is one, two, one thousand, or one hundred million.”

If, in order to avoid a large number of sacrifices you allow a small number of sacrifices, then one day, for sure the number of sacrifices will overcome the number of saved people. Whether it is with self-sacrifice or the lowest possible sacrifices, you are not saving the world. You are just prolonging its life. And the world continues on, without changing. Looking for the next sacrifice one after the other. Without changing anything until the day the world is finally destroyed.

If you prattle on about something high and mighty like saving the world, show me that you can do it by refusing to make even a single sacrifice. They said it, that this world is just a game. If you recognize even a single sacrifice, it will continue without end. Such a foolish “Established tactic” is neither inevitable nor absolute in this world. That’s why, we will put an end to it right here.

Therefore, the shadow that was entrusted with proof of that, outside of everyone’s memories, was burdened with a heavy, heavy move

“Hey! Can’t you carry me more politely!? Someone other than Darling is treating me in such a crude manner, does that mean you

have the courage to make an enemy out of the seas?! Hey, are you listening to me? Hey!?”

... Also physically heavy that trump card was raising complaints from across the backpack. Continuing to Sankaitandaifu, unsteadily, step by step, she started to climb the endlessly long, steep road.

Chapter One — Anti-war tactics

“The great war”. A dark age when the gods and their creations waged war for the throne of the One True God.

As if they were laughing at the planet that was being destroyed, and the fleeting lives of those in it—

As if it wasn't enough to tear the heavens and earth apart, they continued to trample the world to exhaustion.

The ones who are challenging a game imitating that, Sora and Shiro, are writing “Commands” fiercely.

To live... just for that.

However, the hand that was writing the letters required to execute the exploit that'd solve the most difficult part stopped suddenly,

“...!? Shiro, I just thought of something good!!”

Sora excitedly explains his idea:

“If we wrote an order to “ [Netorare](#) the wife next door”, wouldn't that be interesting!?” He said as there was another flash of light.... And another mountain vanished from the “Map”.

That was where their “Capital” was located a few seconds ago.

If they hadn't read the previous attack patterns and ordered a “Settler” to move the capital, that light of destruction would have surely annihilated them together with that mountain. But, seemingly without worry, Shiro gives a thumbs up and answers:

“...Nii, good job.... but, that's not... a specific instruction...”

“Aaah～ What do I have to do to be able to Netorare the wife next door?!”

Forget about stealing someone's wife, he's someone who has never had a girlfriend outside of his own imagination.

While Sora agonizes over a problem that seems to be much more difficult than “to live”...

“I’ve been wondering what you’ve been doing since before.... How can you be so carefree right now?!”

Steph, who was mailing the “Commands” that the other two were writing into the “Mailbox”, screamed.

“I-If you’d been a bit slower, r-right now we would be d-dead... can’t you do this seriously!?”

If they had been a bit slower the capital would have fallen, Steph realized that and became pale,

—‘Well, it’s fine isn’t it?’ Sora replied in his mind.

In a typical RTS, in order to “Take” the enemy capital, first, it’s “Fall” has to be recognized.

Not to mention, thinking about Jibril’s intentions, she does not intend them to die just for taking an attack.

That’s because in this space the players are disconnected from the outside world.

Anyhow, right now Sora and Shiro are in the bodies of children that are less than 2 years old. Sora is 1.8 years old. Shiro is 1.1 years old. Even Steph is just 3.6 years old. The desk is so high that they have to stand on the chair in order to be able to write “Commands”.

In fact, Steph, the oldest one, has to desperately stand on her tiptoes just to reach the “Mailbox”. With those bodies and in the middle of that hell... *If it wasn’t disconnected they would be already dead.*

Well, if every city was destroyed, then all of humanity (their units) would be destroyed as well, so it would be checkmate anyway. In any case,

“Hmmm. Hey, what do you think I should do to get the wife next door to fall in love with me?” He nonchalantly asked Steph.

“Ara～ You’re asking me? Let’s see, if I may speak from experience, then... How about *setting her up with a dirty trick to force her to fall in love with you?*”

“Wha...?!”

Sora became speechless and said that with an exaggerated smile, then continued,

“You’re really on the ball, huh!? That’s right, I just have to deceive her and set her up!!”

“I’m being 100% sarcastic! Couldn’t you notice that at least a little!?”

To Sora’s heartfelt compliment, Steph answers with a heartfelt request.

And, towards Sora, who wrote two more “Commands” with zero hesitation, Steph dejectedly continues:

“Do you feel like using the head that thought of such a vicious and horrible thing so quickly seriously?”

“... Seriously, huh? For *what?*”

“Wh-what...?”

Without worrying about Steph, who continued to post “Commands” confusedly, Sora continues with a serious face.

“Let’s see... How about I use my head seriously for “Diplomacy”?”

Diplomacy. Establishing a relationship of trust by means of a contract.

They don’t have many negotiation tools, but it is certainly not impossible.

Knowledge from another world, a Player’s information, food, etc.

Using those as bargaining chips, they might be able to get the other powers to promise some sort of cooperation, or maybe even a trade agreement.

“...If you believe they can *keep* that kind of agreement even after seeing all *that*, should we try it?”

That ... In other words, the “Scout’s” field of view that is being projected on the empty space above them... The spectacle outside.

The storm of violence breaking apart heaven and earth... After witnessing such a tragedy Steph can’t help but lose confidence too.

In a world where you can just take by killing, things like contracts have no meaning.

“Weeell, in that case how about seriously using my head to do “Battle”?

Battle. Using military power to secure existing territory.

The chances of winning are certainly not very high, but it is certainly not impossible either.

Needless to say, if they confront them directly they will certainly lose, however... the Warbeasts, Elves, Seirens, and Dhampir.

Sora and Shiro have more information about the 16 races than them, to a certain degree.

Based on that, they could use their units to create a strategic surprise encirclement.

Stealing the enemy’s strategic advantage by fighting in a limited area, and capitalizing on an advantageous position... well, if they do that they do have a chance of winning.

It would be possible to crush one or two enemy units, and if they do it really well...

“We might even be able to fatally wound one race... *but then what ?* What do you think will happen after that?”

That race will see them as enemies and seek vengeance, it would only increase the danger uselessly.

In short, both “Diplomacy” and “Combat” are useless, no, worse than useless.

If they move poorly they could attract unwanted attention and their “Capital” could be pinpointed...

“A single misstep and we would be destroyed. The end. And I mean that literally.”

Sora makes a bitter smile, in the first place,

“Thinking about it normally, we would be *checkmated from the very beginning*, right?”

Just how did Imanity actually manage to survive this “Great War”?

Sora, of course, has no way of knowing the answer to that question, but,

“There are not many ways humanity can survive in this environment”

And, among those few options, only one stands out as the most realistic.

“To thoroughly run away and hide... only that”

They have to behave like something that they won’t look out for, something that won’t be recognized... something that can’t even be noticed.

Like small animals, like insects, like leaves on a tree, they have to erase their presence.

To keep running away no matter how far, that is the most plausible move... however.

“But even that... As long as Jibril knows about us that is impossible too, isn’t it?”

That’s right, if they are looking out for them it’s checkmate, but from the very beginning they were already looking out for them.

In such a situation they can’t even afford to move their units poorly.

If their units are discovered by Jibril, and their “Capital” is pinpointed, that would be the end.

“.....”

Steph became pale and gasped, and Sora nodded at her with a bitter smile.

Do what seriously?

In this situation... *Nothing can be done.*

The best they can manage is to send scouts out in order to be able predict the enemy’s conduct. Then, move the capital to avoid being hit by stray bullets.

After that, secure food and send “Letters” to Jibril to instigate her.

“We can’t fight! If we go outside, our units just get expended and its Game Over!! We can’t even use diplomacy, are you trying to use our pride as gamers to provoke us into trying hard to enjoy this shitty game!?”

“I think you’re wrong about the trying hard part, also it is not your pride you’re betting, but your life, right?!”

It was a splendid scream, but Sora is already very aware of that.

That’s exactly why they are performing an experiment.

Yes, for example could they be able to...

“... Nii... it seems.... We were able to... Netorare?”

Sora smiles at Shiro’s voice, jumps on top of the desk and enlarges the screen.

In there, two units were displayed in a position that indicated the experiment’s success, however.

“Uwaaaah... they actually did it... women are scary~”

“...Hey... nii, women are... scary, huh?”

“Don’t you feel even a little bad about pulling away from them because of something you forced them to do?!”

The wife next door and her lover are having dates while hiding from the husband.

Steph screams at Sora, who pulled away, and at Shiro, who for some reason started to brainwash people.

However,

“Forced them!? I did not! Did you forget the contents of my “Commands”!?”

The two commands that Sora made Steph post, what he wrote there was:

First. To “The wife next door” (Unit designation c1fe436)

From today onwards and for 20 days, at 2200 hours, while feeling a ravenous hunger

Move to coordinates (765, 9875) (the food storehouse), and secretly misappropriate some food.

Second. To “The netoraring lover” (Unit designation b3fc412)

In fifteen days, at 2201 hours, move to coordinates (765,9875) (the food storehouse) and encounter “the neighbor’s wife” (Unit c1fe436)

As the price for ignoring her misappropriations, seek a physical relationship with her.

Sora raises his voice in an accusatory tone, in short:

“The one who ordered her to steal was me! The one who compelled him to take advantage of that for a one-time relationship was also me!”

Certainly, “The neighbor’s wife” unit was *forced* to steal by Sora.

Certainly, “The netoraring lover” unit was also forced to take advantage of that and blackmail her.

“However! But! Shikaaaashi!! [\[1\]](#) ”

Suddenly, Sora points at what the map is projecting:

At the two who continued to rendezvous even after the set time period passed.

“That they are continuing that relationship is their own judgement!”

That’s right, “the neighbor’s wife” was never ordered to fall in love with “The netoraring lover”.

What’s more “The netoraring lover” also wasn’t instructed to seek a physical relationship more than once.

Sora also questions things from the very beginning, that is

““The neighbor’s wife” wasn’t instructed to fall for “The netoraring lover’s” blackmail ri-!!”

Thus, it is proven that the one who gave them an opportunity was Sora, however, their infidelity is clearly their own responsibility, that is an obvious thing!!

“.....no I feel like there is something wrong with that reasoning-”

“-ght? As expected, was it because of the sense of immorality!? Does it really feel that good to betray your husband!?”

“No, listen! Forcing someone to cheat, then getting angry when they do is wrong as expected!?”

But, well, ignoring Steph who is causing a ruckus.

Sora and Shiro nodded at each other with satisfied smiles because of this experiment’s success.

It seems like this game is fuzzier than they expected.

To cheat? To continue? The units made their own judgement about that, in that case...

“Well, whatever, let’s keep going! There is also a time limit, so hurry up and mail these!”

Sora stops his overly dramatic lamentations, and hands over 2 more “Commands” that he had written beforehand.

Steph hurriedly mailed them, and, while the two of them were closely watching the map, she asked them with suspicious eyes:

“Your viciousness is completely heartless, huh? How about making a legitimate experiment to confirm whether it’s possible to conduct “Diplomacy” or “Foreign Trade”?”

Specifically, ...

“These are the instructions: To “The neighbor’s wife”, tell your husband that you’re being blackmailed for hush money because of your robberies. “The netoraring lover”, who accepted the money, flees to The Third City”

“That is not diplomacy, that is extortion, right!?”

In response to Steph, who screamed that, Sora simply thinks: 'Ah, that's right'.

In summary, this is nothing more than: 'I stole your jewels (woman), if you want them back, give me some money'

'If this isn't extortion, then what is it?' If someone asked Sora that, he would answer that it is, of course, extortion.

That's why...

"The netoraring lover" successfully cheated "The husband next door" out of the hush money, and then he started to move to The Third City.

When Sora sees that, his smile deepens and he answers:

"If you unwrap diplomacy, then it is just a collection of extortions on the inside, right?"

"...Nii, you're... making a face like... you're thinking of something sleazy again... so cool..."

Shiro's respectful gaze, and Steph's disgusted gaze, fell upon Sora.

This wasn't a situation where Sora could mind that, so he just deepened his smile.

It is possible to deceive even unspecified units.

In that case, it should be possible to use "Diplomacy", even on the other races.

Sora made that breakthrough, but Steph just looks at him with suspicious eyes and whispers:

"A-a devil's deed... Ah, but with this, the married couple next door will have peace again."

But, just as she was saying that.

"...? ...Nii, an unemployed person... is coming out..."

Listening to Shiro's mutterings, Sora touches the "Map" and enlarges the image.

When he does... For some reason "The husband next door" unit is wandering the streets, penniless.

"...Sora? Are "The wife next door" and "The netoraring lover" together by any chance?"

Right.

Sora thoughtfully turns towards the two units that moved to The Third City.

He certainly did not specifically write the contents of the hush money.

He also could not confirm how much they took from "The husband next door", who is outside the instructions.

If he had to guess, they...

"... She cheated the husband out of all his assets. Then she ran away together with the lover...?"

.....

"All right! In any case, I just saw a breakthrough, Shiro!"

"...Yes... With this... we can make... various moves..."

"You smoothly refuse to look at the misfortune we have caused huh?"

Steph had no idea what she was talking about, so Sora and Shiro decided to ignore her, and started to write "Commands" fiercely.

As if confirming something, Steph mutters a few words:

"... shouldn't we just renounce our rights after all?"

"... eh?... why?"

“This is finally getting fun, so we might get busy?”

Sora and Shiro answer with a smile, and hurriedly start to act.

■■■

Meanwhile...

There was a hall wrapped in silence.

It was the same as the cave where Sora and the others were, a player's space.

It was the floating city's, Avant Heim's, main office room. Right in the middle, as expected, there was a worn out “Mailbox”.

Also, in front of a desk where a “Map” was spread, there was Jibril.

Jibril had 10 dice floating around her chest, but she wasn't doing anything.

She was just covering her face and waiting. No, she was praying.

Praying that Sora and Shiro, her masters, would renounce their rights.

“... I don't want... to lose...”

‘Just this time, I will take the win... By any means necessary’

Jibril resolutely made that declaration, however.

“I don't want to lose, I don't want to lose, I don't want to lose... Master!!”

Both Sora and Shiro... no, anyone who knows her would become speechless at her appearance.

She was hugging the book she had been restlessly writing in until now, her “Diary”.

Her back, her shoulders and her voice were trembling.

She was crouching and muttering deliriously.

..... In that case.

‘It might have been better to *just return the 10 dice* when the game started’ She thinks.

Jibril doesn’t know how to handle this feeling, after all she doesn’t have much experience with it, so she just touches her “Diary” with her trembling fingertips.

Her gaze falls on the front cover, written in Flugel language, and she thinks:

‘I will keep reading these 3205 pages to the point of losing my memories’

... In that case.

‘It might be better if I just *didn’t have my memories*’ She thinks.

With those feelings resembling regret... Those 3205 pages.

Since this “Sugoroku” started, she doesn’t know how many times she has opened this diary, but once again, she opens it.

In there, countless memos are crammed in, they are the records that Jibril wrote.

For example:

【Hatsuse Ino】 Warbeast ▪ Male ▪ Can be looked down upon in normal operations ▪ Gross

【Plum Stalker】 Dhampir ▪ Not interested in separations by gender
▪ It is OK to consider him a mosquito.

From crude scribblings like that, to:

【Stephanie Dola】 Imanity ▪ Red haired female ▪ I call her Dola-chan

Servant of Sora and Shiro. Is in love with Sora, but keeps denying it...

And it continues on with detailed things like her height, her three sizes, and even anecdotes.

A person's characteristics, to Jibril's knowledge, and various other things were recorded there.

However, among those notes, there was an item written in conspicuously big letters, inside a circle drawn with double lines, and even with a note saying 'most important information'

【Sora】 Black-haired Imanity 【Shiro】 White-haired Imanity

They come from a parallel world. Siblings who deeply love each other. My new Masters.

The answer I've always been looking for, since I was born...

That last sentence was written in shaky handwriting. Jibril traces it with her fingertips, and lowers her gaze.

She remembers the mental state she was in when she wrote that.

Immediately after the game started, before the 38 days had passed.

In other words, the first move.

The very beginning, when she rolled her dice for the very first time...

■■■

——?

Puzzled, Jibril casually puts one hand on her cheek, tilts her head and whispers:

"...huh? Where is this place?"

Even though she could just fly away if she wanted to, she just stood alone in that grassland.

There were nine white cubes near her chest, and around her, there was an unusual land whirling around and forming a spiral.

‘Where is this?’ ‘Why am I here?’ Jibril just stood there without understanding anything.

She just looks around with her amber eyes and cross-shaped pupils.

Sure enough, using her vision that transcended space, she was able to see those who were advancing along the spiral land.

“One eyesore of a dhampir bug, two beasts that dare to walk on two legs...”

And... Furrowing her eyebrows, she whispers:

“... and even lowlier than those, three human worms, huh?”

Jibril wonders why she is here with such lowly creatures, so she tilts her head.

As expected, she doesn’t understand the situation.

“Well, I don’t really understand, but if I ask someone, I’ll probably get a good explanation♪”

That’s right, she concluded that she should act with common sense.

Well, just to tell the bugs or the beasts something like: ‘I got lost! Please show me the way’.

She was very unhappy, or rather unwilling, to act in such a fairytale-like manner.

“Let’s just kill the cause of this. After all, it looks like this isn’t my own fault, right?”

The point is that if she kills the one that caused her embarrassment, everything would be solved.

Deciding that by herself, Jibril spreads her wings and increases the revolutions of her halo.

—Teleportation.

To twist space to connect two different spatial coordinates.

Something similar to moving with infinite speed.

But, in principle, it is still movement...

“————hya?!”

If there is a barrier in between... this happens.

What caused her to scream in a such dumb voice, so different from her normal one, was an accidental collision. Moving with something similar to infinite speed, Jibril hit something where there seemed to be nothing but empty space. There was even the sound of an explosion, and Jibril was stuck in midair like a frog.

Then, just like that, she started to slide down.

Finally, as if she was getting peeled off of something, she finally fell to the ground.

“...Fu fufu... To surround me with a spatial rupture... fu fufufu”

With a large bump on her head, now wide awake, Jibril.... laughs.

Something so powerful that she didn't notice it even with her Flugel senses.

She understands now, both this spiral land, and the rupture powerful enough to inhibit teleportation.

The only ones able to do something like that... If this was the deed of an Old Deus, she would be able to accept it. However,

“You have some nerve!!!”

In that case... ‘Well, in any case, let's kill them’ she thought.

She fires Heavenly Smites and spatial destruction magic until she calms down.

.....

“...haa...ha... I’ll let you go for now...”

Finally, Jibril reluctantly admits that everything she does seems useless.

She also sees that, at the destination of those who were advancing along the spiral land, there is an Old Deus.

‘In any case, even though I’m going to kill you, I’ll be patient for now’ she thought with displeasure, and stepped forward.

The situation is still unknown, but only a few minutes have passed.

Then, when she crosses that mysterious darkness, the spatial rupture, for the 42nd time...

— 【Make a vessel containing 4 liters of water before the magma swallows you up】

A haughty voice echoes at the same time.

In front of her eyes, there was a fountain and two vessels labeled ‘5 liters’ and ‘3 liters’ respectively.

And suddenly, a looming magma wave as big as a tsunami appeared from the front.

... She didn’t understand at all.

No, she of course understood what was being said.

Using the two different vessels, measure 4 liters precisely.

However, her mood was already the worst. Shoving such a childish problem in front of her at this time...

‘If you think you can solve this before the magma comes, then try and solve it!’ is what she heard.

“... Who do you think you are?”

Jibril showed a daring sneer while saying that.

In short.

She concentrated all the moisture in the earth and atmosphere, including the water in the fountain, and threw it at the magma.

Thus, inside the rain produced by the steam explosion, Jibril looked at the 4-liter container she made herself with magic as it was filling up.

Jibril made a joyful face because of her own, too perfect answer.

— 【Task completion recognized】

The haughty voice echoes a second time, and, at the same time, the number of cubes by her chest increases by one.

She looks at that, puzzled, and immediately after...

“_____!?”

Jibril falls to her knees and hugs herself.

“... What is... *happening* ...?”

Trembling all over, she was barely able to squeeze out that question.

‘*What happened?*’ ... That was obvious.

The questions from before ‘Where is this?’ and ‘Why am I here?’ were melting away.

She answers them herself: ‘This is the Old Deus’ game’ and ‘I am participating in this game’.

She... temporarily lost that memory. That was all. But there was something else that she could not express, chills that seemed to drain the blood from her face.

Her teeth were chattering, and she acted as if she wanted to run away from something.

‘What is happening to my body’ She thought.

“... Let’s calm, down... and think...”

Without understanding that at all, she desperately tries to calm her own confused thoughts.

Jibril starts to examine the rules with care and composure.

First of all, about *what happened*, in other words, the reason why only she lost her memories.

01 : The seven persons shall be granted their own “Mass Existence Time” divided proportionally into 10 “Dice”.

Mass Existence Time. Yes, that is, the time their own mass has existed.

The “Soul”, which has no mass, is not included.

Thanks to Sora’s influence, Jibril was also able to notice this at the beginning of the game.

It seems her masters arranged things so that the participants could still act even if they dropped out of the game.

In other words, to separate the “Body” and the “Soul”, and then, to only put the body on the betting table, however.

One likely hypothesis emerges. Jibril uses her vision that transcends space to look around once more.

Towards those that continued to advance along the board.

Plum, Ino, Izuna, Dola-chan, and... Sora and Shiro, her masters.

Even if their dice decreased they continued on without problems. The hypothesis was confirmed.

It was only her.

The only one that is not a ‘living thing’ but rather a ‘living being’, the Flugel, Jibril... Only she has no clear boundary between her ‘soul’ and her ‘body’.

“Aaah.... This is...”

As she whispers that, Jibril finally understands what was happening. Even with that, she still feels like she’s about to lose consciousness, but she gets a hold of herself.

With trembling hands and chattering teeth, Jibril takes out her diary and starts writing fiercely.

She writes down her memories about those who are advancing along the board, who she regarded as inferior animals just a moment ago, her memories about her masters.

But most importantly, she writes down the memories that make them important to her.

Those memories that disappeared by losing just a single dice.

She didn’t even notice.

After learning that truth, now, after living for 6407 years, Jibril finally...

“...I see... so this is... “Fear” ... huh?”

She finally experiences and understands that feeling, so because of that feeling, she records all her experiences, without leaving anything out, and without adding anything either, in her diary.

So that even if her memories are gone, she should be able to remember by reading her diary...

[\[1\]](#) There was a “but” in English in the original



And... Inside the floating city of Avant Heim's main office. Amidst the unchanging silence, only the sound of Jibril detachedly turning pages could be heard.

'I see, by losing my dice my memories were lost too'

That is because magical living beings like the Flugel have no clear boundary between the "Body" and the "Soul". Even her masters must have overlooked that loophole while creating the rules... no. That information is something that her masters... something that 'living things' don't know. More than anyone else, Jibril herself should have noticed the problem with those rules.

In any case, Jibril continued to turn pages. If that was the case, 'What would happen if I lost all my dice?' The other participants would become their 'soul', their spiritual bodies.

Then, Jibril...?

On the page she just turned to, a likely hypothesis is written:

— 『Only the "Core Spell" will remain, then it will restart』

Yes. That's all. Just like the other participants, she wouldn't die. Only the most fundamental component of a magical living being, the "Spell", would remain, since it has no mass. But if that happens, all her memories would just be reset.

If that was all, there would be no problem if she just recorded everything in her diary. Even if the spell is rebooted. Even if she is reborn. That's because that would still be herself, after all.

No, rather, this is closer to asking oneself: "If I lost all my memories, would I still be the same person?" If she wrote down all of her thoughts, all of her memories in this diary then...

Even if she lost all her dice there would be no problem, she would still adore her masters.

That's what she believed...

Believed, however,

“Indeed... until Master nonchalantly handed me those dice at that bath...”

The second move. When she rolled her dice once again, the moment when they decreased by one...

Everything she had written in her diary, it's meaning, her thoughts, even its value... She no longer understood any of it.

‘Someone like me lovingly calling an inferior Immanity my Master... It must be some kind of mistake. Most likely, that person screwed me in a game, and then planted convenient memories in me. Let’s go take a look at that conceited monkey. And if there’s an opportunity, let’s kill him.’

While thinking that...

She went to meet them. Her masters.

And that day. In the bath, when he handed over the dice, all her memories returned. Then, she asked her masters what they thought about reincarnation. If someone had exactly the same soul as you, would that still be you?

The soul. The core spell. If all the components are the same, would that still be you? Thus, her masters answered, and this time Jibril finally... understood.

She finally understood what she felt at that time. It was her past self who had been writing in her diary. She opened those pages and unintentionally gave a bitter smile.

"No no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no
no
no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no

47



She repeated the same word as many times as she read the tear-stained pages.

‘The “Me” who lost her memories is not “Me” at all’ She thought.

She recorded all her memories in this diary in order to study the theory of the soul. When she lost her memories and read it, she could only think of it as someone else’s diary. If that was the case, then that was someone else, after all. If you read someone else’s diary, could you become that person? There is no way.

It is the same as reading books, no matter how many you read, you cannot obtain anything more than “knowledge”. No matter how much emotion you write it with, that emotion definitely cannot be transmitted. Having reached that conclusion, Jibril did not return the dice that Sora gave her.

If she was going to forget everything again, then she refused to even roll her dice. She even thought about dying right there and then, if she was allowed to. However, if she died, then the 10 dice she was carrying would have been lost as well. Her master’s victory... and maybe even her own life, she was unable to take those away from her masters. That’s why she asked her masters once again: ‘Is it fine if I win?’.

“... I really am the worst...”

When she turned the page and saw the part where she borrowed the dice without returning them, Jibril made an expression of self-disgust without realizing. In there, the procedure to start the “Great War” game was written in detail.

The Old Deus’ “Sugoroku”. If it was fine for anyone to reach the top, then Jibril would be the one to do it. However, if she just climbed just as she was, she would surely be lacking something. Jibril was well aware of that.

‘If anyone climbs to the top, then everyone wins’ None other than her masters, Sora and Shiro, said so, therefore, she wasn’t choosing “Defeat”. That’s why she made them bet “The real way to beat the Old Deus” too.

On top of that, she devised a game where they’d have no choice but to renounce their rights. She wrote all that in detail in her diary so that it would still be carried out even if she lost her memories.

“But... Please, Master....”

Jibril covered her face and muttered that. They will surely look at her with disdain. No matter, she will gladly take any punishment. If, with a single word, she was ordered to die... No, if she was allowed to die, then she wants to die right now... but!

“... Please, please! Just one time... Please Master... Will you let me win?... Just this time... Please!”

She admits it. She is completely terrified.

“... Not me, but someone else, with my face, with my voice!”

Everything in her diary... Everything she has seen and heard, everything she has learned, everything she has felt in those 6407 years. Even the fact that right now she is using dirty tactics to snatch a victory. That although she had no right to do that, she is crying and begging pathetically. All of that, and especially its meaning, if she forgets that...

“My Masters calling someone who is not me “Jibril” ...”

Her most important persons, her most important memories, calling that person by that name,

“ She would see them as worthless ... she wouldn’t recognize them no matter what...”

She imagines that person would be that kind of stranger. Besides, she has never conquered fear even once...

.....

For how long had she been doing this?

A few movements started to appear on the “Map” display. Jibril raised her tear-stained face, and made a small, bitter smile.

“...That’s... right... my masters, Blank.... would never accept... defeat...”

Surely, they don’t have any intention to renounce their rights. But that means that they one-sidedly “Accepted the challenge”. And, at the same time, “It is fine if Jibril wins”.

Anyways, she received a lot of “Letters” from Sora and the others, and they were full of complaints. If they had just written “Renounce your rights” or “Die”, since she is their possession, she would have had no right to refuse.

“Thank you very much, Master. I respectfully accept your challenge.”

And so, Jibril took her pen once again and started to write “Commands”.

‘No matter what, I will win. If I corner them completely, even my Masters will have no choice but to renounce their rights. But...’

She glanced at her diary one last time.

“But even so, my Masters will most certainly win”

She thinks about the page where that was written.

‘Then, at least I want to lose to die after losing to my Masters... This will be the last game of my life.’

The day the Great War ended. The moment when everything ended, how did the world change then?

That answer, Immanity’s power, and the moment when the world changes once more... Jibril will not be able to see how this game with

the Old Deus ends. But at the very least, since she will record it with conviction...

■■■

At the edge of square number 308.

“Let me fucking pass, desu!!”

Unable to break through the space at the edge of the square, a red beast was rampaging and roaring. Clad in boiling blood, Izuna swings her fists down, each blow causing the sound of an explosion. Going beyond the limits of physics, “Blood Destruction”. Using that enhanced perception, she sees a battlefield far away. From the edge of the square she looks down at a space that was compressed to the limit.

The game imitating the Great War. It was the Old Deus’ power that created such a thing. There is no way that she will be able to break the wall of such a space just by punching it, but even so, Izuna, with her blood boiling and her body burning, impatiently strikes at the empty space with her fists, her claws, and her fangs.

She must go back, go back and stop them.

That is a game, just an illusion. Izuna understands that. But, it was a scene where life was treated like nothing, and heaven and earth were torn up like toys.

Izuna knew.

It is different from the story that Tet told her, but if they follow the same path, then the conclusion will also be...

“That, is, no, good, desu!!”

Izuna knew.

Jibril doesn't know, the answer that she wants to know is:
How did the Great War end in the past? How will that game end?
It will just end with someone's death.

【Why dost thou hesitate? State one name.】

She was coldly told that. Izuna swung her fist as her tears evaporated, then she turned towards that robotic voice.

【If thou doth that and become the “Winner”, everything will be finished at once】

The one seated on an ink line floating through space, as if she had done that eternally. The one asking questions that she doesn't want to answer right now like, “Is there anything you believe in?”. The Old Deus, looking down on everything, announces Izuna's 【Task】 .

【Amongst the seven souls that the Old Deus holds, choose one to be released and killed [\[1\]](#) , then, be transferred to the final square】

In other words, it is asking her who to sacrifice in order to settle this match.

“_____”

Confusion. No, not that. With something like a gasp, Izuna just averts her gaze and trembles. If she just sacrificed this Old Deus that is looking at everything as if it didn't concern her, and one more.

It is saying that with that, everything will end.

Jibril, and Sora and the others, are also killing each other in their game. Outside, Ino and Plum, and Kurami and Feel, are also killing each other in their game. If anyone reached the goal, then this Old Deus will die. This is a game of killing each other, like all the others.

In that case... ‘Just one more’.

If, for example, Izuna herself said: Let me be the sacrifice ?

Would she be able to stop any further sacrifices...?

——!?

“Don’t screw with me, desu... Am I not an idiot, desu!?”

Izuna bares her fangs and howls. As if such a stupid thing could be true. She howls at the Old Deus... No, she howls at herself for being too stupid. In the beginning, Izuna thought that it wasn’t necessary to think too complicatedly about this game.

It is only because everyone betrayed each other that someone will be able to reach the goal. Going by the results, they were cooperating with each other. She was able to discover that because of her youth and sharp sensibilities.

‘I will win’, she thought after.

And...

“Save everyone, including Miko” She was supposed to demand that. But why didn’t she notice? Izuna screams at herself with irritation

“In that case, I don’t understand shit, desu!?”

If she reaches the goal will everyone be saved? In that case should she reach the goal? If it’s just to save everyone... Then they should have never played this game !? Not to mention, even if they reach the goal, the Old Deus will become a sacrifice?

She will not even come out even. If she wins, she will lose something , right? Besides, in order to reach the goal, she needs to get past this task, in that case, one more sacrifice?

“I don’t get it, desu!!”

Shaking her head like a spoiled child, Izuna thinks: ‘That’s impossible’.

That's impossible. That can't be. There's no way she would have agreed to that! If she can't save everyone, then, even if she reaches the goal, what demand would she make! ?

A game where someone has to be sacrificed wouldn't have even started in the first place! In that case... Glaring sternly at the Old Deus, Izuna howls:

"It's not about the number desu! I really hate stinking liars like you, desu!!"

One, or two, or all, it's the same thing. She determined that every word the Old Deus is barking is a "Lie".

Of course they are lies.

Izuna uses her head, and focuses on the many "mysteries".

In the first place, what's up with these 【Tasks】 ? They have continued on since square 301. Why are they together like that!? No, if we are asking about what happened in the first place, then who wrote this 【Task】 !?

Wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong. Izuna shakes her head and thinks. In the first place, in the first place... The seven souls that the Old Deus holds...? Who on earth does that refer to? Sora, Shiro, Steph, Jibril, Izuna, Ino, Plum. They are certainly seven. However, including the soul of this Old Deus... Aren't they eight? Furthermore, including Miko-sama then, aren't they nine !?

Wrong. That's not it. Absolutely, that it not it!

"Izuna for sure will not say anyone's name, desu!"

She still doesn't understand what's wrong. However, she still announces her instinct. That 'It is absolutely wrong, that can't be!' She believes only that. Izuna is shedding tears and screaming, but

【Understood. In any case, thy defeat hath already been determined
】

The response, as expected, is in the completely emotionless voice of the Old Deus. Yes, in any case, even if she doesn't complete the Task if 72 hours pass... Izuna will lose one dice, and have one remaining. Then, she won't be able to continue.

However,

“It is fine even if I lost desu. I really hate you desu! But!!”

Izuna glares at the Old Deus with teary eyes, and thinks.

“Even so, I will never accept your death!!”

... After all, there have to be no sacrifices.

She cannot change anything, she cannot stop anything. Why,

“Why did Tet tell Izuna that story, desu!”

In that case, in this world...

Nothing is changing at all...

[\[1\] Killed was in furigana.](#)

■■■

It has already been 16 hours since Jibril's game started. The date: “Year 132 B.T.” was displayed on the “Map”. In other words, inside the game, 52 years had already passed.

“Done, next! Hurry!”

“... too slow... hurry up, and mail it...!”

It has been 10 hours since they found out that the rules allow them to deceive units. In that time, Sora and Shiro, without stopping their hands for even an instant, did nothing but write “Commands”.

“Y-you’re either really motivated or not motivated at all, it’s only those 2 extremes!”

Steph, who was in charge of mailing them, was making a full speed round trip to the “Mailbox”. Originally Sora, or perhaps even Steph, would have been able to reach the “Mailbox” by reaching out with their hands. However, since the three of them had regressed to the size of an infant, now it was too far.

“Y-you have a proper reason for making me run... right!?” Steph asked about the meaning of the heavy labor that she was enduring.

“Of course. The biggest factor in determining victory or defeat in a game would be...” Sora answers as he spreads the “Map” on the desk, and taps it lightly with his finger, and slides it towards the air.

“... *Information* , right?” Sora said as he projected an image of the world map in midair, which caused Steph to open her eyes wide.

“This was the Lucia continent!? S-since when were we able to see all this...”

Some “Scouts” barely illuminated the area around the capital on the blackened “Terrain Map”.

Using more than ten thousand of those “Scouts”, the whole continent was revealed, and that was currently being projected.

“H-how did you do this!? So many “Scouts” ...”

Yes, Steph’s surprise was understandable. Up until now, the “Scouts” died in only a few minutes of their time, even in game time, they lived for 2 months at most. However, even in this hell, where ashes of death rained incessantly, and where encountering the other races meant death; they were maintaining as many as four orders of magnitude of “Scouts”. This “Terrain Map” proved that *their survival*

rate was raised . In that case, what Steph was asking about was the method to do that. Sora grins and answers:

“... I made them make a “Telescope””

“Aaah... As expected. After all, you were the type that uses cheats and trickery...”

Steph was disappointed from the bottom of her heart at the situation, but Sora objects with disappointment.

In this pitch white world with nuclear warfare, just one future technology, is cheating...?

“That was unexpected!? This is mostly according to the “Specifications”. What’s wrong with using a move within the specifications of the game!”

“... the materials... for the lenses... “Glass”... is... practically limitless...”

Even in the present Elkia, glass clear enough to make lenses is by no means cheap nor abundant. Steph is unnecessarily doubtful of Shiro, who stated that in the era of the Great War it was “practically limitless”.

“It’s like that. After all, *these idiots* keep making as much as we want ♪ ” Sora laughs as if making fun of them.

In that instant, there was another flash of light, and a power strong enough to drill a hole in the earth rained down from the sky... That’s right, in other words,

“... “Super high temperature high pressure impact” ... the power to vaporize deserts, mountains... *and even underground mines* .”

— Just like a desert turning into glass in the past nuclear war.

“Glass” containing lead coming from cerussite. Those idiots were the ones that were producing it for us. An infinite amount of glass that, when polished, was clear enough to make lenses.

“Then, we just needed to mail a “Command” telling them to polish the glass thoroughly and make the lenses according to the plans.”

If they do that, then the units don’t even need to have optical technology.

The units simply followed the “Command” – the plans. Without understanding anything, the units combined 4 convexo-concave lenses and made a terrestrial telescope with 50x magnification. Thus, their ability to detect enemies, and their field of view on the map both increased. But, of course, if it was just that, the “Scouts” survival rate wouldn’t increase so dramatically.

Calculating comparatively safer routes of transport, establishing survival technologies, a method to farm even in this desolate world, implementing the technology to preserve foods, etc. They fumbled to disclose all that, and it resulted in a large number of “Commands” being given out, but,

“...Nii... I found it...” Shiro said, and Sora jumped on top of the table – the “Map”.

And, upon the world that was being projected little by little... upon the world map that was being revealed, units from a different faction - one group of the “objectives”, was displayed.

“As expected... They are “hunting”” Sora chuckles, they were hunting by moving periodically along a fixed route.

He touches the “Scout” and pinches out, it’s field of view is then projected in midair. And, with a full face smile, he opens his arms to the one across the telescope.

“Welcome, *Warbeast-san* ♪ We are friends, right~?”

“... I’d rather not have that kind of friends...”

Come on, I will scam you out of everything you have. Steph could almost hear Sora saying that, so she groaned a little.

—In a world contaminated by the black ash, where everything could be blown away the next moment; something like farming in

settlements is not worth it unless you have the leeway of a high ranking race. Furthermore, if you have the physical abilities of the Warbeasts, then hunting and gathering is more reliable. But, there is a problem with the route and frequency.

“...Nii... the route calculations, are done...”

In perfect synchrony, Shiro shows him a memo with the routes that she exposed in an instant. The pack (stack) of Warbeasts was making round trips along the six routes in about three seconds each. Three seconds... In game time that is almost every day, then that means...

“As expected... *They are starving.* Weeell then, it’s time for some fun “Diplomacy”, Shiro!”

It is such a world. Surely there is also lack of prey, in other words. *There is an opening to take advantage of them,* that is, that they are a race with few in numbers.

Sora laughs a little at the expected glare.

Sora and Shiro add just the coordinates to the “Commands” they had prepared beforehand, and hand them over to Steph. She mails them with a full-speed dash once again, and returns,

“S-specifically how... how will you turn the Warbeasts... into allies?” Steph asked, out of breath.

But Sora and Shiro frown at her question, and answer:

“... how to... make allies... out of... the starving Warbeasts?”

“Do you want to serve Immanity in a silver plate to the hungry Warbeasts?”

Certainly, they have already verified that they can deceive units. But, even so. There’s the fact that promises, contracts, etc. are meaningless in this world. And the fact that if they sense Immanity’s existence it’s over. Those are solid facts.

In that case...

Sora announces with an evil smile that doesn't suit an eighteen year old kid:

"First, we will obtain one "Elf Unit""

"... H-huh? It wasn't diplomacy with the Warbeasts?"

To Steph's question, Sora and Shiro just look at the projected map, and answer.

—On top of the projected map, one "Scout" was moving.

And, when it reached the Warbeasts' hunting route, it turned back and returned, just like that.

... *What does that mean?* Sora anticipated that Steph would want to ask something like that, so he explains:

"I made it leave some food and then return - I also included a 'love letter', of course"

Fortunately, although they are crude, thanks to the improvements in agriculture, preservation technology, etc.; we have some extra food. Smoked chicken, pickled potatoes... for the starving Warbeasts, that will be a treat.

So that they wouldn't be able to follow the smell, they made the unit cover it with the deathly ash, then they made it double check it, *then they chose a route that they wouldn't pass through until six days later*, and finally they made it leave it and return.

After about 18 seconds of real time, the stack of Warbeasts picked that up. And, surely, they also read the 'Love letter' that Sora wrote.

"'Love letter'... you mean a just letter, right? What are its contents?"

"A 'diplomatic trade' proposal"

That's right, the letter that he wrote in the Warbeast's language, was a proposal of trade between races. It was:

"That 'For each Elf you kidnap, I'll offer you this amount of food' ♪"

To put it simply, it is a proposal for “slave trading”. That was what Sora said that with a full face smile. Normally, Steph would have fired off some severe criticisms, but,

“... eh? kidnapping Elves... can they really do such a thing!?”

Before that, she raised a valid point: in the first place, isn't that impossible?

Can the Warbeasts even kidnap someone from the race that is the most skilled at magic? Sora answers this question:

“They can” He arrogantly concludes, and continues:

“It is extremely trivial. Very easily... even easier than taking a breath.”

Sora, who even included that method in the letter, just smiles darkly.

That's right. The opponents are the ones who are the most skilled at magic, and are famous around the world, the Elf-samas, but...

“No matter what magic, or what power... *they are all useless* .”

Sora deepens his sneer and continues:

“That's because we will create a situation where we won't let them use magic. We won't even let them *resist* .”

That was a secret technique using only the basic principles of the game, that is:

“Just with that, we will make them all powerless. Whether in the game right now, or the war in the past, that doesn't change”

—Don't let the opponent do anything that they want to do.

Do everything that they don't want you to do.

Only that is true without exceptions, even in war.

“Do you understand? First, we will use the Warbeasts to bring an Elf over to our side.”

Shiro continues the explanation dryly and dispassionately:

“...After doing, that... Next, using the Elf... we will make it sell... a different Elf.”

—Even if it’s just one, by bringing an “Elf Unit” over to our side, we will be able to use it for the next bout of “Diplomacy” In that case, we will dispatch that excellent magician-sama, from there, it will just be one after the other. In this way, we will pull all their strings.

Contrary to their too young appearance, the siblings made this conclusion with devil-like cruelty.

That sends a few shivers down Steph’s spine. Then, she looks at the projected “Map” with the 2 of them.

—All is going according to plan.

It is as if even reality followed Sora and Shiro’s thoughts.

Just like they said, the group of Warbeasts appeared at the designated location with an Elf unit.

Yes, they were right... it was extremely trivial, very easy. Natural. Seeing that truth Steph opens her eyes wide, and Sora and Shiro deepen their smiles.

—At that moment.

“.....eh?”

—The Warbeast stack disappeared from the map.

Panicking, Sora projects the field of view of the scout that was doing reconnaissance from afar. When he did, he saw that both the group of Warbeasts, and the scenery around it, had disappeared without trace.

Displayed on the “Map” was just the “Elf Unit” returning trudgingly the way it came.

.....

Everyone is staring dumbfoundedly. Steph breaks the silence and asks:

“...Sora? You told them how to do the kidnapping, right?”

“Aaaah!! Wait, they actually did kidnap it and come , right?”

“... Nii... How, did you... intend, to... obtain it?”

But, in response to Sora’s strong rebuttal: ‘Did you assume something?’. Shiro’s eyes were asking that, and at some point they had become cold and half-lidded. I see, it looks like the kidnapping went well, but then, how did he plan to bring it over to their side? Shiro’s eyes were asking that question, so Sora responds:

“Eh? That is... By breaking its pride and heart, and teaching it the pleasures of this and that, they would make it obey everything we say. That’s why I instructed them to *kidnap women first*. ”

“...wha-, your idea is the worst!?” Steph guessed what he meant and opens her eyes wide, but Sora answers blankly:

“Eh?... If a group of orcs does *that* to an elf she submits, right?”

—Orcs, in other words, pig-men. Namely, Warbeasts of the wild boar clan.

Sora answered with doubtless eyes, as if he was saying something as obvious as the sun rising from the east.

.....

The response to that was a silence deeper than the sea, and a gaze cold enough to be frozen solid. But, not caring about any of that, Sora hits the table with his fist,

“ *Impossible*! What was my mistake, what did I miss!? An elf getting caught by orcs and saying “Ku, just kill me”, and then immediately falling; those two scenes are a game’s modus operandi, they are creation’s providence, right! Making a lust-starved “Ero Elf” (formerly Elf [\[1\]](#)) with an ahegao [\[2\]](#) into a puppet. Just where is the mistake in this *incredible and perfect plan* ...”

“... Nii, that’s not a game’s... providence... that is a thin book’s [\[3\]](#) ...” Shiro whispers with half-lidded eyes, even though it is indeed incredible.

It seems that Sora is agonizing over his own mistake seriously, genuinely, and from the bottom of his heart.

“Actually Sora, in the first place... Orcs are not Warbeasts.”

——

– –Wh-what!?

Sora goes weak on his knees, and grabs his tablet with a trembling hand. Then, he opens the entry about the “Exceed”, and screams to the heavens.

“Damn it! Are the orcs actually Demonia!? In that case, of course I failed!”

“No! That is not the reason why you failed, okay!?”

However, Steph’s voice did not reach Sora, who was cursing his own failures. What a basic mistake, he was conducting diplomacy with the wrong opponent!?

‘... No, regrets come later’ Sora convinces himself.

‘First, how will I recover from this mistake?’ Sora thinks, biting his nails and with a face full of impatience.

“—Diplomacy with the Demonia... but how should I take advantage of them...?!?”

Demonia. It was a race that they hadn’t met yet, and had little information on. It wouldn’t be so easy to find an opening to take advantage o...

“Hey! I think you should apologize to the Warbeast units... can’t you at least give them something for free!?” Steph said, appealing for a compromise, but she was ignored.

Since they brought her along, they did a considerable number of *things* with the Elf unit.

—‘In that case, those guys are satisfied, right? O rather I’m so jealous I could die. But please, forgive me for making you explode’ Sora thought.

“... Nii... isn’t this... an orc?”

The unit that Shiro tapped was just a little bit to the south of the Elf unit’s road home. The unit’s name: 【Demonia ▪ Orc 8】 was clearly displayed, that was,

“Good play, Shiro! Let’s use the scout to lead them on, and attack with a group!!”

Flying without hesitation, Sora’s pen was writing “Commands” with an unbelievable speed.

“W-wait a second! Didn’t you lose track of your objective!?”

She was pointing out that they couldn’t kidnap it like that, but...

“Shut up! All those who are elves have a destiny to go from being kidnapped by orcs and saying “Ku, just kill me” to transforming into Ero Elves! I have judged that the providence would not be fooled by the change in notation of “elves” to “Elves (Forest spirits race) [\[4\]](#) ”!!”

“How can you say that to the person who is supposed to be judging the most!!”

Steph screamed at her wits end, but they made her drop the subject. She mails the “Commands” that were finished. On the other hand, Sora was calculating calmly.

If it goes well, they would be able to spy on the movements of the Demonia, whom they don’t have enough information about.

The falling by pleasure part was... Well, even if they didn’t wish for it, if it was the exhausted Elf, they would capture-

—‘And well, *most importantly*’ Sora thought.

Sora, with a lewd look on his face, prepares his smartphone and glares at the map. It is probably happening right now, right? An extremely lewd 18+ spectacle.

Sora selects the scout unit that is supposed to be looking at that through it's telescope. In order to display that field of view, he just needs to pinch out with his fingers, however...

"... Nii, right now, you're 1.8 years old... 18+ is... no good..."

"Hah, hahaha, ahahaha!! I thought you'd say that, my sister, however!" Shiro blocked his move, but Sora responded with a perfect three stage laugh.

"One second of real time is eight hours inside the game! In the first place, it can't be seen with the naked eye!" Sora yells a refutation as he readies his smartphone.

"But, with a super slow motion video, I can review it after turning back into an 18 year old, and save certain still pictures... Well, it will be displayed in at least one frame, right? Anyhow, I don't think there is a problem, but do you have any objections!?"

As Sora speaks loudly and eloquently, Steph finally notices:

"Y-you... That was your objective from the start!?"

"Hm, you don't understand anything at all, huh!? I'm always willing to do whatever's necessary!" Sora said, and pinches out on the scout, triumphantly.

"That said, I don't have any intention of missing such a delicious side-..."

'...effect'. It seems that he wanted to end the sentence like that, however.

"...Huh?"

When they faced the "Map"'s display, there was a problem.

—The displayed orc units were gradually decreasing.

At first Sora, Shiro, and even Steph thought that they were being defeated by the Elf's counterattack. But soon, the three of them realized that that wasn't the case, and tilted their heads. They did so because even after two long seconds, or 16 in-game hours, the units continued to decrease one by one. If they were just fighting normally, it wouldn't have become so drawn-out. In that case, just what the hell was happening...?

Among the three of them Sora gathered his wits the fastest, and gulped:

"Don't tell me... The orcs are getting squeezed out to exhaustion and drying up? Is that it?" Sora said with a stiff face.

As if to support his argument, the Elf was now dragging along the last one of the 8 orcs, and was on its way back home once again.

Time stopped. How many seconds... how many minutes long was that cold silence?

Then, a few words were whispered:

"... nii ... it seems, the Elves have... started to hunt orcs...?"

As if Shiro's mutterings had paved the way...

The Elf army (stack) was now waging war with the orcs everywhere, and had started to capture them.

—'Hmm... well then, what does this mean.' Sora thought.

Sora was thinking as if it was someone else's problem, as if he was observing from a god's point of view, and nodded.

"I see. Since the Elves are endorsing slavery... Was *that* their intention?"

Understanding, Sora then remembered Kurami, who is Fiel's slave.

...After several seconds of careful consideration, Sora spreaded the wings of his imagination with a good smile, but:

“I have never heard of anything like that!!!” Steph interrupted, and pointed her finger at the map so fast it made a whoosh sound.

“Because of Sora the Elves became... a, e, Eo Elves... just as you wished, right!? What should we do about this obscene change in history!? If Fiel-san saw this, she would kill us!”

—Ero Elves, for some reason she couldn’t say this and muttered unintelligibly.

But Sora aggressively flares up at the argument that stubbornly speaks about responsibility.

“Haaah!? The one who planned to transform one Ero Elf was me, I’ll admit that! However!!”

Making the same sound, this time it is Sora who points at the Elf unit,

“That means that if the *whole race* changed into Ero Elves, then they were that kind of race from the very beginning, right!?”

“Ack!”

“It’s no wonder I thought that Fiel’s unconcerned face was strange! Make no mistake, there is dirt behind that mask!! Haaa, I can see her doing all sorts of yuri stuff [\[5\]](#) with Kurami!!”

Sora screamed that, and, suddenly, it occurred to him:

‘... That was unexpected, there is no way any race would be like that, right?’

Sora feels that it is Jibril who is making things considerably more complicated. What’s more, he can’t explain it very well, but sadism is truly the other side of masochism. The sadists that destroyed the world to exhaustion were already unbelievably big perverts...

“... Nii... the orcs, keep decreasing... they will go extinct!”

And, as Sora was lost on his delusions and escaping from reality, the situation on the battlefield kept progressing. The Demonia were getting smoothly destroyed, and the orcs were getting captured...

“... kuu, why...” Sora hung his head and lamented deeply.

“As expected, they are overhunting huh!? Even that is the same as our previous world...! Shit, just because they are orcs... just because they are genetically predisposed to have a high fertility, just because they are strong at night, all the orcs are getting stolen away...!? Is this something an intelligent life form should do!!?”

“Even though you understand that this is your own fault... how can you say that?”

He thought about the little bit of hope he saw using ero logic... alas!

It seems that right now, together with that hope, one race was going to be destroyed...

So this is war... how atrocious. Sora hung his head disappointedly because of that, however,

“.....ah”

To Shiro’s single muttering, both Sora and Steph raise their heads.

Then, in amazement, the three of them realized that everything had occurred in less than 60 minutes. Though, in game time, it spanned more than three years.

What originated from Sora’s group’s trifling meddling was...

— *An all out, full force war* between the Demonia and the Elves.

The Demonia’s creator - the “Demon King” intervenes against the overhunting Elves. Using a large scale counterattack they dished out a serious amount of damage and forced the Elves into a retreating battle.

Similarly, the Elves used their creator’s weapon - “Aka Si Anse”, to annihilate the “Demon King”. Thus, they thought the front lines would collapse, but there was another force reinforcing the Demonia.

They were the Dwarves, who thought that the “Phantasma killer” was dangerous. Using several Phantasmas they reinforced the front

lines. The Elves were driven into a disadvantageous position once again, but there were other forces that also saw the Dwarves as potential enemies. Cooperating with part of the Dragonia, as well as the Fairies, the Elves expanded the front lines.

Like a rolling snowball, the more the sacrifices increased, the worse the flames of war became...

The extremely chaotic and sticky situation of an all-out war. It seemed like it wasn't going to end.

—But, disappointingly.

Without any warning, it ended abruptly. All of a sudden, light rained down on both armies. It was like a calamity passed through. With the Flugel's *indiscriminate attack*, both armies' main forces were annihilated.

—— —.....

—And, maybe the “Scout” looking at the aftermath got blown away, but the footage stopped.

It was only a bit short of 60 minutes.

Amongst them, there was one person who gazed at the grand tragedy that was now just empty space, and gained peace of mind.

Sora nodded several times, as if trying to convince himself,

“... Shiro, let's just say that everything was Jibril's fault. What do you think?”

“... No objections...”

“All right, spectating is over! Case closed, well then, let's return to the game!”

“... yeah~”

Saying that, they blamed all the super-large scale tragedies that they caused on Jibril, and nodded at each other as if nothing had happened.

“Someone, help! Two war criminals are running away! Where is the rule of law!?” Only Steph continued to complain about justice, the two war criminals (siblings) went back to writing “Commands”.

—However.

“Hmm... Shiro, we have less time than I thought, let’s give it our all”

“... yes...”

With a complicated face, the 2 of them became serious and started to write fiercely once more.

“ Sora～So～ra～? If you’re going to say that everything is going according to plan, now’s your chance～?”

So you don’t have any intention of running until the end? Steph further presses for an answer:

“If you were to say that now, it would be so funny! I would roll around the floor laughing♪”

—In the first place, there is this **【Task】** . The mistake that made it a struggle for their lives with Jibril. And the mistake with the Ero Elves incident; in the end, it only fanned the flames of war. As Steph blames him for the successive mistakes, even Sora starts sweating.

“ Yes, hmm... certainly, everything is going far from the plan, right?... yes”

Sora averts his gaze and laughs. She made him admit it, albeit reluctantly. But it wasn’t just Sora, Shiro was also making a complicated face...

“—And yet, everything is going according to plan. Also, that is not a very good expectation.”

“... In the first place, if she wants to win against us... Jibril has *no choice* but to do this...”

Those complicated faces... She finally realized that they were really *impatient faces* .

“.....”

Steph stopped talking, as if she was telling them to continue, and stared at them as if waiting for something.

“...This game. I told you that *we can win it even with our eyes closed*, right?” Sora answered without stopping his writing hand.

—If it was just winning. If they just had to defeat Jibril.

No bluffing, it is an easy win. Even a null game shouldn't be so easy. To the extent that,

“—really, we can win even with our eyes closed”

“...yes. After all... if it is just winning...”

If it was just winning. If they even recognized that they had to sacrifice someone—

“ *We don't have to do anything*. Just with that, Jibril will self-destruct and lose.”

That's right, for example: Actions like the indiscriminate attack from a little while ago. Actions caused because she notices Immanity - notices them. Those actions will inevitably lead to that result.

“... *That's why* we are in a hurry. Here, mail these”

He hurried her on with a face that told her that they had no more leeway. Steph, once again, started running and mailed the commands...

[1] A pun, 森精種 (read as エルフーErufu) , to エロフーErofu

[2] [what is an ahegao?](#)

[3] She's talking about [doujinshis](#)

[4] エルフ to 森精種 (read as エルフ)

[5] Meme lost in translation [キマシ塔](#)

■■■

It has been 22 hours since the game with Sora's group started. The date: "Year 112 B.T." was displayed on the "Map". Inside the game, 72 years have already passed.

Having finished her errand on the Lucia continent, Jibril transfers to the skies of the Ariella continent. That is where the Phantasma, Avant Heim - Jibril's "capital" was located. There, Jibril started writing "Commands" with elegance, but also, speed and precision when suddenly:

"....."

She gently brushes the "Map", and projects the scenery outside in midair.

—The "Flugel Units". They can freely teleport at any time to any part of the planet. They were revealing the whole world map, there was not a single speck of black in it. The whole world... yes, the world in the nostalgic era of the "Great War".

Jibril was supposed to be excited about that scenery of destruction and death, but instead, she just gazed at it with a complicated expression.

—At the time when the "Game of Sudoroku" with the Old Deus started.

' If it is my Masters, I think there is no way that they are trying to do something like forestalling me .'

That's what she thought when she heard what Sora said just before they wrote their 【Tasks】 : 'Of course, do betray us, okay?' and 'Since we're going to do this come at us with your full power all right?'

If it was possible to use the Old Deus' power to change the square's contents according to the 【Tasks】 , then she would use that power to challenge her Masters to a game that recreated the "Great War"

—When she wrote her own 【Tasks】 , she even patted herself on the back because of her idea.

Did the overwhelmingly weak defeat the truly overwhelmingly strong and change the world? Jibril would challenge them with her full power, and, if even with that, she was defeated... She had great expectations towards that answer, towards something that she didn't know, towards the unknown. That's right, originally, this was supposed to be the best, and most exciting game but—

But, when gazed upon that scene, Jibril just thought that it was terrible.

“... I was the one who ruined it in the first place, so I really can't say anything... right?”

Swallowing the words she had just spilled, Jibril once again assess the situation on the “Map” as if it was just work.

Just now, some Dwarves and Elves were gathered in the Lucia continent. Since the rabble went out of their way to gather like that... they were really a good target. They saved her some effort.

According to her instructions, they'd launch an indiscriminate attack to ensure total annihilation.

The Demonia, whose “Demon King” was killed, were already on the verge of extinction. The main forces of the Elves, Dwarves, and even Fairies were also annihilated. Also 18 Phantasmas, and 78 Dragonias were destroyed. All those were great military gains.

—She will keep opposing almost all the other races indiscriminately. What's more, Jibril's “Flugel Units” will keep accumulating military gains. But, she will not use strategy nor tactics to accomplish that. Just like in the “Great War” of the past, she will act like the strong, and simply crush them underfoot.

After all, her faction consisted of not only the Flugel, but also the God of War: Artosh, and his disciple, the Phantasma: Avant Heim. It was literally a power in a different dimension. If they pushed with numbers, even an Old Deus would be destroyed without difficulty.

At the time of the “Great War”, Jibril didn't worry about having fun while playing, she just used a full force offensive. If she just did that

now, would things proceed smoothly? She wonders this as she let out a discouraged, or perhaps disappointed, sigh.

—‘That’s right... There is no way any of this is fun. I don’t have the leeway, much less the right to have fun. After all, I’m facing my masters, Sora and Shiro, Blank. I have to win, no matter what I have to do.’

Thus, Jibril keeps writing “Commands” in a businesslike, worklike manner.

“After doing all this, it looks like losing is out of the question...”

If, with just a few words from Sora’s group, she was ordered to “Renounce your rights”, or “Die” in a letter, the game would end. But they are not doing that, and even though she coerced them into this game, they still accepted her challenge.

At the very least, Jibril has to do this seriously and win. She has at least that duty. Jibril slides her pen once more and considers.

—Immanity

I have seen many times that my masters are exceedingly great persons. But, no matter how great they seem, there is only one way to take on this difference in military power.

—Infiltrating in complete secret, and changing the war’s situation from the rear— Just that.

Indeed, that is something she imagines her masters would do, Jibril is half-convinced of it. During the Great War, there was a race that wasn’t noticed by anyone to an unnatural extent - It was Immanity. The reason for that, their true nature, was surely for this.

... But any more than that, she won’t understand until the conclusion.

The last move. How did they end the Great War, also how did they involve the Ex-Machina? But, whatever it is,

“... But in that case what should I do? It is a simple matter...”

That's right, she just needs to exterminate all the races. If there weren't any other races to use, then they wouldn't even be able to move in secret. If she did that, then even her masters would have no choice but to renounce their rights. That's what Jibril was thinking, when suddenly,

"Oh...? The situation has changed..."

The "Map" illuminated by the Flugel Units.

Jibril grumbles at the new information about the situation on top of it. Up until then, the races has been acting separately, as she intended, but now, they had started to cooperate.

—Clearly, they saw the Flugel (Jibril) as hostile.

"As expected, is that it? ... yes, yes... that's it..."

Jibril smiles slightly at this situation, and increases the speed of her pen. This game, the "Great War", is indubitably Jibril's home field.

'My Masters are really coming to defeat me head on!!'

—'I don't want to lose... I have to win.'

But, if even with her most frantic efforts, she was still defeated... Jibril thinks about that and makes a complicated smile. Jibril wasn't able to witness the moment the world changed in the past. She also won't be able to witness the moment the world will change in the future.

—If she was allowed to be selfish and witness it at least until she died.

That—

... that...

"... That would be really good, right? ... Jibril..."

Unexpectedly, Jibril asked herself that question.

—'Losing my memory is scary. It is so scary that I want to die.'

‘I wish I could die by my masters hands, the very hands that are shaping the future.’

That’s what she thinks. But...

Originally, it was supposed to become the best and most exciting game...

...But, it was terribly...

She knew she had no right to continue that line of thought, but even so, she couldn’t help but think of it.

Her last game is so boring.

Was Jibril.... Really all right?... Masters...

—Looking like she doesn’t understand anything anymore she hangs her head in shame.

Jibril wipes away the drops that fell on the “Command”, and just keeps moving her pen.

■■■

And then, a thunderous roar shook heavens and earth.

“Hyaaaaaaaaaa!? What’s thiiiiiiiiis!?”

—It has been 51 hours and 43 minutes since the game started. The date displayed on the map was: “Year 14 B.T.” It seems that Steph had dozed off for 4 hours, but now she was awake,

“Oh. You woke up? It’s okay, that was just the previous “Capital” blowing up.”

It was an attack that turned the previous Capital’s location into a crater.

—‘Just how is any of this okay?’ It seemed that Steph wanted to say this, but in response:

“How sloppy～ Falling asleep after a mere 47 hours～?”

“... Sleeping more than 5 minutes... in the middle of a game... means you lack fighting spirit.”

Without sparing her a single glance or stopping what they were doing, Sora and Shiro answered bluntly.

“N-normal humans sleep once per day! Also—”

Normally, Steph is very resistant to sleep, but her body was still shrunk to that of a 3.6 years old.

“I fainted because I ran around so much... Wait, what is this !?” Steph screamed at the large quantity of papers covering the floor, and continues meekly:

“... u-um... since you woke me up, I’ll do my best to mail...” Steph said to Sora and Shiro, who still wouldn’t stop their hands and kept writing. It seems that Steph thinks the “Commands” had piled up while she slept, but the two of them smiled comfortably, and answered:

“Ah. Those. They are not to be mailed now, so”

“... Half are... Shiro’s... ‘equations’...”

“... Th-then... What are you doing now...?” Steph asked the two of them, who still weren’t stopping their hands, even while answering.

But—

“Hmm that’s right. Now I’m playing S*m City [\[1\]](#) ?”

“... Shiro is... playing harv*** moon [\[2\]](#) ...”

“—What? Actually... since when was the map...”

Instead of a response they used the map. The “Terrain Map” now displayed the whole world. That’s right, the whole world was displayed with such clarity it seemed unnatural. They pinched out at a “Scout”, and projected its field of view in midair.

—Ariella continent’s center, equatorial region.

If the ash wasn't covering the sky, it would probably be a tropical region. But, since it was world without sunlight, the ground was frozen solid, just like everywhere else.

"Wha.... what is this...?"

A "City" so splendid that Steph couldn't help but rise her voice was built. It was a city built with stone and ancient concrete, and in it, they were even "Farming". It was a city that made you think about ancient Rome, but, both building it, and farming in it were,

"H-how did you ally with the Warbeasts while I was asleep!?"

That's right, after looking at the working "Warbeast Units", Steph gasps with admiration. But, not stopping his hand even now, Sora smiles and answers:

"I told you we can't ally with them. However, if we go just by results, then there are some races we can cooperate with"

Yes, that's because it would be troublesome if their existence became known in a bad way. Sora explains while scratching his head as if to hide his embarrassment:

"... Well, I just helped them a bit... since they were so pitiful."

"What a curious turn of events... not. What's your ulterior motive this time?"

Hadn't Sora already strayed far off the path of humanity? To Steph's suspicious half-lidded eyes, Sora answers with slightly hurt feelings:

"What the heck? Even though I helped them when they were about to be destroyed by the cruel Elves' heartless vengeance?"

"I doubt they are crueller than Sora - the cause of that heartless vengeance!?"

It was the incident where Sora confused the Warbeasts with orcs and made them kidnap Elves. Even though it has been 118 years of in game time since that happened, they were still taking on the revenge from time to time. They had no villages nor any food, the

Warbeasts were on the verge of destruction, what Sora proposed under a pseudonym led to this situation.

In other words: 'This is all your fault'

Steph's blaming is accurate, but this time, even though it seemed hard to say, she forced herself to continue:

"I-in that case... If we have that much food, isn't it better to invest it in our 'Immanity Units'..."

—The total number of "Immanity Units" was already over 450,000.

They have 9 cities just in the Lucia continent, they were even scattered around the world in all continents. They still couldn't say they had enough food to support all that...

'However...' Sora stops his pen for the first time, and turns around.

"We have to sacrifice someone... after all, it can't be helped, right?"

"....."

"If everyone keeps telling themselves that then it would result in... this, a "Great War" would it not?"

—Unable to say anything, Steph just hangs her head. If she had to say, then Sora telling her that, of all things, wasn't particularly satisfying. Sora ignores Steph's protesting gaze, and continues while touching the "Map"

"The good you do for others is good you do yourself. Precisely because it was given to them, they shall experience the ultimate luxury. Look!"

He projects the field of view of a different unit, as if saying: this is progress towards peace.

"After 170 years of trial and error! Finally, in this dying world..."

—That's right, he's boasting about a great enterprise that took more than 100 years.

“Using a chemical fertilizer, and a soil improving mineral, vermiculite!”

“... through hydroponics... large scale farming was... successful... ”

Sora and Shiro were loudly throwing out their chest at that, and Steph also gasped with admiration.

At any rate, that’s only natural.

That’s because it was really, without doubt, unmistakably, a great achievement.

—To begin with, the sky was covered with ashes, there was no sunlight, and the ground was frozen. Since the earth continued to receive the fires of war, it heated a little bit, but other than that, almost the whole planet was frozen solid. For all intents and purposes, they couldn’t use the ground, almost all the places they could use were contaminated with the “Deathly Ashes”.

Thus, relying on the information in their tablet, they single-mindedly kept using trial and error for one century. Using soil improving earth, and chemical fertilizers. Looking for land where the deathly ashes don’t rain. Hydroponics. Two simple shut ins succeeded in something that was never seen before.

“But, the only race who can offer and manufacture both the vermiculite and the chemical fertilizers is Immanity!”

No, strictly speaking, only “Immanity” knows the manufacturing procedure. So that they wouldn’t lose the procedure after manufacturing it, Sora and Shiro’s instructions were to treat the it as top secret material. Therefore!

“The Warbeasts are working for the cost of their own food, we are selling food at the lowest possible price! ”

At any rate, they were the ones offering the fundamental technology. For them, for the “Warbeast Units”, refusing would be foolish, they didn’t even have a choice.

“Thus! Distribution of goods and an economy - mutual trade was realized right here!”

“... Through a win-win economy... through capitalism... friendly relations...”

“Come now, it’s fine to shower us with praises, don’t hold back! In this shitty war world, we established mutual economic prosperity based on capitalism! Rejoice! This is a cultural victory, peace!”

Sora was loudly singing praises, and Shiro was throwing out her chest, but—

—After a few seconds of careful consideration, Steph raised her voice:

“That is not coexistence, that’s exploitation!?”

A certain Steph was almost deceived, and Sora just sighs:

“Good grief. You can’t even understand the basics of capitalism... prime minister? What a joke!”

Sora shakes his head and thinks: Exploitation? Ah, of course, that’s completely correct. But the basics of capitalism is to pretend you didn’t realize that since the beginning!

—‘But, well, you can say whatever you want’ Sora thinks, and laughs. Even if that’s true, this is peace, that is an unshakable truth, therefore!

“There is one thing all “Living things” absolutely cannot go against. Do you know what it is?”

That is...

“Hunger...!”

“.....!”

Steph was taken aback. Sora and Shiro glare at the completed world map.

“Using this overwhelming weapon - by seizing their stomachs, we are fighting against this world!!”

“... Those who control the food.... Shall... control the world...”

“If they get hungry, they have no choice but to deal with us. But, we are a hegemony” Sora said.

The light in his eyes was like that of a supreme ruler, courageous, strong.

... Someone’s stomach growled.

The sound that Shiro’s stomach made was like a small animal, cutesy, ephemeral.

.....

After a little period of silence, Steph lets out a sigh, and says:

“... It is fine if you say your true intentions... I understand what you feel...”

“—Both Shiro and I are starving! We are at our limit!”

Sora became aggressive because of that. He struck the desk and cried:

“It’s been 51 hours! We can deal with sleepiness and tiredness one way or another, but we are hungry!”

“.... Shiro... wants to eat... S** King [\[3\]](#) ...”

Shiro had reached the stage of drooling and following something that wasn’t there with her eyes.

“... I’ll ask just in case, but is it really okay? This game is an “Illusion” after all”

“That!? Even a drawing of mochi might be delicious if you eat it!!”

“... At the very least... it will taste like paper and paint... *drool*”

While she was being pushed by their truly ravenous gazes, Steph says firmly:

“Uhm... One second for us is eight hours inside the game, right?”

Even just 4 hours of sleep would surely clear her head. Sora and Shiro definitely didn't notice... no. The truth that they were refusing to notice on purpose, was mercilessly thrown at them.

"Even if you ate in just 5 seconds... it would surely go bad?"

It became even colder than the frozen world.

They had a really hard time accepting reality, but after steeling themselves for a few seconds...

"... Then, it's fine already... we got some free time just now"

"... Nii... Is it fine if Shiro sleeps... for just five minutes?"

"That's fine ~ ah, mail the "Commands" around here in the meantime. Wake us up in 5 minutes~"

Steph, who had already slept for 4 hours, could not argue with that, so she mailed the "Commands" as she was told.

—Since she couldn't carry all of them at once, she made several round trips to the "Mailbox" and kept mailing them, little by little.

To the lullaby of her footsteps.

Faintly, as if talking to himself, Sora murmurs:

"—However, well.... If this is really something that happened in the past..."

Hugging Shiro while laying down, Sora stares at what the "Map" was projecting in midair. While looking at the Great War (world) projected there, at some point, Sora made a bitter smile.

"You did well to survive this... really, humanity is very persistent."

Sora remembers some games depicting people stubbornly surviving in a post-apocalyptic world. I see... If you can survive this hell, then surely nuclear winter isn't worth fearing. In response to Sora's mutterings, Steph, looking as if she just remembered something, stops mailing and says:

“That reminds me, didn’t Jibril say something about Immanity destroying a god?”

That’s right. It wasn’t just surviving. Jibril did say that for sure.

—Eliminating the gods themselves, destroying a god, only two races had done this. They were only the Flugel, and the ones who destroyed their master, god Artosh, the Ex-Machina.... And...

It is implied that the ones who used the Ex-Machina, Immanity, also destroyed a god indirectly. Besides, if “the world changed” because they killed a god, then...

It can even be said that Immanity ended the “Great War”...

“... What did she mean by that...?” Steph said.

A magnificent tale. An epic poem about Immanity’s hidden greatness. That’s what Jibril’s words hinted at. Sora and Shiro smile fearlessly at Steph, who timidly asked that, and answer:

“Who knows? Whatever she meant is completely unclear! ”

“... Jibril... was just... half asleep...”

The two of them concluded this with smiles full of confidence, but Steph’s shoulders fell in response.

“Eh? Huh? But didn’t you say it was easy to win this “Great War”?

Certainly, Sora did say that, however—

“I was talking about the game . There is no way we would be able to win an actual war using the techniques of a strategy game” Sora said, as he rises, and once again looks at the projected “Map”.

Sora and Shiro’s knowledge of their previous world is future knowledge in this world. Not to mention, they also had information about the 【Exceed】 . This is just the result of using those. But, even with that, what they could do was extremely limited.

—53 hours after the game started. In game time, 177 years have passed.

Coming this far under these conditions is certainly the best possible result.

But, if that is true... Sora and the other's life span was coming to an end, it was time to return to the ground.

And more importantly, most importantly—

“... Not only RTSs, also chess, shogi... when comparing any abstract game about war with reality, do you know what is the most fundamental but also most unlikely premise?”

“... hmmm... something like seeing things from above, or pieces that follow orders faithfully?”

Mustering all her wisdom, Steph gives her best ideas.

—But too bad. Both are wrong.

“That there are clear victory and defeat conditions. That it is already decided with certainty that it is going to end. ”

Therefore, Sora evaluated humanity as... persistent. That's because the Immanity from that era also noticed it for sure. Namely that:

“It is impossible for anyone to end this war.”

“..... eh?.....”

Steph was puzzled since Sora concluded something else entirely.

There is no way this “Great War” is going to end. Even after noticing that, nevertheless, they still tried to survive. And, they actually survived. Just that is worthy of praise.

“Using the other races to end the “Great War”? That's idiot talk...”

That is something that could never happen even if heaven and earth flipped over, that's what Sora and Shiro declared.

“B-but, Sora is also using the other races... Can't you just do it whenever you feel like it!?”

Sora and Shiro look into each other's eyes, and smile bitterly at Steph's words.

—That's wrong. It's not a matter of being able to do it or not.

To begin with, in the first place—

“Even if Immanity ended the war, the One True God isn't Immanity, right?”

「～.....」

—That's right, to begin with, the winner of the “Great War” was “Tet”. Not to mention, in the past war, in the real war,

“That... doing something like that wouldn't be worth it. It would be meaningless”

If it wasn't a game, but the real war,

“If they defeated the strongest, the only ones we have to defeat this time, it wouldn't end ”

That's right... “Reality is different from a game” or something like that.

As if he was mocking those who proudly talk about things they seem to know, Sora continues:

“I see, then, for argument's sake, let's say that Jibril's “misunderstanding” is correct”

Let's say they somehow used the Ex-Machina, and they skillfully guided the course of the war. No matter how many lives you had they wouldn't be enough, and at the end of that tightrope:

“Piling extreme hardship upon extreme hardship, let's say they somehow destroyed a god... and then?”

Sora, with dark eyes, asks Steph, who had tilted her head:

“... then what, what would happen after that? ”

“.....ah.....”

After accomplishing that great enterprise, what would change?

—Nothing. Nothing would change.

Next are the Ex-Machina, if it is true that Immanity pulled their strings, then they just needed to make them lose. And next make those that defeated them lose, and the next, and next.... Without end.

Until finally, you're the only one left, continuing until there is no one else.

That is just like their original world .

“Well! It's like that. My well trained gamer brain concludes so!!”

Sora rolls his dark eyes and laughs it away. He collapses on the floor and reaches a conclusion:

“Forget about Immanity, there is no one who can end this “Great War””

What Jibril said, that this is like a recreation of the “Great War”, is completely wrong. Taking this into account, there are only 2 options, either the war wouldn't be settled for all eternity, or only one race would remain and win.

“Then, Jibril just wants to know what we would do!?”

—‘If it was my masters, what would they do?’ that's what Jibril let slip. With amazement, Sora and Shiro let out a bitter smile, and announce the answer:

“ In this “Great War” ... The only choice would be to keep running until the edge of the universe♪”

“..... that's right”

“... It's something like this. You have absolutely no intention to ‘Rise up and save the world!’?”

In response to the question Steph asked with an amazed– no a resigned expression:

“That’s right! Not in the slightest! ”

“... we don’t care.... About the world at all...”

“Right～♪?... That’s what I thought...haaah ...”

Steph lets out a breath mixed with resignation as they smiled and reached such a strong conclusion.

“If is fine to just let the guys that want to be in this stupid war do whatever they want.”

—If that destroyed the world, then it is fine to let it be destroyed .

Then let us do whatever we want too. What will we do? Destroy the world, of course.

After all, the world is being destroyed right now and nobody's being inconvenienced or complaining. Sora gloomily remembered what he had thought about before. But Steph tilts her head and asks:

“But... the “Great War” actually ended, also, the One True God...”

“That’s right. He’s right there. Therefore...”

—If even with all that the “Great War” of the past still ended, then...

If this “Great War”, a war that shouldn’t have ended, ended then...

“Jibril is overlooking one thing. That ‘ something’ happened.”

“... Something?... What would that be?”

But Sora just closes his eyes, that question is not funny, not funny at all.

—He just declared that there is no way that this is historically accurate, that’s because those are not present in this “Great War”. Something they looked for restlessly in their former world, but couldn’t find.

—Something that exists on Disboard, but not on Earth. Something necessary to go beyond the “Established tactic” of having to keep piling on sacrifices.

—There are no “Opening moves”.

“Who knows... but well, if we think about this as a game, then...”

Therefore, Sora just made an appropriately foolish laugh.

“Then it was also a situation where they just had to satisfy some conditions to clear it, right?”

Something like a “Technological Victory” or a “Diplomatic Victory” in Civ.

That’s right, when he was talking about what he thought as he dozed off...

Something like a drop of water fell.

“... Nii, were the Ex-Machina... the ones who defeated... the Flugel’s god, Artosh?”

‘Looks like it’. Sora thinks, half asleep.

— **【Exceed】** rank 10.... “Ex-Machina”...

It was a race of machines with extremely few living members.

“... In that case... why ...”

“... are the Ex-Machina... not destroyed....?”

[Drip.](#)

—————!?

“Whoooooah!? Wh-what is thiiiiiiiiis!?” Steph screamed.

Sora sprung awake, and climbed on top of the desk. There was no time to worry about Steph, Sora fiercely touches the “Map”, and scales it repeatedly. They had scoured each and every corner of the map, and now they had all the information in it.

“... Sixteen...”

That’s right, they confirmed the total number of races - Units, on the “Map”.

Sixteen. There are sixteen races.

— There are no unknown races!!

After a war like this... No, after this continuous natural disaster that can be said to have changed the earth's crust. Furthermore, there is no way this war will end until all the other races are annihilated and you are the last remaining one. To the extent that it is strange that there are not several extinct races, in that case.

It can't be. It can't be, it can't be, it can't be.

"Are you saying that the "Great War" ended without destroying the other races until only one remained!?"

'Stop kidding me, a method like that would...' Sora thought.

That's right. That's what happened. He and Shiro look into each other's eyes, then he gave her a small nod.

—It seems like it's just as Jibril said, the ones who destroyed Artosh were the Ex-Machina.

Did the Flugel, whose master was destroyed, lose the will to fight? Impossible. You're kidding me. Would Jibril, or Azriel... Would the Flugel that Sora knows just cry themselves to sleep? There is no way. They wouldn't lose their will to fight either. Not until they got their revenge. In other words, not until they destroyed the last remaining Ex-Machina!!

So they destroyed Artosh. Were the Ex-Machina so strong that the Flugel couldn't exact their revenge? In that case, the Flugel should have been destroyed in return !? The fact that neither the Flugel nor the Ex-Machina are destroyed...

... That's right, no doubt, the only hypothesis that remains is like a game. After Artosh was destroyed, while they were trying to destroy each other, in that small period of time...

—The "Great War".

Ended all of a sudden. That was,

“...haha... was there really such an “Opportunistic victory condition”?”

Sora muttered, but he also half believed that to be the case. What that condition was, both Sora and Shiro, of course, had no way of knowing. The things that are not reflected in this game are the things that even Jibril doesn't know about.

But that is related to the “Throne of the One True God”.

In that case, that, is related to the One True God, in other words to Tet.

—Something that the “God of Games” demonstrated when he established the “Ten Pledges”.

—Something that exists on Disboard, but not on Earth.

Something to go beyond the “Established tactic” of continuously piling on sacrifices...

— Something that left behind an “Opening move”...

“... Nii... when you.... go against Shiro... in an RTS...”

Shiro told the half-dazed Sora.

“You do ‘that’ a lot.... When you can’t win by conquest.... Anymore”

The Immanity that survived this hellish “Great War”. Even though it’s a war where even aliens would run back to their homeworld with their tail between their legs.

—Since they couldn’t fight, they did it without fighting.

—Since they couldn’t kill, they did it without killing.

Even though they used a different method, they still tried to win. And yet, if they didn’t win... They even entrusted it to the next ones. Never themselves, but someone else, until they claimed “Victory”... without interruptions. Using such a crude method... Those idiots used conventional means...

“...Hey. Are you for real, Tet? Did someone else entrust that to you?”

They arbitrarily decided that this hell, the real Great War, was just a game. And, that they’d really win.

—Winning with zero sacrifices, to that end...

““Humanity” was just one step short...? What’s up with that?”

Even though they were betting everything. Even though they were entrusting it to the next ones... They couldn’t just stay out of it. That kind of extremely loving idiots would surely...

Sora looks down, and laughs bitterly at his “I ♥ humanity” t-shirt. Aah, Sora indeed admired those guys, but he still muttered with frustration:

“... I can’t get enough of them... damn it...”

Guys like Steph’s grandfather, the previous king, whose name he still didn’t know.

Those guys, however...

That's right... Sora turns towards the “Map” projected in midair.

“I cannot live a life as cool as yours ”

As Sora muttered that, Shiro and Steph followed his gaze.

The date projected on the map was “Year 7 B.T.”. And, an enormous amount of units, the armies of many races, were interwoven in the battlefield.

In short, Jibril’s “Capital”, Avant Heim, was taking a saturation attack from them.

As the seconds continued to disappear relentlessly from the display... There were the “Flugel Units”.

“Hey, wh-what is going on? Why is Jibril losing!?” Steph asked, at a loss for words, but she was the only one.

To answer that, Sora and Shiro simply gave a bitter smile:

“... Not doing anything... This is the result of that. Jibril’s self-destruction.”

—Sora’s group certainly had an eye on Jibril.

Originally, if it was the real “Great War”, they’d have been checkmated at that. However, if Jibril was aware of Sora’s group, and her only objective was to make them “Renounce their rights”. In other words, if her objective wasn’t to kill Sora’s group by “Taking their capital”. Furthermore, if she is under the impression that Immanity “used the Ex-Machina and won”. Then there’s no doubt she’s thinking that Sora’s group is going to use the other races.

And to block that move, she’d most likely use the most reliable move. Eliminating the races they’d use, in other words, it’d be fine if she destroyed all the races, however,

“... No matter how determined you are, you shouldn’t try to bite more than you can chew, okay...?”

That is the first thing a strategy game beginner does.

Win against the easy targets.

Make lots of enemies.

— Then everyone gangs up on you ... However.

“... I-in that case, is Jibril going to die...?”

That’s right, at this rate, once her capital falls, Jibril will die and the game will end. The one who pressed for a game betting death was Jibril. Steph doesn’t know if it’s all right to stick up for her.

“Hah? As if we’d let everything go according to her plans ”

“... what do you think... we came this far for ...”

But amazingly, Sora and Shiro just laughed at her.

“A game we can win even with our eyes closed? We reject that shitty null game♪”

“... we will proceed... bound by a much much more brutal... difficulty♪”

Sora reaches his seat quite happily, but also with cold sweat.

“Shiro, we are we. Let’s go and use appropriately uncool ‘forbidden moves’”

That’s right, since Sora can not live coolly, he can at least do that. They’d proceed in a completely, thoroughly, absolutely uncool way. That’s what he declared.

—What was known in the online games from their previous world as “Forbidden moves”. They were perhaps even lower than unwillingly accepting “Defeat”. If they were going to use cheats, then he’d resent it if they didn’t do it together, it was a nasty, unskillful, childish move after all.

In other words,

“... listen, Shiro. This will be the first ‘defeat’ in Blank’s history”

That’s right, Sora was confirming, just in case, but there was no need to do so with Shiro.

“... More difficult, than winning...”

Shiro continues with a full face smile:

“... if it’s fun ... Shiro will... follow Nii...”

And once again, Sora smiled like he was having fun, took his pen started writing “Commands”.

“Then let’s do the bullshit uncool move of ‘Ripping the cable off’!!”

Then, they made Steph mail the “command” she had received. While the instructions were on the way to the units, Sora said with a laughing voice:

“ We are going through the trouble of losing! Let’s have a lot of fun at least!!”

—His voice resounded together with the orders for the “Last Capital Transfer”.

[1] [*SimCity*](#)

[2] [*Harvest moon, or story of seasons*](#) in the west

[3] [*スパキング Spa King*](#) Instant noodles

■■■

—Jibril met the end of the war inside the Formula Repair Operation Room. Therefore, she only knew about the circumstances surrounding the end of the “Great War” by hearsay. However, compared to a few hours ago, when the map was projected completely, the situation was completely different.

—Most of the “Flugel Units” had been destroyed, only a few units remained. Now, only two units: “Avant-Heim” and “Artosh” remained. The “Map” now only projected the “Capital” and its surrounding area, and there were—

The combined forces of the Elf alliance and the Dwarf Alliance, squaring off against her.

—The alliances of those two races extended to the Dragonias and the Phantasmas, respectively.

The fact that the Fairies and the Demonias were also included. The fact that it hadn’t become a no holds barred conflict. The fact that they were steadily shaving off the “Flugel Units” using “Aka Si Anse” and the “E-Bomb”, as planned. There were small differences, but it was almost historically accurate – even up to the date displayed on the “Map”:

— “November 9th Year 2 B.T.”

It was almost historically accurate even up to the day the Great War had ended, as expected—

“... Splendid work, Masters...”

Jibril said, as she lowered her head and stopped her pen from writing any more “Commands”.

In their place, she took out her diary and used her pen there.

—‘No matter what I did, they still won.’

When they didn’t surrender after she threatened them and urged them to renounce their rights, she even tried to make them surrender by force. Even after using such despicable methods, her Masters just told her to “Come and get us”. They answered head-on, and they showed her that they could really defeat her head-on. With that satisfaction, Jibril wrote the last entry in her diary.

As expected... the ones who ended the “Great War” were “Immanity”. She was confident in that. The expectations and possibilities she saw in her masters were correct, as expected. She was able to observe it, and leave a record behind and now—

And now, she will pay her penitence—

.... Or, not——?

“..... Really, until the very last moment...”

—But, suddenly, Jibril notices – she accidentally notices.

Her Masters certainly won, and she lost.... Then, now—?

“... I was a really incapable servant, to the point of being incorrigible, huh?....”

The Great War won’t end with this. She had overlooked something. She couldn’t even leave her last will behind. Jibril looks at the roof in amazement.

“... Master, I wonder, how did the world change?”

Jibril, who would finally disappear without being able to know the past, asked the two who were shaping the future. But, when Jibril made that question, a voice answered—

■■■

—The end of the world, at the top of the gigantic chess piece.

Only the one who saw everything, only the One True God, only Tet – heard all of that.

On one hand, there are those who think that the world is so simple that even a child could understand it.

There are also those who think that the world is so mysterious and complicated that you won't be able to understand it for all eternity, and it's therefore meaningless.

There are also those who think that nothing is changing in the world, that nothing can change.

There are also those who think that the world keeps changing, and is changing right this moment.

Both in the past and in the present—

“Nothing is going to change like this.... Tet... did you lie to Izuna, desu?”

That's a beast. It's the heartbroken voice of a little girl that won't approve of killing because of her childish feelings.

“—Naturally. Nothing has ever changed, nor will ever change”

That's a god. It's the defeated voice of a little girl who doubted everything so much, she even stopped believing in herself.

They were a god, and a person—

Do either of them really speak the truth?

Tet smiles from ear to ear, and looks at those who can answer all those questions.

In the past, at the two who thought that nothing was changing in the world, that nothing could change.

Now, at the two who think that the world keeps changing, and is changing now, in this moment.

—The answering voice of the two successors —

■■■

“–‘How did the world change’, huh? ... I’m sorry, but we can’t answer that question”

That voice echoed behind Jibril’s back. That perplexed, speechless back – Jibril’s “Capital”.

The ones who suddenly appeared on Avant Heim’s main office, the hall that was wrapped in silence.

“That’s why, well. Not how it changed...”

Bringing along the “Map”, that was spread out on top of the desk, and the “Post Box”.

“But what changed. That’s what we want to show you, so bear with us.”

A black and white pair was writing “Commands” on the desk, two children—

“Ehe.... we came ♥”

“.... we wanted, to see you... Tehepero [\[1\]](#) ”

Standing on top of the chair, behaving theatrically with blushing cheeks, fidgeting, were Sora and Shiro.

“–Ha? Eh!? W-w-w-where is this, wait a second, Jibril!?”

And, not understanding the circumstances just like Jibril, there was Steph.

Jibril’s thoughts were going in circles, she was bewildered and at a loss for words.

But with a mocking smile:

“There is no rule saying that ‘You can’t transfer your capital to the opponent’s capital’ right?”

“...it was hard... to send in a “Settler Unit”... in the confusion... V [\[2\]](#) ”

Sora and Shiro had the face of a child that had just pulled a prank, but,

“With this, if “The Capital Falls”, we four would die together as friends, right ~?”

Hearing those words, Jibril...

“... we are threatening you using our lives as a shield. This much retribution is just natural, right♪”

Blood, that she supposedly didn’t have was falling at her feet... she was dazzled by that hallucination.

“No way! P-please renounce your rights at once, and return–”

“You keep saying that!? Shouldn’t you be asking which one of us should renounce their rights?!” Steph screamed, breathing hard. She was trying to convince Jibril, even if she had to lie.

“In the first place, Jibril! I thought it was a possibility but–!”

Steph pointed with her finger, they didn’t even have the leeway to glare at her with smiling faces...

“Did you not realize that if you lost your dice you won’t die, you’d just withdraw from the game?”

“Uwah, Look, Shiro. Just what is she saying, all high and mighty, when she didn’t notice?”

“... Even though... the only ones... who didn’t notice... were probably just her, and the geezer... right?”

As Sora and Shiro spread their malicious gossip, Steph started sweating...

“Whyyyy did you include a rule like ‘If you lose, suicide’!?”

..... Jibril decided to “Get on board” on the spur of the moment.

She reconstructed all the spirits in her body, and forcibly restrained even her nerve terminals—

“N-no—uh～ah,ahaha～”

She awkwardly “Created” a joking smile.

“I thought that if I had to challenge you with my full power, I’d take it literally and add a rule for certain death♥”

Unintentionally noticing Jibril’s exhausted expression and voice, Steph says:

“Is that right? In that case, why don’t you renounce your rights?”

“... don’t mind, us... go ahead”

But Sora and Shiro, once again, returned only a smile.

The two of them were children less than 2 years old, and they were pressuring Jibril, with a smile.

“—Trying to lie to me... you shouldn’t underestimate me”

“...Shiro, wouldn’t... be fooled by... that lie...”

“Eh. A-a lie? What is she lying about?”

As expected – she was seen through, Jibril lowers her head and makes a bitter smile.

“... indeed... there is no way you’d order me to renounce my rights”

“About that. ‘Would I still be myself if I was reborn?’ you even went as far as giving us that hint—”

—The spell restarting, the loss of memory accompanying that. All kind of principles.

There was no way even her masters knew all that—but.

Even so, if she lost all her dice, even if the game ended, she wouldn’t regain her memories.

Jibril once again feels ashamed that they revealed the truth so easily just with circumstantial evidence. Just why did she make light of her Masters? She feels incompetent as she remembers this lesson.

“Anyways, that means we both can't “Renounce our rights” nor “Win”— in that case, shall we begin♪?”

“... Begin what?...”

Jibril was hanging her head, but Sora stepped up determinedly.

“That should be obvious – wouldn’t it be what Jibril wanted to see!?”

Sora passes by her side smiling like he was having fun from the bottom of his heart, and laughs at himself.

—Good grief, he was bragging that he couldn’t lose to anyone because they are all stupid.

‘There is always someone above you’

A god-class idiot, dreamt of breathing new wind into the world – A world that led there.

He doesn’t know how the world was changed, but, he knows how it changed, that—

“... it's this”

Sora waves his hand and shows them. It's not this, the "Great War" of the past.

"This world is a game. No one is going to die, and we won't let anyone die. Not you, not anyone else."

"... That is... more interesting, right...?"

As they said that, Sora and Shiro slowly pass by Jibril's side, who stood stock still.

Extremely naturally, as if it was par for course, you could say that it was perfectly normal, smoothly.

—They seized Jibril's "Map" and "Commands".

"Well then Jibril. I'll say it right now: This game is Blank's loss"

"...wh-what?"

And, while enumerating the unit's names on Jibril's "Command", they make a declaration:

"That is because now we are going to lose – because we are going to rip off the cable"

That's right, ripping off the cable, in other words:

"When the 72 hours expire – With the 【Task unaccomplished】 we are going to run. Shiro, how much time remains?"

"... 16 hours, 22 minutes, 48 seconds... Inside the game, approximately 19656 days, 53.852... years"

Sora smiles bitterly at that answer, while writing commands.

"The unreasonable guys who cornered the Flugel in their golden age — It seems they are outshined just with "Heaven's strike", after all, they possess a universal scale super-weapon, and they are monsters even with their bare hands. And yet, they went against them, for

more than half a century—they managed to hold on with just a human body”

—Fighting is meaningless. Since they are taking Jibril along, transferring the capital is already impossible.

What’s more, if their “Capital” gets pinpointed, all of them would get sent to the afterlife in a few seconds.

On top of it all – they can’t win.

“Shiro, this is the highest difficulty ever, what’s more, it’s a transcendently impossible game where defeat is predetermined, what do you think?”

Sora asked, but the reply was the same as always, just a few words:

“... the, best...♪”

“Right!? Thrilling isn’t it!?”

As he screamed that, Sora approaches Jibril’s “Post Box” and –

“Gaaah! I only regret that defeat is already decided, Shiiiiit!!”

“As expected, you two are crazy! There is no way you can–”

Steph screamed. Both she and Jibril were once again dumbfounded.

“Jibril. If you have fun give me an offering – give me two dice, okay♪”

Sora said, and the moment he mailed the “Command”–

“–Well then, from here on out, it’s the real deal, let’s have fun ”

With lights and sounds that drowned out both Sora and Steph’s voices, the planet shook.

■■■

—And, like those two.

The one who thinks that the world keeps changing, and is changing right this moment.

Nay, the one who believes that. The one who wishes to believe it, the one who kept waiting.

“... It changes. None other that you are changing it! Today, right this moment!!”

For more than 6000 years, that time, that day, that moment.

Tet longed for it. He flaps his limbs and looks at that.

The already destroyed world. The world that ended long ago. *The “Established tactic” that became obsolete long ago.*

—The move to perform it’s last rites.

That’s right, at the same time as Sora mailed the “Command”.

Facing Avant Heim, everything went flying like trash.

Straight ahead, in a straight line, or perhaps straight down.

Tet rolls around laughing at the former world as it falls, heading for destruction.

[1] A particular [facial expression](#)

[2] She’s making a V sign

Chapter Two — Unfair victory (Handover)

—Eastern Federation’s capital ▪ Kannagiri Island.

On Chinka Tandaifu’s office reception...

—Difficult to describe, there’s a shining ominous apparition. It’s hard to tell if it has the shape of a person.

With uncultured shining muscles, Hatsuse Ino was standing imposingly on the veranda. Since he dropped out of the game, he became a spiritual body, his soul, and now his fundoshi, made of light, fluttered to the wind—

If you refused to look directly at that bizarre phenomenon and saw through the thinly transparent light, you’d see the land spiraling into the heaven. And, if you looked behind him—

“... Seriously! Jtst what the heck is happening...!”

“Uehe～Kurami～, it’s because you have such a short temper～ that you don’t grow～”

Clicking her tongue, annoyed, there was the black haired Immanity, Kurami Zell. Bickering with her, and drunk for some reason, there was the Elf, Fiel Nirvalen. They pressed for a game in Miko’s absence, and came to demand it from the “Eastern Federation”. Those two were making a racket.

“... more precisely, how long is this going to continue? We are just sitting here doing nothing～”

The one who muttered that was a Dhampir girl – rather, a boy easily confused with a girl, Plum Stalker. Thanks to his intrusion, even if the Eastern Federation won, they’d still have to turn in sacrifices. Both those who plotted, and those who were plotted against were in a situation where that regardless of who wins or who loses, it couldn’t end without sacrifices.

But, looking up at the same sky, they unanimously grumble, their discontent and dissatisfaction was also the same—

‘_____’

They didn’t know how to look at that “Impact”. A sound outside the audible range, and at the same time, the movements of the spirits shake heaven and earth.

—With a poof.

“... Again?...”

All lights disappear from Chika Tandaifu’s office, and darkness falls.

No, not just here in Tandaifu, Ino takes a breath, and looks down towards the whole town—

The lights had disappeared from all of Kannagiri Island. There was a blackout, and it was wrapped in the darkness of the night.

—Tracing a spiral on the skies, was the Old Deus’ “Sugoroku board”. Since two days ago, those aberrant impacts were repeatedly shaking the Eastern Federation.

Originally, the “Videogames” were powered by the Shrine – by the Old Deus’ power, of course. Thanks to a disturbance in an enormous amount of spirits, the street lights, and even the candlelights, disappeared.

Fiel was extremely—

“E～he～I’m in a good mood～, ah, I’ll take a snack～♪”

“... hee... Fii. I don’t know what you’re trying to do.”

Kurami’s chest gets hugged and fondled by Fiel, but she continues in a chilly voice:

“If you say they are *pinch sized*, I’ll snap ok?”

“.... waah, Kurami was cold to me～sniff sniff”

“Wait, fake tears!? F-Fii! Whatever the circumstances may be, you’re too drunk—”

—An Elf, and what’s more a Hexa-caster, her magical ability was so excellent it hurt her. Thanks to the muddy stream of the excess spirits, she was “Spirit Drunk” – no, that was more than—

“Kura, Kuramiii, Hic... Do you ~, hate me? Hic”

“Th-that’s not it! I’m so – wait! Why am I the one apologizing!?”

As Kurami considered that, Fiel suddenly smiled so radiantly it shined even inside that darkness.

“Geez Kuramiii ~ I already knew that ~ you love me ~♥”

“No! Can’t you do anything about this!? Can’t you sober up!?”

It looks like now a certain someone had started to rub cheeks together with Kurami. That certain someone was just an evil lesbian drunkard.

“.....”

As to what was going on, they were not certain. But, for Hatsuse Ino, it was “salvation”. He looks up at the things that existed thanks to the Old Deus’ power, and the “Sugoroku Board”, and thinks.

—Each time the heavens roared, there was a blackout, then it got fixed. This kept repeating on Kannagiri Island. In the meantime, they couldn’t play the immersion video games that the swindlers wanted. What’s more, it would probably be impossible with that enormous amount of spirits passing through the spell.

Neither Fiel nor Plum were hurrying on the game to start, in that case,

(... I pray that this continues...)

‘If only Miko-sama returned in the meantime’ That’s what Ino wished in private.

“S-secretary of Foreign Affairs Hatsuse! I-I’m terribly sorry about the current situation!!”

A woman’s voice called out as she came flying through the door to this noisy reception. It was a Warbeast woman with squirrel ears and tail. It seemed that she hurried a lot, she was out of breath, and her shoulders were going up and down.

“First official Kanae Chitose... I thought told you that I’m currently unavailable?”

... Admiring the drooping fruits that were moving up and down, was Ino’s sorry gaze. She was also under Kurami’s lethal gaze, but Chitose remained firm—

“I-I’m well aware! But since before the game started there is a guest that insists on seeing you!”

——

“... Hm”

After hearing Chitose’s report, Ino takes a small breath, and,

“Who the fuck is it this timeeeeeee!? Which scum betrayed us!!!”

—The glowing macho howled so fiercely that the 50 floor building shook. Chitose and Kurami screamed at the apparition that had finally reached poltergeist level.

—Is it Oceando? Or perhaps Avant Heim!? Ino doesn’t care who did it, he’s even thinking about letting go and killing everything, no,

“——.....Hey.....”

It wasn’t just Ino. Kurami, the drunk Fiel... even Plum too.

They opened their eyes wide in wonder, their thoughts stopped because of the figure that set down a heavy looking backpack. From the backpack, water overflowed, and the one who noisily jumped out was—

“Tada! Where are you Darling～!? The lovely Leila-chan came all the way from the bottom of the sea to love you ～☆ Ah of course I don’t mean just the feeling, what I meant was ‘I came to make love to you’
♥”

The queen of the Seirens – Leila Lorelei.

While the others were dumbfounded by something else, she looks around restlessly and says:

“Rather, what happened to the Eastern Federation! I was inside the bag for two days... was that *S&M*?”

—Surely, because of the blackout the infrastructure was stopped.



What Leila was saying was that they came while both the transportation facilities, and the elevator were repeatedly turning off and on. The others were dumbfoundedly asking themselves why the queen of the Seirens was there.

No— *More Importantly* —!!

As he yells that inside his head, Ino looks up towards the skies above – towards the Old Deus’ Sugoroku Board.

“—Impossible... then, *who the heck is that* ———!?”

■■■

They began with an “Oath” that it would take less than 15 in-game minutes. But in reality, that ended in just “1/32 of a second”

—The Phantasma, Avant Heim.

They were squaring off against the biggest, strongest faction that possesses both the Old Deus Artosh and the Flugel.

As they rained fire down onto the alliance, a voice suddenly resounded:

“Once, I asked my fellow countrymen this question”

That voice reverberated far and wide across the world, neither in elven or dwarven, nay. *Not in any language*. But, inexplicably, all who heard that voice, understood its meaning on the spot.

“Why were we able to survive this Great War?”

That was something the Phantasma emitted: *Omnilingualism*.

“Even though we don’t have great physical prowess. Even though we can’t use magic either. Even though we don’t have a long lifespan either. —Even though we are like this, we still survived this Great War – then, why?”

But the one saying that was certainly not Avant Heim, but *someone else*. Then, just who could borrow a Phantasma’s words—

“I answered my countrymen: We survived because we were weak.”

—The battlefield quieted down.

“It’s because we are powerless weaklings that we cowardly think of techniques to run away!! It is because we are fools without wisdom that we subserviently learn the techniques to stay alive!! We survived by piling on our thoughts and studies continuously and attaining ‘Wisdom’... That was my answer”

On the battlefield, weapons grounded heaven and earth into powder, and magic was flying about—

At that time, the battlefield chilled completely, as if the flame in a furnace was put out. Inside that silence, only that voice reverberated.

“... Now, I am *terribly ashamed* of those words.”

Everyone had a hunch. A premonition. An insight. That something was going to happen... that he was going to make something happen – or perhaps.

“They were the delusions of a fool, after all! There was a lack of imagination! But, in that case! How could we have imagined *this!?* Don’t tell me – Ah! there is no way! It was simply—”

Perhaps . It was like a nod at those who were able to think that.

“Completely unimaginable that you bastards were this incompetent”

—— *It was already happening.*

As if to prove that, a sublime light surged, erasing the boundary between heaven and earth. An enormous, outrageously absurd power was released – or perhaps liberated. All those who had their nerves connected to spirit circuits were forced to understand:

—There is no room for doubts.

The God of War. The strongest god. Old Deus Artosh – it was clear that his “Quintessence” had been destroyed. What happened? –

No, What was happening? No one could grasp it. But, the voice of the one who seemingly destroyed the God of War continues:

“You bastards are not fools! You are imprudent. You bastards are not weaklings! You don’t learn. In that case, what should we call you? I have been thinking... Even beasts with only instincts, don’t howl thoughtless, painful to hear words saying they are wise. Therefore I thought... And, so. I decided to call you this:”

—That is,

“Pathetically easy to tame —— ‘Pigs’”

And again, at the sign of that voice, the light flashes,

“ *Thanks for your trouble.* That’s right, I forgot to introduce myself.”

Seeing Avant Heim’s falling figure, in the end, everyone understood. The one who slaughtered the strongest: the Old Deus Artosh, the Flugel, and even the Phantasma, Avant Heim—

The one who used them, their enemy, provided their name together with a death sentence.

“We are the ones who ‘Pledge’ to your destruction: Immanity”

And, the last words that came from the falling Avant Heim.

—Before the echo died down—

“Come now pigs – dance. Dream on that you can escape the palm of my hand”

The light that grounded heavens and earth into powder had begun to respond, and—

■■■

In game time, that incident took less than two hours. But, for the ones looking at it—

“.....hey.....”

The one who mailed the “Commands”, Sora, and everyone else, were looking at the “Map” projected in midair. That incident happened in less than ¼ of a second.

From the “Alliance” facing Avant Heim, not a single one remained. Only two persons saw the total annihilation with understanding.

The Elve’s “Aka Si Anse”, the Dragoina’s “WarCry”, the Fairies’ “Sprite Town”.

The Dwarves’ “E-Bomb”, the Phantasmas’ “Alma Qualia”, the Demonias’ “Bloodborne”, etc...

Those were the “Trump cards” of all the units, of all the races facing them, respectively. Concentrating all those – everything, simply became dust.

With the collision of such exceedingly mighty powers, they took half of the Ariella continent with them. Thus, a “Storm of death” made of “elemental bones” was raging around Avant Heim’s corpse. In other words, Sora’s group’s, and Jibril’s “Capital” became a natural impregnable fortress.

— *Just as planned.* Only Sora and Shiro made a thin smile when they saw that.

“M-master... Just – *what did you do!?*”

—Mutual destruction. She understood that much.

So what Jibril is asking with a voice of admiration is – *how they did it.*

The alliance – the common front of the Elf Alliance and the Dwarf Alliance. Originally, they certainly were opposing powers.

But, they each had their use: their catastrophic war potential – under the principle of mutually assured destruction. If they were dragged into mutual destruction, then at a minimum “One had to have struck first”. What Jibril is asking is: *Then, which one, and how did they make them fire?*

“... We haven’t done anything. The one who did it... was Jibril, right?”

But Sora answered with a bitter tasting smile.

“The war the “Ero Elves” were waging because of their desire for orcs was interrupted by you”

So, that became an opportunity to divide the world into two: the dispute between the Demonia and the Elves. From there, a large scale battle started, an inescapable war of attrition,

“... In the first place, wasn’t Jibril – weren’t the Flugel those guys’ objective?”

That’s right, Jibril – the Flugel, *interrupted* by force. Until they destroyed the Flugel, the temporarily became a united front–

“Once they dealt with that obstacle, they’d resume what they were doing – They are *originally mutual enemies*, after all”

As he said that, Sora puts his finger on the map, and projects the scenery around Avant Heim’s corpse – their “Capital”, in midair.

—“A storm of death”. It seems that due to the interaction with the black ashes, the “Elemental bones” shined blue and spiraled around. But the powerful collisions produced an “Elemental bones Fusion reaction” that roared like thunderclouds.

Each time the lightning-like light shone, it was as if a piece of earth’s crust was gouged out.

... With a face that said that he couldn’t be dumbfounded anymore, he asks:

“... They still had the crazy fire power to create this scenery lifted straight from the lowest layer of hell, *in reserve*. If they weren’t stingy, and used it freely – I’ll ask just in case, but do the Flugel get any crazier than this?”

‘There is no way they get any more nor less crazy than this’ Sora adds in his mind. He can’t decide whether it’s more or less, it’s already meaningless. Jibril answers:

“... The full power of Artosh and the Flugel – “God Strike” can barely rival it... I think this is the limit.”

—It can rival even that huh?

How this planet keep its original form keeps becoming more and more mysterious, but...

In any case, that means that even the Flugel forces didn't have enough firepower to destroy it in an instant. Then, if they used a plan that didn't do that to corner the Flugel and crush them—

“That means they were thinking about what happens *after* the Flugel were defeated, as they were watching out for each other”

—That was something that usually happened in the wars Sora and Shiro knew from their previous world. The ones who were waging war did *not* think about the method to win the current war. After winning the current war – How would they win *the next war*? *That* is what they thought about.

That's right, after defeating the strongest, it's time to choose “who to defeat next”.

“It was then that, suddenly, they saw Artosh and Avant Heim being defeated.”

While both factions still had their reserves, the enemy tentatively disappeared. Both would surely realize:

“There is a “traitor” who jumped the gun on them and destroyed the Flugel forces”

“... Then... that is... of course... *not themselves* , right...♪”

—Which one attacked first?

Either one is fine. Actually, it doesn't matter. Whoever it was is fine. Since the beginning, they both, *believed they'd be betrayed*, that is because they were only a common front. Then, since they believed they'd be betrayed, they just needed to provide a small basis for those doubts.

—For example. Yes, just like Sora did.

With Jibril's "Map", with Jibril's "Commands", with Jibril's "Post Box".

To two of Jibril's units: "Avant Heim" and "Artosh".

He just needed to write two small messages ordering the *units to self-destroy*.

So, in the end—

"—Ready Fight!! ... like that♪"

'Hurry and get back to slaughtering, idiots' That's what those words meant.

"... Going back to the beginning, this war started because you wanted to do "Ku, just kill me" play, right?"

Did she suddenly collect herself? ... Thatb was the outrageous motive that invited this disastrous situation.

Did she remember who the main culprit was? Steph turns towards Sora and Shiro with cold eyes, but—

"Sigh, those are the elves we know of. Even though this world's Elves are way too elegant. The name elf, is better suited for someone who says "Nohooo" with a juicy ahegao—"

"... Nii... you have seen... too many thin books... furthermore, you're in pretty deep..."

Steph looked at them with icy eyes, but the main culprits, Sora and Shiro kept carelessly writing commands. Besides,

"That, was just an 'opportunistic excuse'. Look, the real thing is about to start."

"... With the largest force... the Flugel force, absent... the two big forces... are already wounded..."

And, as if anticipating that something would happen , Sora's group's map was being projected.

“—well, come on. Will you be the last one standing? *Keep going until no one else remains.*”

So, when it looked like all the races would start clashing, Sora laughed with great disdain.

...and.

“...M-master, but if it’s like this, when the ‘Capital’ gets attacked, we will instantly—”

Having finally recovered from her stupefaction because of Jibril’s voice, Steph’s shoulders also perked up.

“Wait, that’s right!? Even though it’s checkmate if they perceive us, why did you introduce yourself!?”

That’s right, if they sense Immanity’s existence, and investigate it, then pinpointed the “Capital”, and attacked it – It would end in that instant.

—Sora’s group’s and Jibril’s “Common capital”, Avant Heim, self-destructed. The “Flugel Units” are already gone, and with their master’s death, more can’t be born, and, of course, they can’t move their capital either.

And that, as a matter of fact, was the same for Sora’s group. The area around the “Capital” was reduced to a world of death, the “Immanity Units” couldn’t get close either. Even if they manipulated their units remotely to try and move the capital, they couldn’t just leave Jibril alone.

In other words, this “Common Capital”, was practically empty. *It was totally defenseless.*

If someone just entered, they’d gain control of it, the capital would fall, and they’d die, however,

“No one is going to come to attack us” Sora concludes, as he interrupts Steph and Jibril.

“ That’s because, we understand all of it: what they’ll do, how they’ll move, where they’ll pass through.”

—That’s right, Sora and Shiro understand.

Where someone will pass through, where they’ll fight, where they’ll lie in wait, where they’ll attack – all of it.

In order to mail the “Commands” she keeps receiving in rapid succession, Steph keeps making full-speed round trips. She tilts her head to the side in doubt – But, did Jibril notice *that* ? She opens her eyes wide, and gasps.

“Master... it... can’t be—!?”

Even though Sora and Shiro are manipulating it, the “Map” *is still unnaturally detailed.*

“That’s right. *First, it’s that* – Plum’s ancestors are really reliable, huh ♪”

“Plum’s ancestors you say!? Did you win over the Dhampir!?”

Jibril and Steph screamed doubting his sanity, but Sora just laughs and slides his pen.

— There are few races that can do “Diplomacy”, what’s more they shouldn’t want any cooperation clauses. But, they were few only *until they stated losing* . Now there certainly are races that can be made to cooperate. Races that, even if they notice Immanity, since it has absolutely no value, they completely ignore it.

But, if they had Sora’s group’s information, and utilized it to the fullest, they would be able to avoid the ravages of war, and profit while the others fought.

—Elves, Dwarves, that dependable race *can have their choice of either blood and suck as much as they want.*

“With the information we sent them, it seems the Dhampir can already read the state of this war. Furthermore—”

The enemy's information was stripped bare – that is already the same as having everything on the palm of their hand.

On top of that, they could predict perfectly how the Dhampir would move.

It's simple. Why–

Because, *it would be fine if we just teach them how to move.*

As Steph and Jibril are speechless, Sora and Shiro laugh daringly.

—For Immanity, things like modern day warfare tactics... are completely useless. If they aren't accompanied by weapon technology, they are useless, and cramming in the theory wouldn't be reliable. Not to mention that, against this monstrous bunch, even if humanity gathered all the weapons in the planet, they still wouldn't be able to fight them.

“In the first place, every war tactic is made under the assumption that it would be used against an opponent of the same class, between humans”

None of the war tactics from their previous world assumed they'd go against crazy opponents. In that case.

“– It is because we are making someone of the same class use them that they are valuable.”

To the Elves, who excel at individual abilities, they gave the tactics of flexible defense in depth through mixed squad composition.

To the Dwarves, who excel at armored weapons, they gave the tactics for penetration through air and land, the blitzkrieg doctrine.

Sword and shield, if each faction held one in advance – this happens.

“... Yes, *it inevitably becomes a mess*, right?”

One advancing, one retreating. The “Map” would inevitably be plunged into a war of attrition.

“Wait, Sora!? The Warbeast city, it's being attacked!?”

Since the city that they made the Warbeasts build was being attacked by a large amount of Elf troops, Steph unintentionally stopped her mailing round trips, and screamed with irritation.

—It is self-evident that in a war of attrition, after waging total war continuously, they'd start to lack food. That's why there is now a march plundering the world's largest grain-producing region.

"Eh?. Ah yes. We knew, but so what?"

"... that's why... we made them... build it?"

Sora and Shiro write "Commands" without sparing a single glance, and, as if they were reading a prophecy out loud:

"August 5th year -2 B.T., food troubles become severe, the Elves move to secure agricultural land."

—Nay. Their matter-of-fact mutterings were as if they were reading "History" out loud.

"They are planning on taking control of an agricultural city from the northern mountains, using 4 Dragonias and 7 mixed divisions."

"... *with the same objective* , the Dwarves.... Are going to intercept this, in those mountains... In 9 days, there will be a battle."

Without stopping his "Command" writing hand, Sora thinks.

—'This world'. No, the guys from the time of the Great War, huh.

They are certainly dreadful – They have technologies and weapons that can easily defeat even modern day Earth. But, the way they use them... Good grief, they are surprisingly naive.

... Well the ones who own the crazy technologies, have crazy enemies.

Establishing effective war tactics is difficult. Personnel, material resources, firepower. It is perfectly natural to be biased towards one of those.

—But, *that would be troublesome*. Sora chuckles a little.

The moves of an amateur that doesn't use logic and solves everything with strength, are the hardest to read. That's why we will *teach them deliberately*.

"... The Dwarves, in the mountains, couldn't capitalize on their mobility... they lost 42.7% of their invested war power."

"And, on the Elves' side, with 5 divisions remaining they redeployed, and achieved a "Tactical Victory—"

That was when the amateurs obtained incomplete knowledge. It was time to use what was for them "stopgap knowledge".

—Everything is on the palm of their hands.

"But it ended on a "*Strategic loss*" – That's because."

Thus, when Sora and Shiro gathered together and the corners of their mouth began to rise ominously—

—There was a flash on top of the "Map".

From the display where the northern mountains were projected, the Elf army, suddenly disappeared together with the surrounding landscape, including the whole mountains. Sora laughs wickedly:

"... '*Aka Si Anse*' was detonated. Because the five remaining divisions were also annihilated"

Incidentally, the invasion land route from the Elves' territory was also cut off with this. Steph, and even Jibril are dumbfounded at Sora's words,

"M-master... why would the Elves' own weapon be used against the Elves!?"

She screamed at the mystery of the Elves' own weapon being used against them, but,

"Well, that would be because we used it."

Sora said such absurd words without hesitation. Steph, and even Jibril froze.

“The plan to transform the Elves into “Ero Elves” to bring them over to our side failed... but.”

But, as he keeps writing commands, even more detachedly, Sora continues:

“The Warbeasts succeeded in kidnaping and bringing the Elves, right?”

“... e-eeeh wait! Now that I think about it you never told me the method you used to do that!?”

—Not letting them use magic. The method to create a situation where they can’t even resist.

Extremely trivial. Very easily. Even easier than taking a breath. That was:

“It’s easy. In front of an Elf that has children, you just have to take that child and say this!”

Sora, filled with a childish purity, and with a smile like the sun, reveals it:

“‘If you resist we will kill your child♪’ – That’s all! We get one more puppet!”

“You are a *scum*!!”

“Unexpectedly frank!?”

When Sora revealed that he had so much cruelty in him, Steph immediately disparaged him with an instant response.

“When you offered the Warbeasts food, wasn’t it just for this!?”

“N-no no no!? There is no way Shiro and I would use such an evil move, look!!”

As Steph grabs him by the collar, Sora point at the “map” with consternation.

—The situation was that since the land route for the invasion was cut off, the elves were now approaching by air.

“I-if we released the Elf who fired ‘Aka Si Anse’! What do you think they’d do to the Warbeasts? Once they reported everything, they’d surely come to take revenge, right!?”

“Ah～so that was it♥ Let me correct myself: *You are a son of a bitch !!*”

But, ignoring the enraged Steph,

“... But, this time... the Dwarves... win”

Just as Shiro was muttering that, the approaching Elf army disappeared.

... In mountainous terrain, in “Extreme terrain warfare”, the Dwarves’ mobile army wouldn’t display it’s true ability.

But, in an “aerial battle” the Dwarves, who have flying warships, are unrivaled.

That’s because using the flying warships, they applied the maritime war doctrines to aerial war, and spreaded out all their ships.

“The world’s most prominent food producing area, and what’s more it took a century. As if we would let it fall so easily.”

The dumbfounded Steph releases Sora, and as he was returning to the desk, he continues:

“I told you, right? That I’ll have them fight each other for food for a while.”

“... the one who controls the food... controls the world...”

And, the two of them fiercely, but also having a lot of fun, continue:

“M～any more will die～... both persons, and things that aren’t persons, a large quantity is going to die”

“... kill each other...♪”

“Well then, who is going to win even though there is no room to care about Immanity～?”

“... I can’t even say anything to such a brutish deed...”

Steph didn’t have the willpower to retort anymore, she gave up, and returned to her mailing work.

——.....

By using the Dhampir, they obtained a large and precise amount of information.

In 184 years, after observing the movements of all races, Shiro was able to mathematically “predict” how the war would flow.

In 184 years, after scheming to exhaustion, Sora used tricks to change it into a “Done deal”.

And, as anything and everything rolled on the palm of their tiny hands, Sora and Shiro –

Her Masters.

But, as she sees their sweat rolling down their brows to their cheeks, Jibril thinks privately:

Even if it’s Sora and Shiro... reading through everything in the “Great War” *is impossible*.

How the Gigants or the Lunamana would act, how the indefinite races would intervene, is impossible to predict. What’s more, no matter how many strategies they compiled, or how they based them on calculations, an unpredictable situation would surely arise.

Surely, they even factored in those. Surely, they even predicted the unpredictable – but.

—If there was only a single fatal misread.

—If there was only a single error in the instructions.

Just with that, the capital would be immediately pinpointed, and, unarguably, “death” would be waiting. More than anyone else, the two of them were aware of that fact, but, they just laughed with ferocity.

“Hahaha!! *If we are able to beat this* , the endorphins would be amazing!?”

“... Shiro... is already... amazing ... now...”

Has there ever been such a sublimely impossible game? There is no doubt, this is the game with the highest difficulty ever, and those two cheerfully laugh at it—

But Jibril turns her face with uneasiness, the hand holding her diary, trembling.

——.....

“... aah... the world is being destroyed”

Steph said with a sigh, and continued her mailing round trips without hurry. Projected in the air, was a planet headed towards death. Wasting pieces, the world headed towards destruction, but,

“ Aah it’s being destroyed. It’s better to let this stale “Established Tactic” be destroyed ”

Sora says that over his shoulder, stops composing “Commands”, and looks at the “Map”.

... The dying planet. There was an era where that was reality.

... The wasting pieces. There was an era where they were human lives.

Threatening, kidnapping, killing, cutting down, using, deceiving, betraying, tormenting—.

Sora used all those moves. Dirty moves, tricks, even unfair moves as long as they weren’t found out, but,

“... a method that doesn’t care about any sacrifices. *Anyone is capable of doing that.* ”

Yes, that’s easy. The proof is that even the world has not cared about anyone since forever.

And, after piling on sacrifices, just what would you want?

Yourself, or someone other than yourself, someone will be destroyed
– is that the conclusion you want?

Sora doesn't understand that. Surely, he doesn't want to understand
it for all eternity...

"This world is a game. It *became* a game."

In the past, there was someone who laughed scornfully at the idiot's
method that anyone could do.

The one who refused to make even a single sacrifice, Sora, looks at
Jibril, and laughs.

"—No one is going to die, we won't let them. Not Jibril, not me, and
not anyone else—"

How did the world change—?

"A world where such selfishness is accepted. *It changed into a world
where it could be accepted.*"

In that case, I'm at least thankful to the one who performed the last
rites of this stale "Established tactic".

—Isn't that right... that certain someone...

■■■

—70 hours had passed.

Seated on the ground of square 308, Izuna gazes at that. Many races were being destroyed, and the world, the planet, was being broken to the point of no return.

Sora's group was being projected by the Old Deus. They were getting cornered, and some impatience was beginning to show in their faces. But the one viewing that, Izuna, wasn't uneasy anymore. She was just remembering.

Remembering the old story that Tet told her, a story that had never been told. A story about the ones who ended the Great War of the past, the two who resembled Sora and Shiro a little bit. Those two accomplished incredible feats, but even so, their older sister still said this:

— 'Why am I so frustrated....?'

To answer that question, the one who obtained the "SuniaSTER", Tet, had said:

— 'Well, that is because the game is not over yet'

In the distant, distant past, on the day he obtained the "SuniaSTER", the day he published the "Ten Pledges". The one who changed and remade the world, Tet, hadn't finished speaking. Even though Izuna reviewed her memories many times, she was certain he said this:

— 'Come on, let's *continue* this game'

The game didn't start in that distant, distant past. It had already started – It was just *continuing*.

A myth that could not be told would soon be continued in a myth that could be told. What those two desired in the past was never granted, but its future was succeeded without interruption by these two....

A single victory will change the endlessly accumulated defeats into meaningful defeats. But right now, no one, not even Sora and Shiro, had obtained that single victory.

— Until they finally attained a single victory in which no one is sacrificed.

“... Tet, Izuna called you a stinking liar, desu.... Forgive me desu.”

With her long ears hanging, Izuna lowers her head, apologizes and thinks. Sora and Shiro resemble those two, but just a little bit. Sora and Shiro are *not as strong* as those two, that’s why she’s relieved. Surely, Sora and Shiro will not make the same *mistake* as Riku and Shuvi.

【.....】

And Izuna sees how the Old Deus’ robotic, unimpressed face trembles just a little.

“... sorry, desu. Izuna is not very bright... so I can’t answer, desu.”

— ‘What does it mean to believe?’

How should Izuna answer? How should she reach the goal? As expected, she doesn’t know. But, even so, she intuitively concludes: Izuna was not wrong.

"If you die, then I don't want to win, desu! I absolutely refuse to believe that's wrong, desu"

—Silence was the only response, and Izuna looks at the projected spectacle one again.

At the world that was being destroyed, but that was fine. She smiles. After all, that should be the *world that they were kind enough to break* ...

■■■

Inside his accelerating thoughts, he remembers a boy from the past.

— ‘If you had to die for the sake of the world, what would you really do?’ He remembered the day he thought that.

On that day he thought that winning “Alone” was meaningless, and laughed. But, even winning the two of them “Together” was still not enough. In that case he needed a method to win together with the whole “World”. But such a method may not exist in this world, he had half given up—

—But, it existed in “That World”.

That day, when he heard the ten rules, and stood on the land where the giant chess pieces could be seen in the distance. The boy from the past, a black-haired, black-eyed young man held hands with his younger sister, and smiled broadly.

— ‘I finally found it’

There, a method existed. The “Ten Pledges”. The “*Opening Move*” required to go beyond the “Established tactic” in which everything you do is accompanied by sacrifices.

— ‘It is also an extremely opportunistic world’

He rejoiced, and on the other hand, smiled bitterly at that. But it wasn’t *simple opportunism*. Taking an opportunity, they challenged the things that they had run away from, in exchange for everything, until someone finally obtained it. Who could ever believe in *such opportunism* ?

If it wasn’t for the fact that the Great War did end with the pledges, it would be a ridiculous tale. That extraordinary human makes the young man feel embarrassed. But now this is what he thinks:

Was that guy.... No.

Were you.

— *Really okay with that?*

I... just can't think that's the case.

— A passing impact interrupted Sora's accelerated thoughts.

The date displayed on the "Map" was: "Year -53 B.T.". In other words, there were only 15 minutes remaining until the 72-hour time limit expired. The light that hit very close to them evaporated the earth's crust and blew it up to the stratosphere.

— And the "Storm of death" that concealed their "Capital", Avant Heim, was blown away – *it was ripped off.*

"Hey! What should we do? What is going on!?"

Steph screamed with tears in her eyes, it seems that the impact just now had caused her to trip.

"Don't ask me! There are *unexpected things happening on top of the expected things* !"

".....Even though..... we were so.... confident"

Sora and Shiro screamed a reply while they kept moving their pens. They glare at the "Map". Up until 15 hours ago, it clearly revealed the world, and showed the war's situation, but now, it didn't show almost anything, and was mostly black again, but, most importantly, it didn't accurately show the war situation anymore.

"Well, we knew from the beginning that it was an impossible game! The important thing was having fun on top of that, right!?"

"... It was a challenge.... to see how far... we could go.... in an impossible game"

Sora and Shiro bring their impatience under control, they force themselves to laugh together, and keep moving their pens.

—They knew that they wouldn't be able to read the movements of the races they didn't have enough information about.

But of all the races... Sora privately grits his teeth in frustration.

To think that the “Lunamana” were already on the red moon in the era of the Great War. The guys they had the least information about, intervened. It was a variation that was completely unreadable. They caused the destruction of the two strategic axes, the Elves and the Dwarves.

Because of the the falling moon opening the skies, both the Dhampir, and the “Scout units”, were crushed by the upheaval of heaven and earth, they were annihilated. Thus, the map was now blackened like it was when the game started. The only thing projected was:

The situation of the few remaining “Immanity Units” and “Cities”, which kept disappearing even now. And, as if they were looking for something, or perhaps driving someone into a corner, a few enemy units were closing the encirclement on Sora's group's “Capital” now that it had been stripped of the “Storm of death”. Both the units that they could move, and even the units from other races that they could move indirectly, were nonexistent. There was already almost nothing they could do.

Jibril lowers her head and murmurs:

“... Master. That's enough. Please, ‘Order’ me—”

But Sora and Shiro interrupt her and immediately reply:

“ *Shut up♪*”

“... Jibril, *sit* ♥”

Jibril was forced to sit in seiza, and Steph continues:

“Whooooa!? There was something bright just now! Wait!! A flash!?”

Was the sound already outside the audible range? It was a point-blank shot that couldn't even be heard. There were lights and shocks, and only Steph kept running back and forth from the "Mail Box".

"... Masters, at this rate, as a bonus Dola-chan will also die..."

"I came this far and I'm still treated as a bonus!? I'm seriously going to cry soon!"

Steph was the only one who didn't understand the circumstances but still accompanied Sora, Shiro, and Jibril. That heart full of infinite benevolence, moved even Sora and Shiro so much they were shaking but—

"Please order me to 'Hand over the dice and die'—!!"

Jibril's tearful scream shook the hall. That voice froze Steph in her tracks, what's more, the following words made her doubt her ears:

"... I'm scared... Please... forgive me already..."

As if she was making a trembling supplication, Jibril embraces her diary and wets the floor. Seeing that, Sora and Shiro don't respond. Steph inevitably becomes speechless again. Silence was the only answer... and.

What broke the long silence was a flash and an impact. The impact made Steph jump and also made them really feel that "Death" was approaching.

"... I know that you are making such a risky bet for the sake of someone like me... but I must say."

So she wiped her tears to smooth things over,

"For your incapable servant this is a great honor... but please think about your position"

Thus, Jibril holds out 9 dice from her chest, and says:

“... The Flugel have no fear of death. Please, ‘Order’ me ...”

— If she handed over her dice, her memories would disappear – *and she would be unable to commit suicide.*

Therefore, since Jibril is Sora and Shiro’s possession, a compulsory order is necessary. That is the only way this death game will end while satisfying Jibril’s selfishness. She smiles, and talks as if she was already satisfied:

“It is not necessary for you to die. Please, just end m—”

“*Shut up, okay!?* Just be silent already, you’re distracting me!!”

Sora’s voice interrupted Jibril’s words. It was sharper than the destructive impacts, and shook the hall more. And then, Sora and Shiro finally stopped their pens and turned around with an angry expression.

—When they see their seething anger and fierce eyes, both Jibril and Steph gulp.

But they immediately go back to writing “Commands”, and continue yelling:

“‘It’s scary so let me die’!? ‘Dying is not scary’!? God damn it shut up!! We are so scared of death that we are not just going to leak piss, our very lives are about to leak out, god damn it!!”

“... Nii... when was... the last time... you went to the... toilet...!?”

— ‘Ah, as expected, I’m about to leak, god damn it!’ Sora lamented privately.

Sora handed Steph a new “Command”, almost throwing it, and said:

“It’s just meaningless chatter!! To put it simply, aren’t you *just showing off?!!*”

Like that, he got straight to the point.

—Losing my memories is so scary I want to die. *But?*

I don’t want to cause trouble. I want to win. If I can’t, then I want to die. *However?*

I am evil. My Masters aren’t evil. *But, however.*

That is the only way. Please live my share too—

“Who do you think we are!? Who are your Masters!?”

“... If you are... the possession... of two hikikomori.... neet gamers...!”

“Then act properly! Like that!! Be completely and thoroughly *lame*”

And, as Steph perplexedly mails “Commands”.

—One of Immanity’s cities was literally annihilated.

They revealed it on purpose to distract them, and as it disappears from the “Map” together with the display:

“Something like: I don’t want to die!! I don’t want to be dead!! I don’t want to lose, nor give up my memories!! *So please, help me!!* If we lose everyone will die, *but I don’t want that either !!*”

Sora and Shiro kept writing instructions as they yelled:

“Follow your master’s *example* a little, it’s fine to cry and scream lamely!!”

“_____”

And, Jibril’s face became strained, as if she was holding back the tears at the corner of her eyes.

—71 hours and 45 minutes.

“Just one death is necessary!? One, three, one hundred million, or one trillion are all the same, I don’t care!!!”

“... B-but! If this keeps up, and the “Capital” were to fall—”

Sora, Shiro, and Steph, no, at worst, all the participants in the game against the Old Deus will get dragged in.

“I-I-If it comes to that! We will worry about it then!?”

“... I-It won’t... fall, maybe...?”

But, in response to Jibril’s complaint; Sora, with a falsetto voice; and Shiro, with tears in her eyes, scream their answers in question form.

Apart from the capital, only 2 cities remain, using one whole city as a decoy only buys them a few minutes. They couldn’t buy even 50 days of in-game time, and after that, there were signs of the enemy units approaching again. Sora and Shiro don’t stop their hands even now, and just think.

——71 hours and 49 minutes.

... There is no way there is any evidence.

Just situational conjectures, with more conjectures piled on top. But Sora and Shiro, for some odd reason, could say this with certainty, as if they had seen it with their own eyes.

... That there was an extraordinary idiot that arbitrarily decided that this hell of a “Great War” *was just a game*. While he was getting grilled by the fires of war, and sinking into despair, he wanted to show that the “Great War” could be altered to have zero sacrifices. To go beyond that “Established tactic”. It was an incredibly foolish dream. Struggling, writhing, he challenged the whole world, but it was still not enough.

—But the next time... the next time, for sure.

There was a damn cool gamer that kept saying that up until the moment he died.

—— *However* ——!

“As if we could become that strong— *as if we could live in such a cool way!!*”

At the screaming Sora’s “Command”, one more city is engulfed by light, and disappears, but this time, the “Enemy Units” that made it disappear were dragged in, and disappeared too. The “E-Bomb” they had plundered from the departed Dwarves, was ignited by the “Enemy Units” own attack.

A land that couldn’t even be called a continent anymore was destroyed. One city and 177 “Immanunity Units” remain.

But even so, Sora and Shiro think together even now.

——71 hours and 51 minutes.

— That cool, godlike gamer *failed* . The one who ended the Great War, and made the opportunity of the “Ten Pledges”, was an awe-inspiring great person! But alas! I will repeat it as many times as necessary: he *failed!!!*

“Isn’t that right!? If we were actually cool, we’d win against Jibril now, right!?”

Sora glances at the mathematical formula that Shiro gave him, understands with perfect synchrony, and quickly moves his pen.

“So! Saying something like: ‘Jibril, I won’t let your sacrifice be in vain’ while crying manly tears — *Lying* to both you and myself would be so cool, right!? So manly that I’d be gay for that person, might as well present my butt, but let me ask you one thing!!” Sora screamed.

And as if he was asking all those too cool protagonists, he screams again:

“— After showing off like that, I dare you to tell me: *what would remain!?*”

The futures of Shiro, who had teary eyes; Steph, who was frightened as she ran; and Jibril, who hung her head—?

“You will eloquently run away by dying, quit without a 2 week notice! These guys will cry miserably and quit too!! The only thing remaining would be a virgin burdened with your karma too, what’s up with that!? It is so incomprehensible that I will get a headache, you know!?”

— Ah, that’s right. Apart from that, one more thing remained.

The next time for sure, it will end without having to sacrifice anyone. In a world where everything is decided by games. That guy certainly left behind an “Opening Move”: the “Ten Pledges”. So awesome. We don’t feel like we could ever do such a thing at all. But —

— *What did the person himself think about that — !?*

The god-like gamer that did all that. Just what did he want to do!? Did he want to end the Great War!? Save the world!? That is absolutely *wrong!!* He had such an absurd dream, and he actually tried to make it real, he was truly an astronomically big idiot! Would humanity’s most prideful and biggest idiot really be motivated by such a “Goody two-shoes” reason?

— *There is no way!!*

“Only we can say that the number of years without girlfriend=our age on every update, only we can ask for the definition of ‘friend’ with a straight face, only us: the hikikomori gamers! Some people like to condescendingly say that ‘people can change’, but there is no way flies can change into whales, there is a limit, a limit!! —In that case!!”

As if to take his mind off the fear, he stops yelling, and takes one big breath. Sora says in a small, controlled voice:

“... *Let’s live like that ...?*”

“Will we obtain everything? Or lose everything? It’s all or nothing, but I won’t say ‘sorry’”

His voice was decisive, but it also trembled. His hand firmly grasped Shiro’s, but his foot kept rapping on the floor.

—That is who they are. The siblings exchange a look and smile.

I don’t wanna die, I don’t wanna be dead either— I don’t wanna regret anything either. I don’t wanna, I don’t wanna, I don’t wanna. These two small children, Sora and Shiro, rejected everything and came this far.

“... In the unlikely event — well, there is no way, but when we kick the bucket, *we will take everyone with us ♪* ”

“... So... give it up... and at least, prepare yourself....”

Those spoiled children said something so selfish it makes you think that they never learned any self-control. It was a refreshingly lame declaration.

“Let’s have fun until the very end!! Even in such a thrilling game, okay!?”

As if it was in response to Sora’s laugh, one more city disappeared together with the “Enemy Units”.

Using nuclear weapons inside your own territory. They used the so-called “Belkan self-defense strategy [\[1\]](#) ” – No.

It was already nothing more than a suicidal attack, and if those kept piling on—

●—Five minutes and 42 seconds remaining.

But, even now, Jibril hangs her head in shame and mutters:

“... But, even so... It’s my fault...”

Only Steph caught that, and replies:

“... No... Those two are just crazy... probably.”

Jibril had her head down, but when she heard Steph’s reply, she looked up at her smile.

“If we have to sacrifice someone, then we will kill everyone without telling anyone. It is a perplexingly irrational thought, but”

Steph had a perplexed smile, but she said that eloquently, and starts running again.

“— *That’s why they won’t sacrifice anyone!* Whether it is right, or wrong, it is an irrational thought that I want to believe in!!” As she understood that, she mails another “Command”—

●—71 hours and 58 minutes.

Without even needing to look at the “Map” they saw the “Enemy Units” approaching. The moment the enemies were one step away from stepping into the “Capital”, they were stricken with the conviction that everyone was going to die. Even then, Sora and Shiro, fiercely kept looking for a breakthrough, but their hands had stopped.

—19 Units remain. The only remaining city was the “Capital”. There was nothing they could do. What’s more, they couldn’t think of a single effective move.

Even so, they kept looking for an out inside their infinitely accelerated thoughts. Next to Sora, his sister was making a bitter grimace, while clutching her head, and suddenly.

— Just what did the human who ended the Great War want to do?

Why? That seemed to be something a stranger couldn’t understand.

... That guy surely – no. *As expected* , he didn’t care about the world.

He was just dissatisfied with it... that was all.

He just chose to live as he liked... that was all.

That's how he concluded that the magnificent method of "Ending the Great War" was—

“.....”

Shiro's face was dyed with impatience and uneasiness; she was biting her nails. Seeing this, Sora thinks. That guy simply *wanted to see a smile*, that was all. If he forgot about the world and ran away from everything, *she wouldn't have smiled*.

—For someone... like that—

—.....

And inside his thoughts that were still accelerated without limit.

—Suddenly.

— “... Are we going to fail again?”

Someone's voice asked that question, but it felt like it echoed in front of him. Sora and Shiro raise their faces together and, with a strange composure, they give the one who was there a bitter smile. Their thoughts were so accelerated that the information was consolidated into an abstract image. They were hallucinating.

There were two silhouettes that were dark like shadows, their faces were not clear either... *they were standing apart*.

— “....aah, we might fail”

That was Sora's answer—

“But we will never make *the same mistake as you* ——!!”

“... You are.. Such a handful...!!”

With that, Sora and Shiro *strongly rejoin the hands they had released without noticing*. And, ignoring the other's surprise, they focus on a

unit that appeared on the map for just an instant. Sora and shiro smile deviously, and write one “Command” at the same time.

The unit that teleported instantly. Sora cannot read its movements at all. Shiro designates the “Ex-Machina Unit”.

But she has no idea what to do with it. In Shiro’s place, Sora writes the instructions.

In this way, Sora and Shiro write a “Command” that neither of them understand completely.

They wrote it hastily, and together, they threw it at Steph.

●——71 hours 59 minutes and 59 seconds.

With their thoughts accelerated to the limit, the view outside the Capital became colorless and soundless.

—Each second is eight hours— It was close to 30,000 times faster. And yet they gave the impression that they could see it.

Approaching the Capital, was a conspicuously large Dragonia dragging along a mob of Units. They were certain that if it opened its mouth even once, they would all rush inside the Capital—

—Sora’s mind was filled with countless flashbacks.

They were memories that he didn’t want to remember, but that he wasn’t allowed to forget. But, when he squeezes Shiro’s hand, she squeezes back and smiles. Sora thinks.

Even though Shiro was kind enough to squeeze that hand dyed in red, he was still unable to do anything. He had finally turned his back on that world, for this world, *where everything was prepared so well.*

—This time for sure. If it’s here. Here nothing is impossible. This is just what they wanted.

Those two put their everything into that “Command”, and mailed it through Steph. At the same time —

“Hahaha!! Allow me to show you Laputa’s thunder [\[2\]](#) —”

“... you shall be mowed down...!!”

Looking like they were having fun, Sora and Shiro respectively screamed the “Lines that they wanted to try saying once” ranked 5th and 8th at Avant Heim’s corpse, their “Capital”.

—Next, an incredibly precise direct hit drowned them out.

An orbital bombardment was taking place, and an impact coming from directly above the “Capital” roared. Making heaven and earth scream, that absurd light *pierced straight through the planet* in a right angle.

The approaching crowd, and even the Dragonia’s “Far Cry”, it returned everything to nothingness. If the player space wasn’t separate, not even their particles would have remained.

“... S-Sora, Shiro! Just what were your instructions!?”

As they were covered with that world ending light, Steph asks about what happened. Checking the time on their smartphones, Sora and Shiro answer calmly:



“... *I don't know* ... but, I thought that... the Ex-Machina... would do this”

“If that’s what Shiro thinks, then that’s that. After all, *I don't know either* , but in any case”

And so, Sora reveals what he ordered the “Immanunity Unit” to do:

“We told the Ex-Machina the Capital’s coordinates. Then we tried to tempt them by telling them to *try and end this* ♪”

In short, they did it “Somehow”.

They so declared, but Sora and Shiro’s only response was the sound of something shattering. The cracks that spread across their field of view were an impact that the power that pierced through the planet couldn’t match.

●——72 hours.

—And so, there were Sora and Shiro.

They once again turn their eyes towards the vague contours, and show them a smile.

“We made a promise... that we wouldn’t let each other’s hands go ever again—”

“... that there wouldn’t be... anymore, regrets... nor deaths...”

— Since you did the things that we couldn’t do, you can be at ease.

—Because *next*, we will take up the things that you couldn’t do.

When they said that, the shadows smiled just a little. But that must have been just their imagination...

■■■

— The space that had been compressing one whole planet was released.

As if the twisted laws of physics were trying to remember their place. It seemed that both gravity and time had stopped inside that white space. The only thing in it were four people floating around. Two of them were holding hands and laughing. When she heard Sora and Shiro's mutterings:

"....."

Jibril tries to think of something to say, but nothing came to mind. She had forced her own Masters to go through something like that. It was a blasphemy that deserved more than 10 thousand deaths — No. Now she understood that even thinking that was a terrible insult... Even apologizing was out of the question.

Self hatred, apologeticness, inadequacy, imprudence—

Before she met them, she didn't understand those raging feelings, they were nothing more than simple vocabulary for her. Then, just what kind of face should she make?

"..... Haaaaaaaaaaaaa.... Well....."

Sora exhaled as if he was breathing out his soul too.

"Hmm... well. That was quite fun. You get a passing grade Jibril-kun"

He said with a sour expression and a forced smile.

"... You brought us into a game that we had to lose. At that time, we were utterly defeated."

"..... It was fun.... But *next time* We will win completely..."

Shiro also wasn't blaming nor criticizing her at all.

"— You did a splendid job making Blank suffer its first *loss* . But prepare yourself"

Just that.....

“Make no mistake, this won’t be settled with just a hundred, a thousand or even ten thousand of your pathetic defeats.”

Sora said with a face that only expressed how *frustrated he was at losing*. They were acting tough, saying that there wouldn't be a second time. Her two masters were being poor losers. But Jibril, from the bottom of her heart, didn’t understand... she was dumbfounded.

— “Utterly defeated”? — “Loss” ?

Just what were those two saying. It was supposed to be her last and worst game. But it wasn’t the last, and they transformed into her best game, and on top of that...

They were even willing to say ‘ *Let’s play again*’ to someone like her.

— They obtained a “Defeat that can’t compare to a mere victory” and yet.

Even so, a loss is a loss, and when she sees their frustration, Jibril, finally understands. The words that she should say come to mind first, and then, the expression she should make—

“... *Thank you*, Master, words are not enough to express my thanks...”

Overcome with emotion, she whispers that, and remembers.

— ‘ *If you have fun*, give me an offering, give me two dice, okay♪’

They said that because if the task was not completed and they lost their dice, two of the three of them would disappear.

That’s what her Masters said, so Jibril...

Something like an offering is not important, she grabs the dice from her chest and—

—— 【72 hours have passed. Task failure acknowledged】

When she heard that voice... she couldn’t understand what it meant anymore...

■■■

—— ?

“...huh? Where is this place?” Jibril suddenly muttered.

She puts a hand on her cheek, and tilts her head. She just realized that she was standing alone in a grassland that moved like waves.

There was one white cube on her chest, and she was surrounded by a strange spiraling land.

Where was this? Why was she here? She didn’t understand anything—

“... What?”

She was sitting in seiza, and when she tried to stand up, she noticed a small book on her lap.

— “When you lose your memories, read these 3205 pages” was written on the cover of this book.

But that was crossed out with a horizontal line, and below it, this was written:

— “For an idiot as big as you, the back cover is more than enough.”

..... hmm, well let’s find out who wrote this and kill them ♥

With exactly zero seconds of consideration, she promptly turns the book around—

“... This is.... Immanity language? Such a minor language again...”

It was clearly not her handwriting, only a few words were written in a language she was not used to.

— “Don’t worry. Just wait.”

— “Jibril, sit ♥”

Those incomprehensible sentences were scribbled there. Who wrote that, or what that meant, she didn’t know, she just...

Jibril notices something on her cheek, and opens her eyes wide.

“... What!? Just what is this!?”

She screamed with surprise, but she knew what it was. It was something they called “Tears”.

It was a liquid that protected the eyes of some living things. In some of those living things, it seems they also flowed to express emotions. The Flugel don’t need to protect their eyes, they also aren’t’ supposed to have emotions like those—

“... Hmm... well, I don’t understand, but...”

She didn’t, but—

“For some reason... I feel like something really *fun* just happened. ♥”

—It isn’t unpleasant, so let’s say all’s good for now.

Jibril wasn't aware of it, but she was shedding big tears with a big smile. She didn’t understand the situation at all, however.

They might be someone else’s words, but it seemed that obeying them was for the best. If she didn’t worry about anything, and just waited sitting politely, then surely...

— Something much more *fun* would be waiting.

With no proof, Jibril embraces the book like it was very precious, and laughs with a song like voice.



[1] A reference to a Playstation 2 game called [Ace Combat 5](#) . In the game, to avoid being occupied, the belkans detonated 7 nuclear weapons inside their own territory.

[2] An obvious reference to [Castle in the sky](#)

■■■

And... on top of square 308.

There was a little girl with several cute little birds perched on her head and shoulders. Her tail was swaying gently, the birds' chirps echoed... it was a very peaceful image, however:

"..... Finally, desu"

The same 72 hour limit had passed, and with the 【Task Failure】 Izuna now had only one dice. As her body shrunk even more, she captured the birds in an instant, and made a drooling announcement:

— "You guys are today's dinner"

"Munch munch... pisses me off, desu... nothing beats eating and then going to sleep, desu"

So, with a face saying that she was in a very bad mood, Izuna stuffs her cheeks with the food she just caught.

The Old Deus that had been standing around all high and mighty, was no longer there. Just before she left, she made a complicated face again for some reason, and that was bothering her, but—

.....

"..... I can't climb anymore anyways, desu! In that case I won't endure this anymore, desu!"

Only the birds heard her complaints. Izuna opens her bag and takes out some food. In any case, she has only 1 dice remaining... She cannot advance anymore. And what's more, *if she reaches the goal the Old Deus will die*, that means it was already "Checkmate" anyways. Then, as if to clear away her accumulated anger, she fiercely consumes her food... Frankly speaking, she was just stress eating.

Izuna, as expected, doesn't understand these troublesome things. The reason why these 【Tasks】 were lined up, the reason why it was possible to reach the goal by choosing a sacrifice. Even if she ignored this and reached the goal, there was also the fact that the Old Deus would die then.

Izuna, as expected, doesn't know what she should do, but:

“ Those bastards, they know for sure, desu! Desuu! Desuuuuuu!!”

Izuna loudly screamed while laying on the ground. On one hand she was happy, but on the other she was extremely frustrated.

— “Izuna will not lose, desu...?” When she tried to confirm that, those two had answered:

— “Don't think we will let you win”, “We will be the ones to win”

‘Since it's fine if anyone wins, we will win’ that's *not what they meant* . Even if Izuna tried to win, she probably *could not win*. It seemed like it was impossible to win without sacrificing someone.

— *Except for Sora and Shiro.*

They will reach the goal without making a single sacrifice, and without letting anyone die. Jibril was no exception either, those two walked on a tightrope and might have lost their lives for her after all. They knew the way to win this game, and Izuna didn't.

“..... Pisses me off, desu”

She will say it once more. After all, it should be like that. In short:

“ Isn't everything going according to their plan? Desu♪”

It pisses her off, but now she thinks it is much more fun. Izuna laughs and thinks:

— ‘For some odd reason, losing to Sora and Shiro doesn't put me in a bad mood. That must be because everything will come to an end without anyone dying, and without any sadness.’

It's an unexpected answer, but that might just be it. After all, this world is just a game.

“Argh! In that case, Izuna should have had a match with Sora and Shiro too, desu!”

.... It was a waste of time. A complete waste of time.

“Phew, I’m full, desu. Time to sleep! Desu!”

She had lost. Now after stress eating, it was time to sulk in bed.

As soon as she says that, she embraces her tail and enters a perfect sleeping position—

“.....?”

When she was about to fall asleep, Izuna suddenly notices something. The reason why Sora and Shiro resemble Riku and Shuvi *only a little bit*. Sora deceives other people, but Riku *deceived himself*.

Trying to win while deceiving even himself. If that was Riku’s strength, if that strength becomes a cause of defeat, just like when Jibril wanted to self-destruct, then maybe that was the reason why it ended in a tie.

— Telling a lie that should absolutely never be told..... Was a “Failure” then.

“..... yes Sora and Shiro, smell good, desu”

At least don’t lie to yourself, you liar.

Izuna remembers that smell and smiles, then she starts to lose consciousness, reassured.

— “What do you believe in” —?

Izuna drowsily thinks: Before she ended up in this game, what would she have been her answer?

The two from the past couldn't reach the end of the established tactic.

— Ending the game with everyone laughing... An ending from which they can begin anew.

The answer is.... for sure....

■■■

Meanwhile, on square 297, almost at the same time.

Sora and Shiro asked Jibril to “First, hand over 2 dice, then, transfer all your dice to us except for one.” almost like it was an order. Thus, they had 11 dice in total. They threw them for the sixth time.

After advancing one square, and with a refreshing wind caressing their bodies, Sora and Shiro say:

“..... Nii..... is it fine..... if Shiro reaches the goal?”

“Aah... I just want to lie down like this, right here, and get comfortable...”

— With an expression that seemed to say that he had been reduced to ashes and spread to the winds. With a really good smile. As if he was welcoming the end to this life.

—They had advanced just one square after clearing Jibril's grand game.

With a loading screen in the way, those two look up towards the heavens, and finally remember. That Jibril's game *was just a mere* 【 Task 】 .

They had finished only a “ *Game within a game* ”, and then gallantly departed. Just what did they think they had accomplished? With that, they fall prostrate on the ground, smiling, and despair.

From here on out, the survival game would restart again. That was the harsh truth. They had conveniently misplaced their thoughts due to a lapse in memory, but it was about time they found them again.

“..... You actually forgot.....”

Sora and Shiro could not withstand Steph’s gaze. As she looked down on them, they averted their eyes and answered:

“Aah.... to be perfectly honest, I thought we were already going to go home with that...”

“... Shiro.... even though as far ahead.... as getting inside the futon...”

—With no sleep, nor rest; without eating, nor drinking. A game where a single misstep would cost them their lives.

What’s more, they had to keep their tension and concentration at their utmost limits with a child’s body. For 72 hours. Anyone would be worn down both mentally and physically. But worse than that the two of them—

— *lost*.

That’s right, this was immediately after Blank suffered its first loss. They were acting tough, but they didn’t even have the willpower to stamp their feet in frustration, they felt like not doing anything for one whole week. More importantly, they had assumed they’d be able to go back home and sulk in their beds until they regained their footing, and then review what happened. Sora and Shiro had already finished their meeting silently, but what now?

— Their current number of dice was: Sora had three. Shiro and Steph had two each. —They got an eleven. Their destination was still a distant 100 kms away.

Their food had run out, they still had no transportation method, it seemed like they were back to the wilderness once more.

Forget about survival, with how much willpower they lost from that defeat, their willpower to even *move* was running out.

“—I’m hungry... actually, when was the last time we ate...?”

“... Shiro, is tired.... When was the last time... I slept...”

“Ah, a, hmm – ah! Th-this! Is this ekki herb!?”

She said so with a hoarse voice, like a whisper. Did she realize that at this rate they were really going to die?

Even if it was for only 4 hours, she had slept by herself. Was this because she was feeling guilty? Steph brought the mysterious herb over but—

“... herb?... at least... bring something with protein or carbohydrates...”

“... Shiro... wants... something like phenylalanine or tryptophan... also lysine, and glucose...”

— In short, they were telling her to bring essential amino acids, something like meat, fish or rice. They demanded life while their eyes were darkening like those of a suffocating fish.

“E-eating meat now will have the opposite effect!! I will boil it, so drink it please!”

As soon as she said that, Steph started looking for something to start a fire—

“After all, it’s a medicinal herb that restores stamina! After that, well, it’s only a little, but there might be some smoked meat—”

Remaining. She was in the middle of rummaging through her bag, but.

She suddenly stops moving, looks at her surroundings, and whispers:

“.... ? Since there is so much ekki herb growing around here, does that mean we aren’t near Elkia?”

Because of that whisper, Shiro takes out the tablet with a shaky hand, and looks at the Old Deus’ “Sugoroku Board”. In other words, she opens the map of the land above, and:

“....Nii.... in two squares... we can plunder.... The streets of El Roble....”

Shiro said with a gaze that said she had recovered a little bit of hope. Sora thinks about the city of El Roble.

Formerly part of the Eastern Federation, and now Elkia’s territory, it was the entry port for land commerce. It was a trade city. Certainly, it it was there, there might be some—

“.... There might be some satisfactory horse carriages, and food, but... Even so it’s still 20 km away....”

When he said that, Sora and Shiro gathered the last of their willpower and stood up. They were taking uncertain steps like those of a newborn gazelle, but even so:

“L-let’s have positive thoughts! *There might only be 20 km remaining* , for example!”

“..... I hope.... This, is.... *The last* stand...”

Even now she felt that if they lost focus their spirits would break, so she was trying to encourage them – no. They were already broken, their spirits had patches all over and had somehow managed to keep their shape. To those two people, Steph says:

“.... *The last?* Actually forget about that, do you have a minute?”

As Steph said that dubiously, Sora had a flash of inspiration. It was a flash that made his neurons catch on fire in more than one way. And because of it, he screamed.

That inspiration was—!

“Eeeh!? You want me to hold 5 dice and carry the two of you!?”

—That ‘We don’t actually need to walk’!

“..... A goddess..... There was... a goddess... Nii”

“Haaah!? Even with 5 dice, I would be just 9 years old, wait, listen to me!”

Precisely. Even if they had only one dice each, Sora and Shiro would be 1.8 and 1.1 years old respectively. Having the 9 year old Steph carry them might be unreasonable.

But what kind of person gives up without trying first!?

It was no use arguing about it, they handed over their dice, and started to climb on Steph’s back. Steph tries to shake them off, and screams:

“Sh-Shiro! You had a... ‘Ritual’ was it? You used it, right!?”

— A ritual. Manipulating the outcome of the dice, in other words, an “RNG manipulation”.

On the sixth move, after adjusting the dice one by one, Shiro takes three out of the eleven they had. On the first three throws, she got “1” “1” “1” and then whispered: “Random number analysis complete”.

After that she got “1” on all the remaining dice. She got only ones, just like she wanted , but:

“Why did you get only ones...?”

If she could get any outcome she wanted on the eleven dice, then why? Why didn’t they get the largest possible outcome that would allow them to reach the goal in one go, but the lowest one instead?

That's what Steph was asking, but Sora and Shiro just look at her blankly.

"... Eh? That was, just.... Because, *we, must not, get that?*"

"In other words... *we manipulated the RNG so that we wouldn't reach the goal by mistake....?*"

Sora and Shiro answered as if it was something obvious, and Steph was just dumbfounded, but:

"Well, let's leave it at that! Now, let's play rock-paper-scissors!"

He smoothly ignored Steph just like that, and went back to the previous matter, the most important matter— they bring up the matter of "Not wanting to walk" once more.

"The loser will have to look after 5 dice until "Square 307"! And walk carrying the two winners without sleep nor rest! All right! 【Aschente】!"

"... Let's do it~.... 【Aschente】!"

"Ah okay~ ♥ 【Aschen— as if!? I'd die you know!?"

—And so, Steph did her usual routine of going along with it and then pointing out how ridiculous they were with a scream.

After 10 squares, after 100km, even without carrying anything if an adult walked that with no sleep nor rest they'd die.

"What's more, it's already predetermined that you'll make me carry you!? There's no way I'd ever do it!?"

That's right, and even worse, when she dared to try and visualize sound effects, the background was completely filled with "Mwahahas" from Sora and Shiro's faces.

—There is no way they aren't plotting something. It was a smile that made even Steph confirm her misgivings.

She decided that they were just messing around with her. Steph sighs, and says:

“Haaa.... So you still have enough stamina to make jokes... more importantly, about the results of the dice throw—”

However,

“A joke? What are you talking about—?”

—Suddenly, Sora’s voice blew away the joking mood.

Even though it was a small child’s voice, it seemed to be looming over even the 9 years old Steph. With a gaze, and a voice that seemed to reverberate from the bottom of the earth, he continues and freezes Steph in her tracks:

“We are going to *lose on purpose* the game against the Old Deus. Is that alright with you?”

——

“... Wha.....t.....?”

“At best one person will die, at worst, all participants. If you don’t want that, I’ll say it one more time”

And with that, Sora changed the mood. No, he changed everything. As Steph stood there dumbfounded, he presses her for an answer and “Checkmates” her:

“—We will play rock-paper-scissors. *Accept*. If you refuse someone will die.”

He made that proclamation in order form, without giving her any room nor time to think. Whatever they were planning, they wouldn’t give her any time to prepare countermeasures, no right to choose, and not even a right to refuse. They wouldn’t give her a single thing. That’s what Sora was saying, and now, as if to mock her, he adds:

“Don’t worry. In the unlikely event that you win, either I or Shiro will die. So we are even♪”

It became dead silent. Steph could only tremble, but Sora *waited* for her in silence.

“I don’t... understand... there is absolutely no need to do that!?”

—That’s right, there is no meaning to playing this game, so of course Staph screamed. It’s just like playing russian roulette without any prize. It’s just a game where someone will die. If staying alive was the prize, then it’s a game that you shouldn’t even play in the first place.

So that’s why —

“That’s right! There is *absolutely no* need to play it. So~ I won’t♪”

Sora claps his hands, and the mood from before vanished like it was a lie — no, it was actually a lie. In any case, he takes off his devil face, he was a child that had broken into a smile, correction,

“.....”

He was just a shitty brat that you’d want to hit if possible. As if he was running away from Steph’s half-lidded gaze, and with a little bit of cold sweat, he continues:

“W-well! However!! If we were to do this, then you’d have no right to refuse... right?”

“.... eeeh..... Well.... haaaaaaaaaaa.....”

Steph still had half-lidded eyes, but since it was a joke as expected, she let out a breath of relief.

— ‘I’m sorry, but’ Sora thinks, and destroys that reassurance with his following words:

“ *Someone got the Old Deus with this* . How about we say it was Miko-san, for example ”

—That's right. If that wasn't the case, it didn't make sense — In short:

“There is no mistake. The Old Deus *is only playing this game because she was threatened into it.*”

— Up to this point the explanation is good enough. But it doesn't hold out further than this.

First, because this isn't a game that the Old Deus will certainly win. Also, there were various rules that unnaturally showed Sora's group's intentions. There is also the fact that a god, of all people, bet everything against inferior lifeforms (Sora's group).

Well, there was the participant's everything: Sora and Shiro, Plum, Jibril, Miko, Ino, and Izuna. *By going all in*, they were able to make some demands, but even so.

—That explained everything, except for one thing.

“Well then, if you don't want to die, or maybe, *if you don't want to let someone die*, accept the game.”

Let's say the game started with that threat. Sora and Shiro smile sarcastically.

“If the side that was threatened, in other words, the Old Deus were to lose... what would normally happen?”

Sora asked, but there was no need to answer, Steph just stays quiet. Yes, there is no need to answer. Thinking normally — they'd die, right? And *that's a problem*. In other words:

“The problem is: Why are we playing this game when there is absolutely no need to do so?”

Why did they force the Old Deus into a game of russian roulette with no prize? And what's more, Sora's group *doesn't have any intention to sacrifice anyone*, however.

14: The Old Deus in question accepts the obligation to fulfill all demands within the scope of her rights that the “Winner” makes.

— That means that the “Winner” can make any demand.

But, how far does the scope of rights of the Old Deus fulfilling them go? The game started by threatening the Old Deus, whether a demand like “Don’t die” would go through or not is unclear.

Furthermore, say they were somehow able to obtain the power of a god, what would they even do with it? If there is a sacrifice, then it is already a loss anyway. In the first place, who even desired that power?

“That’s right. We don’t know why the Old Deus accepted this game, furthermore”

Sora sits somewhere cross-legged, and says:

“— we also don’t know *what we wanted to demand.*”

Since their memories from before the game were levied, they didn’t have what was needed to figure that out.

Except for the only one whose memories weren’t levied, the “Traitor”.

— But, well... Sora and Shiro exchange looks:

“We don’t have any intention of sacrificing anyone, then, what do you think we concluded was the correct course of action?”

Even without memories, that was easy to infer. Sora and Shiro smile:

— If thinking normally they’d die, then *they just needed to not think normally.* That was all.

“— In short, we musn’t win normally, we musn’t reach the goal that’s all♪”

They were deliberately vague about an essential part again. Steph doesn’t like it, and becomes sullen.

“Well, 10 squares was just a joke. Let’s play rock-paper-scissors to see which one of us will carry Shiro for just two squares.”

And so, Sora looks at Shiro, who was the most exhausted, lifts his hand together with Steph, and says:

— 【Aschente】

■■■

— And thus, like it was completely natural.

“Well, with this you understood *the reason why the ‘Prisoner’s Dilemma’ doesn’t hold true* , right?”

Like a person’s breathing. Like a river flowing, like the wind blowing. Like it was the natural order of things, very naturally, Steph lost at rock-paper-scissors, and was carrying Shiro, and—

“The reason why you *screwed me over* !? I, don’t, understand, at, all....!!”

She was carrying Shiro, and she was also forced to carry Sora in accordance to the pledges. She was now walking through the grasslands.... Well, they omitted the ‘No rest’ part, so it should be fine. In any case—

“When I told you to play rock-paper-scissors with me the first time, you thought we were plotting something for sure, right?”

“Eeeh! So that’s why I was careless the second time! Haaah.....”

“Shiro and I plotted something. You saw through that and refused to play rock-paper-scissors... Everyone has *an ulterior motive* .”

That’s right, everyone has an ulterior motive, an intention, an objective. Naturally.

“Then the Old Deus—the “Detective” must have one too... right?”

Sora said, and thinks back on the statement of the prisoner's dilemma once more.

—A detective offers prisoners A, and B a plea bargain,

【1】 If they both stayed quiet, then both would serve two years.

【2】 If only one confessed, the one who confessed would be released, and the one who kept silent would serve 10 years.

【3】 However, if both of them confessed, then both would serve five years.

If the prisoners believed in each other, and stayed quiet, they would get a better result: Just two years in prison. But, if the prisoners only sought their own benefit, then they would serve 5 years for sure. If only one of them betrayed the other and confessed, the traitor would be released, while the one who stayed quiet would serve 10 years.

In that case, remaining silent isn't actually the best choice. There is no choice but to bet on the possibility that the other party will remain silent and confess. Because if you do that—

You avoid the worst outcome of serving ten years, and if you're lucky you get released.

— That was it.

Well, this is what is known throughout the world as the 'Prisoner's dilemma' but....

To make this statement an actual 'Dilemma' *there shouldn't be a 'Detective'.*

— Since the 'Detective' also has ulterior motives, then it is not a dilemma—

"That is simply a game between players: the 'Prisoners' and the 'Detective'."

Sora makes a sardonic smile. For example, in this statement:

“ Why is the ‘Detective’ offering that plea bargain in the first place? —or something like that♪”

— According to the prisoner’s dilemma, it seems that the only choice is for everyone to confess. Then, why does the other bad choice has the bait of ‘getting released’ attached to it? No— *‘Why does he want to make them confess so badly that he is doing all that?’* That’s right, if you read through the detective’s ulterior motives, then it is possible to see a flaw in this statement—

“ The detective has no intention of releasing anyone... He wants to make everyone confess and put them behind bars.”

— If they were able to read through that, then there is no need for them to stick up for each other. The necessity of a previous meeting, or even the memory of a previous meeting, if you like, are unneeded. They nonchalantly revealed the detective’s desperation and ulterior motives.

That’s right, if they didn’t confess, *the one who would be troubled is the detective*. It is precisely because they each look for their own benefit and betray each other that they arrive at a victory in which they cooperate with each other.

“It is a common cliché in the dramas of our previous world, but whenever they used the prisoner’s dilemma—”

The cliché was that when it seemed that they were about to commit another big crime, they’d make a suspect that was already caught confess, and stop it before it happened—

“ The one who is cornered is the ‘Detective’... The ‘Prisoners’ are the ones who have the initiative.”

That’s the thing: It’s used when *the only way to win is to make the prisoners self-destruct*.

“This game – the prisoner’s dilemma, is just an impracticable theory that pretends to be good. In order to clear it properly, you need to not have a single doubt that everyone is absolutely going to betray. That confidence is the key.”

That’s right, if they weren’t betrayed he would be troubled. Sora chuckles. Right about now Plum, and Kurami especially, must be so angry that they’re about to have an aneurysm. From Steph’s back, Sora makes a smile full of sarcasm, and finishes:

“In short, *if we believe in each other, we can win this game ♪* It is a super wholesome game, right!?”

But when Steph heard those words, she stopped walking abruptly.

“..... W-well, in that case, I have some bad news...”

Steph makes a grinding sound, like unoiled hinges as she turns around, and screams:

“I-I haven’t made any special preparations to betray you!? Uhm! I-is it fine if I just start asking myself if it’s alright to betray you!?”

Steph appears to be uneasy since they might lose because of her, but Sora and Shiro just smile bitterly:

“We didn’t believe in *Steph* since the very beginning... In this game, you’re just an extremely heavy piece of luggage♪”

“.... *Steph* , is a girl, who can’t betray.... that means, here... she’s super useless.”

“..... In this particular case, should I be glad? Or depressed?”

At Steph’s complicated expression and wide eyes; Sora and Shiro share a look and smile bitterly.

— Steph won’t betray. Normally, she would be the one they could trust the most.

Ironically, in this game she became the most untrustworthy of all.

“However, *you* believe”

—Suddenly, an ominous voice resounds from her back, and Steph turns around. Sure enough, Sora and Shiro were there with smiles like those in a noh mask [\[1\]](#) , however:

“We cannot believe in *anyone that has been called a Steph even once*. But—”

“ *You*..... can believe..... so..... there’s no, problem...”

There are three rules that were established only because of the Old Deus. Sora and Shiro think about the third of those rules, and make a splendid smile.

They stare at *that* , and draw a conclusion.

“ *You* will betray. You will betray for sure. According to the rules, for sure ... we are looking forward to it♪”

[\[1\]](#) [Noh masks](#)

Chapter Three — *Incorrect answer*

—Somewhere in the Eastern Federation’s capital, Kannagiri Island.

Chinkai Tandaifu. It’s a 50 floor tall high rise building with 10 underground floors on top of that, and an extra floor that the public doesn’t know about: underground floor eleven. That large underground hall is an Eastern Federation national secret. A “Trump Card” game to be used against the other races. It was supposed to be an underground hall where the cabinets for the total immersion videogames were installed. A dark underground hall, full with equipment, but right now—

“Hmm? I knew you were a weakling, but this is *way below* my expectations.♥♥”

He said, and danced playfully, she was getting *dominated* by one Dhampir. Day and night, heaven and earth, here and there, were all cobbled up together. They were inside that broken scenery.

Even though he was a boy Plum had a bewitching smile:

“Ah... Am I just too strong? Ehehe, excuse me”

His heels click clacked every time he took a step, and the broken scenery kept transforming endlessly,

“— I hear a mosquito flying around ~ ... it’s really grating you know ~”

There were also the one facing off against him. The killing intent in Fiel’s smile increased.

When the scenery changed, it changed *together with the flow of spirits* . Everything changed. That’s right, the magic thar Fiel had weaved, and the spirits compiling the magic, had vanished like mist.

It was just like – no, it was exactly like this:

— *Like knitting with thread that didn't exist in the first place.* As if it was making fun of Fiel.

“Would you just shut up already~!!”

Fiel screamed angrily, and the soul stone in her forehead shined. At the same time, the light drew geometric patterns along Fiel's body, and expanded outside her body, advancing against the very space they were in. Then, the scenery, the space, and the spirits that were disguised by Plum's magic broke with it, and they returned to the hall with the rows of machines.

—The quad spell: “Instant cast”.

It is equivalent to *omitting* the casting, instant magic. While doing something that even the highest ranked elf spellcasters found incredibly difficult, Fiel also broke the spirit disguise. That's because she also used a dual spell: “Front runner” with the abridged incantation.

— “Front runner” was, in short, a countermeasure spell.

It was a spell to hack the video game systems of the Eastern Federation. By activating that single spell just once, the whole virtual space would change according to her thoughts. In the battle against Hatsuse Ino, Kurami's victory is assured. For Fiel Nirvallen, a hexa caster, and one of the elves' best spellcasters, this was her full powered parallel casting. Even though it was an extremely complicated spell, it was completed in a matter of seconds, that was—

“Ah, could it be!? Are you going easy on me!?”

“— Wha....!?”

But those few seconds were deceived into *an eternity* by him. After hearing his laughing voice, Fiel's thoughts went blank. Even though the scenery had just changed back to the underground hall, it

changed into something very different: the skies. And as they were falling down:

“I thank you for your kindness. But, please go ahead and try your best without reservations♪”

Plum was happily flapping his tiny wings as he fell together with her. When she sees this, Fiel gasps in surprise.

— ‘There is no way’

Did he recast and expand the spatial disguise that was broken by Fiel with a speed superior to hers?

‘Surpassing the elves in casting speed shouldn’t be — wait, it couldn’t be’ As if he had been waiting for her to think that:

“Did you fiiiinally notice? Your memory is also pretty bad huh? As expected♥”

A voice whispered that, but it didn’t come from the Dhampir in front of her—

“Try and remember!! I’m sure I told you this!!”

Fiel touches upon the *words that he said himself* , and finally understands. With a pop the scenery is broken again.

“ *Let’s believe that you’ll be able to use a single spell against me!!*”

Plum said. She didn’t know where she was again, they were in the cobbled up space again.

“ *It will be worth it just to see what kind of face you make when you wake up from the dream where you were able to use it.* — That was it, right?”

He was relaxing on a sofa and drinking black tea. Seeing that, Fiel’s fist trembled with rage.

“How many spells did you use? The answer, by the way, is zero hahaha♥”

— *She was put under the impression* that she used magic ever since “Instant cast”.

Plum making Fiel angry was just like someone taking jackstones from a child’s game again and again,

“Ah, Ino-sama～? I will soon send you additional information on the target!”

Inside that virtual space – inside that crazy scenery, on the only functioning screen:

“Understood Plum-dono! You just relax and leave it to me!!”

“Wait a second. Fii!? These guys are just brazenly talking about interfering with the game!?”

Inside the game, Kurami screamed when she heard Plum trying to leak information to her opponent, Ino.

“.... I can’t cast a spell to confirm that he is interfering～...”

“Hahaha, that’s so saaad. Your *futile efforts* bring me to tears. ♪”

——.....

— Outside the game, Plum and Fiel were having an abnormal magical battle.

Inside the game, Ino and Kurami, were having a physical battle that was also abnormal, in a way.

— With the sound of two different voices saying “Die Sora!” and “Get crushed, damn monkey!”, *NPCs made with Sora’s appearance*, were sent flying through the air one after another. Observing that battle were—

“Hey, What do you think you are doing to my darling!? Why did it become like this!?”

Asked Leila, the Seiren queen, from her water tank. She was making a fuss because she was angry.

There was a red haired girl whose smile froze when she heard that question that was:

— Stephanie Dola.

To answer the question of how it became like this, she thinks back to seven hours ago... and smiles in her mind.

■■■

While Kannagiri Island’s lights kept flickering because of the reverberating shocks that came from the Old Deus’ sugoroku board.

Leila appeared from a heavy looking backpack with some water. But the one everyone was looking intently at with dumbfounded eyes was—

Not her, but the one who carried her... or rather, the one that was carrying her. The one who carried the heavy looking backpack with Leila and some water stuffed inside.

She was supposed to be inside the Old Deus’ game even now—

“Huff... puff.... The Eastern Federation... relies too much... on the power of... infrastructure... “

It was a red-haired Immanity girl that fell to the floor, exhausted, it was,

“— S-Stephanie-dono, why are you here!?” Ino cannot help but howl that.

“Wha-what!? I brought Leila-san and a note, what else!?” Steph thought that she was being blamed, so she answered with a frightened scream.

“A-a note, you say?”

“Ehm, yes... From the kings of Elkia... or perhaps I should say, Sora and Shi-hya!”

“That’s right! Darling!! Or rather are you just going to ignore me!? The only one who can do neglect play with me is my beloved darling... h-huh, my chest... hurts...”

Leila interrupted Steph flopping like a fish out of water. She was causing a commotion with the hits of her tail. But as their furious tempo was rapidly weakening, she made a nice smile.

“..... wh..... This.... Is weird...?”

“Aaaaah it’s over there! There is no water, so you are dying!!”

When she jumped out of the backpack, the water spilled; and the Seirens can only live inside water.

Right now she was ascending to heaven, she was passing on with tranquility. When Plum sees this, he raises a scream—

— And, instantly.

“Wh-what do you think will happen to the Dhampir if we let the Queen die!?”

With nothing in between, omitting the process, he put Leila inside a water tank, and screamed, almost crying. The Dhampir in spirit form could use as much magic as he wanted, and he still became this tired. The only one who understood what happened was Fiel. Her conjecture is that Plum used “ *Time disguise* ” to stop time, then he desperately looked for a water tank and carried it over. She had a penetrating cold gaze, however. However, as if he didn’t know — no. *As if he didn’t care about that,* Ino screams with confusion:

“S-Stephanie-dono is supposed to be over there, inside the Old Deus’ game!?”

— In that case, just who is *that*, or perhaps *this* !?

“So you were the ‘*impostor*’ as I thought. Haaah.... you surprised me...”

‘Im... postor?’ Ino thought, but Plum just continued his explanation.

“Hm, after all, something like ‘a traitor that didn’t lose their memory’ is *impossible*”

— Impossible. Hearing Plum conclude that, Ino also remembers.

Sora also stingily taught him a lesson about the “Impossible” in the baths:

‘Getting all participants to agree to let someone keep their memories while everyone else forgets is absolutely impossible... *I wouldn’t let them*. In that case, it’s simple♪”

00b: — There is one person among the dice holders whose memories weren’t levied, a “traitor”.

A traitor whose memories weren’t levied.....

“*If they are memories they didn’t have from start*, then they can’t be levied, right♪?”

Plum was saying that the “Impostor” was a fabrication of the Old Deus. When he heard that, Ino thinks:

‘If the Steph that was in there, in the battle against the Old Deus, was an impostor, then why did they —’

“Well, to begin with... counting Sora-sama and Shiro-sama as one, there are *six players*. Since there are *only five race pieces*, one person shouldn’t have been able to participate in the first place.”

But when he heard Plum’s continuation, Ino lost his train of thought.

.....Wait a second.

“Since at least one person shouldn’t have been able to participate, then the traitor must have been one of those ... Personally, I thought it was either Stephanie-sama or Izuna-sama♪”

—Wait. Wait wait wait.!

Just what is Plum saying?

—— The “Race Pieces”?

“..... Wait, just what are you.... I-it can’t be—”

‘ Well, calm down.’ Ino tells himself, and asks in a trembling voice:

“A-are you saying that you can’t participate in the game against the Old Deus if you don’t *bet a race piece* ?”

‘Please tell me I’m wrong. Tell me I made some kind of mistake.’ He made that futile prayer,

“Eh? Is that wrong? Sora told me that... that’s why I brought the note—”

Steph just blankly tilted her head to the side and answered. When he heard that, Ino became dizzy.

‘.... Ha ha ha...such a thing... again.’

‘No way, no way, there is just no way. This has to be a joke, or if not then a dream’

Ino’s head, or rather, since he was in spirit form he had no head, so he just felt phantom pain. And yet, he persists:

“N-no... wait a second. Even if that’s true there’s *still one race piece missing* ?”

— I see, the participants were mostly important persons from each race.

“Immanity’s piece” — Immanity’s designated representative can bet it.

“The Dhampir’s piece” — The Dhampir’s designated representative can bet it.

“The Flugel’s piece” — Let’s say for now that a representative of the council of eighteen wings can bet it.

“The Warbeast’s piece” — The Warbeast’s designated representative, Miko-sama, can bet it.

Let’s also say that either Ino, or maybe Izuna was entrusted with it to participate.

As for Stephanie, she was indeed an impostor. But even so, it was either Ino or Izuna, *not both!* Even after counting Sora and Shiro as one, and what’s more, excluding Steph! There are still *five* participants, and only *four* race pieces. There is still one piece missing!!

He made a very compelling reality check, but then there was a voice full of bottomless cheer. Normally, that would have been enough to steal Ino’s heart, it was an intoxicating and alluring voice.

“Yes! Since my beloved darling said that he would step on me, *I lent him the Seiren’s race piece* ~♪ He said that I was ‘An important trump card’ Kyaaa♥♥”

But since right now that voice just made him angrier and angrier, he mercilessly cut it off.

“So then, where is my darling!? He said that he would step on me, kick me, and tie me up—”

—— ‘I see’ Ino nods and accepts that reality.

“The Seiren’s piece” — This foolish designated representative... can bet it.

— And then, the light in Ino's eyes just died.

And when they turned to look at that Ino... everyone saw him with pitiful eyes.

"... actually, if the Old Deus were to take something like our lives, what should we do?" Plum said.

"..... No way, you.... Did you really not realize that?" Steph said.

"Kurami~, I feel bad making such unreasonable demands to this poor doggy~ Don't♪"

When she hears that, Kurami repeats their demands:

"..... 'Everything and anything that is on the Eastern Federation's territory.' Those were our demands right.....?"

That's right— 'The Eastern Federation's whole territory: any and all human and material resources on it.'

"Even if Sora and the others lost, and the Old Deus took the piece, if we become *Fii's possessions* ... this is insurance, right?"

In other words, if by some chance everyone lost, they'd lose the race pieces of five races. But, if in that worst-case scenario 'everything on the Eastern Federation', including human resources, became Fiel's possession, they'd be able to protect it, since the elves' race piece wouldn't be lost.

"... Well, of course we would prefer to win in retaliation to Sora and the others, however."

She said that in the unlikely event that they lost, this would be the beginning of a counter-attack, and—

"... eh, uhm.... Ino-san....?"

Plum, Kurami, and Fiel continued, and beside them —

“You thought that there was no way we had a betting chip valuable enough to get the Old Deus to agree to a game, right?”

He was just silent. That silence was just like Ino’s mental state.

There was another shock that shook heaven and earth, with it, the lights disappeared from Kannagiri, and darkness fell.

‘... even Stephanie-dono managed to amaze me’

With a shock that was difficult to describe, Ino felt like his soul was melting now.

“Well but such a trivial thing does not matter at all, right♥?”

Ino was no longer a fluorescent macho. The strange light that seemed to be able to shorten your lifespan was getting dimmer, but no one paid it any mind.

“Now you should understand that there is a reason why we must steal away the Eastern Federation as soon as possible... whenever these irritating shocks stop — Wait a second, Fii!? Did you get drunk again!?”

“What? Oh Kurami, you～ your visual acuity is also small～ I’m not drunk♥”

“— ‘also’?! Just what else is small!? Just try and say it: my visual acuity and what else is small!!”

“Eh～? Isn’t it obviously your bust, miss chopping board♪? kyaha☆”

“I will lay you down on a chopping board and fillet you into three slices, you fish!! An idiot who would submit their race piece for being stepped on needs more nutrients going to her brain rather than her chest, wait, that’s right, Stephanie Dola!” Kurami screamed with teary eyes. There was no use arguing about Fiel and Leila’s chests, so she turned to the other wealthy person, and glared at her with malice.

“What’s up with you!? Did you come just to show off too!? What, are breasts really so important!? Is it really so bad to live modestly!?”

Seeing Kurami getting mad at her for no reason, Steph cannot help but scream:

“I keep telling you that I came to deliver this note! Can anyone listen to me!?”

..... But it looks like no one wanted to listen. Steph looks at the ceiling, and sheds a single tear.

— That’s right, no one was listening.

In fact, she couldn’t even afford to listen to Ino.

He was looking out the window, but because of the commotion, his spiritual muscles were getting carbonized, nay ectoplasmized. He is just gazing out the window, at the sky coiled like a snake, and thinks, in a semi-trance.

..... To sum it up, in that game it’s not just the participant’s lives that are at stake, but also *each race’s everything* , it could all collapse. That’s what they were saying.

Even though their memories seem to have been erased, everyone had agreed, including Miko-sama, and even Ino himself.

Just why did everyone agree to take such a big risk!?

—Aah... Miko-sama.

Miko-sama surely believed that Sora, no, that everyone would betray for sure, but she also believed that they’d win on top of that.

Without making a single sacrifice..... Miko-sama must have believed that, and Ino, in turn, must have believed in her.

But, in the end, they weren’t just killing each other, they were *exterminating each other* . What did Miko-sama see in those siblings? What were her intentions when she bet the Race Piece?

That scenario. The scenario where there are no sacrifices. Just where—

— Ino made that question inside his head, but there was someone who answered.

“..... It’s fine already. I’ll just read the note by myself!!”

It was something no one expected of her, especially after her defeated declaration.

“I will r-read them in the order Sora instructed. These are not my own words, okay!?”

But, it was something that everyone expected of the *ones that were making say that*.

“Dear gross macho-sama, and all the other idiots gathered here.”

——

That was the first thing Steph said. No, it was the first thing she was told to say. Just with that, the commotion immediately quieted down, and Ino’s thoughts came back to reality. She was under a rain of piercing glares, but Steph firmly continued:

“The bet will be that if Kurami and Fiel lose, Blank will take everything”

“What? J-just what is this girl saying—”

“What~... even though he didn’t do anything~ he wants to take just the good parts~?”

— The second thing. Kurami heard it with suspicion, and Fiel heard it without sobering up.

The bet with those two would include one of Elven Garde’s provinces, themselves, the counter measure spell, etc. Originally, ‘everything’ was just bait... But the one who used that and cut off their retreat was *Plum* .

‘There is no way that Plum, who has the initiative in this game would accept this change’ Ino thought.

But, the words that followed *stole away that initiative*.

“Also, Leila will be added to Kurami and Fiel’s demands, if you please!”

“Of course, I will offer myself up for darling’s sake♥ I will swear by the pledges!!”

“—Wha..... Wha— eeeeeeeeeeeh!?”

—The third thing. When they heard it, Leila had heart-shaped pupils, Plum screamed, and Ino became speechless.

He didn’t care if Ino lost, it was because he was in that position that Plum was able to make such demands. But now, let’s say Ino lost, if Leila was stolen away, and the *Dhampir were in danger of being destroyed....*

“Since with this, if Ino lost, a certain race is now in danger of being destroyed—”

— As for the fourth thing, everyone just listened to it completely dumbfounded.

That’s right... just with that, Plum’s position was *completely reversed*. Ino agreed to the game only because he couldn’t win without Plum’s help.

“We scornfully reject that guy’s demands. I will have you work hard for free♪”

Even if Plum withdrew all his demands, he had no choice but to make Ino win.

Even if Kurami rejected the game, just like in the original plan, *their path of retreat was cut off*.

It became completely silent.

With everyone's silence, Ino's question was answered.

Whose scenario is this? Where is the scenario where no one is sacrificed?

This would be their scenario. That scenario was right here.

All they did was bring Leila here, and with just a few messages. Just with that. Nothing more, just with that.

Everyone's intentions were rejected, utilized, there wasn't even a path of retreat remaining.

Seeing that amazing feat, they even felt chills that's how this silence was. And thus, the sibling's spokeswoman said:

"A-also..... Hmm! Before I read the last sentence, here"

—Because of the blackout the inside of the reception room was totally dark, no one could see each other's faces. There was just the silence. No words. As if they were feeling the gravity of the situation, it was hard to breath in that room.

"A letter for Kurami-san and Fiel-san... It seems like it's fine if the others read it too."

— Mustering up her courage, Steph hurriedly holds something out.

"....."

With a light that Fiel turned on, one could see Kurami's face. It was so dull and uninterested that it looked ominous. With similarly ominous politeness, Steph handed it over... It was a single cylinder.

They ordered an ornament made out of snakeskin, something that wouldn't be impolite, but also not overly formal, and gave it to them. With just a single glance, everyone could tell that it had a craftsman's high class ornaments.

Once they opened the elegant looking cilinder, they found a single piece of paper inside.

Kurami and Fiel illuminated that piece of paper. Then Ino, and also Plum peeked into it too.

There was an official looking 'Diplomatic document' inside.

It had the seal of the Elkia Federation, as well as the king's seal of the Kingdom of Elkia.

It even had the signatures of both Elkian monarchs. It appeared to be an official sovereign's message.

—It was overly proper, it even had excellent calligraphy.

This is what was written in there:

'To our dear friends, Kurami Zell-sama and Fiel Nirvallen-sama:

We are terribly sorry to have invited you to our humble home while we are busy with our trip. It was surely quite difficult to prepare your invasion in such a short amount time. You have our sympathies for that.

Although this may be presumptuous and a bit informal, I hope we may continue being good friends from now on.

We sincerely hope you understand that these words carry our utmost gratitude:

Serves you right! (lol)

With love,

Sora and Shiro

Elkia's 205th monarchs.'

And, in order to complete her last mission, Steph reads the last sentences:

“I believed in you, that you’d surely betray us, I love you guys!”

“..... Good work, everyone～..... Well then, good bye～♥”

—— And thus, the world became silent.

It was so silent that it seemed that time itself had forgotten to flow. In that silence, daybreak could finally be seen after such a long night.

The world was illuminated. Aah, it was a long, long daybreak. Little birds were singing, leaves were rustling, and the sound of waves resounded inside the reception room.

“..... This is quite elegant..... fufu”

In contrast to everyone else, who was still silent, Steph whispered that with a smile.

She had an enlightened look. No, maybe it was a look of resignation. Either way, when Ino saw that Steph had attained enlightenment, he made a bitter smile.

— If he were to put it in a few words... It was an incredible thing.

Sora and Shiro, like Plum, had made preparations before their memories were erased. But theirs were made *even before Plum’s* . They had read the contents of the game with the Old Deus to that extent.

They believed without the slightest bit of doubt, that everyone was going to betray them in succession.

That’s right, it was a method that Sora and Shiro would certainly think about, since they, more than anyone else, had a dirty, twisted, and broken personality that made everyone show disappointment, both in their minds and their faces.

— Winning by betraying and deceiving everyone.

Miko-sama believed, those two believed, even Ino must have started to believe himself.

Just with that. Seriously, it was truly splendid.

“Well, then”

Those two showed him they could use every betrayal. Ino felt somewhat refreshed because of it. He, just like everyone present, squints at the scenery tinted with the colors of dawn, and thinks:

— ‘Still, getting done in like this pisses me off, you shitty monkey.’

“Let’s go back to discussing the game’s setup. Is Love or Loved 2 all right?”

Ino said with a refreshing smile. Everyone else also had a refreshing smile, and continued:

“Yes, that’s fine. By the way Ino-san, can I make one request?”

Both the question, and the answers were made with smiling faces, however:

“Can you make the NPCs look like Sora? As realistically as possible.”

“I want to request that too~, please~♪”

“Ah, me too! Making them explode with a big boom would be the best♪”

The four of them were still smiling, but they were so angry that they even cooperated,

“Hahaha. As you wish. I shall prepare a perfect avatar using Sora-dono’s data from the previous time. But it would be no fun if they kicked the bucket so easily, right? I shall also raise their health to the maximum value!”

Aah, those were indeed friends. Comrades.

“Uhm, Ino-sama. I swear by my race that we will win this game but—”

“Oh dear... Now that we’re on the same side, words are meaningless, Plum-dono”

That’s right, they had acquired a common enemy, for sure:

“In order to wrap Sora-dono in a bamboo mat and hang him upside down, I promise to cooperate with the full power of my nation.”

And so, only Steph and Leila saw off the comrades in arms, walking side by side...

■■■

— And thus, the shocks coming from the Old Deus’ sugoroku board began to subdue.

And in the townscape where they once bet the continent against Immanity’s piece, two persons were now fighting for the Eastern Federation’s, and Elven Garde’s territory.

Using Sora’s personal data from the last time, and even Kurami’s memories, they created NPCs with Sora’s appearance and made them as realistic as possible. When he sees them clamouring around, Hatsuse Ino think that perhaps, that was a mistake and grinds his teeth in frustration. Even though his intuition had become dull since he retired from the front lines a long time ago, this was still—!!

“Hey geezer. No, hey you man among men....”

There was a voice behind his back. A Sora NPC with Immanity’s stats had taken his back—

Was it because they had used Sora’s personal data to create the best possible copy?

Just like the original, the Sora NPC was able to predict their lines of movement, and it also moved elusively like a phantom. Ino clicked his tongue once, turned around with godly speed, and faced his gun towards the previous voice, namely:

“..... H-how was it?..... I wanted to get close to you, even if it was a little bit, did you like it?”

“———Die!!”

Sora bashfully approached with a red face and heart shaped pupils in a fundoshi, but even though he had somehow avoided his perception, Ino launched his first with godly speed. He launched *that* several meters through the main street, like a cannonball, until it went through a building with a thunderous roar. When he hit *that*, Ino’s fist made an explosive sound, as it broke the sound barrier.

“.....whoops..... I did it *again*”

He had forgotten the love gun in the spur of the moment, having felt a sense of duty to eliminate all the evil in this world.

— By touching Sora, his love power had decreased.

Since it was a one-on-one match with Kurami, if he ran out of love power, he would lose.

Even though it was an instant touch, Ino gets flustered at the decrease in love power, and breaks into a run.

Sora was stuck to the wall like a stake, and Ino hits him in the nuts in order to end his life. Having struck his finishing blow, Ino jumps back to the main street with recovery in mind—

“Hey wait a second!? You didn’t tell me you’d got his far!!” Kurami screamed as she continued to shoot a crowd of approaching Soras.

— The rules of the game hadn’t changed, of course.

Naturally, if Kurami hit Ino once, or if Ino hit Kurami once, the game would be decided. What's more, in a one-on-one match between an Immanity and a Warbeast, it was obvious who would win, however:

“Whoah? Look, look! It's Ino-sama♪”

“You are so unfaithful ~ Even though you had been chasing Kurami-chan just a little while before, jjust how slutty are you!?”

“Since both of them have no breasts, then it's obvious that the burly man-breasts are better!”

Said some of the Soras. There were Sora A, B, C... and many others causing a commotion, dressed in a great variety of attires: skirts, culottes, short pants... There was plenty of variation... In women's clothing.

She was hit by a commotion. Kurami was hit by a storm with not even room to breathe.

“..... So not hitting them was impossible..... It seems I failed huh ~”

A regretful voice said... There were multiple Soras stuck to the walls, to the ground, and falling through the air. Ino continued to hit them with his attacks and dispersing them, with an inversely proportional smile. Kurami screams at him with half lidded eyes:

“Was it really necessary to make them move and cosplay like this!?”

“It is as you say Kurami-dono. But that is Sora-dono's own conduct, you know?”

That's right, they were NPCs made to emulate Sora as realistically as possible. That means that Sora was 'made' into a program...

— He couldn't see Sora and not punch him.

“Ino-samaaa, it will be our 'secret'! Kill me more and more... please do me more!”

— 'Secret', that's what everyone outside the game heard.

However, only Ino heard: '21. At 8 o'clock. Distance: 600' echo with that word.

"Hah, *this* is the 64th Sora... I leave the outside to you, Plum-dono!!"

"Leave it to me! You can just show off and have as much fun as you can!"

Once again, Ino dashes together with the shockwave, and Kurami screams:

"Fii! I'm still at 24 Soras! He keeps increasing his lead!?"

"..... I'm trying Something..... hold on just a bit longer—"

At some point they had started to compete to see who could kill the most Soras, however—

'That's only natural' Kurami thinks while biting her nails.

— Since Plum had absolute confidence that he wasn't going to lose to Feil, even though it was a game he could end quickly, he made having fun tormenting Sora his priority, and since Ino trusted Plum, he jumped on board.

Kurami was *thankful* for that.

Until Fiel could force the countermeasure spell through, she could only do her best to run away at most—

"... Really... just how useless am I..."

"Aah... seriously. Kurami, you are really, an idiot, huh?"

「——!!」

As Kurami was wallowing in self-pity, Sora appeared behind her, but her reaction was an instant too late. As she was turning around, her gun got easily caught together with her hand, and she got pushed

against a wall. With one hand caught, Kurami couldn't move about anymore. The Sora NPC continues:

"... It seriously makes me angry. Are you telling me you are not aware of your own ability, and cuteness?"

"Wha...?"

Bewildered, Kurami tried to resist, but he raised her chin and,

"— You are too defenseless. Did you seriously think I was the only one aiming at you?"

—

"... w-wha.... What are you saying?..."

He was so close she could feel his breath, and had a serious expression. Kurami's thoughts were in disarray.

— Apart from Fiel, no one had ever called her cute.

What's more, none other than Sora (although she knew he was an NPC) had recognized her.

As Kurami's face became more and more confused, a lifeline came from outside the game.

"Kurami, hurry up ☆ and kill him ~♥ It's fine to kill him by ripping off his fingers one by one, too"

"Fii, just what are you saying—!?"

That lifeline came from a fully armed ship. When Fiel told her to mercilessly execute him, Kurami screamed.



— That said, Kurami still couldn't fire the love gun pressed against the wall like that.

She was trying to resist, but even though it was just an avatar, it still had the same physical abilities as Sora, so it had the strength of a man. She couldn't break free. She was no match for him in physical strength, and for some reason her heart skipped a beat at that—

“That silky black hair... that white porcelain like skin—”

She was getting gently caressed the whole time, and that made Kurami unintentionally feel intoxicated,

“And even your slim chest are all mine—”

—— In that instant. Her disarrayed thoughts cooled down.

When she understood that she was just *getting buttered up*, Kurami moved with mechanical precision. With extreme coldness, and no hesitation, she raised her knee, and hit him where it hurts most. Sora collapsed with a summersault. Kurami looked at him like he was trash while she kept stabbing him with her heels.

“Fii, you just focus on activating the countermeasure spell... I will manage, somehow...”

“Yeees! Kurami, do your best～!”

Kurami discarded her feelings. The voice that answered her said to ‘do your best’, but well, what she really meant was ‘Do your best to bully and defeat Sora’, but *there was no need to say it*.

After that exchange, Kurami, with eyes that had lost their light, turns her gun at the *thing* she was stepping on.

“I have two things to say... First, die”

In that time, her love power was decreasing too, but she didn't care.

— She kept firing repeatedly.

The shots hit only his clothes, but one after another his clothes were destroyed. When he was completely naked, she kept kicking him and forced him to his knees. When they see him like that, not only Fii, but also Ino, and even Plum cheer joyfully, however—

“And I keep telling you that I’m *still growing* !!!!!!!”

She fired, and as Sora disappeared in a shower of pink particles, she turns around and thinks.

— Since Leila was added to the betting plate, Plum and Ino couldn’t afford to lose.

However, even if they won like that, the prizes would be all taken by Sora and Shiro. Just winning would be frustrating.

— On top of being able to outwit even Kurami and Fiel to this extent, trying to frustrate Sora and Shiro’s plans, ‘winning against Sora and Shiro’, was already a loss. What’s more, they also used the one who brought them here, Plum. And in the unlikely case that Sora and the others lost, that victory wouldn’t be desirable either... Since if those two lost, there would be nothing we could do—

“Then, at the very least let’s try and become a distraction... fufu—”

That’s right, this had just become a four person, two on two pure game.

Having finally understood that, Kurami deepens her smile dangerously—

“Let’s have some fun then... I will kill you all, Soraaa!!”

And thus, the NPCs with Sora’s appearance kept flying through the air, to the ground, and to the walls, and exploding.

■■■

— And, observing the disastrous and erratic scenes outside and inside the game, was Steph. She couldn't help but make a stiff face, she was accompanied by—

“As realistic as possible, you say!? Aren't they stupid!? There's no way my daaarlign ♥ would say such things! He would just abuse you verbally!?”

Raising complaints while shaking her water tank, there was the foolish representative, Leila.

— ‘Even though she's so certain, I'm not so sure’ Steph thinks.

However, seeing the killing intent each had for Sora:

“B-but... i-it became a situation where no one loses..... right!?”

Getting past her fear of the others, Steph gathered her courage and expressed her opinion—

“It that really true!? The stress might be making me *lose* lifespan at the speed of sound!?” Ino said.

“I had finally raised my charisma, but they made me *lose* it too〜♪” Plum said.

“As for me, they gracefully used me, what I did was just a waste of time!? All my hardships were a total *loss* of time!!” Kurami said.

“And, they are making me *lose* my pride〜 right now, in progressive tense〜” Fiel said.

She was dismissed with the four instant replies. But even then. No, *because of them* , Steph smiled.

“But you all look like you are *having fun* ”

——

“... If Sora hadn’t stopped you, no one would have been able to play the game with those faces” Steph continued with her face down, and suddenly:

“..... Just how much did you know, Stephanie-dono?” Ino said, from inside the game.

Everyone waited for the answer to that.

— Since they had made an ‘Impostor’, Steph had been outside the game this whole time. Just how much did she remember? How much did she know about the past — or perhaps, even the future? That’s what Ino was asking, and Steph’s answer was:

“... I don’t have any memory from right before the game started either”

— Naturally.

When they heard the answer they expected from Steph, everyone focused on the game once more. Even though it may be an Old Deus, the Ten Pledges are an absolute principle.

She couldn’t harm the targets of the pledges, the Exceed, at all. She couldn’t violate their rights. It was impossible to alter or read memories *without permission* . Even reproducing them without permission was out of the question. In that case, when the game started, Steph was right there, and consented to the creation of her own impostor. Thinking that her memories were levied in the same way is also probably correct, however:

“I remember what those two said when we departed from Elkia.”

That’s right, when they departed from Elkia; what they had called a trump card, Leila stuffed in a backpack, was already being carried by Steph. Those two had told her:

“— We should be able to negotiate the contents of the game to a certain extent”

That's right, they didn't know specifically what the contents would be. But on the other hand, those two had said that *they knew to a certain extent* .

"When they said that, they handed me over this paper... and told me to read it when *the time came* ."

Steph said, as she took out the piece of paper, the 'Instructions' she had received from Sora, and remembers.

Yes, she remembers when that time came, 41 days ago...

— In the gardens of Miyashiro, Steph was standing alone.

She felt a kick coming from the backpack on her back. Had Leila woken up? She didn't even know why they were there, so she realized that she had lost her memories. So Steph hurriedly opened the paper that they had given to her—

"... I had passed out. Surely you can already guess what was written there."

When Steph said that, everyone answered only with a bitter smile. Aah, they could indeed guess: it was *everything* , right?

That's right, written there was *everything* that had happened in these 41 days.

— It will be a game where we will betray and deceive each other. They will most likely demand a Race Piece as the price for participating in the game. Plum will betray us, and from that, Fiel and Kurami will come to attack us. In that case, it will become a drawn-out game with the possibility to withdraw in the middle of it. Since most likely Miko made the preparations, it will be a game that cannot be won normally. Everything.

That's right, everything was written in there. You can surely guess what Steph thought when she read that:

"... That's *crazy* , isn't it... fufufu..."

Just why had she agreed to this before losing her memory?

And thus, Steph doubted her own sanity. At any rate:

“I didn’t understand why they made it a game where they knew you would betray each other, and where if they lost, five races would be destroyed. Or why if it wasn’t like that there was the possibility that someone would die. I didn’t understand anything.”

She was full of bewilderment and uneasiness, and suddenly—

“But then I remembered that Sora and Shiro had also said this”

Sora had said: “Don’t worry. It will be fine”

Shiro had said: “We will not let anyone die”

And on top of that—

“— ‘Believe’ he said... ‘Believe that everyone will betray us for sure’...”

But at that time, Steph didn’t understand what they meant.

Believe? That they’d get betrayed? — There was no way she could believe in that.

‘Then it will become something terrible.’ That’s what she thought.

‘If it went badly, five races, or at least someone, would become a sacrifice.’ She thought.

She spent day after day filled with unease and worries, unable to stop shaking, and looking up to the skies.

She could do nothing but wait for tens of days outside the game.

— Even so, there was only one thing.

Even though she didn’t believe in anything then, there was just that one thing. She believed in the last sentences written in that piece of paper, in the ‘instructions’.

— “We are counting on you to stop them so that no one loses anything, Steph.”

— “We are relying on you. Also, forgive us for excluding you, okay...?”

Believing that she couldn't believe—

Holding just that close to her chest, Steph was able to come this far. However, that was...

“— Now, after seeing you all, I was finally able to calm down!!”

Shaking her head, Steph smiles—

“After all, you look like you are *having so much fun* !”

Having seen that, Steph was now able to say that with a lovely smile.

That smile was just a little bit lonely...

“That's why. I can now believe that the game with the Old Deus can end with fun”

Steph made that unilateral declaration, and thinks.

The reason why they hadn't let her participate must have been....

— Because they *couldn't believe* that she'd betray them for sure.

Originally... that'd have been something to be proud of. Something to be happy about. However, looking at the people in front of her, and how much fun they were having playing the game, she felt just a tiny bit jealous.

Steph thought that being unable to join them was just a bit *frustrating*.

■■■

— From inside the virtual space, Ino smiles bitterly at Steph's words.

He now understood that Sora's last message wasn't a lie.

— “I believed in you, that you'd surely betray us, I love you guys!”

‘I will show you that we can beat a god without a single sacrifice, and *without believing* in anyone’ is what he said.

Miko-sama had been able to find the meaning behind those words, but Ino hadn't. Also, he felt that he understood the part about *believing* , at least in part—

“... However, even so, there are still some questions remaining...”

That was, of course, what had Miko prepared? No. Before that was this game's *true intention, what was even their goal when it started?*

There were many questions remaining, but Ino thinks about the most baffling one.

— ‘Why did Sora and Shiro act together with the impostor?’

Sora and Shiro certainly knew that ‘that Steph’ wasn't the real one. They knew immediately after the game started. And yet,

“Even though they didn't know when she would betray them, or even her true colors, they still handed their dice over to the impostor...?”

Ino whispered that, and thinks back to 23 days ago.

In the baths, Sora and Shiro had calmly transferred their dice to the impostor. He had certainly said that, ‘The problem is the same for both of us’ It was extremely dangerous... why would they do such a thing. As Ino was pondering by himself,

“E-excuse me... Ino-san?”

“Yees? What is it Stephanie-dono?”

Steph's voice resounded from outside the game, and Ino replied with an unusually good mood.

As if there was something wrong with that, Steph answers in a very shaky voice:

“E-ehm... I thought that maybe! Y-you should stop... mounting and punching Sora repeatedly!? Oh-hoho~”

Steph spoke against Ino, who kept hitting Sora NPCs endlessly.

With just one hit, the earth trembled, and the road broke. By now there was a crater there.

Not caring about the decrease in love power, Ino kept producing blunt sounds—

“Stephanie-dono, do you know the saying: ‘This is this, and that is that’?” He answered with the best smile he has made this century.

He was convinced that this game had been created just for this moment.

“U-um! C-c’mon~, don't they say that good friends are the ones you can fight with?” Steph desperately tried to make a follow-up.

“In that case, in the era of the Great War, everyone was already the best of friends♥” Plum answered from outside the game.

“E-ehm, Sora also said that even foolishness can come full circle!!”

But, once again, Plum responded with a logical conclusion:

“Then, enmity can come full circle too and you’d become best friends! Are you saying that everything can come full circle!?”

The blunt sounds were echoing even now, and Ino—

“I-i-in the first place!! Didn’t *everyone get betrayed to the same extent* !?”

— suddenly stops his hand. And considers.

“Sora said so too, didn’t he!? ‘I believed in you, that you’d surely betray us’!!”

00b: — There is one person among the dice holders whose memories weren't levied, a "traitor".

... A 'Traitor' it says.

Not an impostor, nor a liar. A 'Traitor'.

Sora had said: 'I believed in you, that you'd surely betray us'. If everything can come full circle, if they didn't have faith in that belief either...

"It can't be. Is that it, Miko-sama... But that can't be..."

Ino remembers the start of the game with amazement. The words that Sora had used to instigate them had a hidden meaning.

— 'It doesn't matter who is the traitor, anyone is fine'

He understands what he meant now. Who is the traitor? —
Themselves .

Everyone. Everyone betrayed everyone. Everyone believed they'd be betrayed. In that case, the one that the Old Deus had gone out of her way to put in the rules as the 'Traitor'.

Just—

— *Who were they going to betray ...?*

■■■

That everyone would betray was within their expectations.

However, if the one that cannot betray them was going to betray them anyways ...

The, the answer would be— that, *it's like that* —

——.....

— 42 days have passed since the game started, on top of square 306.

They were proceeding west towards Elkia's capital. The sounds of hooves and cartwheels could be heard.

They had resupplied in the city of El Roble, and they were now swaying along inside a horse-drawn carriage. Shiro was on Sora's lap, he made a small, sarcastic smile.

He had already gotten used to the billboards, they had letter for letter, word for word, the same task, it was:

— 【Amongst the seven souls that the Old Deus holds, choose one to be released and killed [\[1\]](#) , then, be transferred to the final square
】

With this, it was the sixth consecutive time that 【Task】 had—no? Most likely, *they keep on repeating, from square 301 until the end.*

Had someone written them with some sort of intent, and then somehow managed to gather them?—

‘What... is it some sort of cliched word play that you have to solve?’ Sora ponders by himself.

— ‘Let's try and arrange the rules’ Sora thinks with a small smile.

03: The result from throwing the dice is randomly determined, and after doing so, one dice from those used is lost.

10: Each 【Task】 shall be described on a billboard, and they shall be positioned irregularly across the squares of the board.

The results of the dice are ‘random’... using the random number generator that Shiro specified.

But the 【Task】 positioning is ‘irregular’... It seems that it is not random.

01 : The seven persons [\[2\]](#) shall be granted their own “Mass Existence Time” divided proportionally into 10 “Dice”.

06 : When the game begins, each player shall have the right to create 50 【Tasks】

It seems that the dice were granted to... *seven persons*.

But the ones who wrote the tasks were... *players* .

— Then, the three rules that must have been determined solely by the Old Deus were:

First, the rule that says that only the leading player would be saved without earning anything.

Second, the rule that makes the one who carried Miko away always the leading player.

And third, *the rule concerning the ‘Traitor’*.

That’s right, this game started because the Old Deus was threatened, or perhaps set up, by Miko.

Normally there is absolutely no way everyone would agree to a ‘traitor’ that *preserved their memories*.

From the fact that they had allowed those rules one could guess that — no?

Let’s suppose that they were able to determine those rules. If that was the case...

— Who wrote these tasks, and how had they arranged them continuously like this—?

“That should be obvious, right?” Sora said with a smile as the horse carriage they were on, kept rolling on, and finally arrived at square 307.

After the loading screen, they finally arrived at the resulting square. But someone was already there.

Sora helped Steph and Shiro down from the carriage. He had that someone in his sight. They were basking in it, meaninglessly and unshakably, they were simply there, it was,

“It was *you* wasn’t it? The seventh player, the Old Deus-san with no name”

— That’s right. She had a dry writing brush in one hand, and was resting her chin on the other. She was floating on empty space, seated on an ink line as big as her. She had the appearance of a young girl.

She turned to look at Sora and the others. She had reddish-black eyes that seemed to reflect everything in creation.

She was just there. Just with that, she had the overwhelming presence of a natural disaster. However... Right now, for Sora all that seemed like a fabrication — something hollow.

She looked just like an artificial doll. Sora dares to continue his provocations:

“ *You are not a dice holder*, yet you’re always in the lead. You can teleport anywhere you want, and also teleport others, and yet *you are a player* . If the Old Deus, you, weren’t here this task would be invalid—”

For a God, it was a lousy trick.

“You wrote it yourself, by saying *irregularly* you were able to put them at the end of the board— how would it be possible otherwise?” Sora said, mockingly, and at the same time the 【Task】 resounded:

— 【Amongst the seven [\[3\]](#) souls that the Old Deus holds, choose one to be released and killed [\[4\]](#) , then, be transferred to the final square】

— ‘Well then, let’s continue with the next answer’ Sora thinks, and deepens his smile.

“If we reached the goal normally, probably, almost certainly, this Old Deus will die”

It was a game that started because she was threatened. That’s what would normally happen if the threatened party lost. And what’s more, even if they reached the goal, and made a demand, would she be able to avoid fulfilling it?

Since Sora and the others had their memories levied before the game, they had no way of knowing that. However, since there’s no way that Sora and the others wanted to *sacrifice that*, then it’s easy. *They just needed to not think normally* ... In short:

“If *the one who knows which demand would prevent the Old Deus’ death* reached the goal, then there’s no problem.”

“... Are you saying that... you are the one who knows that... Sora?”

Steph asked from behind him, but Sora just tilted his head, and with a smile that was like a crevasse engraved in his face, he turns around and answers:

“There’s no way I’d know. *But you know, right?*”

When Sora made that eerie declaration, Steph — *No?* The one whose memories weren’t levied, the one who knows what to demand —

“It’s your turn ‘*traitor*’ ... or should I say ‘impostor’?”

“.....wha...t.....?”

The thing with Steph’s appearance had a face twisted by bewilderment and fear. She took a step back.

“— You will accomplish this task and reach the goal.”

As if he was chasing after her, Sora took a step towards her, and continued as if he were ordering her. *That* was still confused, and just raised a hoarse scream:

“A-are you saying that I have to say someone’s name — and kill them, s-so that I... can climb to the top!?”

“Not *someone*. You will properly say the name of the one that wouldn’t be killed even if they were released.”

— ‘Well then, let’s reveal the final answer’ Sora smiled as he said that.

The task urged them to release one of the seven souls in the Old Deus’ possession, *but which seven souls was it referring to?*

It was reasonable to think that it’d be the seven dice holders. By dividing the ‘Body’ into dice, and entrusting the ‘Soul’ to the Old Deus, they were able to stay alive — if the Old Deus let go of them, Sora and the others would die.

However! Steph is an impostor! And the Old Deus is also a player!? No, wait, what about Miko!?

Aah — Just who are these seven people!? Oh my, who should we sacrifice then—!?

... They should have been worrying like that, right?

Sora and Shiro just looked into each other’s eyes, and laughed. If the usual question would be: ‘Who should we sacrifice’, then the

solution would be to answer with: ‘We shouldn’t sacrifice anyone! Are you an idiot?’.

If they wanted to not sacrifice even a single person, then there was no room for worries.

“ We will get rid of the sacrifice that was already made. Simply put, we will revive the person who died .”

That’s right. They even went as far as forcing rules like: ‘The leading player will be saved’.

The one whose ‘container’ is being safeguarded by the Old Deus after being carried away carefully by her.

The one who, unlike Sora and the others, wasn’t divided into dice. Even if their soul was released they wouldn’t die.

— The one who was already dead, so they couldn’t die anymore than that.

The one who disappeared together with the Old Deus, although Sora and the others couldn’t see it.

— The one who must be right next to this Old Deus as it floated with a composed expression.

In short, the *seventh* of the seven persons.

“— You just need to answer with ‘Miko-san’”

Shiro reacted to Sora’s conclusion as if it was natural. But the thing with Steph’s appearance was just dumbfounded. There were no words, they just stared at each other, and yet, Sora by himself raised the tension.

“And thus! Miko-san’s soul will return to her body! With this, first, we will take back one sacrifice !”

He turns his hand towards the ‘traitor’ as if he was dancing, and says, as if he was singing:

“Be transferred to the final square — Congratulations!! You are the ‘Winner’!! Now just do a winning lap to celebrate your victory, stand on the podium, bathe in champagne and make the demand—!!”

He suddenly stopped moving when he said that, and concludes:

— The third of the rules that could have only been determined solely by the Old Deus. In other words, *they could only know what to demand by tampering with the fake Steph’s memories and conduct*

—

“... that only you, the ‘traitor’, could know, demand that the Old Deus doesn’t die— okay?♪”

—— Confusion. It created a silence born from bewilderment.

The Traitor shakes her head, and displays a natural response.

“I-I don’t... understand... F-first of all — I’m an impostor...?”

That’s right, Sora and Shiro knew that she didn’t have that awareness.

In that case, *she was a ‘replica’ created with the real Steph’s agreement* — that’s precisely why.

Steph’s agreement — in other words, *this copy would betray according to Sora and the other’s intentions*, Sora was now more certain of it.

That’s why Sora dispassionately brings that truth forward.

“— You. Do you have any memory of submitting your tasks? There are only 350 squares, but only the Tasks written by the Old Deus exist, then where are your tasks? Can you tell me what I told you right after we left Elkia? Where is Leila? Where are the notes and orders we gave you now?”

There’s no way *that* can answer. But if it was Steph she could easily answer those questions,

“... E-even if I reluctantly gave in and did what Sora says... It would be reluctantly, all right!?”

She said, and tried to object, but—

“I-if I raised to the top and said the Old Deus’ demands, wouldn’t the Old Deus win!? — E-everyone’s lives and everything we bet too! At worst, she could demand everything—”

“She won’t. That’s because *the Old Deus wouldn’t win* ”

Sora interrupted with an instant reply. In the first place, the rules say that:

13: When a Dice Holder reaches the final square, they shall be declared the “Winner” and the game shall end.

14: The Old Deus in question accepts the obligation to fulfill all demands within the scope of her rights that the “Winner” makes.

The scope of the Old Deus’ rights — Sora and the other’s rights were outside of it.

“... That’s right. You will be the ‘Winner’ after all. I told you — you are the ‘Traitor’ remember?”

If the one who would absolutely never betray, still betrayed then —

“You will betray me, betray Shiro, betray Jibril, betray Plum, betray Ino, betray Izuna, *you will even betray yourself* — *You will betray* all participants, you see”

The Old Deus’ demands: the Race Pieces, Miko’s life, everything. They won’t let her obtain everything, it’s just that *they can win by not making any sacrifice*.

— *That’s all they wanted, and the only reason why this game started*. That is their victory.

“The Old Deus believed that there was no way the traitor would reach the goal, so betray even the Old Deus too, okay♪”

——.....

Only the wind was blowing, it was a long silence.

The Old Deus was just there with an unreadable expression. Her mere presence was overwhelming.

For how long had she been like that? The little girl with Steph's appearance was looking down, and muttering.

"... Sora... Shiro... Am I... an impostor?"

She asked with a trembling voice, but Sora and Shiro answered with an extremely natural tone:

"... yes... after all... in the first place—"

"We had no intention of letting Steph participate in this game from the very beginning"

By now, the real Steph should be in the Eastern Federation with Leila. He smirked when he tried to imagine what kind of faces that buch was making—

"Then... Who am I..."?

She was still looking down when she screamed that.

"A doll created just for this game!? What will happen to me when the game ends!?"

She was trembling. She hadn't complained like that even during Jibril's game.

"— Am I needed just to win this game...?"

Even though Sora had told her that if they wanted to not make a single sacrifice then all participants would be included. That caused a big impression in her — that's why she had been desperately pushing her fears away, and yet—

"Is it fine for me to disappear just because I'm... an... impostor...?"

— However, in response to that scream filled with resentment, Sora stuttered:

“Eeeeh, aaah no, tha-that’s wro— that’s not iiiiiiit!? Shi-Shiro, help!”

“... Nii... you’re a virgin... because you lose your composure... with a single tear... from a woman”

However, since Sora was really flustered for not knowing what to do, Shiro turns towards him with half-lidded eyes. It seemed like Sora wanted to say that something was really wrong, so Steph turns her teary eyes towards him too.

“... You will not, disappear... you will not, die... It will be all, right...”

To continue what Shiro was saying, Sora takes a few deep breaths, clears his throat once, and says:

“Ah～ How many times do I have to say this. *No one will be sacrificed, we won’t let that happen.* ”

—Returning to the previous topic. Why was this person not one of the souls that the Old Deus has? That was because:

“... The Old Deus doesn’t have Stephanie Dola’s soul. Due to the Ten Pledges, without Steph’s agreement, a duplicate cannot be made. That’s why! There’s no way that me, Shiro and Steph would all agree that since you’re an impostor you’d have no more uses after the game”

That’s why, well, they’d need her at least to transfer the memories from the game to the Steph outside the game, but—

“Aah～, it’s just that... you see... Steph cannot betray everyone... that’s why—”

He averts his eyes a little bit. As if it was displeasing, or perhaps embarrassing, Sora says:

“— As long as you are a traitor, I cannot call you Steph”

Instead, Shiro give her a thumbs up, and with a mouth shaped like a chestnut [5] says:

“... Let’s meet outside... later... and say ‘I’m home”

“Ah... well, if we do that — I will reply calling you by name, okay”

..... Suddenly.

“Hahaha” She bursted into laughter—

■■■

— The Steph that was not Steph, the traitor, walked towards the Old Deus. Her small limbs were trembling, however, Sora and Shiro were the same, and made a bitter smile.

In a way that didn’t befit Steph, she understood the reason for that. Both Sora and Shiro... didn’t have absolute proof that they were correct. What’s more, in this game, including that incident with Jibril, they had made several mistakes.

— What if even if the traitor reached the goal, they still couldn’t make the correct demand?

Perhaps, once Miko’s soul was released she’d die?

Or maybe, once the game ended they’d be exterminated after all?

What if, in the worst case scenario, this was a scheme by the Old Deus, and they all lost?

— Countless worries filled her mind, but the Traitor just smiled.

‘I can believe’ she thought.

There’s no way she’d betray them, that was the very reason why she was chosen to be the traitor. That’s precisely why they were able to entrust that move, and everything they bet, to the one who would certainly betray them.

They won't sacrifice anyone. They went so far with Jibril just for that. The traitor believes that this can end with all participants laughing.

— She stares directly at the Old Deus, and says the name of the soul to be released:

“— I choose... ‘Miko-sama’!”

And suddenly...

The scenery changes, at that instant—

The Old Deus' face was robotic and unfeeling but... for some reason, at that moment... It looked like the face of a child that was about to cry—

■■■

— There was a flash.

She had exchanged places with the girl that had just disappeared, as if it was teleportation.

From a small hill that commanded a view of the sea, accompanied by the sound of wooden sandals, a voice like a bell could be heard:

“... haah... my body after 42 days... was it always this heavy inside?...”

She appeared behind Sora and Shiro... waving her two big tails and kimono... a golden fox.

— ‘I don't want to get any older’ is what she was trying to say. Miko made a wry smile.

When they saw her Sora and Shiro were so relieved they put a hand on their chests, however,

“Aah, c'mon!! Can't we win already!?”

“... Shiro, is also... tired... I just want... to enter, a futon... and sleep...”

They stretched and said that with tired faces—

At the same time—

Suddenly, the two remaining dice they each had [\[6\]](#) disappeared from their chests. Sora returned to being 18 years old, and Shiro to being 11, then they looked up to the sky.

She's supposed to be on the final square, 44 squares away.

— Did the traitor make the correct demand?

The ground rumbled and shook, the game board collapsed. They had confirmed that the game had ended,

“Well... since we suffered a defeat, we can't say that it was a perfect victory... haah, there were so many misreads”

“... it's not... nii's fault... this time... Shiro too... made a lot of... mistakes...”

To summarize, the loss from this time will have lasting repercussions. As expected, Sora and Shiro just want to sulk in bed and review, however:

“Kaka! You certainly slipped through the preparations of all participants, including that child—”

However, Miko had a merciless and wicked smile.

“Did you forget about my own preparations? You are so cold♪”

Sora and Shiro turn to where she was looking at together.

— As usual, she was expressionless, unfeeling, robotic. The Old Deus was drifting through space on a giant incline, however:

“... why doth thou not seek victory...?”

“.....”

When they heard that question, Sora and Shiro made a dubious frown together. The Old Deus' appearance hadn't changed, however,

there was something different about her. The words that had been directly engraved into their brains before were just sounds now. Her incredible presence was like an act, it had no realism at all.

— It was almost as if she had stopped being a ‘god’.

“...why doth thou not seek ‘profit’...?”

Even her tone had changed for some reason. She asked her questions with an attitude that made them think of a child.

However, it looked like Sora didn’t understand what she was trying to ask:

“I’m sorry, I don’t understand. This is our victory, right?”

— They had pursued profit, and as a result they had won. They had obtained profit, right?

Sora had spoken without any doubts, however, the Old Deus’ expression trembled, and she spoke with sorrow:

“... Why didn’t thou steal from me? Why didn't thou allow me die...?”

“... ehm... well, you see. This is a game, right?”

Sora’s self confidence was a bit shaken, so he tentatively confirms, in a single breath:

“Is there any meaning to a master gamer killing people!? Instead, they’d want to play again, right!? Or rather, we’d feel disgusted if we let you die! It would be a heavy burden, c’mon!”

“... It wouldn’t, be fun... it’d leave a bad, aftertaste... we have, chicken hearts, after all...”

“The ones who bet their lives so calmly have chicken hearts... such a funny joke” Miko teased.

However, Sora turns around with a very serious face, and screams:

“And actually!! I can’t take it anymore, so I’ll just let everything out, all right!?”

It was something he planned to tell Jibril later, but even so, Sora screams at his wit’s ends:

“You!! Listen to what Tet says a little bit more!! Aren't you ignoring him a little bit too much!? Even if you say it’s because he’s annoying, won’t you spill a single tear of sympathy after coming this far!? The tenth pledge! C’mon!! Repeat it!!”

—Let's all have fun and play together!

“What would you do if you had killed her!? I’m only asking because you seem to think I’m the crazy one!”

Sora screamed, and remembers the scenery he saw in the match against Jibril. A world of killing or being killed, of stealing or being stolen from. A world that was an endless chain of despair and hatred—

If they had made a single mistake it could become something like their previous world.

“— Is such a thing— reaaaaaaly so fun!?”

... There was a shocked silence.

That silence swallowed up the place, and then,

“... I don’t understand— don’t understand don’t understand don’t understand don’t understand don’t understand don’t understand don’t understand don’t understand don’t understand” The Old Deus murmured at her wits’ end. The game board kept collapsing, and the rumbles became louder.

And then, she finally raised her voice:

“In that case, just what is there to believe in?”

“—? Can’t you just believe in *doubting* ?” Sora asked, but the only response was a blank stare. She didn’t understand very well, but... through their belief in betrayal, they had arrived at trust. They had proven that just a moment ago, right?

Finally, the Old Deus clenches her teeth, and yells at the bewildered Sora with a tearful voice—

It was almost as if... yes it was just like a child throwing a tantrum:

“——In that case— answer me!!”

The board’s collapse had finally reached their feet,

“Why—— *why didst the medium betray me?* — Answer me, inferior race!!”

In that collapsing scenery, that scream reached only one person.

“Then, since my suffering friend asked for it. If I were to borrow your words—”

Miko makes a smile befitting an ill natured fox, and says:

“— The real thing starts now. I’m looking forward to it ♥”

A black *thing* swallowed Sora and Shiro.

■■■

— Eastern Federation’s capital: Kannagiri Island.

Deep under Chika Tandaifu— Plum & Ino Vs. Fiel & Kurami.

It was where the grand game that crossed over between the inside and the outside of the video game had ended. Cruelly, there was a clear distinction between the winners and losers.

— On one hand, the winners were engulfed in delight..

“Hey, how do you feel right now? Hey, how does it feel to not be able to use magic even once ~ ♥”

“Ha,ahaha, ahahaha! I, Hatsuse Ino, have no more regrets in life!”

Plum was floating around provoking them, and Ino had a satisfied face.

If Ino had been in his body, he wouldn't have been able to use blood destruction continuously like that and massacre the Sora NPCs.

He was filled with an intense sense of accomplishment, he even though that he would be fine with dying right there and then.

The other one, Plum had also been able to ignore the “Soul Degradation” due to being in spirit form, and had used magic continuously. Using the original power of the Dhampir, he had completely cut off Fiel, just as he said. Not only that, he had also trapped her in multitudes of dreams and made her as useless as moss. He was ecstatic.

— On the other hand, the losers were engulfed in despair.

“... I lost to a mosquito. I lost to a mosquito. I lost to a mosquito～ Fufu— I want to die”

“... huff, puff, Fii... It can't, be helped... after all they cheated right...!?”

Fiel was grumbling with a vacant smile, and Kurami tried to comfort her, out of breath.

With Kurami's physical capabilities, there was no way she could win against Ino alone, much less against Ino using Blood Destruction.

The other one, Fiel, had used magic to her limit — no, she had exceeded her limits. She had used multiple carved seal spells at the same time. She had even used her trump card of using seven spells at the same time, the soul stone on her forehead had been strained like never before, and was even blackening.

— Even after doing all that, she still couldn't get past Plum even once.

If one compared it to how dark her eyes had become because of that, one could say that the soul stone was crystal clear.

“... After this experience～ flowers surely grew on my head～... right Kurami? If you happened to see me in my next life～ I wouldn't be a flower base, but rather, the natural fertilizer on the flower bed, but even so, I still want you to love me～...”

“Wait, I don't understand what you're saying! Where are you going, Fii! Fii!!”

— Delight, and despair. It was a scenery separated like light and darkness.

Steph was staring at the line between light and dark with a stiff face. However, at this time, she still didn't know. That the division between light and dark could be a lot worse. And that the mixing of yin and yang brought about only chaos..

— And then, she suddenly woke up.

“——!?eh? What..... Where am I?”

The memories of 42 days flowed into Steph's head in a muddy stream.

The contradictory memories of being in two places at once were confusing her—

However, two screams that seemed to be more urgent were heard at the same time:

“Wha!? What is up with this blood!? I-I can't die yet, I take back my previous words!”

“Kyaaaaaaaa!? I'm burning up! I'll die I'll die, I'm dying! Blood! Give me blood Queen!!”

It seemed that together with Steph's memories, Ino and Plum's bodies had gone back to normal too. Was it backlash from that? Ino was vomiting blood and had started to beg for his life. Plum had jumped at the water tank next to Steph, at the sleeping Leila's wrist.

And——

"... It would seem that my Masters have won— huh?" Jibril muttered emotionally.

She came using teleportation, and tilted her head to the side when she saw the new scenery.

Due to her memories of the game— the continuous fear and her rough treatment at Sora and Shiro's hands, Steph was screaming sarcastically.

Due to Leila's whims, Plum was unable to suck her blood, and he looked like he was about to implode, Fiel was just chanting 'die die die' at him.

Ino was submerged in a sea of blood, convulsing. Unable to help, or even move due to fatigue, Kurami was crying loudly

——I see.

It looks like everyone had a lot of fun, I'm glad to see everyone smiling♪"

"Don't call a face like this a smileeeeeeee" Steph screamed that firm request right next to her.

"... Actually... Jibril, where did you appear after the game?"

"In Miyashiro. Ehm, Izuna-sama is also coming this way, but where are——" Jibril said as she raised her hand — now the scenery outside could be seen as if it was completely natural.

— It was as if heaven and earth were collapsing.

The spiraling sugoroku board that transcribed the planet. It was made in the sky it even reached outer space.

That was now broken, destroyed. It was now collapsing due to gravity, following the original laws of physics—

There were no less than 350 squares, each with a 10km side. It was improper to call them simple rocks, they were entire lands.

It was crumbling completely — It was dissolving as if it had never even existed in the first place.

—However,

“... Where are Sora and Shiro?... Also Miko-sama...”

Steph had reached the end, the board was collapsing... Also her memories had flowed in, and they had returned to their bodies.

“The game ended, right? Then where are my Masters...?” Jubril muttered.

However, suddenly, Steph remembers something from her murky memories. It was what the other Steph was forced to request at the final square:

— *“I demand that the Quintessence that Miko has is returned to the Old Deus”*

... That was it.

Since she was forced to request it, even Steph herself didn’t understand. It seemed like it had ended without anyone dying and without any sacrifices, but...

“ — The game is not over yet.”

“... What?”

Steph sees a small black dot at the end of the collapsing board, and mutters:

“After all, that child... the Old Deus still hasn’t smiled”

[1] Killed was in furigana.

[2] This is pretty much untranslatable. As Sora said it’s a play on words, the rules are plagued with them. 七名 literally means seven persons, 七=seven, 名=formal counter for persons. However, the kanji 名 also means name so it also means seven names.

[3] Same as before, it uses 七名.

[4] Killed was in furigana.

[5] 栗みたいな口

[6] Fun fact: they had exactly enough dice to reach the goal.
 $24+18+12=44$

Chapter Four — Correct answer (Who are you?)

— It was something instantaneous.

But in that instant, hundreds of millions of memories flowed into Sora and Shiro. For a human, it was something close to “Eternity”. They were forced to experience such an absurd amount of time.

In a dream like state, ambiguously as if they were just dozing off...they *saw*.

■■■

Long, long ago, there was a lone girl. This was even before the world had formed, it was such a long time ago that it was overwhelming.

That girl was a “God”.

But what is a god? And why was she born? The girl didn’t know. And since she was alone, there was no one who could answer her questions.

Knowledge didn’t exist in that world yet.

The girl had been born to ask “Why” in place of those with no awareness, those with no consciousness. To doubt everything. The girl carried the quintessence of doubt. She took her writing brush and kept asking:

What does it mean “To be”? What is the “World”? What was she then, since she asked those questions?... etc.

No matter what doubts she harbored, there was no one to ask. No matter what hypotheses she thought of, no one answered. She was just a philosopher that kept questioning everything in solitude for eternity. And since she was alone, she didn’t even know what loneliness was.

— She just kind of wanted someone to talk to. So she made 5 small machines.

Observation. Analysis. Proof. Response. Four machines to perform those tasks, and one to manage and coordinate them.

In a world where knowledge didn't exist yet, she decided to try and create knowledge. Her infinite doubts could now be answered by the response machine, that was what the girl wished for. However, the machine's very own knowledge caused them to ask in return:

— What are we? What are you? What is to doubt? etc...

The machines had knowledge, however, even though they had knowledge, they lacked something that the girl had. And since she was alone, even though it was something that the girl had, it was something she couldn't have known about.

That was why, in that primordial world, the first to have a “heart”, the girl, despaired. She didn't even know what a wish was, she was left without understanding even that. And, at the end of that even more eternal silence, the girl finally thought of a method to answer one of her endless doubts.

The lone girl doubted even her own existence, and in the end—

— *She ended up negating herself*, she pierced her own “Quintessence”.

At the very least, she existed. That was her only answer. It was an answer she obtained in exchange for death, it was a precious answer she held close to her heart...

□□□

But on that day, even that answer was negated.

On a remote hill that would soon be called the “Eastern Federation”, under a sky with a red moon that set the stage, in the dead of night, there was a golden fox child that looked like she would die at any time, and the one who doubted everything in this world. The Ten Pledges, the One True God, established tactics, the inevitable, she doubted anything and everything—

Even so, the lone girl, the girl that should have died, the girl whose “Quintessence” was dozing; asked the fox that had decided that “You can’t go against the established tactic” with a warped smile, a question:

— “Why?” The day she asked that was denied.

— The dozing girl guessed that *she hadn’t been able to die*.

She had negated herself and pierced her own “Quintessence” with as much power as possible, but even so it wasn’t “Erased”, it was just separated—and temporarily deactivated. She despaired, but she wasn’t able to realize that while she dozed, so the girl kept piling on questions.

— “Answer me. What’s thy basis to conclude that thou canst not go against the established tactic?”

It was almost as if she was blaming the one who woke her up from her illusory, but satisfying dream—

The golden fox’s answer was her own condition, her history up to that point was her basis. The girl asked what was her proof that such an extrapolation fallacy was true. The golden fox’s answer was that proof was unnecessary for something as obvious as the strong trampling on the weak. The girl asked the definitions of weak and strong, and proof that proof is unnecessary for obvious things.

It was an endless and fruitless argument, however—

For some reason, even with a dying body, she was laughing. The golden fox daringly stood up, and interrupted her question.

“— This has become so stupid. Hey you, what’s your name?” The fox asked.

The girl thought and answered: “Unknown”.

Even though the fox pointed and said “You”, even her own self was in doubt. The girl talked about everything: her own “Quintessence”, her endless questions, and how in the end she denied herself.

Therefore, she never even thought about a name. When the girl finished talking, the fox answered:

“Oh, so you’re nameless then. Well, that doesn’t matter. Then—”

The golden fox deepened her smile as she said that. There was no despair on her face anymore.

“— It would be fine if I just provided proof, right?”

However—

“In order to destroy the established tactic, we’d have to go against that One True God bastard... we’d have to change the world itself so it keeps going against the established tactic forever — I’ll create that world with my own hands as your proof.” She wanted to remake the world.

The fox stood up full of enthusiasm, however, the girl *didn’t care either way at all*. She just wanted to sleep. After all, it was possible to disprove proofs infinitely. The girl made that clear, but the golden fox, displeased from the bottom of her heart, said:

“Are you trying to provoke me? Even if it’s against your will, I’ll be keeping you company”

“Why?” The girl tried to ask, but the fox boldly interrupted her.

She made an arrogant boast:

— She'd unite all the races, and make an "Established tactic" in which no one is sacrificed.

With that, she'd defeat the One True God, and attain his throne.

"So c'mon 【Aschente】 " The fox said as she raised her hand.

——?

But the girl's answer was just silence.

Both the end of the war and the ten pledges happened while she was inactive. What's more, since the girl kept denying herself, she was just temporarily weakly active. At any moment, the girl could go into temporary inactivity once again, she didn't even have her powers as an Old Deus. Past, present, and future; she has always been in a hazy slumber...

"Let me continue. How about we play a little game?"

But the fox kept talking:

"After you win, my body will be your medium until death."

And, with the fox's big words, dawn came. She threw her body away because it had become useless for her.

"— But once you obtain the Throne of the One True God you'll return it, without reservation"

When she heard those words, the girl was surprised. As expected, she didn't know. The Throne of the One True God. That referred, without a doubt, to the Suniaster. The Great War in her faint memories had actually ended.

— The Suniaster. An all powerful, all knowing conceptual device.

Certainly, if she had that, even her infinite questions would be answered—

□□□

— And so,

“—— Uwaaaaa thou! Thou, thou, medium! Didst thou deceive me!?”

“Hahaha! The one who got deceived is at fault, that’s the current world’s common sense, right?”

That’s right, if the girl won, she’d use the fox’s body as a medium until she died. And thus, the girl won, however, it was her “Quintessence” what was bound inside the fox. Until the fox died, or perhaps—

“With this, you will remain inside me until I give you the Throne of the One True God ♪”

The girl’s thoughts were still in disarray, but the fox just kept laughing in a good mood.

— As expected, the girl didn’t realize.

She didn’t notice that *she was expressing emotion* for the first time.

The goddess of doubt couldn’t believe even in her own existence, yet she encouraged the fox to go against the established tacting without meaning to. And so, both the fox and the girl made their first friend. They were forced to share a body, according to the Pledges, those two couldn’t be separated—

“... Relax, a loss is a loss. I will fulfill my promise.” The fox said. It was an unprecedented cheat, she bound the girl’s Quintessence to her own body.

She was gazing at the giant chess pieces on the horizon with shrewd eyes.

“You can keep asking questions. I will tackle as many as possible”

... But for the girl, that was somehow not unpleasant.

“Until you obtain the Suniaster, and stop negating yourself, just watch from inside me.”

Just by talking with someone else, she felt... something—

— And thus, the Eastern Federation was born.

But for that, they didn’t use the girl’s powers as an Old Deus, there was not even a need to.

Whenever the fox thought something was impossible, the girl asked why. That was all.

Whenever the fox thought that she couldn’t win against the other races, the girl would ask how she had come to that conclusion.

If the fox lamented about how being unable to use magic was a disadvantage, the girl would ask why that was a disadvantage.

— If the fox gave up on the idea of changing the world, the girl asked why she thought it couldn’t be changed.

The girl who kept asking why became the fox’s advisor, and they created a country in the blink of an eye.

— For a god, it was the blink of an eye, but for the fox it was something that required 60 years—

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And so, the end came abruptly too.

“... It’s almost time. I’ll finally let you out, thank you for your patience.” The once young golden fox said. This was the night after they took the Seiren capital. The golden fox was playing with the War Beast’s race piece in her finger when she made that declaration. The girl, of course, didn’t understand what she meant... but she had a hunch.

“Is it them— those Immanities?”

— The fox had previously apologized to the girl.

Because she didn’t think she’d be able to obtain the Suniaster before her lifespan ended.

— The fox said that she hadn’t been able to find something to end the established tactic, and that she was *leaving the match to someone else*, however the girl intentionally didn’t mind it, she didn’t understand why she was apologized to either.

Since the beginning, it’s not like she thought that just by controlling all the races she could win against the One True God. But since those Immanities appeared the fox changed. That’s what the girl thought.

No, did she just go back to how she was in the past? When she thought that she could actually obtain the Suniaster.

“That’s right. It’s not like I’ll ‘cohabitate’ with you forever.” She said, and laughed while playing with the Warbeasts’ piece.

“In truth, since the designated representatives of the Warbeasts are both you and I, I can’t bet the race piece.”

However, the following words were meant to go beyond the girl’s expectations, they surprised her:

“... It’s enough if I die by myself, I will entrust this to the next ones.”

“.....”

Did the fox really intend to hand over the Suniaster?

If her lifespan wasn’t enough, the fox would entrust it to someone else, however, the Pledge with the girl was to ‘be your medium until death’. Neither the fox nor the girl had the right to annul that, but what if the fox’s lifespan approached its end—?

“That’s why, before that happens let’s overwrite that Pledge... let’s play one last game”

She proposed to play a game with someone else before the girl disappeared together with the fox's life, and let them succeed her Pledge. However, the girl refused. The one who promised to find the truth was the fox after all.

However—

“— In that case, I'll end my life right now.”

——

“... I won't let you die, by any means necessary...”

The fox said with her head hung low, but the girl thought in secret:

— Inside the fox, the girl just existed with no power, however, according to the pledge, for her Quintessence to be succeeded, the fox needed to die. With the fox's death, the chains of the Pledges would be broken, and the girl would go back to being temporarily inactive due to her self-negation. But after being released from the Pledges, she'd have a bit of time. During that time, she could use her powers as an Old Deus to hold the fox's soul, think of a way to grant her eternal life, and then return her soul.

In that case, they'd play a game as the fox proposed, *and once the girl won*, she'd use the Pledges once more to house her Quintessence inside the fox.

“... I shall accept... However, I won't accept thy death, medium.”

And that was why the girl accepted the game, and declared that she'd use all her power in it. What she didn't say was that she didn't have any intention to hand over her Quintessence to anyone else but the fox——

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And thus, the girl was finally released from the chains of the Pledges.

So with the girl's advent, or in other words, with the fox's death, her godly powers were released. Then, the Immanities, the Dhampir, and each of the fox's companions were deciding the rules according to their own circumstances. It was there that the girl realized.

— After the pledge ended, and she grasped the girl's life, she realized that she was in an unfavorable match, and *she couldn't even get out of it.*

Then the girl understood.

— Since the very beginning, the fox had absolutely no intention to die nor to hand to hand over her Quintessence to anyone else.

She simply wanted to *throw the girl away*. The girl was betrayed once again.

The betrayal was:

That if someone reached the top, then the girl's *Quintessence would be erased instead.*

That she made the participants bet a Race Piece each, and...

"... You were very patient. Even so, I believe in you" The soul the girl was holding said.

"Thou would say that even as thou are plotting to betray me. Is believing just a joke to thou?"

And that whether she won or lost, there were rules protecting the fox... that was all.

— The girl didn't understand why she'd do such a thing, however:

"I'll have you think that... It's about time you stood up by yourself."

That's right, using this game, she'd make her think that proofs are a joke.

In other words:

“Believing in the Traitor... It’s about time you also realize that doubting and believing are equal.”

— If she was able to make the Traitor reach the goal, her Quintessence wouldn’t be erased. But either way, she’d probably just go back to being temporarily inactive.

And so, the girl was watching those that started the game, those that’d try to kill her... or rather some of them, and thinks about her doubts:

— Just where did she go wrong? However, she understood.

The Suniaster. The all-knowing vessel that can only be obtained by gathering all the Race Pieces and winning against the One True God.

— That’s just perfect. In that case, she’d start by obtaining the Race Pieces of five races. She’d assume the Throne of the One True God, and obtain the answers to all her questions... If she did that—

If, she... did that—

‘... I should understand... why she threw me away...’ The girl thought, but she didn’t understand what that meant. Nor the meaning of her shaking hands, or the meaning of her crestfallen expression, or the true character of the ones in the spiral—

What is to believe? There’s no way you can prove anything. If you say that you can, if you say that you can answer then—

— She thought like that even now, that was the answer she was satisfied with.

‘If you can show me... then show me.’ Even that way of thinking too—

■■■

— And, as if they were waking up from a daydream, with their thought still not completely separated, Sora and Shiro looked at their surroundings. Looking once around they, and Miko who was standing next to them, saw the same thing. The magnificent land that spiraled to the heavens just a little while ago, was nowhere to be found. It was just a dark room.

It was a small, gloomy, cold, mechanical — they were in the center of a space that seemed to reject everything in the world. And there was a lonely, nameless Old Deus hugging her knees.

In there... in that, the siblings saw a familiar place, a familiar scenery. It was that place, their previous world.

They were pretending they didn't see anything. Neither the room they were trapped in nor those two peas in a pod.

"Ye boaster who answered with 'doubt' when asked what believing was...." She said in a frightened, trembling voice. It was an appearance that was quite far from the majesty of a god.

But Sora and Shiro... knew.

—That this was this Old Deus' true form.

By watching that memory — No, even if they hadn't watched it, Sora and Shiro would have known.

When the game started — *The first time they saw her*, Sora and Shiro knew.

They knew because when both Sora and Shiro peeked into her eyes, they realized they were very familiar. Those familiar eyes really didn't suit the transcendental race — the Old Dei. That was because they were the eyes that both Sora and Shiro *saw in the mirror* in the past.

What was there was neither a person nor a god, but someone who got betrayed, hurt... They were the eyes of someone that no matter

how hard they struggled, they didn't know what to do, or how to live. Therefore:

“— Just what is a god...” She simply asked. It was like she was begging, imploring, or perhaps, blaming them.

— She was born without understanding anything. Without desiring anything.

Not knowing anything, she was forced to ask questions eternally.

She lived without knowing anything, she died to try to know something.

She was awakened without knowing anything, she was used, tricked, deceived, betrayed...

And what she was told in the end, what she was missing was that: ‘Doubting is believing’ ? In that case, what was the meaning of the Goddess of Doubt?

She was asking the persons that seemed to be having fun, as if she resented them. That was why she had those eyes,

“Hmm... Well you see it's something that Shiro... No, it would be better if you heard it from Miko-san”

Sora cannot help but look away, towards her sister, and towards Miko.

“We came this far, but I have a confession to make: There were always things that we didn't know.” Sora said, and glared at Miko with reproachful eyes.

Indeed, Sora had seen through the real victory conditions of this game. The things that they hadn't been able to read through, the basic mistakes, and even that loss had been mostly explained already.

But even so—

“ Why did the Old Deus play this game?. This is the only thing we never understood.”

—Well, originally Sora thought that a reason to play the game, or even an *objective were unnecessary*.

Prizes, money or even a simple trophy, they’d play a game simply because they wanted to, nothing more, nothing less. If there was an opportunity to play a game with a literally godly gamer, and they didn’t take it, they’d rather ask the meaning and objective of not playing.

However, maybe that was not the prevailing view. That thought became more prevalent these last few days, until the conceited Sora finally started to doubt.

He realized that Miko had set up the Old Deus and *forced* her to play the game.

— In that case, what did she *use as bait* to set her up?

The only thing he didn’t understand was why the reason they sought such a large scale game, however—

“... I think it’s unlikely, but...” Sora takes a breath.

“— My friend betrayed and shamelessly said: ‘Even so, I still believe’, but what’s up with that!? Believe, even though she hurt me so much!? What is believing!? I cannot believe, if you say that you can, then prove it with your lives!! If not, then I’ll become all-knowing and all-powerful and get the answer myself——!!”

He even mixed in body language and hand gestures, it was a true to life performance—

And so, he changed back.

“... Or something like that. I think it’s unlikely, but was it really just something like that?”

“Hahaha.... Right? She’s really a difficult child huh?” Miko answered with a foolish laugh, so Sora and Shiro directed a freezing gaze towards her.

— No, the question was rhetorical, but Sora also understood. The game had already ended, the memories that were levied before had already returned. According to those memories, before the game she had certainly asked: ‘What is to believe?’.

... Not knowing what they were being asked, they naturally answered with: ‘to doubt’. They were saying that doubt and trust were the same thing, but for some reason, they were asked to prove it.

It seemed that she intended to use the prisoner’s dilemma to disprove it. Sora read through that, and he himself proposed:

‘How about not erasing the Quintessence if the Traitor reaches the goal?’

— In the first place, it was a game built on the premise that they’d betray each other.

The prisoner’s dilemma originally was meant just to make fun of a shrewd move, but—

Who’d have thought. The Detective’s true motive was just to *test the Prisoner’s trust* ! Normally that’d be unthinkable—!!

Like that, and with eyes resembling those of a dead fish, Sora sighs.

“... Adults are really geniuses, making the world so complicated”

“Right? One can only be amazed～ kuhahaha!”

“Why are you laughing?!! Miko-san, you are also part of the side making things complicated, right!?”

“... In the first place... this was all... Miko-san’s fault... right?”

Sora and Shiro cannot help but scream, Miko lowers her eyes with self-depreciation, and laughs.

“... That’s right. The ones making things complicated are hopeless boring people like me.”

— As if it was responding to that masochism, that dark place creaked. And, once that creak echoed once, the master of that space, the squatting girl, swayed once. She was flickering like a candle’s flame, she was becoming faint and indistinct.

“... C’mon, I think I told you already, but the real thing starts now.”

— Since Sora and Shiro had seen the girl’s memories, they knew what was happening. Since her pledge with Miko had been severed, she was negating herself again. Her temporarily released, limited godly powers, were decaying without end.

“The Quintessence that was tied to me by the Pledges, returned to that child. However—”

At this rate, she’s become temporarily inactive again... she’d be a sacrifice. With this, Miko calmly ‘threatens’ them with a warped smile:

“Even if we were the ones who made it complicated, you were the ones who released it — It looks like it will be your loss♪”

“— I know that I shouldn’t be the one to say this, but Miko-san, you have a really bad personality...”

“Gamers should have bad personalities, and what’s more, I’m a fox... However—”

But, she changed her attitude. She lowered her voice and her eyes, and continued:

“I made a mistake... But, I don’t know what I should have done, even now”

So that was it, as long as the Old Deus remained inside Miko, she wouldn’t disappear. However, in the end that was just because she

was bound by the Pledges. The girl didn't have any awareness, she didn't obtain any answers, she didn't even notice anything— and when the chains of the Pledges were broken just now, this happened.

The two of them are one. That part resembled them, Sora and Shiro thought.

But there's also one part that is definitely different.

“— Even so, I want to save that girl”

Did she still have the qualifications to call herself her friend? She doesn't know, but Miko says:

“Even though I held her hand, I want that girl to be able to choose to grasp someone's hand by her own will. If I don't know the way to do that... If I cannot do that—”

And, inside the space that was finally cracking, Miko decisively announced:

“— I'll still do it, even if I have to use someone who can. Even if I have to involve unrelated people.”

Even if the hand she grasped was not her own—

“If I can't even throw away such stubbornness, I won't become an adult, I'll be just some blockhead— well, say what you will”

— Even if they cursed at her, even if they despised her, even so, there was one thing she wouldn't concede.

If she believed that there was someone able to do it, then it didn't matter what they thought. When they saw Miko say that, Sora and Shiro just made a wry smile.

“In that case, I'll say it as many times as necessary: *Don't underestimate us. It's but an easy task.* ”

“... For not throwing away... that stubbornness... I send you... my compliments.”

— Since the very beginning, Sora and Shiro had absolutely no intention of letting the Old Deus die. There is no need to threaten, and also, no need to ask.

Or rather...

“Is it really fine for such an easy game to be the final game? This is so disorganized ~!”

Sora and Shiro sighed, amazedly, as they approached the girl——

■■■

Those two were very composed, but even so, Miko saw them off with just a tiny bit of worry.

Is it really as easy as they think?

For the Old Dei, their condition, perception of time, and even their visualization of the "world", are fundamentally different compared to "living things" like them— No. *They are the very definition of different.* That's why the Miko of the distant past wasn't able to give the girl struggling with doubts any answers.

A complicated promise was exchanged with a complicated "Pledge". Their interactions while they were bounded by chains were nothing more than two people going in different directions bumping into each other , but that gave birth to a strange form of coexistence, a complicated relationship:

"Friends hip", or at the very least, she wanted to be friends with the girl, even without something like the chains of the Pledges. She wants her to laugh, cry, and more than anything have fun of her own free will. She'd break those chains just for that. She'd break them even just for the sake of doing that.

—To come this far, she's had to do many complicated things.

Even now, Miko can't think of anything she could do after breaking those chains. Right now, her friend is disappearing and crying in anguish, but she can only watch over her while biting her nails, and clenching her fists.

For more than half a century, she has bet her life countless times, and got through multiple scenes of carnage, furthermore:

—She was confident that this would be the biggest, or perhaps, the last bet of her life.

Sora and Shiro had also bet everything, and Miko stared at their backs as if she were praying.

“... Uhm... What is a god— What am I? Was it? Well, to put it simply—”

Slowly, Sora sighed and squatted right next to the girl.

“Why was I born? Why do I live? ... Pfft—!! ”

From a serious expression, suddenly he magnificently burst into laughter. He was even tearing up and holding his stomach as he laughed, but he continued:

“What would such person be!? They could only be a ‘god-class idiot’ of course!!” Miko sighed as she heard this.

— ‘Was I perhaps too hasty?’ She thought as she stared into the void with cold eyes.

“What is your head filled with? Jam!? Is it also made of wheat and beans!? Even bread has more kinetic energy, are you okay with that!? Isn’t it obvious that if you just approached this with a different outlook you would’ve been hundreds of times livelier!?”

And, even now, one could almost see Sora pointing and laughing at her. The girl trembled a little bit, and at the same time, the cracks in the space spread.

— That dark, small, and black space shattered—

■■■

—Had she become unable to maintain even that small and dark space?

Sora and Shiro, Miko, and the self-proclaimed god that was on the verge of disappearing even now, left behind the dark, shattered space, and reappeared in the sky.

They were now in free-fall. However, Sora and Shiro just held hands, looked at the giant chess pieces over the horizon, and smiled broadly.

— The world on top of a board. The world where the “Ten Pledges” exist.

Where an outrageous person made an “Opening Move”, a world where everything is decided by games.

That’s right, it was the same scenery as the day they came *here* —

“What, did you get angry!? Heeey, did you get mad!? Are you throwing a fit!? hyahaha~!!”

“... Nii, this just looks like... you are bullying... a little girl”

Sora and Shiro were trying to ignore the fact that they were doing an amazing cordless bungee jump with calm and composure.

They continued to apply one of gaming’s fundamentals: a mental attack.

“— be, silent...”

“Whaaaaa!? Sorry, I can’t hear you!? The wind is too loud!!”

“I’m telling thou to be silent!!” She screamed. She ended up hugging her head, covering her ears, and scattering her tears.

“Haah!? After answering your question you are telling me to shut up!? Is this a girl’s mood swings!? Are you the autumn sky?!”

Sora keeps striking his downed enemy, and the girl screams in return — No.

Her face just seemed like she was shaking and screaming. She looked at Sora and Shiro with that face.

—— *What on earth is this?*

Just what did I do? Why do I have to go through this? Answer me. If you don't feel like answering, at least let me sleep.

... 'She looks just like Jibril' Sora thought, and made a bitter smile unintentionally.

It looks like the high-ranked races too— even the Old Dei have their own problems. Was it because they are too great? Or perhaps because they saw too much, and noticed too much as well? As expected, this is just something the lowest ranked race can't understand: What worries could those in heaven have? But really, in that case... *she was so great that she looped back around* —

— to being a hopeless, crying child of the lowest ranked race !!!

"Hey!! You were so smart you looped right back around to being dumb, girl!!!"

"Be quiet! Be quiet! Be quiet — quiet..."

— A concept that gained self-awareness, is that a god—an Old Deus? If the concept of doubt gained self-awareness, would it doubt everything? Since her Quintessence made her do that, did she have no choice but to keep doubting? Until, in the end, she doubted even herself, and negated herself?

— *I really don't understand this at all!!* —

"What are you!? Even though it's so dumb I'll still answer you, so listen well!!"

Why did Miko and this girl become so serious over such a stupid thing?

'Why do they not understand something *so simple*?' is what Sora was trying to understand from the bottom of his heart.

This girl is a god that can only doubt everything?

— *There's no way that's true!!*

“At the very least, *you are not the goddess of doubt* , I assure you!!”

When they heard him deny such a major premise, both the *self-proclaimed goddess of doubt*, and Miko, open their eyes wide as if asking for proof, but they only received Sora’s laughter.

Proof. Proof they say? Just how much did they want to make him laugh.

— *Why do they think such a thing is necessary !?*

“If you really doubt everything, then why do you seek answers!?”

“_____”

— If she asks something, then... she *believes* that “There is an answer”. If she really doubted everything, then she wouldn’t even be able to ask.

“If you doubt everything, then the very first thing you would normally doubt is: *Am I really the goddess of doubt ?*”

You believe if there’s proof? But where is the proof of that proof? You believe if there’s a proof of that proof? But where is the proof of the proof of the proof?

— It just becomes an infinite regress, there is no possible answer, however.

For argument’s sake, let’s say that there really is a god that doubts everything. But be it for argument’s sake that for the sake of the girl, or even for the sake of everything, saying that that god is the faint girl in front of their eyes...

“Would that god really make such a face!? Would they get hurt, cry, get angry, and scream!?”

“——, ah... hic”

— Being told that *perplexed her and made her cry*. If they were telling her to recognize that she was just a girl, then she'd just wait for an opportunity to say: 'Are you kidding me?'

I see. It seems that she was the first one to have a "Heart" in this world. Since she was alone, she couldn't verify that with someone else, she couldn't become aware of it either.

Let's say that her "Heart" was born from her doubt and curiosity. But in that case, *just* doubting everything wouldn't give birth to a heart, it wouldn't be necessary either, however!!

"—— In that case... What am I?..." The ephemeral girl said with a sorrowful voice. She was about to disappear, just like a mirage. Holding out her hand, her whole body, with eyes just like the past Sora and Shiro she asked:

"... Now that I am even doubting whether or not I'm the goddess of doubt... then——"

That's right, if even her smallest definition was wrong, then:

Just what should she believe—No.

Just how should she live—No.

Plain and simply, just *what should she do* ?

The girl questioned everything.

Sora tightens the hand that was holding Shiro's once more.

—He was trying to ignore the wind hitting him, and the approaching ground, as hard as he could.

He has to answer. Answer the girl who is seeking what they themselves seeked in the past.

So, what Sora started to tell was something like a fairy tale, but make no mistake, it was a true story:

“A long time ago— actually, for you it was very recently. In a certain place, there was a *super lame idiot* .”

— And he was really an idiot.

That idiot didn't seem to know how to live.

He thought that it would've been fine if he lived as the others wanted. It was an idiotic way of thinking, it would've been better if he hadn't thought of anything at all.

“That idiot decided that he was just a “Puppet”, and he really did become a puppet without noticing it.”

It didn't have a happy ending, and it wasn't an interesting story either.

That was one side of it... Sora continues:

“A long time ago — and this was actually a long time ago. Somewhere, there was a *super cool* idiot”

— And he was really an idiot.

That idiot seemed to be dissatisfied with living in despair because of the Great War.

He thought he could just create a world he'd want to live in. He was taking it a bit too far, it was an idiotic way of thinking.

“That idiot decided that the world was just a game, and the world really did become a game before anyone noticed.”

And they lived happily ever after.

However, this story still hasn't ended yet. That's because:

“ Those two idiots, were both idiots after all. The two of them *made a mistake* ”

The former was too weak. The latter was too strong. Those are the reasons why they made their own mistakes.

The two of them failed, and regretted.

“— That’s why, in the end, *they were both lame*. They decided in their hearts that the next time, they wouldn’t make a mistake.”

Probably. Sora added in his head, and made a bitter smile. It was something he learned recently. Sora thinks about the guys that couldn’t think like others.

“... N-Nii... I-I know you’re trying to look cool... but, we’re already...” Shiro said as she pointed downwards with a trembling finger.

— Sora unintentionally screamed, gulped, and said:

“A-a-all right, I’ll stop trying to look cool!?” He said with a trembling voice, panicking.

Sigh, he was the very image of uncoolness. He kept talking without pause to accelerate the conclusion.

“ *Recognize* that you are an idiot! That you don't understand anything!!”

—In any case, if she doesn’t understand anything,

“You can only desperately fumble around!! No matter how much you think, you can only find the answers for tomorrow at most! You’re that incompetent! But you shouldn't care what others think!— *Isn’t that fine?*”

— If she can’t understand anything no matter what,

“Let’s say this loud and clear: You’re totally uncool!”

He was sure it was like that. Even if it was just his opinion, or something he decided, it would be fine. If he ever realized that he was wrong, if he just swallowed his words, and retracted what he said it’d be fine.

Ah, there was also a time when he used to say such idiotic things!!

No matter what you have to do, even if it embarrasses you, throw away your pride!

— What if I *keep saying that for all eternity* !?

If you don't like it — that's it. That's the thing.

If you thought that the planet was flat, but it was proven to be round, and that embarrassed you, then try to make it flat once again. That wouldn't be too bad, right!? After all, there was a guy that changed the world into a game, it seems possible!!

“Well, time's almost up! So let's answer, shall we!?”

With their teeth clattering, their faces cramped, and holding hands, Sora and Shiro—

— Question. What am I?

“— Eventually, everything *comes back around* !!”

Like how doubts turn into beliefs, and trust becomes doubts.

Or how treason ends with cooperation, and cooperation gives birth to rebellion.

Or how the strong defeat the weak. Or how there is intelligence and foolishness.

It's as if everything contained two opposite concepts.

Even for antonyms like white and black, you can only separate things into *whichever grey is closest to them*, according to the circumstances!

Even for a god, if it was too much... It would be as if you had made a human cry...

“Regardless of what you might be! If you go back all the way around, it becomes the opposite!!” Sora and Shiro said, holding hands, and

extend their other hand towards the eyes that were seeking what they, Blank, once sought.

— She was so wise that she became stupid, she became empty because of the isolation... that girl didn't even have a name.

And now, she wasn't even certain if she was the goddess of doubt, *the girl was questioning* her own Quintessence.

Even so, the girl demands and begs for an answer, she was using those two opposite concepts—



“If you take these hands, then you are just the *lonely* goddess of wisdom [\[1\]](#) :—”

“... ‘Holou’ [\[2\]](#) ... that’d be... our answer”

They gave her a ‘Hollow’ name like theirs. They answered the *question* with another question.

—Question. What am I?

“If you play with us again, you’ll be the god-class beauty, the rookie gamer girl for whom I have high expectations, Holou!”

“... If you ask again tomorrow... we will answer that you’re wrong again... that you are the gamer, Holou”

—Answer. What do you want to be?

The girl hesitated, and took a few seconds to think.

As if she was frightened, and even though she was a god, as if she was praying; she slowly and quietly, extended her disappearing hand. The girl—No.

The Old Deus—No.

“—— *Holou.....*” Holou said, and—

——.....

■■■

— And so, Miko and the girl... No, Holou.

The girl called herself that, and fell on a rock platform that was hastily constructed in midair. She was like a mirage, but now, she also had solid substance.

“... H-how about it Shiro. It seems we can conclude that your brother is still alive.”

“... N-no... objections... hic... hic...”

She turned towards Sora and Shiro. They fell prostrate on the rock platform, hugging each other, and when they confirmed that they were alive, they cried.

Holou was silently approaching them. Meanwhile , the rock platform that she made was crumbling, as it gradually descended.

Since she chose to call herself Holou, her self-negation had stopped. Even so, Miko knew that her Quintessence is a concept, an accumulation of the power of an idea—

“... No matter how many times thou propose the ‘hypothesis’... Holou is still doubting even now.”

She lowered her head, as if she was scared. She knows the reason why she is still ephemeral. Her temporary inactivity had stopped just now, but Holou’s divinity had fallen *below the lowest possible level*.

Forget about the power to create a land that spiraled to the heavens, now she doesn’t even have the power to maintain this single rock platform.

What’s more—

“... Even thou... even thy words... I still doubt them...”

— That’s right, even if it’s like Sora says, and everything went back around to its opposites, that just means that *it would have both qualities, and both meanings*.

To doubt, you need to believe, strength encompasses weakness, wisdom coexists with foolishness.

Whether you called Holou’s Quintessence “Doubt”, or “Desire”
[\[3\]](#) it’s nature would be the same—

That's because she desired that, this is the hypothesis she chose: As long as she is the goddess of wisdom that entertains every thought, she'd entertain every thought, even these words.

She is the weakest Old Deus.

She can't make any conclusions, if making hypotheses was her limit, then... Holou looks down and says:

"Even so, was there a meaning to taking Holou's hand even now!?"

"Yesssssss! I finally took it, a low angle shot!"

... It was a serious question, but as expected, she was interrupted by Sora, who is suspected to have a disease that would kill him if he was ever serious. He rose with an unbelievable speed, and took a picture from Holou's lower right,

"I waited for the perfect opportunity! Just what kind of paradise was hidden inside that slit in your clothes by the waist... I've been so focused on it, that I haven't been able to sleep these last 42 days, but now, I can finally, sleep..."

—He had been aiming for this ever since the game started, so what was on the picture?

With a blissful smile, Sora holds his nose— and just like that, he closes his eyes as if he was going to sleep forever.

"... Nii... that's not just... 18+... that's forbidden material."

"Hm, that's not like you, my sister! Just what law forbids pictures of a tens of thousands, hundreds of millions years old girl!?"

"... It's against the misdemeanor laws... forbidding peeping photos... it's a violation of her rights to self image ..."

"Ahahaha, that's naive, very naive my sister!"

He was dying just a few moments ago, what happened to that? Sora exaggeratedly screams:

“Those are all human laws. They only apply to the human race!
Therefore—!?”

“...! *They don't... apply to... a god...?*”

—Exactly.

Shiro joins Sora as he flies towards Holou, and—

.....

“ Thou. Are thou... really... human!?”

Sora was patting Holou's head, and Shiro was rubbing cheeks with her—

“..... Designation: Sora, Designation: Shiro”

“Yes. What is it! Also the ‘designation’ is unnecessary!”

His voice made it clear that he didn't have any intentions of replying until she called them by name,

“Holou is still an Old Deus. Remember? ... So answer my question—”

She doesn't know how to react. Or at least that was supposed to be the case, but Holou had a beet red embarrassed face when they turned towards her,

“— Don't make such a *worried* face. It wasn't meaningless.”

“... As long as... Holou... keeps calling herself... Holou... it will be fine”

Hollow. Empty—No matter how much you poured into her—

“We shared ‘our pride’ with you. Rather than worrying about that—”

“... You should worry... about the time when... you got embarrassed... because of our names...”

The two of them said, with childish smiles.

Did she finally understand, or rather hypothesize, that they were provoking her?

“— Exceed rank 16—Lowest ranked race”

Holou herself surely didn't realize, but she had a very vexed face. She struggled free from them,

“It is nothing more than an assumption from an analogy, a hypothesis that might be negated tomorrow, but—” Holou said, or perhaps, boldly declared.

‘Everything comes back around’ If she were to hypothesize Sora's claim...

To Miko it just looked like she was displeased with the pair grinning at her, but,

“Hypothesis: The highest ranking race—transcendence will also come back around, so next time Holou will win against you, the lowest ranked race.” Holou declared, but Sora and Shiro just had satisfied smiles.

“... Come and get us... we accept your challenge”

“Well, do your best. We will answer as many questions and challenges as you want♪”

That is fine. She had a face worthy of the one they shared their name with.

Sora and Shiro gallantly turned back—

—However.

Holou firmly grabbed Sora by his sleeve.

“Thou were telling the truth, right? In that case—”

When he turned to look at Holou's dazzling eyes, he had a bad premonition—

— A scroll big enough to cover the sky was spread out.

He realized that they were the doubts she had kept listing for who knows how many millions of years—

“Thou will answer everything.”

When he was pierced with that look full of expectation, Sora...

“A-at least let me answer them one by one ... ”

■■■

And, after some tens of minutes.

Only Miko noticed that the descending rock platform had stopped—

“— I. Keep. Telling. You! Holou is Holou! What’s the problem with that?!”

“There is a problem. Let me ask thou: What is the definition of me, who is called Holou?”

“Aren’t you calling yourself Holou right now!?”

“Nay. I just assumed that the one thou call Holou is Holou. The definition of ‘me’ is still—”

“The one whose eyes I saw! Touched! Talked to! The one I’m super thankful to for letting me take that wonderful picture! That person, in other words, you! Holou! Any objections!?”

“Objection. The ‘eyes’ thou saw, the ‘body’ thou touched, and—”

Holou announced, without missing a beat, that they were extremely important things.

“The childish body’s nether regions thou photographed so thankfully — They are all *outside the scope of that definition.* ”

“— Now you’ve made me think that I’m just some criminal asshole...”

He wants to say that it wasn't like that but...

There's no way he can make any excuses for that unsightly lolicon accusation at this point. That's what Miko thought, as she gazed at Sora and Holou's stalemate of an argument with distant eyes.

That should be it. Holou's true form *isn't that girly appearance* , after all.

"I am Holou's Quintessence"

".....eh. You mean... that inkline you were always on?"

"—Nay. That is not accurate either. What thou saw as an inkline was simply an image of my divinity that thou could comprehend. In the first place, Old Dei don't have a true physical body. This 'puppet' is nothing more than a virtual image used to communicate my will—"

"Okay, this is too bothersome~ ♥ Hyah!!"

"..... Thou? Thou, thou. Why was Holou's head karate chopped?"

"So *you* were karate chopped! You admitted it, right!? In that case, both this and that are Holou, so no objections, right!?"

——Sigh.

Looking like she had noticed something, Holou was mumbling for a moment , so Miko thought this was her chance. She should run away, she slowly distanced herself from Sora . Miko looks around aimlessly, and makes a bitter smile.

—In the past, there was a certain fox... that made a big mistake.

The Goddess of Doubt, she was born to doubt everything and ask questions for all eternity .

Her first friend... wanted a basis to support her doubting self.

The fox had that misunderstanding. Seriously, she was a failure of a friend.

What she really wanted was simply to be able to believe, something to believe in—

— That *certain someone* approached Miko, and muttered:

“Well then, this would be our victory, right ~ Miko-san?”

They stopped Holou’s self-negation and made her independent. He splendidly cleared Miko’s trap.

“Kaka! You are underestimating me, adults have their own way of winning, child” Miko responded with a smile.

That’s right, she was an adult. She couldn’t help but become one, so Miko smiles bitterly.

The boring bunch that’s making the world complicated, the bunch that has given up many things. However,

“... If it’s you, you would be able to do something that I couldn’t—”

That’s right, in order to free Holou, she bet her own life, it was the biggest bet of her life, and she won it.

“In the first place, *I bet on my own defeat...* No matter how you look at it, this is my win, right♪”

She tried to make excuses, but,

“... If Miko-san... bet on... her own, defeat”

“Then *that* was Miko’s loss. Therefore, this is our victory”

“.....?”

Sora and Shiro said with a meaningful smile, as they waved their hands dismissively.

They’d be reaching the ground soon, so Sora and Shiro turn towards the edge of the stone platform, as Miko looks at them quizzically.

“Medium, Medium!”

Holou was using her writing brush, when she suddenly screamed, and ran up to Miko.

“Holou is Holou! Doth thou have any objections!?”

.....

“What’s up with that face!? Didst thou not understand me!?”

Holou was like a philosopher whose great discovery wasn’t understood by the masses.

—However, that wasn’t it.

“Thou can say that as long as there is an observer that defines ‘me’ and they recognize and call me as Holou, I have tentative proof that the one called Holou exists. Therefore, Holou can call herself Holou!

Miko was dumbfounded

When Holou came running at her, she took her hand without hesitation.

— *Did you forgive me?*

Is it alright for the hand that you take by your own will to be mine?

In the end, I couldn’t do anything, I don’t have the qualifications.

Miko thought.

— ‘There is something I want to say before you start thinking about minor details’—

“... I deceived you... can you forgive me?...”

“I cannot forgive thou” She instantly replied, and tilted her head to the side. Miko lowered her eyes for an instant, however—

“Since Holou still hasn’t been able to hypothesize what it means to forgive”



“But it is just like the medium says, since you deceived Holou, both the conclusion and the end were changed together with Holou.”

Holou nods a few times, she was rethinking things, as if she wanted to confirm something,

“— And it looks like it is not an incredibly unpleasant change” She said. Even she herself probably doesn’t realize, but she was smiling—

— And with a small movement, it was gone.

The place where the rock platform had descended were the gardens of Miyashiro.

Coming to meet them were Steph, Jibril... And Izuna’s smile.

They looked at Holou’s, Miko’s, and Sora and Shiro’s faces in order,

“ *Welcome home* —was it?”

—Steph said, with the most radiant smile,

Sora and Shiro answer with a thumbs up,

“Hey, *Steph*... sorry to greet you with bad news so soon but...”

“... good... bye... *Steph* ...”

Fatigue, tension, hunger, and various other things made them lose consciousness right then and there.

[1] Goddess of 誇戲 reads as [omoikane](#) . Her new Quintessence is a 3-layered word. First of all 誇戲 can be read as ‘kogi’, so it’s a homophone of 狐疑, ‘Doubt’, her old Quintessence, so you could say that she’s still the goddess of doubt. Next are the individual kanjis, 誇 =pride, and 戲=play, (Tet is the god of 遊戲) so you could say that she’s the goddess of pride and play, or the pride of players, maybe. Last is the furigana, omoikane is a Shinto god of wisdom, omoikane also means to think about many things at the same time. I’ll use

omoikane as the main meaning, since it seems that's what was actually said here. Fun fact, if someone asked me what was the hardest thing I've ever had to translate I'd immediately point at this single word.

[2] 帆楼 pronounced ほろう. 帆=sail, 楼=tower.

[3] 請希 not a real word, but also an homophone of kogi

Ideal ending

— Whack!

That was the sound of a bucket from the large public bath in Miyashiro, the echoes of paradise.

Right now, this place was like a dream, it was Shangri-La—Or it was supposed to be like that.

It was a forbidden paradise that he couldn't look directly into, even so, he believes in the power of science—

“Thou! Thou thou thou! The one who calls himself Sora!”

“Don’t call me that! What am I a pokemon!? Just call me Sora-san like everyone else!!”

Sora prepares his camera on the other side of the screen as he imagines a picture of that paradise in his mind.

In front of his eyes, as if it was completely natural, paradise had jumped across the boundary and came.

Even after her powers had been reduced to its minimum, she seemed to be even crazier than Jibril, however—

“Holou!? Even though you’re a maiden, you’re completely open, remember to be modest!!”

For now, Sora instantly averted his gaze, and squealed.

“..... Thou are being inconsistent. Thou have already photographed Holou’s nether regions.”

It was exactly like that.

She was estimated to be some hundreds of millions years old. What’s more, she’s not even a person, and that appearance wasn’t her real body, it was just a virtual image.

She was something that didn't seem to exist in this world before: a perfectly flawlessly legal loli—however!

“Idiot! This is why gods are so... Erotic scenes without shyness are not ero— No, wait. If it is with a little girl, would that be correct then? ... N-no but I'm not *that* p—” Sora mumbled as he considered a problem larger than the world,

“I'll listen to thy conflict later! I have a question much more important than that, so answer me!”

However, the naked, approaching divine presence interrupted him.

“Thou, the one who calls himself Sora. Didst thou define Holou as Holou?”

“... You're still caught up in that ~? And I keep telling you the 'one who calls himself' is unnecessary!”

“.....? However, the components that define the individual called “Sora” are variable, right? Therefore, the point of view of the “Sora” that acknowledged Holou; and thy, “the one who is assumed to be Sora's” current point of view are different. That makes you just “Someone who calls himself Sora”! In that case, can the singular intelligence that defined Holou as Holou, “Sora”, define the multiple intelligence, of Holou's myriad point of views as “Holou”—”

“Ack, you are troublesome beyond imagination, you know!?”

“As expected, art thou just “someone who calls himself Sora”? “Sora” said he'd answer all of Holou's questions”

The fully naked loli goddess kept spewing cryptic words as she approached. Sora couldn't take it and screamed.

However, when she heard that scream, Holou's eyes became a little uneasy and she took some distance as it echoed—

“... Actually, just where did your energy come from...”

His shocked voice echoed through that dream-like Shrangri-La.....

—Really, it was a scene that no one had ever seen before, even in a dream.

Covered by the steam, and submerged in the tub were Fiel, who had lost her confidence, and Kurami, who was leaning on her.

If he stopped sucking blood, he would disappear even now. Plum was disguised as a girl and was biting into Leila without moving.

Since they were so tired they couldn't resist, Shiro was softly washing Izuna and Miko without reservations.

Submerged in the tub, as if she were running away from reality, was Steph, she had an expression without a single hint of tiredness—

As compensation for lending them the Flugel's Race Piece, Asriel was happily getting washed by an unhappy Jibril.

... And, anxiously teleporting over and over, was Holou.

— Immanity, Elf, Warbeast, Dhampir, Seiren, Flugel, and even an Old Deus.

The sixteen races, the Exceed, hated each other, killed each other, and even destroyed the planet. And yet, seven of those races were there.

Anyone who dreamed of that scenery was a fool, simply imagining it was practically impossible.

But the two of them were part of the select few who were able to imagine it.

And one of them, Sora, just by thinking about his camera full of beautiful girls, he was able to raise his spirits infinitely, so he screamed:

“Weeeell then!!”

Once he confirmed that the camera was working properly, he raised his glass.

“So! To the territory we obtained from Elven Garde that is now part of the Elkia Federation!”

“... And, more than anything... to Holou’s... good fortune...”

The two who commanded such a large scale game, raise their glasses filled with juice, and declared:

“Cheers!”

—Cheers.

Jibril, Asriel, Holou, Miko, Leila, and Steph answered, in response:

“... Cheers!”

— With an utterly defeated tone. [\[1\]](#)

‘Sigh... It was, indeed, a complete defeat.’ The others mumbled in their heads.

【Note】 Mr. Hatsuse Ino is currently in the intensive care ward, so he is absent for today. Please understand.

■■■

“Thou. Presumably, Sora”

She passed through the partition screen just with her face as she called Sora by name, however, he scolded her:

“Holou. You should properly call people by their name. It’s rude not to.”

“... Holou is a goddess thou know?... Therefore, hypothesis: ‘Sora’”

In response to Sora’s very serious scolding, Holou puffs her cheeks a little bit.

She temporarily defines “the one who calls himself Sora” as “definitely Sora” for now, and asks:

“Holou’s independance. I now more or less understand that was the medium’s objective...”

She probably feels guilty that she didn’t understand something so simple.

Holou probably doesn’t realize that herself. She keeps talking with a dejected voice:

“However, for what objective didst thou carry out that game with Holou...?” She continued with an uneasy tone.

What Holou asked was Sora and the other’s intentions.

— That’s right. It was a fundamental question.

What was the objective that made them want to carry out such a game?

— A game where they bet Race Pieces.

The only precedent of that was when Sora and Shiro went against the Eastern Federation.

— What’s more, a game where five of those were bet.

Furthermore, several designated representatives bet one Race Piece each to play against an Old Deus.

Immanity, Warbeast, Dhampir, Seiren, and Flugel. A single misstep and five races would have been destroyed.

There’s no way there was a precedent, at least not until they won that unprecedented game.

And in the end what Sora and each of the other races obtained was—

A lonely Old Deus, the salvation of a single powerless girl.

— Just that.

Holou couldn't be so valuable—No. It was still impossible to determine if she had even a small value or not.

Her trembling voice was asking the intentions behind going so far just for someone like her,

“Eh, to do something fun together with the rookie gamer beauty I have high expectations for?”

“... Mhm. Because... we wanted to play a game... and we wanted to play a game... and maybe we also wanted to... play a game?”

When she heard Sora and Shiro's responses, Holou was dubious—No, she was dumbfounded.

Certainly, Sora and Shiro had said that when they extended their hands to her... But was it really just for that?

Holou was perplexed and lost for words, however, the following words delivered the finishing blow.

“Well, the game about *becoming an idol* will probably be the main course.”

——

“... was that perhaps a word outside of Holou's vocabulary?... Sora. What didst thou say just now?”

A god's several seconds of careful consideration. They were beyond a person's several years of lengthy consideration, the answer to Holou's complicated question was:

“Becoming an idol. God=idol, right!? We'll make you popular to earn you some believers.♪”

But Sora's words kept making no sense, even as Shiro chimed in:

“Prepare yourself Holou ~ you’re about to get busy!? Costume design prospects are already done!”

“... there’s also... reserving the venues... we’re also aiming... at offering music.”

“Manufacturing merchandise, we have already started to choose a tie-up company so don’t worry♪”

— Sora and Shiro kept rattling on and on.

An Old Deus is spread through multiple points in space-time and those can understand each other without needing language, and yet:

“... Why! Holou is a multiple intelligence entity! Why can’t I extract a single meaning from that....!” Holou finally complained with teary eyes. Jibril answered in Sora and Shiro’s place:

“It’s only natural that a God’s (lol) understanding can’t reach my Masters’ deep designs♪”

She said, wriggling.

Did she shake Asriel off? She went through the screen too, and peeked with her face.

..... No one seemed to be in the mood for obeying the laws of physics, Sora sympathized in his head, as she kept talking about a different topic:

“The unworthy Jibril shall explain so that even a god can understand ♡”

Like that, Jibril started talking with a smile.

“First of all, as you’d expect, my Masters will bring down that shitty bra—Excuse me♡ the One True God.”

..... want to. That’s the plan. She didn’t say that, Jibril said it as if it was a done deal.

Holou turned to face Jibril with half-lidded eyes, however, that by itself didn't surprise her.

After all, she'd have already heard all about that when she was inside Miko, and more importantly—

“... I'm aware. I'm currently doubting the sanity of that, however.”

—Even though it was half in desperation, Holou had also planned to do that. As Holou thought this, Jibril smiles as if to ridicule her:

“Then you must also know that in order to do that *you cannot steal Race Pieces* right♥”

“—————eh?”

—Holou didn't know, so she lets out a strange voice.

Actually, if she had known, she wouldn't have demanded they bet the Race Pieces.

Since Jibril obviously knew, she was enjoying the opportunity to look down on a god, and continued, grinning:

“It is my Master's opinion that we shouldn't take the race Pieces. Instead, we must unite the Exceed under a single banner, and with the Race Pieces of each of them, challenge Tet of their own free will.♪”

“.....”

Holou's face was asking why, so Sora answered:

“— Taking their races pieces and telling them to shut up and obey me?”

He made a bitter smile,

“... Ruling over and ordering them like that is just like war, the established tactic...”

———

If they ruled, enslaved and trampled over them, then nothing would have changed since the Great War.

The words of the ones that claimed the world had changed, and provided proof of it, silenced Holou—

“However, even though we won’t take them, someone who owns the Race Piece, a designated representative, is indispensable.” Jibril continues, and Holou nods.

Holou realized that she was blind to her own shortcomings, so she stated a hypothesis with half-lidded eyes:

“— Hypothesis: The Old Dei can’t have a designated representative.”

In the first place, a designated representative is someone with the authority to resolve conflicts between groups.

But the Old Dei don’t flock together, they don’t form groups, so there is no need to have one in the first place—

“Eh? Why did it become a matter of can or can’t?”

That’s what Holou thought, however, Sora tilts his head with a blank face and says:

“ Holou is the Old Dei’s designated representative, right?”

“S-Sora... Holou hypothesizes that she is a fool. B-but am I really such an idiotic girl...?”

Holou couldn’t follow the conversation at all. Was she finally doubting her own intelligence?

Her head that was peeking through the screen fell to the floor, she literally sank into depression.

“All previous and future victories of the Elkia Federation were thanks to Holou! It was all you!”

“——So Holou... really was an idiotic girl after all...”

When she heard Sora’s scream, she reached the floor, and continued to sink below it. But Sora continued without care:

“No one believes me right? But that’s fine!”

Sora pointed slowly to the other side of the screen, and Holou’s gaze followed.

Submerged in the tub of that large bath were a large variety of people of different races, and each of them were necessary.

“What would happen if we added an Old Deus to a Federation with this many races?” Sora said, grinning.

And as expected, Holou guessed too.

The whole world, every country regardless of race, will get swallowed by a storm of doubts.

“And then there appears the unworthy me, Sora! With things like Idolmaster, Love Live, Tokyo 7th Sisters, Aikatsu! ”

“... also Shiro... with the high scores worldwide in many idol raising games... Blank will...”

“Magnificently produce! With great fanfare! We will make Holou debut as a literal “Idol”! We will make you sing, dance, and hold hand shake events— we will also rake in the profits!!”

Is what they want to do.

Sora, with an exceedingly happy smile, peeks into Holou’s eyes, and says:

“... As the goddess of Doubt, the goddess of Desire... the goddess of Wisdom.”

If the strength of the concept determined the strength of the Old Deus— of their Quintessence, then:

“Doubt, request, refusal, desire... Everything will become Holou’s sustenance.”

“——!”

“That’s right!! “Every single emotion felt towards an idol” will become your power!”

“... H-Holou understood the second half of that but surely thou...”

— And so, Holou was finally able to understand, however, she doubts that thought.

The medium and the Immanities formed a united front and defeated Holou.

Everything is possible, anything can not happen.... But that was too much.

Holou thought that with her eyes wide open, but, as if to assert that thought, Sora continues:

“It’s fine if Holou just calls herself the designated representative of the Old Deus.”

He smiled as he said that, just how much fun was enough to satisfy him?

“If you do that, the Old Deus that don’t like it would have no choice but to come and challenge you”

But, he was deeper than the lowest level of hell, like trying to fill a bottomless pit.

“Just with that, those incompetent bunch who put on airs as rulers will all fall into our plate”

—And, as Sora said that, he extended his hand towards Holou once more.

“... How about we have a lot of fun? If you’d like, let’s play together.”

— Holous opens her eyes wide, and takes that hand again, but also thinks:

This man surely understands what I went through, right?

It certainly was a majestic game. An unprecedented game where five Race Pieces were bet.

However, aside from Holou’s independence, this man didn’t obtain anything—No.

He colluded with his little sister— Sora and Shiro, those two.

—With just a single move.

—Just a single game.

—Just by winning against Holou alone.

Just—with that.

—They checkmated all the Old Deus.

■■■

— However, Holou was astonished at that truth.

In the first place, all participants more or less understood that when they agreed to the game.

It was for that very reason that, unexpectedly, Plum bet the Dhampir’s Race Piece.

That was also the reason why Asriel entrusted the Flugel’s Race Piece to Jibril.

—They’d take the cocky Old Dei down completely.

For all the gamers gathered here, it was more than enough motive to bet their extinction.

“... hey~ Kurami? It’s just as you said~” Fiel said as a bit of light returned to her vacant eyes.

“Today, on this day, the world was quietly turned inside out~”

That’s right, it was exactly what she imagined before departing from Elven Garde.

However, Kurami takes over the conversation, and asks the other side of the screen a question:

“Indeed, they did not only take some of Elven Garde’s territory, but the Old Deus also can’t go back to how they were.”

Indeed, the world right now was a hot pot of suspicion.

There are very few persons left who would declare war on Elkia, but not zero.

For example, Elven Garde cannot remain silent, and what’s more—

“... It wouldn’t be surprising if the Old Deus that have complaints about that came to attack us right now. We can pull through, right? Since, you know, if they were to ambush us right now we wouldn’t be able to say no.”

That was Kurami’s shrewd question, but the siblings just answered frankly:

“... ‘pull through’?... if they come to attack us... and they are “favored”... then it is more fun... than attacking ourselves”

“What’s more, besides Immanity we have Warbeasts, Flugel, Dhampir, Sirens, an Old Deus and even an Elf. If there’s someone with that amount of confidence to win against this party, then it’d be us that would want to have a match with them♪” Sora said happily and with excitement, but when she heard him Fiel frowned.

“... Just now～ you included me without hesitation, was that just my imagination～?”

But he answered in a surprised voice:

“Eh? I mean after all, Kurami and Fiel *can’t go back to Elven Garde anymore*”

——?

There was a moment of silence, but it was broken by Sora himself:

“We notified Elven Garde of your parting— or actually of your betrayal in an official letter. Ah, we have a fully furnished house for you, so don’t worry. Be thankful for Steph’s abilities, all right girls～?”

And so, with a creaking sound, Kurami and Fiel, shifted their gaze towards Steph.

With that same creaking on her neck, Steph averted her gaze and answered:

“... E-erm... I-it was Sora’s instructions you know? O-ohohoho...”

Kurami stood up with the sound of water gushing out, and screamed fiercely at the other side of the screen—at Sora:

“Y-y-you!!! What have you done!?”

I mean, it was obvious that you were going to lose anyway... We were just being sensible～”

“I’ll beat you up!? I mean, now you won’t be able to destroy Elven Garde from the insi—”

“No, I mean, that is not necessary anymore, you know?”

“.....What?”

Kurami and Fiel froze when they heard Sora’s cheerful declaration.

“Because we accused you of your secret maneuvers and exaggerated them as much as humanly possible ♥”

“.....”

— When she understood what that meant, Kurami clenched her fist.

No matter how many lies they mixed it with, Kurami and Fiel’s maneuvers were made in order to bet a state.

It was to the extent that they even manipulated memories to do it, and there was also the fact that they lost some territory.

That would invite a lot of suspicions, so probably—

“Even if we left it alone, Elven Garde will split up before long?”

.....

“Civil war in such a big country? It will be a very big deal ~”

Sora and Shiro said "as a matter of fact" and with a big smile.

— On the other hand, Kurami, grinding her teeth, hit the wall with her fist, and thought: ‘So it’s like this’

The more their small maneuvers accumulated, the more leftovers they produced.

— *They ruined everything with a single attack, and now they willy-nilly run away after winning...*

The single move that she’d been endlessly looking for together with Fiel. It was an incredibly infuriating move.

Sora and Shiro nonchalantly succeeded right in front of her eyes, and they weren’t even proud of it. That made her feel like killing them.

“... Kurami... Bear with it ~”

Fiel’s eyes came back to life, and she scolded the trembling Kurami.

“Next time~, we will return the favor a trillion times over~... Yes, and that pseudo-mosquito too, for sure♥”

Fiel said with a smile seething with anger, as Kurami let out an ominous smile once again—

■■■

It was a very noisy bath, but even so, Steph was submerged herself in hot water.

Complaints, discontent and dissatisfaction were flying about. But even so, everyone seemed to be having fun.

“... Having fun is the most important thing after all”

That scenery was just as expected, like she wished it to be, and Steph smiled a little.

— However, the next instant.

“Thou. Thou thou! Individual of indeterminate name!”

“Hyaaaaaaa!? Wait, I think that was the worst thing I’ve ever been called!?”

Holou just appeared in front of her out of nowhere, submerged in the tub, and then Steph raised a scream.

But Holou didn’t have any ill will— No, she didn’t even know what ‘ill will’ was, so she tilted her head in confusion,

“.....? Be that as it may, thou have too many designations. Which one should I assume?”

“Stephanie Dola! I’m from a respectable family! I have a name with good pedigree!”

— Did Holou remember what Sora just said, that it’s rude not to call someone by name?

However, for some reason, Holou thought very seriously about it, and nodded. Then, she called her:

“However, there is none that call thou that. Calculating the one with the most overlaps, I hypothesize: ‘Ste’”

“After saying all that couldn’t you have kept at it for just two more letters!?”

Was she satisfied at being able to hypothesize her name? Holou ignores Steph, and asks what she originally wanted to ask.

That is—

“Ste, what is ‘fun’?”

“W-w-what? Ah erm, you see... I-isn’t it fun... right now?”

— *Let’s do something fun. Isn’t it fun?*

Sora and Shiro had said that to Holou, however, she hadn’t been able to precisely define it.

She was earnestly staring at Steph with pure eyes—

“H-hmm. I-isn’t it just whether you’re happy or not?”

When she heard that answer, Holou tilted her head.

“... if it’s about pleasantness or unpleasantness, then yes. It seems that Holou is not displeased at the moment. However—”

“... it is unknown if that will continue to be the case. Therefore, it cannot be completely hypothesized, is that it?”

“— S-Sora—Thou! Didst thou read the thoughts of a multiple intelligence entity—?”

Sora answered in Steph’s place, and when she heard him, Holou replied with a terrified voice.

— The fact that there is a future that even an Old Deus can’t see must be making her uneasy.

Sora must have guessed it with his shrewdness, Miko smiled unintentionally at that, and almost burst into laughter.

Together with Holou, she listened carefully to what followed:

“In that case, you don’t know what will happen after this. Try thinking about that.”

——

“Is it unpleasant?”

“.....Nay. Why?”

Holou asked Sora, marveling from the bottom of her heart, however,

“Who knows♪ I don't know what will happen after this, but——”

When Holou asked that, her face wasn’t uneasy, it was just,

“I get the feeling that it will be just as fun as now, if not even more, won’t it?”

——

“Medium, medium”

Suddenly, Holou teleported again, and called Miko, who was focusing on a single cup of sake.

Miko answered not with her voice, but just with her eyes——

“Hypothesis: It looks like Holou is”

“——Having a lot of fun right now!” Holou said with a smile.

When she heard that, Miko was deeply moved, and closed her eyes.

She couldn’t remember how many years it had been since she last saw that tender smile.

Miko herself was more surprised than anyone else at the fact that she had spontaneously——and said a few words:

“... Let me be”

That’s how she replied to her friend.....

■■■

—A few days later.

“Well... what’s thy business, possessor of the Suniaster—correction”

They were at the end of the world, on top of a gigantic chess piece,

“Or should I call thou by name... ‘Tet’?...” Holou asked while glaring at him. He had suddenly appeared and said ‘Let’s play chess☆’.

The current Holou doesn’t even have the power to talk to Tet.

She also doesn’t have the power to resist Tet’s direct summons, so she was in a bad mood.

“Of course! Ah, in exchange, I’ll also call you Holou! That’s fine, right ~?”

She had been unilaterally summoned by that unfaithful One True God without hesitation.

That One True God saw the feelings behind that silent protest, but perhaps he shouldn’t have, in the end he had to ignore them.

“... Rejected. Since thou are Holou’s—Nay. I hypothesize that thou are our ‘enemy’.”

Holou’s bad mood increased one stage, and she moved a piece as she refused, however,

“... Mmm. I see ~ ‘Holou-chan’ do you still want to obtain the Suniaster?” Tet asked, as he moved his piece.

He had completely ignored her refusal and referred to her with overt familiarity.

Of course, it was a question that Tet knew the answer to.

Therefore, Holou—

“... Tet. Thou said that ‘I only look into the past’ correct?”

That’s right, Tet had a principle of not looking into the future, and he was proud of having such a good habit.

However, his only response was a smile. When Holou saw this, she let out a sigh and declared:

“— Hypothesis: thou could indeed say that it’s not a bad hobby.”

“I’m happy that you understand～. But that was a bad move, wasn’t it? All right, check♪”

— Holou’s bad mood increased once more, so Tet smiled a little.

—That’s right, this Holou doesn’t want to know the future nor answers anymore.

Tet didn’t even have to use the Suniaster, he understood just by looking at her.

That’s because that wouldn’t be fun.

Her Quintessence Doubted, Desired, and thought about those things at the same time. What that Quintessence wanted now wasn’t that. Holou stares at Tet.

“However, thou said that thou wanted to see Holou’s tearful face.”

“Hmm..... well, that’s right. But I said ‘your’—” Tet said ambiguously with a bitter smile.

At any rate, he didn’t want to see the current Holou’s crying face.

‘If I had to choose between them, I prefer the current one’ Tet thought.

“— Hypothesis: Thy demand will not be fulfilled.” Holou announced.

That's right, and definitely:

"... Because the one who will make a crying face is thou, Tet."

Tet thought that, if anything, he'd want to see that and smiled at that.

Holou returned his check, and Tet thought for a long time, however, he still happily asked:

"— Is that future sight? Or is it just an expectation?"

He knew that the answer to his question was, of course, that it was an expectation.

Tet smiles at how Holou now recognized expectations.

Holou was smiling, but she wasn't aware of it herself, and Tet continued:

"It's future sight. The future that thou don't see. Holou hypothesizes that she will see it."

—Hmm?

At that unexpected answer, Tet tries to understand Holou's intentions, and returns the check again.

Tet was probably unaware that it was more than he expected, he had a full face smile.

"— Holou, together with them, will make a future where thou are crying, and see it." Holou said as she made a move to satisfactorily return the check, and Tet—

"... I see♪ All right, I'm really looking forward to that"

That's right, he was truly looking forward to it from the bottom of his heart, and like that, he suddenly closed his eyes:

"Then I'll give you some quick advice. Holou-chan, you should perhaps be a little more patient☆"

So he made a serious move to try and end this reception game.

“..... Whyat?”

With a single move, he reversed the situation on the board, so Holou unintentionally let out a weird voice, and entered into deep thought.

However, Tet’s attack was one of gaming’s basics, a mental attack, so he continues without stopping:

“Holou-chan, you are too hasty. Putting it bluntly, you are the easy heroine? Aha☆”

Even though she didn’t understand what he meant, she must have understood that he was making fun of her.

Each time Tet said something, Holou’s mouth twitched a bit. For example:

“Well, first of all, Miko fooled you twice, right ~?”

—Twitch

“Also, after Sora and Shiro were a liiiittle bit kind to you, you easily went with them”

— Twitch twitch.

“... And besides.”

Holou was wary of his next words, however,

“.... Sprouting a heart, creating a race— despairing... you were too hasty.”

This time, it was Tet’s turn to lower his head.

“Although, if you had only waited just a little bit longer, those machines with hearts would have been able to answer you”

Tet whispered, however, Holou didn’t understand what he meant yet.

She was just suspicious that it might just be another provocative statement.

But Tet just made a complicated smile, lifted his head, and said:

“..... ‘Why was I born?’ They worried about that a lot, like you, but”

The Old Deus— Quintessences are produced when concepts are thought of and wished for—Tet was just like that.

However, for the primordial gods... from the era without consciousness, no one knows what they were wished for.

That’s why it’s fine if they just chose by themselves like persons. Sora told Holou that, and Tet also said:

“... No one knows why you were born. Maybe not even the Suniaster”

However—

“Even so, if you remember that there are persons that think about you like this, it’ll make me a bit happy.”

— This girl was the first one to have a ‘heart’ in the world.

She also gave birth to the one who wished for, desired, and believed in Tet and gave birth to him.

He had called her here just to convey that, and so, he did:

“... Thank you for being born— or something♪”

Holou surely didn’t understand what he was talking about.

But there is no way that the current Holou wouldn’t understand that those words came from the heart.

As if she was suspecting something, Holou timidly moved her piece, so,

“Ah, yes, yes. And of course, this is the last piece—!”

So, as if he had been deceiving her, he suddenly smiles, and says:

“You were a bit too hasty, thinking that you could defeat me☆”

— It was so sudden it didn’t even leave room for disappointment.

As if it was completely natural, Holou was checkmated and left shocked,

“—Welcome to the world on top of a board. I had always been waiting for you” Tet declared, and waved his hand in goodbye.

“Considering that you’re the first Old Deus to join, I’ll forgive you for being 6000 years late☆”

Just like she had been forcefully summoned, Holou was being forcefully returned. However, before that, Tet left her some parting words:

“Ah, however, you’re too weak as you’re right now, so be sure to polish your skills. You have to at least become able to tie with Blank-san, or else, you won’t be able to see a future with me crying～
Ahaha～♪”

■■■

“Oh, so you were here Holou, we were looking for you”

“... why did you suddenly... disappear... what happened?”

Holou had suddenly disappeared from Elkia’s castle, so Sora and Shiro had been looking for her, and now they greeted her.

For some reason she had been standing in a corridor with her head down.

“—Thou. Canst thou answer just what happened to Holou?” Holou asked.

“.....What?”

“... I’m displeased. Something indescribable fills my heart, even though it’s supposed to be just a virtual image, there is the illusion that my body is shaking. My head is filled with fantasies of destroying the one who planted this emotion—what is this?”

Holou dispassionately asked, as if she was describing her symptoms to a doctor.

..... even if you ask what that is.

Even though they are not doctors, Sora and Shiro could see the answer written in Holou’s face.

“... Are you angry? Something happened right?”

“—Ohhhhh... I see! Tentatively: Holou is angry!!”

As if she had written down the discovery of the century in her scroll, Holou continues to pile on questions with that same face:

“—Well then. About when are thou planning to destroy Tet?”

“Eh?”

“Thou will defeat Tet, right? Destroy him, right? Is it tomorrow, tonight, is it right now!?”

Holou was making a racket with a smile like a noh mask, so Sora and Shiro were panicking uselessly.

And the one looking at them from the end of the world laughed.

— *Once upon a time, in the distant, distant past*

It started with stereotypical words, and ended without being told... there was once such a myth.

Now, that myth wasn’t in ‘the distant distant past’, it would be continued in the near future.

It would start with stereotypical words, but this time, a myth that could be talked about would continue, and finally become a story—

“Come on, let’s continue the myth that stopped on that day”

Laughing like that, god writes the myth that didn’t end in a book of white paper.

Finally, this world on top of a board, this game... would live up to its name.

The most interesting game since the creation of heaven and earth, started from here.

—Finally, the god who wrote in past tense, could spread his arms to the heavens, completely satisfied.

As if he was receiving everything he ever wanted, along with that old myth—

“—This time, I won’t let you tie, and I don’t have any intention of losing either. Prepare yourselves☆”

■■■

——

“—Report from observation unit: Conclusion of the battle against the Old Deus confirmed.”

——

“—Report from analysis unit: Loses from the battle: 0. Conditions cleared.”

———Roger.

“Notification to all units: This phenomenon’s observation is presumed to be approximately within standard deviation.”

Measuring instruments validated—54355146 hours since the end of the war?

“— All surviving Ex-Machina. Reboot for disconnection approved.”

It was kept waiting for quite a while, but in the end—

“The ones we’ve been waiting for have arrived”

—The machines are walking out in order to confirm the proof of that will.

From the North-west of the Lucia continent, towards that Federation, far away.....

[\[1\]](#) Cheers and utter defeat are homophones, so this is an untranslatable play on words.

榎宮^{かみや}です！ ようやく六巻から続いた伏線、全部回収出来ましたッ！
六巻最後の挿絵、ステフのリユックからはみ出てるものまで、ちゃんと！
気になった方は六巻ラスト、また七巻の口絵と挿絵のステフのリユック、
見比べて頂ければ幸いです——ッ！
——ふ。もう、思い残すことはない……最後に寝たのいつだったけ……？
ま、いいか……これで安らかに眠、れ……る……

「あ、榎宮さん、九巻の原稿っていつ上がります？」

——ピー。

おかけになった電話番号は、燃え尽きております。

また、一月以上徹夜と仮眠を繰り返してようやく脱稿した原稿を手にも、
「次は？」と質問してくる人外魔境的な鬼畜外道の輩。

具体的には担当I氏を相手には、当分使われております——

「かりみりやうさーん？ メ切まであと一時間半切ってるんですよ♡」

再度燃え尽きた空と白——！
「もーややこしいのやダ……もー疲れた」
「……にい、もう……かわいいこ、
愛でて……穏やかに余生、過ごそ？」

作者を代弁しだした二人は、立ち直れるのか——!?
『もー、日常系に路線変更しませんか。マジで？』
とか言い出した作者を、担当は止められるのか——!?

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