

Katanagatari Unofficial English Translation: Act 1: Zettou Kanna



Chapter 1: Fushoujima (上)



The island is situated opposite of Shinsou Coast, that tiny island had a perimeter of approximately 2 kilometers, even amongst the Shinsou area villagers there are only a few that heard about that particular

island ; Even though some knew about it, it is not remarkable, that is because it is not worth remembering. So of course, that island did not appear in any maps, nor had any name assigned to it ; In the past there is a name given to the island, naturally it is because it isn't worth having a name in the history. Speaking of which, that island is one of the country's abandoned islands out of many.....

Nay.

That particular island holding the status of no inhabitants, ended 20 years ago.

20 years ago, a family of 3 sailed from across Shinsou Sea ; they christened this particular island Fushoujima (不承島) (*lit Owned by no one island*), in this world, they are the only 3 that give the island name some worth.

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"Ai..... What a hassle."

It is early in the morning.

In the heart of that tiny island there is a simple and crudely built handcrafted house, at the side of the house there is a boy who was complaining --- He was clothed in tattered clothes, with a head full of unkempt hair, it seems like he just got out of bed, right now he was lazily going about doing chores.

He was building a wooden basin.

That empty basin was enormous, it could be mistaken for being a giant barrel.

Both the house and the wooden basin had the same crude look to it, on closer inspection, it seemed it was held together simply by twine, however it does not leak at all. The boy threw a wooden ladle in the basin, carrying the wooden basin; Using the twine from the basin as straps, he carried it by his shoulders.

At that moment, he silently thought in his heart "What a hassle".

This is just a extremely regular matter . it is not that he hated the basin and ladle, anything and everything that has to do with him, it is just a hassle; not just waking up, even lying down for bed at night, he always whisper that, closing his eyes while he was doing that.

"Heave ho!"

That is how it is, he was doing his chores as usual, it's just that his movement was on the slow and leisurely side. Just when he sleepily moved his body, setting off towards the hill, the door of the house opened.

"Shichika (七花)."

A voice from the house called forth the boy.

Yasuri Shichika (鑪七花) (*lit,File Seven Flower*)--- That is the name of the boy.

"What are you doing? Shichika."

"Ah...."

Shichika's expression turned from sleepy eyed to somewhat being embarrassed, trying to avoid the light of sight from the pair of eyes that was seemingly floating in mid-air, it was as if he was a child caught in the act of doing something bad. Of course, Shichika's age does not qualify him as a child, his physical stature was way different than a child, nor he was doing something bad ., However, that person that was walking out of the small house --- in his sister's Nanami's eyes, he is forever to her a child.

Yasuri Nanami (鑪 七実)(*lit, File Seven Fruit*).

Compared with her wild and energetic looking little brother, she was pretty and pitiful looking--- Irregardless of her posture and looks, like a delicate machine, beautiful and radiant--- yet thin and frail. She was just wearing her Juban (襦袢, thin coat), her hand pressed against the door, she coldly stared at Shichika.

Nanami mercilessly asked again..

"I am asking you what are you doing!"

"Noth...Nothing..... The cistern is almost running out of water, I am thinking of drawing some water. Sister, go back to sleep! To head out in such thin layer of clothes, you will catch a cold."

"When you are half naked you still have the cheek to say about me? Don't worry, just getting some breeze, its comfortable. Don't mention this, Shichika, I remember today is my turn to do housework."

" Ai --- thats right. Ah! No, is it? Hmmm....."

Shichika stammered, evidently a little panicky.

"Ai, so what if it is? Just treat it as part of training---"

"Shichika."

Nanami coldy called out.

Her intolerance in her voice , is enough to shut Shichika's mouth up.

" Don't treat me like a fragile doll--- Didn't I always say?"

"No, that's not what I meant---"



"I can draw the water by myself, I didn't recall teaching you to be overly considerate. Then again, what training?"

Nanami seemingly to mock him by yawning, mischievously said ..

"What meaning is there to train?"

"Why there's no meaning---"

"Isn't it? This combat style ends with your generation, what use is there to continue maintaining it?"

"....."

His sister's words had Shichika silent for a period of time.

Seeing that her brother making that kind of expression, Nanami sighed again ., She is the kind of girl that always keep sighing.

" Aren't just trying to make things difficult for yourself? "

"Ai..... Aiya! Sis, why do you have to put me down? I was just enthusiastic, yesterday I even thought up an ultimate move! I am thinking about making this especially extraordinary."

" Tsk, Shichika."

Nanami was unhappy for him to divert the topic.

Powerless, Shichika reluctantly replied...

" ..... What was it? "

"Dad is already dead for about a year, its about time."

"What's about time?"

"You can build a basin, then again you of course can build a boat."

Nanami pointed at the thing on Shichika's back, speaking matter of factly..

"Originally the one who is being exiled is only dad..... It is impossible for me, but for you to sail out by yourself should not pose a single problem."

"Don't say such nonsense!"

Only up to now, Shichika bravely interrupted his sister's words.

"Me and sis are the same, as far as I can remember we have been living here all along, speaking of suddenly leaving , how can I go back to mainland? It will be no surprise that I will be lost or something like that , maybe even die by the roadside! "

"I did not feel that being exiled is a big deal, and this is the only thing dad left for me, hence what I will cherish is just this."

"Ah!"

Nanami laughed mischievously.

"I didn't know that you are actually that filial!"

"Sis!"

"Okay, whatever makes you happy, go draw the water then! This matter we shall discuss another time. Just gotten up from bed, it is inappropriate to talk about these. I go prepare breakfast, is there enough water?"

"Oh, there is some left."

"Go on! ..... Later show me your new ultimate move or whatever it is."

Having said that, Nanami went back inside the small house, closed up the door.

Shichika secretly felt relieved, let out a sigh. That big and tall man sigh compared with his sister is quite different, it was every bit unsightly.

"Ai.... I already knew that one day Sis will bring up this matter, never thought that it will be today. Speaking of which, Sis is really thought I was some kind of superman, building a basin and building a boat is of completely different caliber!"

Furthermore it's father who built that house 20 years ago, it is quite impossible for him to design and build that .

Because on this island there isn't a presence of a single blade ---

Figuratively speaking.

Shichika and Nanami is trapped.

Trapped due to the island, trapped due to father, trapped due to being exiled.

" ..... "

Filial.

Really?

Shichika said that drawing water is part and parcel of training, naturally not all is a lie (at the very least

there is little help towards honing his skills); That act plus being a filial son, make him felt quite accomplished.

He had the Hero of the Rebellion as his father.

Comparatively on the other end of the spectrum, a son that has accomplished nothing.

Having spent most of his life on Fushoujima, naturally he did not have any chance to strut his stuff ; This type of contrast taught Shichika some inferiority complex.

Due to having to stay exiled , up to the death of father, his father kept on imparting his martial arts skills to Shichika.

Then again, what Nanami said, Shichika spent most of his life on that island, and the status of being exiled is only up to Shichika's generation. Not only Nanami, Shichika and his father knew how to live one's own life, they also had mutual understanding with each other.

So that is how it is, Shichika knew nothing about the outside world, and had no interest in finding out. That kind of troublesome stuff, he tend to distance himself from it.

"..... setting off!"

Shichika shook his back, adjusted the position of the wooden basin and set off towards the hill.

Fushoujima is quite barren, but luckily there is a place to obtain water, if not the whole family would have died of thirst. But that water source is not a river, nor its a well, its actually a mountain spring. That particular island is like a mountain, even Shichika did not know where is considered a hill, where it is not (Actually, other than the beach and the flat piece of land where the little house was, the remaining is all hill) ; That particular spring was situated deep within the steep recesses of the hills , Shichika won't permit his sister to come up to such a place to draw water. Therefore, in this one year after his dad died, Shichika ensures that whenever it is his turn to do housework, he fills the cistern to the brim , eventually this had a blind spot ; That said, he secretly eliminates most of the heavy burden in the house work, and eventually it became exposed. Having no other way out, and to top it off, how the dimwitted little brother is able to hoodwink Nanami for so long, it definitely a strange thing altogether.

---- health.

Shichika reminiscence about his sister's health which is not very good, and ever since she is young she is afflicted with poor health.

Nanami's skin is naturally fair and pale, so other than heaven to ascertain whether her health is good or bad, sadly only her brother knows.

Shichika suspected that she caught a cold.

She said that getting a breeze to make her a little comfortable, conversely is it because she had a fever?

One look at Yasuri Nanami, one can tell that she harbors many illness ; if encountered at night, even though she is not a ghost, one might mistake that her for a wandering ghost. Just only recently her health status is relatively okay --- Shichika wonders if it was due to him that bears the brunt of the house work---

Just recently she found out that her little brother has been acting the de-facto leader, only wanted her to rest more, she was absolutely against the idea, saying that she is able to eke out a living of her own and took back her share of the housework. That sis and that carefree little brother is quite the opposite of each other, she hated to rest. However on closer look, she is similar to Shichika in terms of laziness, but of course ; She is unwilling to move around much, it is due to her body being so weak and all.

She was looking forward to eke out a living, hence gotten sick.

Or rather that she was sick, therefore ekes out a living --- People has been pursuing what they did not have, starting by proving that they can do what they supposedly can't, such that was the case of Nanami.

However Shichika is different. He despises whatever he had, and tend to avoid what he is able to do ---

Filial?

Hero of the Rebellion?

Shichika stopped thinking for a while, shut his eyes ., having felt the beginning of a headache.

Shichika doesn't like to ponder on stuff, he doesn't like to crack his head analyzing too, and he absolutely hate overly complicated concepts ., Then again his sister enjoys doing these kind of stuff.

Those siblings sure are like part of a set ---

Nay, it is more appropriate to say that they were like a broken set of pottery .

If things can be solved easily and naturally, it will be the best ---- This is Shichika's viewpoint. However, walking the walk is still definitely harder than talking the talk.

"Hm....?"

At that time, Shichika suddenly noticed something.

After his dad died, the one who is the most familiar with the island would be Shichika himself ; Nay, even if his dad was still in this world he might still could not surpass Shichika in the familiarity of the island. This island is originally small, every single blade of grass and every single tree, Shichika could remember as if it is the back of his hand ; Therefore, if there is any changes made to the island, no matter how big or small, Shichika is able to notice.

"....."

The road surface was quite messy, on closer inspection, there is actually a set of footprints ; Those feet might be small, and it was made by a sole person.

It is a footprint made by snow shoes.

The first thing that came into Shichika's mind is his sister Nanami, but that was an impossibility. Firstly, Shichika did not recall making any snow shoes . Secondly, this set of footprints are new, Nanami couldn't have come up here, much less surging ahead of Shichika himself. Even though today Shichika had an unusual attitude, he walked and was in deep thought at the same time, yet he still continued walking towards the spring as it is close ; Nanami is weak and fragile, she could not even catch up with a tortoise, furthermore she has a extremely bad sense of direction, if she and some other people raced towards the foot of the mountain, she would end up at the beach instead.

But this island only had Shichika himself and Nanami, if it is not Nanami, nor Shichika, then whose footprints were they belong to?

By utilizing the elimination method standpoint --- No, that sort of method is still the same ; No no, even Shichika who was bad at thinking arrived at the very basic conclusion--- Other than the brother and sister duo, there is some one else on the island.

Actually Shichika do not mind this, just felt that it was a hassle ; He felt that drawing water is more important than attending to this matter.

That said, he could not leave this problem alone. In the 19 year space of time when his father had been exiled, he forbade any visiting outsiders to go onto this island, there are some instances of close calls, but eventually no one has taken a single step on the island.

Has the first visitor came upon this island?

Its quite strange, picking a time to come after his father died.

"If dad is still around, he will slice him up ; But what am I supposed to do? Welcome him? Better leave it to Sis to settle this matter!"

Shichika muttered to himself, while changing his direction. He knew Fushoujima like the back of his hand, He can kind of guess what is the owner of the footprint's intent ; People are normally lazy and gullible , always take the road that is the easiest to travel , no matter how they walk, it will be a never ending walk. Even though the mountain trail did not have any challenges --- Actually it has, it has no clear route.

Or it is possible it is similar to his sister, someone who is a idiot in directions?

Not just Nanami, normal people will frequently get lost in this hill scape, try as they may they will never walk out of there, only to be lost to the forest. Come to think of it, Shichika had never seen a [Normal Human Being] ; at that time 20 years ago when he followed his father onto this island, he was just four years old, he never had a chance to see a [Normal Being] nor an [Outsider]. Shichika only know 2 [Human Being] --- one of it is his father who died a year ago, the other is his sister who shared the similar situation as Shichika. Whatever his father taught him regarding the [Outside World], is only the basic and essentials.

According to common sense, Yasuri Shichika with regards to the stranger's footprint must be more vigilant and cautious, if not to think things through ; But of course, he was born to be quite a blockhead, thinking things through is not his style.

Therefore at that time Shichika did not return to find his sister who been born in similar environment but however more tactful to discuss things over, nor he want to get caught up in the resulting bothersome thing,..... No,it is risky ; it only the truth that this situation need not much additional thought.

Then again, if things can be solved easily and naturally, it will still be the best.

Shichika noticed the path that has been cleared out from the bushes, and he is able to estimate the footprint's owner height ., The visitor's height isn't very tall, but not as short as a child. Originally when he saw the tiny footprints, he was guessing that it was some child ., then that option can be eliminated, so the visitor must be some young girl.

Shichika's train of thought stopped at the 'young girl' part, he began to think even harder.

Its that there is something, jammed up his not too bright brain --- its the depth of the footprints. The surface had some soft mud, It is not too clear ; But the left footprint indentation, is deeper than that of the right.

The visitor is carrying luggage on her left side.....?

That luggage's weight must not be light.

"..... Oh."

In that case, in Shichika's manner of speech, it is still the same [Oh] that regard this as some unimportant matter.

Not long after, Shichika's suspicions and guesses has been confirmed. Although Shichika is thin, he is also quite tall ., the footprint's owner is a female, carrying such a heavy load , furthermore didn't know the mountain route , it would be strange if Shichika is unable to catch up.

The girl's body shape is think and shapely, sported a head of long white hair, on closer inspection to determine her age, she is just a young lady ; A hair that was not kept in a knot, it was like his sister Nanami to drape her hair over her back, her clothes were embroidered with gold threads, and it is quite eye-catching. That kind of getup is not suitable for walking around in the mountains, in actuality, her skirt has already been torn to shreds by the branches and bushes ; originally her clothes is not that complete, just not quite promiscuous. Her body was adorned with lots of bright and shiny jewelry , breathtaking and majestic, individually there is nothing picky about it, yet when all combine together it was a little over bearing, of course it could be of fashion sense, it will be wise for people not to question much.

Only that, Shichika who did not know what is [Ordinary] things saw the whole getup as very hard to move around in, even never had any feelings or curiosity towards the lack of color in the girl's hair. There is only something that caught his attention.

There is a katana hanging on the girl's left waist.



So that what the heavy luggage is, a katana.

"This island has no particular rules on restricting who can come in or out, outsiders are welcome. However --- "

Shichika recklessly blurted out.

Regarding this trait it could be seen that he never think things through; According to common sense, one should observe in silence, then make an appropriate move.

"There is a thing, in which this island never had ---- it is forbidden to bring any kinds of blades on to this island."

Even though voice was announced so suddenly, the woman was however not shocked, turned around.

She had a pair of beautiful eyes, and emanated a strong mysterious aura, its the kind of that does not gloss over trivial stuff.

That pair of eyes firstly inspected Shichika, then trained it on her waist.

"Sorry for my lack of manners."

She at that time was sorry for that.

"I didn't know it was illegal, please pardon me. "

"..... It is okay, actually it is not me who set that rule."

It's a rule set by his father.

Due to that particular rule, Shichika and Nanami no matter whether its cooking, doing chores, had never used a single blade before., Not even a single day in these 20 years , they never thought of any inconvenience caused by not using a blade. That said, this is the first time Shichika has even seen a real blade.

It could have been before he came on to the island he saw blades before, but how can a 4 year old kid remember all these? Furthermore if it was seen 20 years ago, seeing it now it has not much difference.

So that is what it is, so that's a Katana?

It is indeed quite heavy.

"How did you get to this island?"

"Naturally by boat of course."

The girl did not have to think much, gave a straight answer.

Other than a boat, how else would she come here? Asking this question is shameful.

Then again, Shichika's face is rather emotionless, proceeded asking..

"What are you here for?"

He is not asking out of sake of curiosity, it is what his father and sister reminded him to say in this kind of situation, it is already what he strictly follow and do. Shichika's mind did not bother processing any answer, rather than that he was thinking of what question to ask next, or rather should he ask what was her name.

"Hm, I heard that Kyotouryuu 6th Generation Head Yasuri Mutsue (鑓六枝)(*lit, File Six Branch*) was on the island, did you know?"

"The 6th Generation head died a year ago."

Shichika replied.

So she's looking for father?

That said, she made a wasted trip.

Hearing that, she was briefly astounded, but then she quickly recovered, nodded her head..

"Is it? I anticipated this situation might happen, its already been 20 years. That means, you are ---"

"The family head is now me, I am Kyotouryuu 7th Generation Head, Yasuri Shichika."

The girl suddenly realized and laughed.

"Come to think of it, of course --- What a stupid question to ask. This island only has Mutsue and his family, so that means you are---"

"Yes, I am his son."

"So that's how it is, his body shape is not bad, appearance is passable, I give it a pass."

"Pass? What do you mean?"

"Hm? Oh, I am just talking to myself."

"You had business with my dad? I am sorry to disappoint, He---"

"Originally I am looking for your esteemed father, but now the situation is a little different. I am looking for the Kyotouryuu's head."

The girl continued...

" Therefore, what ever business I had with Mutsue changed to Mutsue's successor which is you,--- Shichika. I have not told you my name, sorry for being rude. My name is Togame (とがめ)(*lit, left cross eye*), I am a strategist."

"Togame?"

Strange name.

And, what did she say after that?

Strategian?

For the first time Shichika wanted to ask in his own initiative what she meant, however the girl made her move first.

"Lets put Kyotouryuu to the test!"

With that, she drew out the katana she carried on her left waist.

The length of the sword is about 4 feet, with a width not exceeding 2 inches, the edge of the blade from the broad to the narrow end is of a uniform mark, on the katana there is a carving of a tiger.

"This is one of the 36 Fugaku (フガク) swordsmith, early works of Mibu Kasamaro (壬生傘磨) originally brought this sword here to test on the great hero of the rebellion Yasuri Mutsue's ability, and this is his successor I am facing, this is still a good match."

"Test? What do you mean?"

"Don't have to ask so much, that is what I mean. Here I go!"

This is the first time Shichika seen a katana --- much less a katana that was aimed towards him --- yet he did not even flinch. Katana is much commonly seen, yet on the 20 years he was on this island, he never even seen nor imagine how one will look like ; Even after his father the 6th Generation Head passed away, he never neglect to practise his skills.

Therefore, Yasuri Shichika is unafraid to face the blade!

Then---

"Gyafun!"

He in the end did not execute any moves from Kyotouryuu or the extraordinary ultimate move in this situation ; It is because the exclamation, the girl who was wielding a katana to attack --- Togame was tripped by a small rocky protrusion from the ground, fell with her face flat on the floor.

And this is Kyotouryuu 7th Generation Head Yasuri Shichika and Strategian Togame's meeting of fate.

It took place in the time where that exclamation, it was commonly used and not yet outdated.

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Kyotouryuu, it is written in Japanese as the 'Flow of the Empty Sword'.

Originated from the Sengoku Period.

Founder is Yasuri Kazune (鑪一根) (*lit. File First Root*).

Since the past, Japanese swords are one of the more commonly used weapons in the army armories ; This is a hard fact, and it will not change in the near future. Japanese swords' strong points are too numerous to be named, if really have to state 2 examples, it is both long and heavy. Long length is good for beheading enemies , heavy weight is good for injuring enemies; To get to one's desirable power, the most imperative thing is yet to be found. Looking from every single corner of the earth to there are always negative that comes with positive ; That is because it is precisely that it is both heavy and long, it is unwieldy.

Founder Yasuri Kazune once stated: Swordsmen are the strongest of the strong on this earth, yet however for the strongest, the weakness must not be described or be pinpointed ---- even if they had to discard their strong points. What he planned to do from there,even the world or any swordsmen had never come to this conclusions.

To say it briefly ,he discarded the sword.

Those swordsmen who do not wield any swords are the true swordsmen --- this is the answer that he concluded with. In the following 10 years, he secluded himself in the mountains, diligently and pouring in sweat and blood to create Kyotouryuu, with the help of the one of the government six houses, and to depend on oneself using his power to shake up Sengoku.

What he uses isn't martial arts, it is actually a sword style.

Yet the sword style is unlike empty handed martial arts style, it can kill.

And according to legends ---

Those that are regarded as true or fake, still the outsiders would not know; About the circumstances of which Kyotouryuu would not use any swords that kind of sword style, no one knows, even in rumor mills, even though it is not a secret. However to see the true secrets, one must join the Kyotouryuu,perhaps treating Kyotouryuu as a enemy --- The former is impossible, it is because Kazune enforced a rule of Kyotouryuu that it only be passed down through the family line, outsiders are not allowed to even observe, it is truly that secretive of an art. Therefore, determined people brought blades to test, going there to spar and learn; At that time prying into Kyotouryuu, is also quite dangerous thing to do. Even if gathered back a life, a normal person won't want to risk their lives to test whether the unarmed combat is

truly the elite.

Alone in the shadow recesses of reclusiveness.

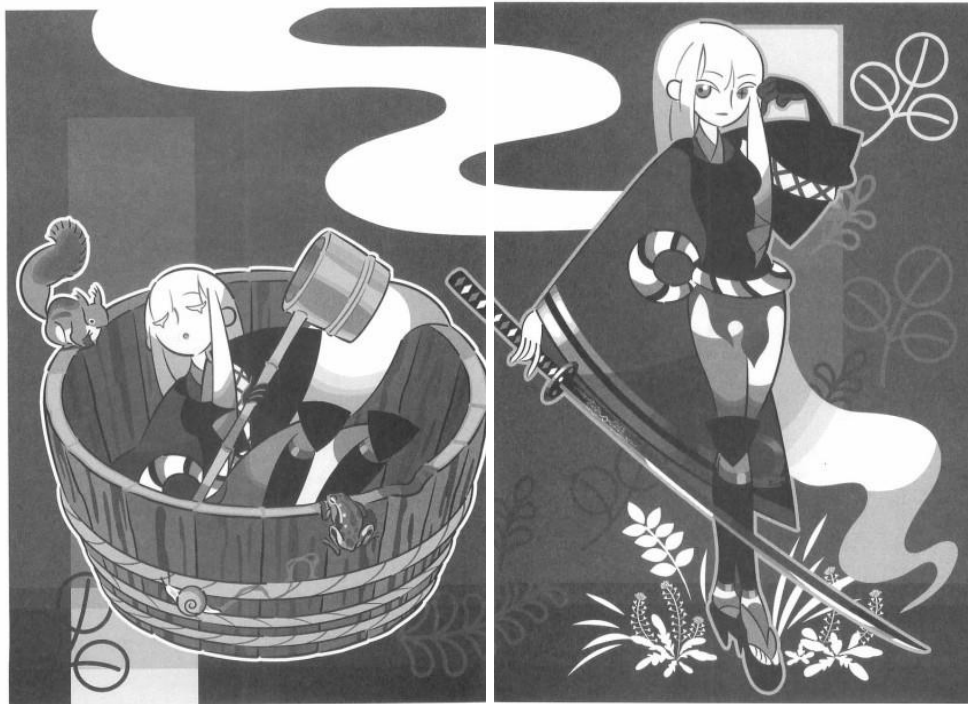
Kyotouryuu is only openly displayed by Founder Yasuri Kizune and the 6th Generation Head Yasuri Mutsue --- In the Sengoku Period and the Rebellion, when the whole country is plunged into chaos, it is used as the deadliest of sword styles.

Yasuri Shichika spending 19 years learning from the 6th Generation Head Yasuri Mutsue, he is now the Kyotouryuu Current Generation Head.

"Togame-san --- Did I say it correctly?"

Yasuri Nanami's voice is calm and quiet, it is hard to tell what she was thinking.

That said Togame previously fell, fainted on the spot ; Shichika had her put inside the wooden basin that was originally used to contain the water, once again carried it back to the small house. That time Nanami had already changed into a kosode (小袖), seeing that her little brother wasn't carrying back water, carrying a girl back instead, she raised her eyebrows in amusement --- Of course, she raised her eyebrows at the fact that her little brother did not bring back water.



After the two discussed for awhile, concluded that they could not just leave the girl that fainted inside the basin , therefore they moved her into the small house together, and also confiscated the weapon on her waist. If she woke up and started to cause a ruckus, it would be problematic --- Nay, recalling what has transpired just then, it is still not worth it.

That said Nanami has been on this earth longer than Shichika had been, however according to her, Togame's age could actually be even older than 20 years ; Speaking of which, even though she just got involved, Nanami is relatively quiet. That is not because she is similar to Shichika in terms of the unwillingness to think, it is precisely to keep calm and quiet therefore it is better to make good judgment. Nanami is that kind of person with that personality, even if being kicked out from the sky, she will be composed and face the situation.

The small house has only one room, miserable and suffocating.

The siblings at while they were eating breakfast, they planned on what to do later ; Just when they finished their meal, Togame woke up from her slumber in the corner of the room, Nanami raised from her position, gave her a cup of water she prepared beforehand.

"You are the first visitor to this island, if my greeting is inappropriate, I am extremely sorry."

"No, I came here suddenly, it is me who is lack of manners."

Togame answered as she reached out for the cup of water in Nanami's hand. Shichika silently thought: If she knew that dad has a son, did she know that he had a daughter too? Looking at how Togame speak, it sounds that she know more than what she let up ; Then regarding the matter of having children, naturally she will know --- This is what normal people would have concluded, however Shichika is just plain lazy to guess, he thought that she did not know a thing, but looking at that situation, he banished that original thought.

Therefore, the sister took the initiative without waiting for her carefree brother to make a move introduced herself first.

"I am Yasuri Mutsue's daughter, name is Nanami."

She said, then moved on to the main topic:

"Heard that Togame-san is looking for father, did you and father have a connection?"

"I had not seen your father before, nor did I had any connection with him."

"No?"

"No."

Togame suddenly said:

" You could say that I just got involved with it, Nanami. "

Even though Nanami's voice is tense and wary , it is polite and had humility; In comparison, Togame's attitude is a little haughty, totally seem like that she would apologize if she intrude. When she met Shichika she had already introduced herself, naturally its like introducing herself to Nanami. One that tripped over the protrusion and suffered a bump on her head and even show that kind of attitude, it only put her in a comical light ; But thinking about it, she was in the mountain and was lost, she was not even in fear, she might be carrying herself with high confidence, then it might not be appropriate to call her comical, then it might be respectable. Nanami thought that she was comical and respectable, not knowing what was it, in short it was a little unpleasant.

Speaking of which, on what was Togame's behavior or attitude, Nanami didn't particularly care; She was only interested in what was Togame's intent. Even though Kyotouryuu's Head is Shichika, after his father died, the Yasuri's household leader is Yasuri Nanami herself.

"The sword we will temporarily keep it. My little brother should have told you, it is forbidden to bring blades on the island, much less use it."

"Oh, is it Kyotouryuu's regulations?"

"That is correct..... Right, Togame-san, I heard that you tried to attack my little brother---"

"I am thinking of using the fastest method to see Kyotouryuu in action. However, not used to it though, as I am a strategist, not a swordsman."

"But..."

Shichika interrupted:

" The way you pull out the sword is quite impressive . "

Its only at the time when the sword that was unsheathed that was impressive.

"Ha!"

Togame chuckled.

"It is because I practised that move."

"" "

Then why didn't you practice until it was mastered?

Shichika involuntarily thought.

"This method is too violent, its not worth it to do it."

"It is understandable if you look at it that way, but I had my reasons. Kyotouryuu's Yasuri Mutsue, I only heard his name, never seen him before ; If I mistake him for someone else, the results I can't imagine. If the opponent can display Kyotouryuu's moves, isn't it the best way to authenticate it?"

"And Mutsue can be replaced by Shichika too right? So that is how it is."

Nanami nodded her head, seems to accept the explanation.

Having to accepting this kind of explanation, its a little strange.

"Then --- would you like to try again?"

Nanami eyed at the corner, the confiscated sword is there.

"Well I don't encourage you to do it --- Kyotouryuu first and foremost is a sword style that is meant to kill, it just that it doesn't utilize any swords; In strong cases it kills, or it doesn't. Tripping over that small protrusion, I say luck is by your side; if the sword even touch Shichika's body, you won't even escape with just a bump on your head."

Nanami's words seems to lower the temperature of the room, sending shivers to anyone who hear it.

But then she was expressionless, it was as if that Togame attacking her little brother is not such a big deal.

Togame was surprised at that, but Shichika was in comparison more dumbfounded than her. Shichika originally wanted to explain to her what his ability and worth, but how to show her his movesets? He was a little panicky, since it was obstructing him on how to explain.

"No, this words I shall keep as proof of Kyotouryuu. I am still very much cherish my life, not planning to simply throw it away."

"Really? Then, lets hear what you have to say!"

Nanami said.

That time the one leading the discussion was Nanami, and the main topic was of course Togame; Shichika tried to shy away from the discussion, he attitude is very poor, don't particular seem to care, even passing it on to his sister to do the work.

Then, at that time Togame's words were aimed at ---

"Kyotouryuu 7th Generation Head."

Aimed at Shichika himself.

"Would you like to rule the world?"

"Don't want."

"That is of course. In human history, who do not have high aims? There is no shame in having ambitions. The previous rebellion recollection, that rebels are determined, yet still can't be wrong. If you look into the origins, the current Shogunate, isn't it being built up by them? You can find the origins in the rebellions, just have to wait for --- What? Don't want!"

That late of a reaction, it can be found in any time period.

"Eh, it is not as if I don't want....."

Seeing that she suddenly aimed a topic at him, Shichika never gave it extra thought and just answered; But come to think of it, it is actually that he did not understand what Togame said. That's right, [I don't know] these three words, it is Shichika's actual answer; To suddenly mention the world, just made him confused, that Fushoujima to him is the world, it is already his possession, what's there to want or not want?

This interesting and confusing reaction, made Togame's facial expression harden; Seeing the situation, Nanami stepped in.

"Togame-san, we grew up in this isolated island, not knowing much about the world; If what you say wordy language, or complicated topics, I am afraid we are clueless."

"Oh..... Really?"

Togame nodded, and said: "Er, so that how it is, may I invite Nanami to leave; because what I intend to say is of utmost secrecy ---"

"That I can't approve."

Shichika did not allow Togame to finish and interrupted her, but this time round it is not he did not put additional thoughts in replying her.

"There are two reasons. Firstly, Kyotouryuu is passed down by blood, if my dad is still around, he would request us to stay too; The other reason is..... I don't like to think, that confusing words I don't quite understand ; if you want to discuss something, my sister will be there, might be more beneficial to you."

"..... Alright."

Togame was unrelenting on changing her arrogant attitude, just easily accept Shichika's viewpoint. Hmph, the first reason is reasonable, listening to the second reason, even she did not know what to do with it.

"So I take it as it is. Then I shall proceed! Please keep it a secret you two."

"I beg of you to explain it a little more simpler."

"There is a swordsmith named Shikizaki Kiki (四季崎 記紀), have you heard?"

"Never heard."

"That is of course. Even in an isolated island, you yourselves are swordsmen, who could have not heard about him? It is natural for not using sword Kyotouryuu --- Nay, facing the Kyotouryuu who never wield swords to say, Shikizaki Kiki is a natural enemy; Irregardless of the founder or the 7th Generation head, should have the same kind of thinking --- What? Never heard!"

That kind of reaction,

also can be found in any time period.

"Shichika, how come never heard of it? Dad mentioned him quite a number of times! Shikizaki Kiki..... It's the famed swordsmith in the Sengoku Period, is it? Togame-san."

".....? Is that all you know about him?"

Togame doubtfully questioned Nanami, she thought that Shichika even know that --- its quite sensible indeed. Since as what Nanami said, their father already mentioned about that swordsmith that matter ; It's just that, Shichika devoted himself solely on Kyotouryuu training, regarding any knowledge matters, its one ear in, other ear out, so it can be safe to say he forgot.

"That Shikizaki Kiki where was he from? Its what you said, hm, what was it? Oh yes yes yes, one of the Fugaku 36 swordsmith?"

"No, not even close, speaking of which..... Nanami, Mutsue-san did he discuss much about Shikizaki Kiki?"

"It is what ever Togame-san said ---- Father said that Kyotouryuu and Kiki is opposition of each other, but had connection with the Kyotouryuu founder."

"Anything else?"

"Just this much. The origins, I also have no idea."

"....."

Togame was deep in thought. That two did not even know who that swordsmith was , made her quite perplexed. Shichika don't understand it is understandable, even Nanami was clueless, but seeing that their father Yasuri Mutsue did not even delve into the topic of Shikizaki Kiki. What else can be done?

Togame's head was swirling with thoughts, Shichika just stubbornly don't want to think, just hoping that Togame stop keeping the suspense, hurry up and explain the swordsmith matter, but also felt that if she didn't speak its not okay.

"In the Sengoku times, in our country the swordsmen are the most active in this time period; The main players in the conflict, it was them."

Togame finally started explaining, she refrained from skipping here and there, starting from the very beginning.

"Kyotouryuu's Founder Yasuri Kazune is one of them, in the darkness and secrecy of Sengoku to make it prosper, be it blacksmiths, swordsmiths, or metal casters. Supposing that swordsmen are the performers, blacksmiths are the stage hands behind the scenes --- No, its more like an limb extension ; So without swords, swordsmen are pretty much useless, the only example that can function is only Kyotouryuu."

"Really!"

Shichika nodded his head in agreement. Those words he seemed to understand, even though wanted the topic to end quickly, even though it is hard to fulfill that wish. Togame continued:

"Just now I mentioned the 36 Fugaku swordsmiths, they were just one out of many; But the most heretic out of the heretics, it is Shikizaki Kiki. He wanders around, doesn't discriminate at all, and the swordsmith that dominate the Sengoku."

"Dominate Sengoku? That I do not understand."

To answer Nanami's inquisition, Togame replied: "The explanation is no different than what it originally mean."

"Kyotouryuu is supported by one of the 6 houses in Sengoku, but Shikizaki Kiki is different, he belonged to no country, belonged to no house, he makes his swords and distributed them throughout the country, irregardless of morality ; In 25 countries, there are 1000."

"1000 --- That's a lot."

"1000 --- That's not a lot."

Shichika and Nanami's viewpoint clashed, they looked at each other in the eye ---

"..... Alright, not a lot."

The one who retreated is Shichika.

That siblings who is stronger or weaker, one look can tell.

"In 25 countries, there are 1000 swords: So that means each country held 40 swords each?"

"No, each country had different amounts, they are not the same, and this is precisely what happened. Overall, this can be observed --- The 25 countries loss and wins, all were decided by Shikizaki Kiki's swords; The more of Shikizaki swords they amass, the better they fared in battle. If this is not called dominating the Sengoku, how to explain it? This is what I said, and what it really meant."

"..... couldn't you say its the other way around?"

Nanami said with a slight doubt:

"That is because there is almighty military power, therefore they can acquire much of Shikizaki's swords."

"Its also correct."

Togame confirmed Nanami's viewpoint.

"But however the people actually mistake that Shikizaki blades are of exceptional make. Bound by that mistake, they put Kyotouryuu at the last place..... So it could make Mutsue-san hate Shikizaki Kiki, by all means it is fate."

To take responsibility of Kyotouryuu's fate?

Shichika knew that his father isn't that kind of person, but he didn't make an objection: It is not because he found it a hassle, it was actually that the matter regarding Shikizaki Kiki has spark his interest, he didn't want to change the subject.

So that is how it is.

The swordsman that reject the usage of swords and the 1000 swords that dominate the Sengoku --- it is truly in opposition of Kyotouryuu.

"So just by listening to my story. Shichika, before Owari (尾張) Shogunate rule, there is a person who ruled and conquered the Sengoku, do you know who was it?"

"I know."

"Hmph, This is common sense, you know the --- What? You know!"

"Mm."

"Oh....."

Togame is really unwilling.

It has already been 3 times, it really must be found in every single time period!

"Where was he from? Yes, yes, Tosa(土佐) of the 4 Country. He and Awa (阿波) , Sanuki (讃岐) , Iyo (伊予) together, they unify to form a unified country, the person is called Kyuu Shogun (舊將軍), isn't it?"

In light of this common sense, it shows that he was at least a little knowledgeable. Shichika and Nanami's father at least got teach them some knowledge, although Shichika coincidentally could remember one of the history lessons.

Kyuu Shogun.

A household name 250 years ago --- However he was very old when he unite the country, and he was backed by no one, and was able to change the world. He became a [Shogun], yet he was unable to establish a [Shogunate]. So therefore, Kyuu Shogun's power is not exactly small ; Mutsue said, to enable the Owari Shogunate to establish itself, it is all due to Kyuu Shogun's work.

"That Kyuu Shogun held Shikizaki Kiki's swords? Judging from your words, he should have held the majority of the swords---"

"Thats right."

Togame's confirmed Nanami's guess.

"Once the unification is completed, Kyuu Shogun had a total of 507 of Shikizaki Kiki's swords, already exceeded more than half; to see that basis of that myth, and to obtain the world, that is just fantastic."

"More than half? It seems he spent a lot of energy collecting it! That is really childish."

"More appropriately should be greedy, that's why he is able to rule the world, and in such short time too. The following topics I originally wanted to mention it later, but now is not the time to dally, so I shall discuss it as I go along. After the unification, Kyuu Shogun did not create many decrees, but one of the decrees stands out --- It is not what I view it, but the whole world views it as important. Do you know what decree it is?"

"Don't know."

"Ah? Oh....."

Facing that 3 times extremely slow reaction, Togame's hesitation to answer to that, at one moment it was speechless ; This time round her reaction is not that exciting.

"Using just now that story to make a guess, it should be the Sword Hunt Decree!"

The one that said was Nanami, she was already used to her little's brother lack of speech.

"The Sword Hunt Decree, it is one of Nippon's most vile and underhand methods --- It could say this is one of the reasons of Kyuu Shogun's downfall."

"Oh! I remembered."

Shichika said. He wasn't because he heard the answer then 'came' into a revelation, but he really remembered.

It was mentioned in one of Mutsue's history lesson --- The Sword Hunt Decree, it was to gather materials to build a Buddha, so it gather everyone's swords together to make it.

"But that was just the face of it, the original aim of Kyuu Shogun was the swordsmen --- Right? He wants to eliminate all the swordsmen and martial artist in Nippon. So there are some people who said that it was just a decree to slaughter all swordsmen!"

"The actual secret is that. Kyuu Shogun came from a military background, therefore his personality is forceful and conquering, he knew the true horrors and capability of the swordsmen; So he felt that there is only room for one swordsman. Although, this surface reason was not all a lie; Tosa's Sayasou(鞘走) Seiryuin(清涼院) Gokenji Temple(護劍寺) was built a [Sword Buddha] image, it was made with the swords that was collected from the Sword Hunt decree. Ever since the land was known as the Holy Land of Seiryuin, and presently a lot of swordsmen came to visit, considering it their mecca."

At the same time, Togame was observing Nanami, was thinking that she already could have guessed what she was going to say next; Nanami complied, and said:

"However, the hidden reason and the actual reason is not the real reason --- Right? The true aim of the Sword Hunt, was to gather up the remaining Shikizaki Kiki swords."

"Exactly right."

These deepened Togame's confidence, she lightly slapped her knee and continued:

"Not only did he took the fame swordsmen's swords away from them, Kyuu Shogun did not even spare the commoner's blades; To collect up all Shikizaki Kiki's 1000 blades, he put all the faith in the Sword Hunt Decree. Kyuu Shogun wanted to rule the world for himself, put his faith wholly on Shikizaki's Swords. Got the wrong impression, right? It could be a gut feeling, yet he believed it thru the very end. To say the truth, that Kyuu Shogun is determined to the very end as the myth says. To further fulfill his own ambitions, to collect up the remaining 493 swords."

"So he used this underhand method?"

Shichika only felt that this is quite amusing.

"Such an abuse of power! I am not trying to insult anybody. But I felt that the 'Eliminating all Swordsmen' the reason is more believable."

"Believe it! In the span of 3 years when the Sword Hunt decree was issued, a statue was erected, swordsmen's numbers dwindled, and even helped Kyuu Shogun to gather up more than 100,000 swords."

"100,000 --- That's not a lot!"

"100,000 --- That's really a lot!"

Shichika and Nanami's viewpoint clashed again.

Who retreated first, it is obvious.

Togame expressed her agreement: "To collect 100,000 swords just for 500, it is really too much. In that 100,000, most of it are either normal swords or just plain antiques, but the amount of Shikizaki's swords collected are a not very little. Shikizaki's swords are mostly held by famous people in the Sengoku, naturally it is not hard to collect; But to include those whose whereabouts were unknown, or those that landed up in the hands of commoners, that is really incredible feat."

"Not very little? You mean not all?"

"Not all, only collected 481 swords; add up the total, Kyuu Shogun has only collected 988 of Shikizaki's swords."

"Is there something wrong with it? Isn't the Sword Hunt stopped after 3 years after it was launched? By stopping, one could say that all of the required swords has been collected! No, wrong --- Of course, some of the swords were destroyed in the rebellion, right?"

"No, on the contrary, it is actually Kyuu Shogun who gave up at the very end."

"Gave up?"

The world is already within his reach, yet he gave up?

"The Sword hunt is a draconian decree, yet to obtain the swords itself is another matter, he managed to track down the locations of the swords --- and stopped at the locations of the swords."

"Then if he knew the location of the swords, of course he can obtain it. Now then this matter arise, he's a Shogun who did not fear heaven, nor afraid of anything on earth; to even fear a person, one use power on power!"

"To expend human resources on this matter? I had just mentioned this, Shikizaki's crafts are more unique and special than any other; frankly speaking, whether this trinkets are even Japanese Katanas, I don't even know. Those 1000 swords are made with the "It is not how the humans uses the swords, its actually the swords that made them" basis in mind, even people called them Deviant Blades; I felt that this term is

more appropriate."

"Most heretic of heretics --- Is it?"

"That's right. The last twelve blades are of exceptional make. Legends says that the 988 swords that Kyuu Shogun held, are just practice to make the final 12."

"To make that 12, just to craft a thousand?"

"That degree of craziness, isn't comparable to the 100,000 swords for a 500 right?"

Togame replied in a mocking manner, taking out a piece of paper from her pocket.

The paper was scrawled these:

Zettou Kanna (絶刀「鉋」, Zettou Kanna, [Absolute, Plane])
Zantou Namakura (斬刀「鈍」, Zantou Namakura, [Decapitate, Blunt])
Sentou Tsurugi (千刀「鍛」, Sentou Tsurugi, [Thousand, Sword])
Hakutou Hari (薄刀「針」, Hakutou Hari, [Thin, Needle])
Zokutou Yoroï (賊刀「鎧」, Zokutou Yoroï, [Bandit, Armor])
Soutou Kanazuchi (双刀「鎚」, Soutou Kanazuchi, [Twin, Hammer])
Akutou Bitu (悪刀「鏹」, Akutou Bitu, [Evil, Poor])
Bitou Kanzashi (微刀「釵」, Bitou Kanzashi, [Fine, Sai])
Outou Nokogiri (王刀「鋸」, Outou Nokogiri, [King, Saw])
Seitou Hakari (誠刀「銓」, Seitou Hakari, [Truth, Balance])
Dokutou Mekki (毒刀「鍔」, Dokutou Mekki?, [Poisonous sword, Gilt])
Entou Jyuu (炎刀「銃」, Entou Jyuu?, [Flame sword, Gun])

"Those swords really had strange names."

The one that gave the first opinion, was Nanami.

"Are each and every one of them famous or something?"

"If I would discuss whether that they are famous or not, they would fall in the less famous region; However, these swords harbor poison which is very malicious, even being rumors calling them akin to the more famous swords as demon blades are quite close. Let me show you an example! Let's say this fifth sword --- "

Togame took the piece of paper and pointed at the name of the famous sword.

Zokutou . Yoroï

"After Kyuu Shogun created the Sword Hunt Decree, the sword Zokutou [Yoroï] was found not long after; That time the one that possess the sword is the Seto Nakai (瀬戸内海) pirates head. This kind of people would never be able to be bargained with, secondly they did not even heed the sword hunt, therefore Kyuu Shogun immediately sent out another decree, which is to outlaw pirates. On the surface it is to protect and upkeep the peace within the region and combat the pirates, the actual reason is to pursue one of Shikizaki Kiki's sword."

"Just for one sword, cause such a big hoohah?"

"That's right. And that is just a prelude. Kyuu Shogun did some people some favors. The outlawing of the Pirates are actually one of the few legitimate decrees he put out, yet it failed --- The armies that Kyuu Shogun sent out were lost to that one sword."

"Lost?"

"Annihilated. Of course, this exploits are not recorded in the historical annals. This is one of Kyuu Shogun's attempt to procure Shikizaki Kiki's Perfected Deviant Blades and it's scary outcome, he did it 12 times in that 3 years."

"....."

Silence is in the air. What Togame explained just now was as simple and easy as it goes, even the siblings that grew up on that rural area should understand. Then---

"That is because there is army doesn't mean that there is enough might in the military power, it must need more to acquire Shikizaki Kiki's swords --- From this standpoint, I don't think it is ridiculous at all...."

"Don't know whether Kyotouryuu has this saying --- Many of the travellers have the [Swords choose their owners] that saying, that saying can be taken in the root form, naturally also can be used in that form. This and Shikizaki Kiki [It is not man that uses swords, instead it is the sword that makes the man] the idea is similar, yet it is different..... Take that time who possess those 12 swords, they are all highly skilled warriors. Saying that they honed their skills to the fullest, therefore able to obtain that blades, it is quite impossible ; Only that it could only be explained via that saying. Even though I may get the wrong impression on it --- "

Togame proceed on to say:

"Yet I don't think it is the wrong impression."

"Not even an absurd thought?"

"Yet it does not fit what the situation deems it to be."

"Therefore you said that it compared to the more famous swords to be even more demonic and evil?"
"It is even more evil than the demon swords. Just now what Nanami said, ordering that draconic Sword Hunt Decree is one of Kyuu Shogun method of obtaining the world therein lies another reason, it is actually not to let the commonfolk know about the 12 defeats that they had suffered; That time the situation is pretty much undescrivable due to the fact that it does not escape from the knowledge from the select few. Kyuu Shogun's final military might, probably less than 50,000."

"The difference in this and what the officials say is heaven and earth!"

"Who would want to say these out? The history is written by the victors, there is no need to record all these bad losses and memories."

Following that, Togame folded the paper 4 times, took the remaining water that Nanami gave, and drink it in one gulp; One might originally thought that she would kept the paper back where she took it from, instead, she thrust it towards Shichika.

"Now I am going to say what I am here for. Kyotouryuu Head Yasuri Shichika, collect up the fabled swordsmith Shikizaki Kiki's remaining 12 swords, this is a huge responsibility; I hope I can give it to you."

"....."

In that situation Yasuri Shichika, also not that disinterested in that matter to even reject it immediately; He is rubbing the back of his hand, Togame who was expecting his answer saw that reaction, felt a little disappointed. However, Shichika did not really reject, one half is because he was a little interested, the other half was because it was such a important matter, his mind could not keep up.

Therefore Shichika look for Nanami for rescue; To cause complication by relying on his sister, that was just his style. Nanami's eyes are both shut, it could be she was digesting what Togame had just said; Then, she sighed deeply.

"You asked if Shichika wanted to rule the world, so that is the reason?"

Not long later, Nanami opened her eyes, her line of gaze is right at Togame.

Togame wasn't bothered by her gaze at all, now she was trying to compose her thoughts, was about to open her mouth for a rebuttal.

"However,"

Nanami once again continued to speak:

"It is already past the Sengoku Era, even if collected up the 12 swords, you won't even get to rule the world. Even if it is legends or mistaken thoughts, or be it truth it is also the same, today's Shogunate it is already quite well established and set in stone, even the previous rebellion used force only to get their way ---"

"That's right --- using force."

Togame agreed:

"The 988 swords that Kyuu Shogun collected is already in the hands of the Shogunate; Let's say that letting mistaken thinking be the reality, it could be said that the well established and set in stone Shogunate is due to the swords."

"If I follow what you say, isn't it strange that Kyuu Shogun gave up?"

"Not really gave up, just that in the end that no one left to support what he wanted to achieve --- Of course being the lone Shogun without backing is akin to listening to a fairy tale or a legend. However, Nanami's observation also has a valid point; It is now peaceful country wide, collecting the swords also could not even get you to rule the world. I asked you whether you would like to rule the world, it is to explain Shikizaki Kiki's swords origin, not actually saying that I would give you the ability to rule it."

"Is it?"

Shichika felt that there could be some underlying reasons, but to ask what underlying reasons, he didn't even know, therefore he never tried to pursue it.

"I didn't think that your knowledge towards Shikizaki Kiki's swords is quite staggeringly low. This words doesn't mean --- "

"Are you really from the Shogunate?"

Shichika interrupted the topic, asked something aside:

"Of course it is with the Shogunate --- No, now there are no one that dares opposes the Shogunate, all of them are being vanquished during the rebellion."

"..... I originally thought of using this to introduce myself."

By spoiling her grand entrance, Togame's expression showed an disgusted look. Until now Shichika had yet to accept the piece of paper that had the 12 sword's name, Togame's hand is suspended in mid-air, making her quite confused indeed.

"That is correct, how did you know?"

"I had never thought about it, it's just that you with regards to the swordsmith and Kyotouryuu's origin is quite well versed, and with certain matter about entrusting some responsibility.... In addition, didn't Owari Shogunate had Kyuu Shogun's 988 swords, why would you want to trouble yourself to collect the rest of the 12 swords?"

"Do you think that this white-hair lady which dressed in a strange garb sitting right in front of your eyes, is one from the Shogunate?"

"Hm? No way!"

"....."

That mistake with other mistakes couldn't be compared.

This point Togame knew it quite well, yet she did not betray any emotion, just squinted her eyes.

"That's okay..... I selected this getup because it is easier to change in and out from. Since I had been already been found out, not that it matters, let me re-introduce myself. I'm under the control of Yanari Shogun of Owari Shogunate --- army general director in support of critical tasks, Strategian Togame."

"Army --- General Director?"

Nanami knew in her heart that Togame isn't generalizing, it could say that she already guessed her position before Shichika even did; But hearing that kind of introduction, she was quite shocked. But even with expressionless nature that she had, she also had to say it out loud.

In contrast, Shichika is quite relaxed; Even though he knew what is the name of the current Shogunate, he did not know what was the organisation level was like, so he didn't even know how important that position was, He couldn't imagine, just felt that it was a term for an officer. In the end learning what was the hierarchy was also not important, he also would not understand.

Therefore he asked:

"Sis, what is an army?"

"It is what a General organize, Shichika. To order is what a general does, it could say that this what leads to the organization of the Sengoku period, it is being set up at the same time as the Shogunate. In the previous rebellion, dad also worked for someone in the army."

"Oh, so what you mean, is that my dad worked under your dad before?"

"....."

Togame did not immediately replied Shichika's question, rather she showed quite a sullen expression.

".....? What is it?"

"No.... Just seeing that you are quite love easy stuff, do not know much about the world, summarise in a slow way that's all. Listen carefully, I am not some noblewomen. The difference between army general director and Kyotouryuu is heaven and earth, not only in terms of attack power, but it is brute force inclusive; No matter the young or old, rich or poor, only with brute force, could stand in the top."

" But you don't even know how to use a sword!"

"My purpose is to plan battles away from the battlefield, Strategians originally never meant to even wield a sword. That is because I never use a sword, therefore am able to direct how a sword to be used."

Togame's words carried a tinge of anger, silently implying that Shichika is like a impertinent fool, viewpoint constricted and shallow. Shichika thought: Brute force made her have quite a bad temper; although she's angry, there is no need to say [Kyotouryuu difference is like heaven and earth]! That said, she said that she did not use a sword, therefore could not use a sword?"

Shichika and Togame --- That pair's conversation really could not match each other, really never could not be paired up.

"The army always moves in secrecy, always moving in shadows --- However now it is not as famous or famed. I am specialized in the things that the history books never talk about, naturally do not carry a proof on oneself; whether it is true or fake, only trust can decide."

"I believe."

Shichika replied at once:

"I will take your easy going attitude as proof!"

"....."

This words also infuriated Togame, only see her stretching out her body, seems like she wanted to flare up; But to think about it deeper, Shichika believing it is not a bad sign, moving her concentration away

from Shichika, towards Nanami: "Nanami, do you approve?"

"Kyotouryuu's head is Shichika, what Shichika says, I only follow. That said, knowing your intent and background, I cleared up some of the doubts that I had."

"Oh, so all along, in proper words. Actually this kind of development is not led by me; It could have you knew that I was from the Shogunate, ability being the strong point, saying any more is also quite pointless!"

"So what if our abilities are the strong point?"

"Because ---- "

Shichika asked with a tone devoid of feelings, Togame was really at a loss of how to answer; So Nanami took up the lead and said: " If it is regards to our dad, then you can relax." Her voice was quite icy, it had some edge to it.

"Regarding that father being exiled to this island that matter, it is only father himself, even that we siblings had nothing to do with it, so we don't hate the Shogunate one bit."

"If it is so then it is okay."

"Then we shall continue to discuss this original matter! Togame-san, you are one of the Shogunate people, coming here to deliver the order to collect up the 12 swords; But why now then the Shogunate is interested? There is only 12 swords left to complete the Shikizaki Kiki collection, yet there is no need for it to do so. The Owari Shogunate has been around for about 150 years, the only thing that shook the country, is the rebellion that happened recently."

"The main point of this argument is the rebellion itself. That's right, Owari Shogunate has been established itself for 150 years, so lets say that the Sengoku Period is still around, Shikizaki's swords are the ones that changes the fate of the country; Then if you think carefully, what if the leader of the previous rebellion had gotten the 12 swords?"

988 versus 12.

Judging from the numbers, it is quite obvious.

But, that 988 is just practice for the 12 swords ---

"Even Kyuu Shogun could not do anything about those 12 swords, then the Shogunate had a hard time putting down the resistance, its quite hard to say. That time Kyuu Shogun was the one doing the attacking, the opponents were just holding their ground, never even made a counterattack; But if it is the opponent who attacked, Kyuu Shogun could not do anything about it."

"But that happened 150 years ago, so that means the swords are already found their owner."

"What you said is right, but who ever the owners are we do not particularly care, the problem lies with the swords that Shikizaki Kiki crafted... More precisely, the sword and the user, they with regards to the Shogunate is shrouded in mystery; Now it is quite a peaceful time, the 12 people who wielded the swords won't be that brazen."

"So the Shogunate feared a rebellion?"

That dimwitted Shichika even started to rack his brains for a bit.

The Shogunate --- At least the higher ranking officials had learnt some lessons from the previous rebellion, decided to make their first move, collected Shikizaki's swords; That said that Kyuu Shogun ran into some trouble collecting the 12 swords, it is obvious that they are more tactful. These swords are all menacing by itself, naturally to prevent it to fall into the hands of the previous conspirators of the rebellion, not to have a fight with the Shogunate. However ---

In light of this fact, however how weak it may be; If this could even spark this kind of outcome, it is better to start moving, eliminate the sword's owner---

"That's why we are only able to operate in shadows."

Togame saw through Shichika's thoughts, continued to speak:

"That is why we need a strategist for."

"Pardon my interruption, originally I wanted to find an appropriate time to ask you about this thing..... What do Togame-san mean when you said strategist? Is it a new post that the Shogunate created in the past 20 years or so?"

"No, I named it myself."

Togame huffed it out proudly.

So it is self-named.

..... why it is self-named?

"Now the Sword Hunt Decree is quite useless, so now have to understand the current affairs. More accurately, I myself see things in a different light, if it is a proper order, I have a no authority to put it in place; If I collect Shikizaki's swords, I had to create a posting of a Strategian, so it was like an order."

"Strategian---"

"Tactics are used by a tactician, Strange orders, strange strategies are naturally used by a strategist. Unusual orders, that's why they are all given to me."

Togame was like some kind of superstar, and she copied that all to a point.

"So now let me repeat myself, Kyotouryuu Head, would you lend me your strength? You yourself is a swordsman that doesn't use swords, with regards to Shikizaki Kiki collection of the 12 swords I am guessing that you must be quite interested."

".....Not that there isn't any interest or not.... However, why did you look out for Kyotouryuu? I thought you are from the Shogunate, and since you are here. Your original intent is to find my dad for help right?"

"That's obvious. But then the information that I had is already 20 years old, I originally calculated, if Mutsue-san strength isn't what it is used to be, I will ask for his permission, allow his son who was born and grew up on this island to help."

"What a calculation that was!"

Nanami could not hold it in, exclaimed it aloud.

Shichika deep within him felt that something is wrong.

This girl named Togame and Shichika are talking akin to like a chicken trying to converse with a duck, and even Nanami included were like a mismatch; But however they were actually people, on the surface it look like they are able to converse well.

"However, that son's power could not have match up with his dad----"

"Hold it, this issue we will talk later ---"

Shichika adamantly interrupted the mumbling Togame, bringing back the topic to himself. All along he was not being like a leader and did not know how to be one, maybe he was a little greedy, wanted a share of the pie."

"It doesn't really matter if it was me or my dad, what I meant was---- Since you are from the Shogunate, why bother looking to Kyotouryuu for help? Kyotouryuu in the past was of an unimaginable power, but it is

because there is a crime committed therefore we are being exiled; The Shogunate can spare lots of money, why not use it to find a more suitable talent?"

"Because we could not trust people who worked for money."

Togame said:

"With regards to your point, I already thought of it and tried it out --- It is also one of the old ways the army uses -- the usage of the outside ninjas."

"Ninjas?"

"Maniwa Ninja Corps --- This name.... I think that you have heard about them before; They are reliable, trustworthy, and been working with us for a long time. In the past I had dealt quite a number of business with them, the relationship is good; I didn't think they would betray me."

A ninja betrayal ---- It is something that is quite unimaginable. But it is said: The seas will dry up eventually, rocks will shatter, it is no surprise that ninjas would betray.

"Why would they betray?"

"The reason is simple, it is because all of Shikizaki Kiki's swords are of an exceptional make, it values for a lot. One who works for money, naturally will betray due to this."

Togame motioned her eye to the piece of paper.

"Zettou [Kanna] --- Maniwa Ninja Corp successfully obtained the sword from the owner, yet they brought it along with them when they vanish without a trace. The one that vanished wasn't just the ninja that was allocated that task, but the whole village itself."

"The whole village?"

"The whole ninja corp is being regarded as traitors. Seeing their luck, all of the ninjas trust with the Shogunate was doomed, all of the ones that support them could not even lift up their heads in shame."

"Oh, yes, you mentioned it the other time. Speaking of which, ninja betrayal..... it was unimaginable indeed. One that one for money, naturally will try to betray, reasonable. Then what about honor? There are those who don't work for valuables or money, then ask the ones that are morally upstanding? My dad once said, this is one trait a swordsman should have."

"Swordsman are also not suitable. In the swordsman's words, the poison that Shikizaki Kiki's swords have is too strong."

"Poison?"

"It goes without you saying, I had already tried this method, I personally handpicked the strongest and most morally outstanding swordsmen of what the Shogunate has to offer, the name of the swordsman is Sabi Hakuhei(錆 白兵), he appears young and frail ---"

"Sabi.....? Hearing the surname seems like it is not that strong. Speaking of his age, is he by chance younger than me?"

"No wonder you have doubts, even though he is very strong, his swords arts are unparalleled. Kyuu Shogun's Sword Hunt decree has already been over 150 years already, including [Kanna] which we mentioned, we found 6 of the swords' location; The one that was the hardest to obtain was Hakutou [Hari], yet he obtained it in a shockingly short amount of time."

"Oh!"

"After he obtained it, he disappeared."

"Ah?"

"That is why I said the poison is too strong. Swordsmen who worked by honor, who couldn't resist the honor of owning one of Shikizaki Kiki's sword? The Shogunate employed the swordsmen to be its helper, and now the trust that the swordsman had is being doomed; That kind of shaky relationship, it is all caused by me."

This is truly unimaginable.

When she said that 2 events, one after which the ability is more and more profound, never noticed that what she said is not easily felt --- what if she fell for the same trap again, since the 2 times she has been betrayed after they gotten the swords; Come to think of it, it is like taking the sword from a less capable owner and transferring it to a more horrifically stronger one.

So this plan involves three steps; one is the first time, second is to familiarize, third is to conquer.

So with regards to what it means, Togame will not fail this time around.

"So that's why you look for Kyotouryuu?"

Nanami said:

"Swordsmen who do not work for both honor and money, it is the most suitable to collect Shikizaki Kiki's swords --- So this what Togame-san calculated?"

"That's right, only Kyotouryuu can resist the poison in Shikizaki Kiki's swords. Truthfully speaking, time is running out; Maniwa Ninja Corp and Sabi Hakuhei must already think of collecting all the 12 swords, they had this kind of nature. Upon betrayal it would seem that they become somewhat of a formidable opponent, but it is something we could not easily eliminate. Kyotouryuu Head Yasuri Shichika ---- Would you be the weapon, lend a hand to make Owari Shogunate prosper?"

Togame once again took the paper, held it out to Shichika.

Her pair of eyes were locked on Shichika, baring all her honest intentions.

"..... I understand the situation."

But then, he did not accept the paper.

The situation has already become like this, why did he still reject the paper?

"But that is the reason why you seek out Kyotouryuu, but not the reason of why I should collect the 12 swords. You're right, I had no interest in money, even the swords I had no particular care of whatsoever; But with regards to the Shogunate, it is more of not interested and unhappiness. Swordsmen should work with honor, yet I do not have any obligation to help out with the Shogunate."

"....."

"In addition, with regards to what my sister said, I doubt that you can get through to my dad regarding this order. 20 years ago I was too small and immature, only hate what your officials, even though I knew nothing about the word. And speaking of which, I am already used to the laid back life on the island, I don't feel like going back to the mainland to slaughter people."

"Are you saying that you are scared of those kind of people?"

"Of course I'm scared."

Shichika hit the jackpot of what Togame thought.

"However I am more afraid of the hassle."

"Shichika!"

"Sis, don't you think so too?"

Nanami just sighed, Shichika just blew her mind, couldn't allow her any space to speak. Seeing the situation, Shichika turned his attention back to Togame:

"I actually was quite curious about the swordsmith named Shikizaki Kiki --- If it is what you say, he and our Kyotouryuu is of opposition of each other ---- However , it is not curious enough for a reason for him to sail off the island. So what if he and our founder have connection with each other, isn't it a little ancient? You labored yourself to come to this desolate island, it must be a no mean feat! Your stories are quite interesting, more suited for a bedtime story, but for this to happen early in the morning---"

"Ah!"

Yasuri Shichika's abrupt rejection, Togame still has the galls to laugh, it could be the situation has changed in her favor. This particular words must have triggered something, brought back to the path that she had in mind, and eventual arrival at the destination.

"You didn't think that I would expected you to say that? This strategian has already dealt by the Maniwa Ninja Corps and Sabi Hakuhei, if I could not persuade you, why would I flamboyantly waltz on this island?"

".....you have a hidden trick?"

Seeing Togame's unexpected move,

Shichika was unduly shocked.

"You have a way to convince me to collect these 12 swords?"

"That's right."

Togame said with overflowing confidence.

"Those who work for money cannot be trusted, those who use honor also cannot be trusted; so that is how it is, only left with love."

"Love?"

"The ones that are moved by love, can be trusted."

Togame said.

Body stature is good,

Appearance wise it is a pass;

It is quite a blockheaded idea,

So it is, it is part of the plan

"Yasuri Shichika, you will fall in love with me."

<Katanagatari Chapter 1: Fushoujima End>

Chapter 2: Maniwa Ninja Corps (上)



Maniwa Ninja Corps.

The number of ninja personnel isn't comparable to the one like the swordcraft dojos, but it is also quite a lot --- Basically, ninjas aren't the type who exposes themselves to the surface world, estimating the numbers is no easy task, and to differentiate those who travel around too also is no easy task --- But the Maniwa Ninja Corps is the cream of the crop in the midst of all the other ninjas, demonstrated exceptional skills. In the times of the Sengoku Period, ninjas and some famous figures had some unexplainable relationship; not only in the planning stage, but also on the battlefield. The work of ninjas, is something that had not seen the light of day. If Shikizaki Kiki's Deviant Blades are supporting the Sengoku, ninjas are the one that supporting the remaining time periods; Even the task that they can do are numerous and varied, with regards of information gathering and assassinations, they are unmatched. Maniwa Ninja Corps with regards to the assassination aspect, they are of top notch.

And the ninjas that are specialized in assassinations, it is the Maniwa Ninja Corps.

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In a blink of an eye, Yasuri Nanami is the only one that is in motion.

That is of course. At this side Togame was like talking to the wind, was quite pleased with herself; On the other side Shichika was totally speechless, totally had no idea, really could not match up with her.

Nanami who was at first sitting suddenly knelt down, suddenly extended both her arms, pushed Shichika and Togame's shoulders. Nanami's force is quite small and light, however at that time Shichika and Togame sat facing each other, being pushed to the side by someone, they tipped a little; They tried to regain their centre of gravity, naturally raised up their legs.

In that time of the blink of an eye, the wall --- That small crude house, the wall is just made up of a few boards that was nailed together, it was just built enough to help them to go through the hot summer and

cold winters --- shattered inwards with shards everywhere!

It was like a violent explosion.

"Wh, what!"

Although he was slower than his sister by a beat, he is the guy who trains hard in his skills everyday the young head Shichika; Just only saw him gave a shout, while reaching out to wrap around the floral patterned belt on her waist, slammed her back to the ground, it was really convenient for him. And Nanami used the momentum generated by pushing the two people apart, rolled towards the other end of the room ---

At that moment, it is safe to say the blink of the eye ended.

The flying pieces of the wooden wall were imbedded to the opposite wall --- No, not only are there are wooden splinters, there are some metal shards --- No, not that they are metal pieces, they are shurikens! The + shape shurikens are also mixed in there together, total there are 45!

45 shurikens simultaneously flew past, pierced the wooden wall like a piece of paper door , and also embedded themselves on the other side of the wall! They were all clumped together, there are no individuals lying about; If Nanami had never pushed Shichika and Togame apart, they could be horrifically pierced a few dozen times by the shurikens.

They were being thrown, and in a hidden position to boot, who attacked them is a mystery indeed.

"Ba..."

Shichika jumped up, his expression was the one unlike the bored and don't care attitude he always wear.

"Bastard! Look what you have done! This is the house dad built!"

Shichika howled at the attacker, flew out after that --- He is not stupid to even use the door, immediately use the hole made by the shuriken to exit the house.

"Ah! Shichika!"

By the time Nanami called out to Shichika, he already disappeared. After exiting the house, he should be after the ones who threw the shurikens. The avenging son who wants to bring justice --- seeing that her brother recklessly charge out, Nanami only mustered a long sigh.

"Really... So reckless..."

"No, what he did was right."

Even though Shichika protected Togame, when he got up he callously hurled her out of the room; She was only seen massaging her back area when she returned to the room, this is what she said:

"It is like a thunderclap after the lightning, there could be a second wave of attack, that time could really not defend. With regards on how to deal with aerial weaponry, need to make split second decisions. That kid... don't know whether he understand where the attacker should have gone."

"Oh.... He just basically knows how to move that's all."

"Hm, so this is what happens when one never put any thought. He didn't even wear his slippers and just begun pursuing, don't know whether it is the right thing to do."

"No, It is not what it looks like. If like that child said, the slippers and any protective gear are like sword sheath, when fighting it is quite a useless burden. Back to the topic at hand, I think this room is more breezier from now on!"

"So it is Maniwa Ninja Corps."



Togame was calm and collected, plucked out one of the shuriken that was imbedded in the wall, specially scrutinized it. This is most definitely the shurikens used by the Maniwa Ninja Corps, but the opponent really not that brazen, evidently it is an accidental attack. Nay, not an accidental attack, it could be...

"Really?"

Nanami nodded her head, seemingly not astounded.

That is of course. What just flew past was shurikens, its not hard to guess they are from ninjas; Furthermore Togame just mentioned the name of the Maniwa Ninja Corps.

"There are how many of them?"

"Most likely only one."

Being asked on how many attackers threw that amount of shurikens, Togame immediately answered back a definite answer, and she answered with confidence and conviction. Nanami never would have guessed that amount, just silently faced her.

"Maniwa Ninja Corps never worked together in a group --- Nay, they do not need to work in groups."

"But ---"

Having said that, Nanami observed that the hole that the shurikens made is very big. [But] that word, need no explanation --- Lets say that one ninja held one shuriken and simultaneously threw 45 shurikens, she guess that there are 45 ninjas, one shuriken was thrown by one.

"The situation that presented in front of me that I don't understand is, how did Maniwa Ninja Corps would show up here. I made sure I wasn't followed, also never told anyone where I was heading --- "

"Togame-san."

Nanami called out to Togame who was deep in thought.

Even though her attitude still remains expressionless and lazy, her gaze is quite earnest.

"Your proposition, I approve of it."

"Ouh....."

Having just experienced an ambush, Nanami immediately returned back to the original topic, catching Togame by surprise; However it is her exception, it's just Nanami's view.

"I thought that you opposed to that proposition."

"Yes..... No, truthfully, regarding of what you brought up, I had no say whether to approve or not to approve. Basically, me and that kid are one of the same..... Not interested in money, and don't really care about honor, the Shogunate or the collection of Shikizaki Kiki's swords. I don't like to leave the house, maybe saying this is a little harsh --- regarding the world and its happenings, I really do not want to care. That kid expresses interest in Shikizaki Kiki, then I am not the Kyotouryuu's head, so I can't do anything."

"....."

"However, regardless of reasons, I approve of that child to go out to see the world. He has been on the island for 20 years, training daily, train until he is skilled, but then achieved nothing, its really sad actually."

"However --- this words may be harsh to the ears, but the one that is being exiled is just Mutsue-san, and since he just died---"

"My body is frail, unable to survive in the outside world. It is the truth when I say that I don't feel like caring about the world matters, but yet in this critical juncture, it seems like I say it out of injustice. The air in the mainland is too polluted for me, that child is worried about this point."

Togame already guessed that Nanami harbored some sickness. Nanami was so sickly, looked so frail, she looks like she could shatter if accidentally bumped into her.

"He had too much to worry about." Nanami suddenly said : "I hate to be under the protective care of my little brother, not wanting to be a burden for him. More importantly --- Togame-san, if Shichika abide to the mission, Kyotouryuu..... can it see the light of day?"

Nanami's tone is not like a question, more like a request.

Togame hurriedly nodded her head to acknowledge it.

"Of course. I was also thinking that the hero of the rebellion is stuck on this island, doesn't make any sense, so I originally planned, since Mutsue-san can be of use in this world..... I may get him to be pardoned."

"..... really?"

Nanami answered, her words are not tinged with thought.

"So if it what it is, I have no reason to object."

So to finish off, Nanami gave her blessings.

"Its a little embarrassing to say, just now I object against how Shichika replied, I am unable to control him --- I will discipline him later on. I hope I can entrust my little brother to you Togame-san."

"..... I had just said in the beginning, the road could be harsh. If you want me to protect your little brother, I am unable to vouch for his safety; If it is so, it will only cause burdens for me. Not only the Maniwa Ninja Corps, he may have to fight with Sabi Hakuhei; and also the unknown locations of the other 6 swords, who knows whether they land up on which monster or demon's hand --- "

"If you had a lack of confidence in Kyotouryuu's skills, why not you go and take a look at the fight?"



Nanami lifted up her head and spoke.

Her haughty retort, isn't like the normal cold tone she usually uses.

"If the number of attacker you said are true, only one --- I guess, Shichika and him would already be heading towards the beach. If you head there now, I don't know whether you will miss it?"

"You had such self-confidence, the opponent is still Maniwa Ninja Corps!"

"You mean Kyotouryuu can lose to such ninjas?"

She suddenly said.

Just now Togame felt a little strange that Nanami just said those words with ease, so it is actually expressing total faith in her little brother's ability to wield Kyotouryuu.

And at that time, Nanami laughed, that kind of laugh made her felt a little ashamed.

"Togame-san's has a good and kind heart, really cared for Shichika. Since Togame-san is that kind of person, I can rest easy leaving my little brother in your hands, really hope that you can take care of him."

".....!"

Togame isn't used to be praised, turning beet red; However just now isn't actually a praise, more like a sarcastic remark.

"Don't..... Don't say such nonsense! More importantly, we need to think about why Maniwa Ninja Corp was able to appear here!"

"Hm, it is true that it is important..."

Nanami replied with this words, yet still smiling away graciously, it appears that it really make people embarrassed; It could have she had some evil in her.

"Togame-san, are you sure that you weren't being followed? The opponent is a ninja, tailing other people are their forte."

"How many times did I have to say? It is precisely that the opponent is a ninja, en route I especially made sure that I wasn't being tailed, up to the point to being obsessive; Also I never told anyone, it is also due to this reason. So other than Maniwa Ninja Corps and Sabi Hakuhei, I doubt that there are any other enemies. Hm, so what was it?"

"..... I need your clarification, how did Togame-san come here alone to this island?"

"Do you need to ask? You can see by yourself!" Togame said: "The methods of the military and ninjas are not the same, but basically need to move around; Yet I move around alone it is an exception. So this matter the lesser people know the better."

"So, how did you come onto this island?"

"..... Naturally by boat of course."

This question Shichika already asked. So this time around Togame need not think much, just gave the answer.

Other than boat, how else could she have come on this island? Asking this type of question is really embarrassing.

However, Nanami still devoid of expression, continued to ask:

"You rowed the boat by yourself?"

"Rowed by myself? Such interesting words, how could I? I am built that weak, where could have I had the strength..... Huh?"

"So there is a ferryman?"

"Ah..... No, but ---"

There is.

There is a ferryman --- It is him who rowed her over, rowed Togame from Shinshou Coast to this island. After docking at the beach, Togame told him to wait there, so to prevent the boat from floating away.

"Bu, But --- No, so it is like this!"

Togame's beet red face turned green.

"Oh shit --- That guy carries a Shikizaki Kiki's sword!"

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In Yasuri Shichika's words, Fushoujima is like his backyard --- This kind of age-old adage is not really due to laziness. He actually knew every single blade of grass and tree like a back of his hand, therefore is able to judge where the attacker that hurl out those shurikens are heading, chasing the attacker, can be used as a pre-breakfast exercise --- shame that the breakfast was consumed with Nanami while Togame was out of commission.

Regardless whether he is a ninja or some ethereal god, on this island, no one can escape Shichika's grasp. When the criminal ran, he realize this crucial information.

Only seeing the criminal silhouette, flew down the mountain, heading towards the beach with the soft sounds of the waves crashing against the shore.

The above scenario was just as what Nanami had told Togame, just that Shichika hasn't made a move yet.

In the teachings of Kyotouryuu, shurikens are also treated like swords, but definitely not classified as one; Since Shichika had never seen a shuriken before, he doesn't know much of the capability of ninjas, seeing that the + type shuriken that pierce his home made him bitter and angry, haven't really realize that the opponent would be a ninja. He only heard from his father Mutsue said that ninjas are the type that are loyal to the end, but this belief has also been shaken to the core. Maniwa Ninja Corps these words, are forever ingrained in his mind.

So, as he entered the beach, seeing that the criminal that came from the dark depths of the jungle into the the sun is dressed in a ninja outfit, he haven't recalled it yet.

However, if it switched perspective to the others, it is also the same. Because that ninja attire was not exactly the same as one expected to be, not only the clothes, the whole body was twined with metal chains, it is not conspicuous at all, rather eye catching.

That guy is even masked, sported a head of jet black hair; Seeing that Shichika was chasing him from the jungle, he laughed out.

"Kyotouryuu, you may think that you have me cornered, but it is actually the opposite, it is I who led you here."

"....."

Shuffling sounds were being heard on the sand, and Shichika moved to the front the criminal, face to face; However up to now, he just realized that he did not come up with any plan at all. He just saw that his small house being destroyed, he just angrily chased him up to that point, so what is the next step?

It is really depressing to say, Shichika's understanding of [People] are limited to his father, sister and

Togame whom he just met, so he did not know what are the proper steps to encounter people; Speaking of which, this problem really has no definite solution.

Lucky that I held my judgement, since it is just a house that is hand built, even though it is just one broken wall, it should be quite easy and fast to repair..... Then why did I flare up? Shichika begun to think about his actions.

Thinking about is it because it is the house that his father personally built, as that time Shichika had howled out earlier.

Filial.

Shichika was internally troubled.

When Nanami heard it, what will she think?

Although this is Shichika's personal matter, how would the opponent react now? The ninja never observed him well, just happily announced his name, that kind of attitude, not all ninjas had it.

"I am one of Maniwa Ninja Corp's 12 leaders --- Maniwa Koumori (真庭蝙蝠). Kyotouryuu, I hope that you don't take it on me, I hope you would just lay down your life here."

That voice is high pitch and really unpleasant to the ears, made the listeners to the voice felt unsettled, it makes people feel that he was speaking from some other orifice other than his mouth.

"Maniwa..... Oh! I just heard about it."

"You heard about it, just saying that you are just unlucky. If you had never heard about it, I would spare your life; It is because my target is that woman that you heard the information from."

The criminal --- Maniwa Koumori said.

"In the end there is not much of information! However after finding us she seek upon Sabi Hakuhei, really shocked me. What she had said to you, it means that she had spoke of the same thing to Sabi; It seems that the guy with the surname Sabi could be let alive."

"You overheard?"

"Ya!"

"Really distasteful."

"You should say that I am great!"

Koumori laughed out loud, his laughing voice is high pitched and unpleasant.

"You followed Togame over here?"

"No, I will never do such sneaky stuff, I came together with her, with an oar in hand to row and row, really tire me out! That lady just sit there and give orders, really adamant on not helping, I really wonder what was her mind made of."

"Oh, so that is how it is. Today is really a day full of visitors!"

In reality there is not more than 2 people, yet Shichika still said it.

Since long time ago Shichika has been waiting to use this words.

"HAHAHA! Kyotouryuu, now you had no peaceful life is because I was on this island, because there is also something that you had to do."

"What to do?"

"Need to ask? Of course is to beg for mercy!"

Koumori continued to laugh.

"I loved to hear people say: [What ever you want I can offer up, just spare me my life.] after that I will reply : [I don't want anything, just want your life!]"

"....."

Shichika had not known many people, seeing the guy in front of him having that kind of substandard morals, he no need to think much further to arrive at this conclusion.

"This is definitely giving me a headache..... I didn't know how to fight with a Ninja, and seeing that you did not carry any Ninja Sword --- "

Saying that , Shichika did just notice that Maniwa Koumori did not carry any ninja swords, also not carry any other ninja weapons; If it is said that it is hidden in the clothes, it is really unlikely. What about just now these shurikens? Could he actually expended all the weaponry in is arsenal? Really such a blockhead!

"Ah? Ninja Swords? Oh! Right, Kyotouryuu are the swordsmen who don't use swords! A sword style that treat swords as their enemies, HAHAHA! It is comical really!"

"Kyotouryuu and empty handed martial arts style are both different, even though they both don't use swords. I am just saying that I am not clear on how a ninja fights."

"Why need to flare up over such a trivial matter? In Kyotouryuu teachings, aren't there any that touch on how to be a prim and proper gentleman? Relax, I am not a swordsman, however it's not like I can't use a sword."

Koumori said:

"I heed your words, take out my beloved treasure."

After he spoke, he brought his chain laced hands and reached into his mouth --- In any time period there are people who can swallow their fist and be proud of it, however the level that Koumori does it could not be compared. His skull is totally warped, not only is fist, his wrist, his arm, all been sucked in by him, the imagery is like a snake consuming his own tail.

"Wh..... what, so this is the ability of a normal person? I, I now then know --- "

Shichika was shocked.

This thing is beyond human abilities, ladies and gentlemen please take a look at the following attempt of human speech.

"Ghruaheudahsleala, ghreeahsdelase ---- "

Koumori spoke with a grumbling voice, however hard we analyze this situation, the noise is still naturally undecipherable. He swallowed once and then gently pulled out something from his mouth, the only thing that was seen is his hand grasping a handle, and it is a grip of a blade.

".....!"

Seeing this horror of a freak show, Shichika was totally immobilized; And the grip of the blade that was in question was pulled out, revealing the whole blade itself.

That sword's blade was long, it is even longer than Koumori's body length; It is unknown how the hell did he store that thing inside his body, however the earlier mystery was cleared up. No wonder that there isn't any weapons on his clothing, all of it were hidden in his body!

It is not fit to be a human, more appropriately being a monster.

"Hurk!"

Koumori spitted out the tip of the blade, happily brandishes and poses with the sword.

The sword was coated with a slick slime which was made up of saliva and other digestive fluids, yet there is no trace of blood to be seen; So it seems that the Ninja extracted the sword from his digestive system, the body height doesn't matter, so if it is ninja arts, it was not surprising to anyone.

"Don't get too shocked when you listen to this! This is one of Shikizaki Kiki's Completed Deviant Blade --- Zettou [Kanna]!"

The one that is really shocking, it is your body instead.

That is what Shichika thought.

"HAHAHA! I hereby announce what I am known for, I am the ferryman that sends you to the gates of hell. My nickname is [Hades Koumori] (冥土の蝙蝠 Meido no Koumori) , because I am exceptionally generous in serving presents from hell, therefore my brothers gave me this nickname ---"

"Your nickname, why do I not get any feeling of malice from it, more like it is kind of cute.....?"

*Note Japanese translation Meido (Hades) sounds like Maido (Maid).
So what if it is?

The reason will be made known in a few hundred years to come.

"Oi! Kyotouryuu, stop spouting nonsense, upon seeing this sword, shouldn't you be feeling anything? This is one of the legendary world shaking Shikizaki Kiki's swords the woman just spoke of!"

"Oh....." was heard, Shichika observed the globs of fluid that was coated on the sword. Truthfully, compared to the sword, he was more interested in the body capabilities of Koumori.

And the shape of the sword is similar to the one that Togame brandished on the mountain but with a few difference.

Firstly, the sword isn't curved, also not a bent sword, but it is a straight one; the space between the handle and blade is less than a hand grip's length, and the length of the sword itself is about 5 feet, on the body itself there are some pinkish lines, it gives the impression that there are 2 streams of blood.

In short, this is a huge sword.

"....."

"Oi, say something! Why didn't you make any sounds?"

"Nah, I am just thinking that the sword was more normal than I had in mind; According to what you and Togame said, these swords are famous, demonic and can throw the world into chaos, so I thought that it would have taken a weird form. Speaking of which, you made this sword so dirty and sticky, frankly its disgusting; Why didn't you put it in a sword sheath?"

"Its such a long sword, and it is really inconvenient to carry along at the side; Furthermore this sword does not require a sheath."

"No need for a sheath?"

"HAHAHA! Why not test it out now? Tell you a piece of good news, I just got this sword not long ago, so I have not use it to kill yet; Grasping this point, you may be the lucky one to be the first to fall by that blade. HAHAHA! I am that generous!"

"..... That sword is very valuable right? You carry it around like that, eventually will be ambushed; You should find a location to safekeep it."

"Quite the opposite! It is such a treasure, if I didn't carry it around, how can I be at ease? That said, in this world, where else can it be safer than one's own body?"

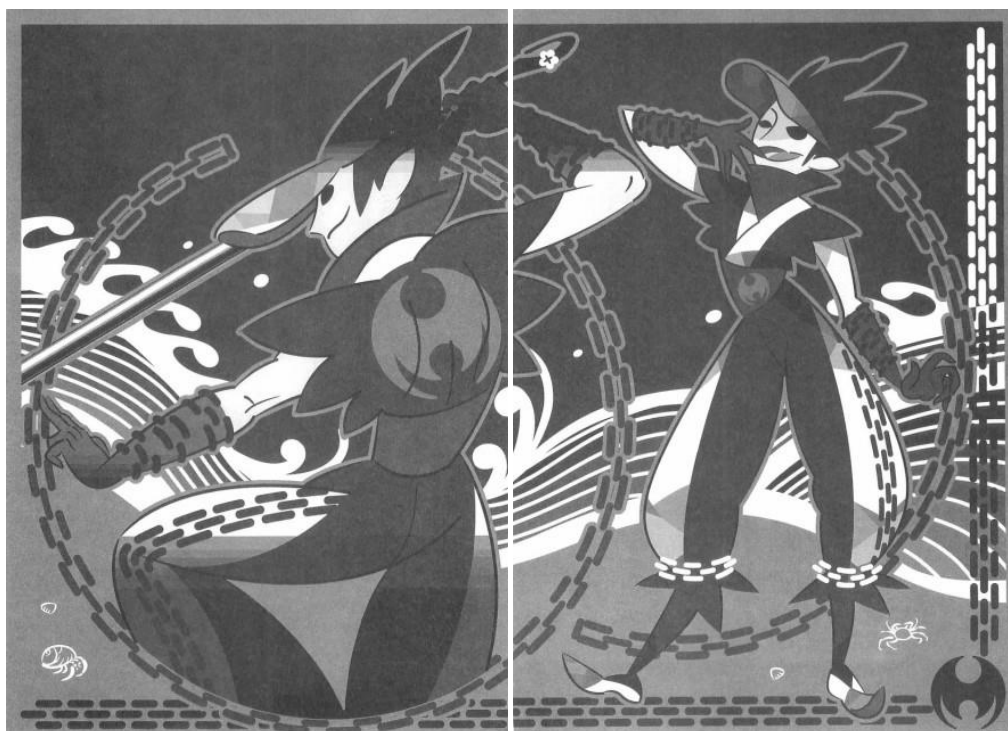
"....."

"In addition this sword had some inexplicable ability --- That woman says that it is poison, but I called it an godly elixir. Just by holding the sword, just felt the need to kill --- !"

The time of talking is over. Koumori jumped without a running start, only observed that he used strength, with his sword overhead and shouting this line:

"Hofuku Zettou! (報復絶刀)"

Although Shichika was not well versed in the ways of human life, he was actually quite skilled in the ways of fighting; The situation in front of his eyes, you can say he lust for it.



It is already been a year since anyone had sparred with him --- No, this is not a sparring exercise, it is Kyotouryuu Head Yasuri Shichika's first battle.

"Huk!"

His both legs are in contact with the ground, and he shifted back, dodged Koumori's first strike; What he stood on is the beach, yet it doesn't really hinder his capabilities. According to Shichika, Fushoujima is like a natural battleground, no matter it is the beach or the mountain, he already experienced all.

The tip of the blade flashed past his eyes. The opponent is using a real blade, and of course ready to kill.

After landing back on the ground, he used the original momentum to move backwards, up till Koumori was three feet away, then he stopped and went into a stance.

He spread his feet wide, his waist was lowered, left foot was forward, the toe was facing front, his right foot was slightly back, the foot was facing towards the right; His right palm was up, his left palm was down, formed a stance, its like forming a wall in front of the opponent.

"Kyotouryuu's First Stance --- [Lily]!"

Faced with his first ever battle, was a little bit laid back, even used the most basic moveset available. There are actually more effective moves in facing that kind of katana and other moves that works better

on that straight sword, however Shichika observed Koumori's that kind of lackluster move, it is classified as not a swords master (Of course, Koumori is a ninja by trade), and he is lazy to further analyze the opponent.

Even when fighting his opponent, his "what a hassle" attitude is still present.

And this proves his cold calmness.

The feeling is quite different from when he first stormed out of the small house in a rage; In that turn of events, Maniwa Koumori executed the killing move that he shouted out, and it is aimed for him --- Of course, it was only limited to that move.

Kyotouryuu First Stance [Lily].

A bare handed martial arts style versus a sword, it does not limit what Kyotouryuu moves are about; If the methods are appropriate, any situations it can handle itself appropriately. The best plan is [Make a Getaway] (The actual moral is: Since the opponent is holding such a heavy and unwieldy blade, the speed naturally will decrease.) , since the best plan is not always could be used, the next best one has to be executed --- [Fight as you go].

The sword's good point, it is the length.

There is no need to breach one's attack zone, they still can attack me --- I can't touch him, yet he can attack me. This is an inevitable matter, since that there is no way to minimize oneself, it could only seem that the range will be larger if it could do that.

In other words, while standing one's ground to attack --- Dodge the katana, wait till the opponent could not stop the momentum, pierce past own's boundary, then launch a counter attack. This method sounds so easy, it is precisely it is easy, that it could work.

However, the move [Lily] actually obstruct that idea.

What can be stomped to death, it is not exactly nimble to use this move. That attack appears to have high attacking power, and it is like challenging the opponent.

"..... huk!"

This move brought Maniwa Koumori's guard up. When he strike, he missed by inches, and both his eyes are fixated on Shichika. Witnessing someone who uses his body as sword and executing this kind of move, naturally will incite the curiosity of the enemies.

It could be that he is a little flippant and arrogant, after all the Maniwa Ninja Corps aren't what it appears to be like it said; But it is at least stronger than most storybook starting characters, whose job is to test out the capabilities of the main character.

"Take this!"

Koumori kicked up the yellow sand around him, creating a smoke screen --- No, it was unlike a smokescreen, this cloud was spread 3 feet around Shichika's line of sight, it is to restrict his eyesight.

Koumori flew out of the sand cloud, along with [Kanna] in front of him.

"Ha! Hofuku Zettou!"

This particular strike has the additional force generated by the whole body weight that Koumori put in.

Using the straight sword to stab is one of the more effective ways to attack --- Even though Koumori isn't a swordsman, he knew of this information.

"Kyotouryuu, [Chrysanthemum] --- "

However, the sword blade did not pierce Shichika's body. Koumori's eyes were occluded by the sand

cloud in front of him, didn't see that Shichika's right hand moving since everything was covered up with the sand, the eyes can't discern any movement. Following that, Shichika's left foot was positioned in front his right foot, firstly dodged the strike by turning his body, so in the end his left side was facing Koumori.

Zettou [Kanna] and Shichika's back were in total contact with each other; Shichika's left arm was on the blade's shaft, while his right arm was near the tip of the blade --- Of course, that is horizontally positioned on the blade.

So, in short what Shichika did, he immobilized [Kanna] entirely.

"Ooh --- Why, why you little!"

No matter how much Koumori pulled and tugged, [Kanna] would not move or budge; All the while he was being laid back and cocky, his face finally showed an emotion of panic. He do not understand what Kyotouryuu is about, and yet he underestimated Shichika; The result is as follows, he was surprised that the unarmed man managed to stop the blade.

Shichika at that time would launch a counterattack --- At least the situation would have deemed it so, even everybody in the position of Koumori would have thought; However, Shichika's expression of shock is more than that of Koumori's.

He oogled at the Maniwa Koumori's [Kanna], at that moment he forgot that he was fighting with someone. The enemy could not move, and he did not move, isn't the battle at a stalemate? Seeing that Shichika was at this situation, Koumori didn't have a choice but to panic.

The two of them simultaneously returned to battle mode. Shichika released the grip from the back, executed a half turn; Sweeping the arm that used to hold the [Kanna] in place, it is similar as using arms as swords', executing a chop towards Koumori which was in his attacking range.

Maniwa Koumori dodged the 'arm sword', Shichika switched to using legs as swords.

The legs grazed past Koumori's neck, and it missed ; It is because Koumori's [Kanna] was long, even if the legs and arms were not bound, it is impossible to counter attack. Other than using short swords to attack, the long swords follow that philosophy; Even if it is the swords that are crafted by the legendary Shikizaki Kiki, it does not break that exception.

Shichika's arms and legs swords are like a unrelenting wind.

"Tch! Get away!"

Koumori yelled in panic, he body sank on the beach, almost fell flat on the ground; He grabbed the sword, and rolled towards the back, putting some distance between him and Shichika --- This kind of evasive maneuver can only be used on the beach. Putting some distance from a guy who uses his body as swords and who is unarmed, it is really a change in luck.

There presented with a prime chance to attack, yet Shichika did not do so.

Koumori hurriedly got on to his feet, yet he did not attack, he placed his sword on his shoulders, Whomever who had learn the way of the sword, will never assume this posture to wield a blade.

He appears a little disturbed.

So when Koumori said that he hasn't used [Kanna] to kill anyone yet, it appears to be true, he didn't even know how to properly use [Kanna].

Wrong impression really begets wrong impressions, it does not form a reason.

Whomever wields Shikizaki Kiki's Deviant Blades will be a natural professional, is there is such perfect thing on this world?

"I would like to thank you, Kyotouryuu. It is a long time since I felt shocked! It is bad luck that I am the first of the leaders. I am quite suspicious on how the swordsman that didn't use swords fight, so you used your limbs as swords You are definitely a genuine [Swordsman], it's surprising indeed!"

"Though I am not as surprising as you."

Shichika stopped attacking, and answered back; However he didn't just let down his guard, he reassumed the [Lily] stance.

"Nor as surprising as that [Kanna]."

"Oh?"

Koumori was interested at Shichika's words.

"The clash just now, what did you discover?"

"Well it is not counted as discover per se That move I did just now was called [Chrysanthemum], it is one of Kyotouryuu's specialty moves; This move isn't used to dodge the opponent's piercing moves nor used to clamp the sword in place, it is to use strength to attack, it uses the arms, the shoulders and the back to break the sword in two."

Shichika illustrated and explained at the same time.

"Yet the sword still remain as straight as ever, didn't my moves hit home?"

"....."

"What's up with that sword? Definitely there is something weird."

Hearing Shichika's enquiry, Koumori brandished the Zettou in front of him, its like he is proudly showing off his toy.

"Of course it should be weird, because it is a Deviant Blade! It is one of the 12 that was perfected, it would be strange if it is not strange. However this information I had gleaned off from that woman, I never would have known about the insanely bizzare swordsmith, with the name Shikizaki Kiki.

Koumori continued:

"This Zettou [Kanna] is built having the toughness as it's main focus. It is commonly said, Japanese swords are hard to break or bend, able to cut through steel like butter; However swords are dispensable, naturally will break or diminish over usage, furthermore it will rust. However this [Kanna] is different, it truly is unbreakable and invincible, forever will cut through steel like butter."

"..... How is this possible?"

Is there such sword in this world?

"A normal designed sword is curved by nature, it is to make it harder for it to break; However this particular article here is a straight sword, no matter how you used it it still would not tarnish. Even if elephants stepped on it, this Japanese sword would not break, it confirmed would have been sold for a substantial amount of money! AHAHAHAH!"

Koumori kept emphasizing his sword's excellence; It could be that he did that unwillingly, having contracted the poison of Shikizaki Kiki's sword.

"Isn't it almost the same as a machine? How was this sword even made?"

"If you asked me, who would I asked? What you don't know, don't ask others! There is saying that goes like 'Don't ask don't tell' right? The woman should know more about it! The last time I checked, although Shikizaki Kiki was a swordsmith, he also dabbled in the occult and alchemy, he could have used some demonic magic or something!"

Maniwa Koumori was not exactly interested when he said it.

He wasn't exactly interested in finding appropriate reasons; just finding the one that made the most sense, this really suits the erratic nature of the ninja.

"Speaking of demonic magic, the move that you used to bring out the sword is definitely one of them. Exactly, if that hard and tough sword do not need a scabbard Aren't you using your own body as a scabbard? Isn't it the same as keeping it in a sheath?"

"Idiot! Keeping this precious sword in a scabbard, doesn't it spoil it's image? Don't be so ridiculous!"

Maniwa Koumori laughed out loud.

"Speaking of which, it proves that Kyotouryuu can't match up with Shikizaki Kiki's swords, its because it's sword breaking technique won't even break this blade."

"Oh....."

"But however when I heard what you said, I am truly shocked. A normal unarmed person that engaged in a combat with a armed person, will instinctively dodge the person's weapons; The more active ones, will try to steal the opponent's weapons to use against them. I never knew that Kyotouryuu aims to break the opponent's weapon instead, it is a different level altogether. What a shame, what a shame, I really wanted to see you do it!"

".....not to worry!"

In reply to Koumori's mocking, Shichika changes his stance.

This move is basically the whole body face the opponent, the pose is almost as similar to the [Lily] stance; Both of his arms were waist high, one front and one back, palms were formed like blades.

"Kyotouyuu Second Stance ---- [Daffodil]!"

"Oh.....? That was the same move that you used just now, how would you want not to make me not to worry? Not to worry to strike you down?"

"I want you not to worry, because I want you to witness the ultimate power of Kyotouryuu's sword breaking move! This time I will definitely break your precious Zettou [Kanna] into two"

"Dumb ass!"

Shichika's cool and valiant speech, was interrupted by a screeching and ear splitting scream. Looking at the direction of where the noise originated, it is Strategian Togame; She was drenched in sweat, and was breathing heavily, her clothes were quite disheveled.

Wearing such a extremely heavy clothing and running, while screaming at the top of her lungs, no wonder she is gasping for breath. And the situation is, she is staring angrily at Shichika --- Not the enemy Koumori, but at Shichika.

"Who... Who says that they want to break the sword? I want to collect them, asshole! If I brought back the sword in 2 pieces, they will make me commit harakiri! Did you really even heard what I said?"

"Ah....."

That's right, come to think of it, can't really break the sword.

Since the aim is to collect up all of Shikizaki Kiki's swords, naturally there shouldn't be doing any deliberate hurt towards the swords.

Koumori made fun of Kyotouryuu, it made Shichika particularly angry; Why was he angry? It is because of his pride, or is it because of the legacy that his father, the previous generation head carries?

Shichika did not know himself.

This question had never come across his mind, and never had he thought it through --- No, he should start examining this topic in detail.

"..... but, I had never agree to your proposition yet!"

"That's not the problem! You don't even know the value of things, a normal person won't even think of breaking Shikizaki precious swords! "

Togame was shouting till her mouth was wide open.

"What she said was correct." Maniwa Koumori agreed. "Like a person like me who understand the worth of things, I wouldn't dream of breaking such precious things."

Hearing that voice which is laced with fake sympathy, Togame still had anger toward's Shichika, but she snapped her mouth shut, trained her eyes at Koumori.

"HAHAHA! Hard to say that we came together on the same boat, we just separated not long ago, just to satisfy your feelings, long time no see! Little Kitty!"

In that time calling a lady a 'Little Kitty', well, it is not that old-fashioned.

"Maniwa --- Koumori---!"

"Hey hey don't bare your teeth and claw! Little kitty. You only just arrived yet threw such a huge tantrum, really have lack of composure. If it is because of the matter that you are betrayed by ninjas, you are sadly mistaken! Ninjas originally are capable of betraying, being despicable and lowly are our trademark."

Having said that, he changed his point again:

"No, how could you not be angry? You should throw a huge tantrum. If you are not angry, that would be strange, it would defy logic!"

"What did you say? ---"

"Huh --- Forget it. Since you picked such an opportune time to appear, hold the thought, we shall discuss these matters later on, Strategian --- wait until I settle this Kyotouryuu kid, then we can slowly talk."

Having said that, Koumori shifted his eyes from Togame to Shichika. Togame backed away, and Shichika returned to the [Daffodil] stance.

"The fight between us men, let an outsider to start. Oi, Kyotouryuu, help to say some words too!"

"..... Togame, to accept or not to accept your request is another thing altogether, for now I will help you obtain [Kanna], you just retreat to the side and observe. You wanted to see how Kyotouryuu works right? Now I shall show you the true might!"

Shichika said.

He did not agree to what Koumori is suggesting, and don't really understand what fight between men means, he was just interested in the reputedly unbreakable sword which can beat his [Chrysanthemum]--- Zettou [Kanna], in turn quite interested in the Deviant Blades that was forged by Shikizaki Kiki.

"However you really really must not break the sword ---"

"Ok, ok, I won't break it. Any other request please say it all, I will entertain it all!"

"Then, then --- there is one."

Togame answered back after giving it a little bit of thought.

"Try to use a little more flashy moves."

".....more flashy?"

"The process of obtaining the final 12 blades, I have to write up a detail process on how we obtain it, so sorry for troubling you to do some really exciting moves that catch the reader's attention."

"....."

"Let me say it again, don't ever damage the sword --- If it ever happens, the story will end at chapter one."

"Chapter one....? Don't tell me you are going to write a series?"

"Planning to do in the future. It could be popular."

"It won't sell!"

Shichika sniggered, effectively ending the conversation; He was lazy to think that much.

"Then I shall show you my unique finishing move. Sorry for the long wait, Koumori... O!"

When Shichika and Togame were talking and bantering away, Koumori had already inserted half of the Zettou into his gullet.

"AH!"

"AH!"

By the time they realized that, it is already too late; Koumori kept the sword back into his body without a thought. The imagery of him reaching into his throat to extract out the sword is already bizarre enough, the swallowing process is the one that made them speechless. No matter how you calculate it does not seems to add up, unless Maniwa Koumori's gullet extends all the way to his toes, with his stature, how would he have kept that katana?

"Gurgle... Ah ya, I am sorry to make you wait! Let us continue to fight! Kyotouryuu."

"What fight..... Why do you keep the sword? How do we fight like this? Are you worried that when I am serious, will break your precious sword?"

"I am not worried, since you are showing your second move again. However I forgot to mention, I am not a swordsman, my ability could not match up to this sword; If I lost to you for that reason, me as a ninja would be pissed off!"

Having said that, Koumori laughed to himself.

"Kyotouryuu's fist and feet power are extraordinary I must admit, but when I use the ninpo, you would be no match for me. Your battlefield experience are a far cry's from mine."

".....perhaps!"

This point Shichika could not admit, luckily this is one of his more common sayings.

"You -- you bastard!"

The one that screamed is Togame, the howl was louder ever than before.

"How dare you coat Shikizaki Kiki's Deviant Blade with your filthy saliva! Spit it out! Spit it out right now ---"

"Spit it out? Hmph! This kitty is really impatient, and you are such an aristocrat lady, don't keep yelling like that! Ok, ok, I will spit it out for you ok?"

Koumori said it in a laid back manner, he arched back his back, took a giant breath, his chest, his waist and his whole upper body was inflated like a balloon.

This imagery can only be explained like above, therefore Shichika and Togame attention was fully on this phenomenon, and their reaction was in the end slow.

"Ha!"

Maniwa Koumori didn't spit out the Zettou, he spat out the air that he was storing up just now.

No, its not; He didn't spit out Zettou [Kanna], nor did he spit out the air; A huge amount of shurikens flew out from his mouth, it is the same as the ones that destroyed the wall of the small house ---

A shuriken barrage!

This particular ninja not only can he store the shurikens in his body, he can also use his body's ability to attack, and also store a huge amount of shurikens.

It is truly baffling in comparison to Kyotouryuu and the Deviant Blades.

"Uh oh!"

This and the dust cloud were quite different, can't use the arms to sweep it away, and this movement is already quite risky; The proximity is closer to the person than it looks, if came in contact, not only that there were holes in the body, even the bones will not be left!

However, Shichika did not dodge; Since he knew in his heart that he could not able to avoid and hide in time.

It was lucky for Shichika to be in the [Daffodil] stance when he encountered the enemy, if he was in the [Lily] stance, it would be effortless for him to go to heaven. So he used his limbs as a shield, effectively reduce the amount of surface area that the shurikens will hit; Although it is inevitable that the arms and legs would get hit, he avoided danger at least!

The wind was like a gale, and the wind swept past Shichika's surrounding, trying to blow away his thin stature, however he endured it. He endured --- his arms and legs experienced a flash of pain, but he did not budge in the billowing wind.

"Ow ow ow... ouch!"

So it is, he could not take it anymore and cried out.

Upon scrutiny, his arms had 4 shurikens imbedded, and his legs had 2. It is the easy to pull out that kind of range, since he tensed up his muscles, the shurikens weren't imbedded that deep. The opponent threw out (spat out) shurikens were not very little, yet he suffered such minor injuries, it is really unlucky of the lucky; No, it is not the matter of luck, it is the result of the long trainings that Shichika did.

"Ouch, I thought my limbs would have been grind into dust..... Ah"

Shichika thought that it wasn't the time to think about the pain in his limbs, hurriedly lifted up his head --- This point will definitely point out that his battlefield experience were meager; In this clash, it shows that this really was his first time and displays a lot of carelessness in that matter.

That is precisely so ---

".....oh?"

When he lifted up his head, there was no one to be found.

There is no trace of either Maniwa Koumori and Togame.

"Where did they go?"

<Katanagatari Chapter 2: Maniwa Ninja Corps : End>

Chapter 3: Strategian (上)



If you want to go by the book, like the position and the status regarding a strategian : The Owari Shogunate and the military is being set up simultaneously -- and the white hair lady Togame introduced herself as the Strategian of the army general director in support of critical tasks, this matter we would talk about it in a later time. One of the reasons is that it is unable to be explained and mentioned, and the other reason is --- It is hoped that she would maintain secrecy and mysterious manner. However, to question the nature of Togame --- Togame is not really loyal to the Shogunate.

Her purpose of collecting Shikizaki Kiki's swords, therefore landing on Fushoujima, it is not for the Shogunate.

Strategian Togame is not like the ninja that works for money, nor like the swordsmen that work for honor, yet she was the most not loyal to the Shogunate.

Then why on earth did she come here for?

The real reason to this conspiracy, is one of the plot lines of this story.

~~~~~

Failure.

Togame silently thought to herself.

To what aspect of failure she meant, she herself did not know; It fails because she came to the inhabited island, or it fails because she decided to rely on Kyotouryuu's head. Why did she want to rely on Kyotouryuu?

Kyotouryuu 7th Generation Head, Yasuri Shichika.

From the previous conversations, Togame already guessed that Shichika's mental faculties are not too bright, yet she didn't expect him to be stupid like that, he wholly put his trust in his skills, yet he forgot the founder completely, it is really despairing. Even though Shichika is that laid back, could he evade the

shuriken barrage that Maniwa Koumori shot out? He sadly has no choice. Therefore, Shichika had allowed Maniwa Koumori steal Togame away from under his nose, well it is not actually too much for him; Much less Togame or the founder of his style, this battle was like a first test for him --- Kyotouryuu is it's own unique sword style, however in the teachings there are no directives on how to pursue enemies who were fleeing.

The reason is as follows.

The opponent is a ninja, and their trademark is them being despicable and lowly.

Maniwa Koumori said that he wanted to use ninpou, but he did as what he said.

After he released the shuriken barrage, Koumori flew across the beach, in one stride he reached Togame's side; That time Togame and Shichika was in awe by the freakshow, was stunned, couldn't dodge in time ---

No, at that time Togame was calm and collected, she who is without any knowledge and experience in fighting skills couldn't hide or defend herself from one of the 12 leaders of the Maniwa Ninja Corps Maniwa Koumori; That is because she is a strategist who does not use a blade.

"That was close, that was close. That brat is really something, he really has a simple minded attitude, in a flash decided on a method to counter a barrage of shurikens. If it was someone else, they would have turned tail and run. HAHAHA, However, since it is you that is scouring out for someone to help you, naturally he would have some ability! Little Kitty."

Maniwa Koumori sniggered to Togame who was tied up by twine rope to the tree. Of course, the rope was taken from within Koumori's body, coated with the sticky bodily fluids.

Koumori hauled Togame while he fled through the forest, he ran pretty much in every direction, zig-zagged along the way --- Of course, he and Togame are different, to prevent himself from leaving any footprints, he spent most of his time zipping through the forest canopy --- When he felt that he went in deep enough, he then searched for a suitable place to rest. When Koumori goes about his actions, Togame had no strength to resist him; Firstly, he bound her hands to the back of her body and then he continued to tie her to an enormous tree.

"Well, that kid is little bit naive! He only knows how to fight, but he hasn't been to any battles yet. Well he grew up in this barren shithole island, so I think the situation is a little understandable."

"Hmph..... Coward!"

Togame scolded.

Since she is bound from head to toe, she could only move her mouth.

"You don't dare challenge Kyotouryuu head on?"

"Oi oi oi, what nonsense are you spouting? I am not a swordsman nor a martial artist, it wouldn't be a fair fight. If I did, I will be shamed, and my comrades won't even look up to me. Facing a skilled warrior, using brute strength would be dumb, while using intellect would be wise, right? Strategian-san."

"Don't you ever put me in the same level as you!"

Togame gritted her teeth and seethed out:

"All you do is to come out with methods to bully people, while I as a strategist use methods for weak to fight the stronger opponents by whittling away their morale and spirit!"

"Oh my god that is so righteous! However, Strategian-san, with regards to all of your unrighteous deeds, I knew all and every single one of them!"

"Ah.....?"

"Ha! That is because I am a ninja, not a swordsman, don't put me together in the same boat with Sabi

Hakuhei."

Koumori started to laugh, that blood red mouth of his is ever wider than before.

"That's right, the conversation that you held with the Kyotouryuu Boy, I was overheard everything clearly at one side. I am a ninja, quite righteous of course, right? I never knew after me would be that Sabi Hakuhei --- Oh yeah, without that dude, how would he stand up against Maniwa Ninja Corps? Well even he had betrayed you, you are really an unlucky lady indeed!"

"So you heard it all..... well I am not that surprised."

"Little Kitty, don't be such a sour puss! I am not even peeping over you committing adulterous acts. Speaking of which, you should be a little more careful. Your mental faculties aren't bad at all, just that it is quite unguarded."

"....."

Togame was at a loss of words to how to answer back.

She knew of his capability, yet she didn't expect him to impersonate the ferryman. Other than the shuriken barrage that she didn't know, Maniwa Koumori's modus operandi, she was clearly well versed in it.

"Oh, if you never knew that there was someone else listening, would you say such mushy things? [I have you fall for me]? Gyahaha, that was surprising and really wild! Why didn't you ever say such things to me?"

".....if I had said it. Would you have not betray me? Stop spouting nonsense, are you going to take me as a hostage?"

"Hostage? Now thats not a bad idea."

Koumori pretended to scratch his chin.

"However you and that Kyotouryuu boy just met each other, not much of a use, I presume. Well if switched to the other missus, now that would be an effective one, worth it to be a hostage."

Maniwa Koumori was a little too gleeful.

Togame silently thought that the missus he meant was referring to Nanami. Since he was eavesdropping at the side, of course he would know the existence of Nanami.

"However it would be best to forget it, that missus could be a little dangerous herself. Originally I intend to use my own specialty skill the shuriken barrage, in one fell swoop get rid of the bother you and Kyotouryuu represents, never knew that I was thwarted by that missus."

"....."

Togame recalled to the point of time in the small house who had any reaction to the release of the shuriken barrage, it was Nanami. She moved when the shuriken barrage was launched, before even the shuriken blasted through the wall, she already pushed Shichika and Togame's shoulders.

Yasuri Nanami, no doubt that she is one of Kyotouryuu.

"Anyways there is nowhere to flee in this desolate island, wait till I settle you and Kyotouryuu, then I will deal with that missus!"

".....if you want to kill me or cut me, hurry up and do it already!"

"Don't act so dignified, little Kitty. You may have said it like that, but in reality you are plotting how to outsmart me right? What's inside of you, is even more vile than me!"



Koumori plastered his face against Togame's face, its close enough to feel the breath on her face.

"Relax, I had a lot of things that I am going to enquire you about, I won't kill you, the previous shuriken barrage is also aimed solely on the Kyotouryuu Boy, I never intended to take your life; Saying to settle both of you at the same time, it was a joke. Of course, there is a intent for me to inflict serious injury, HAHAAH!"

"If you would attack with that calculation in mind, I would suggest you know a little bit about moderation. Not withstanding Kyotouryuu, if I were nicked even a little I would die. You don't know how fragile I am."

"What good would it do to tell me this? In my plan, I was hoping that Kyotouryuu Boy would at least be your shield..... Anyways what I came here for, naturally it is about Shikizaki Kiki's blades --- Shikizaki Kiki's Perfect Deviant Blades, other than the Zettou [Kanna] that I held, where are the rest of the 11 at? Who are the sword owners? How do they look like?"

"....."

"You said that you found 6 of the swords' location, however don't tell me that you have no idea about the remaining 6? Since Kyuu Shogun in his time already found out where all the 12 sword went, and since you had connections with the army, shouldn't you at least have a teeniest bit of information about their whereabouts?"

"Although, I also dirtied my hands a little and did research --- For example the sword Sabi Hakuhei obtained and promptly vanished Hakutou [Hari] ; It was aptly named, the sword was like it's name, it was thin as a needle, if viewed horizontally, you really can't see it at all, only highly skilled warriors can use it. [Kanna] has it's toughness as it's focus, while [Hari] has its lightness as it's focus. However the sword is extremely fragile, so only the most skilled out of the skilled are able to use it. HAHAAH! I understand why you ordered Sabi Hakuhei to obtain this sword; It is because the only one who can properly wield this sword, it's only Sabi Hakuhei."

"....."

"As for the sword that has sheer numbers as it's focus, what's it's name again, Sentou [Tsurugi], is it? A strange sword that consist of 1000 swords ..... This information I was unable to find out, if I had obtained the information out of you, it would be excellent; That is why I followed you to this island. However what you said to the Kyotouryuu Boy, isn't as much as what you had told me!"

"....."

"Are you that bored so not to make any sounds? TCH!"

Koumori spat unhappily, stepped away from Togame.

" --- I sincerely ask you something, do you want to betray the Shogunate, work with me? I will give you a share, I wouldn't take all for myself."

"I refuse."

Togame replied immediately:

"I don't trust people who worked for money."

"Are you still mad at that betrayal? Didn't I just say? Trusting a ninja is a problem in itself. Of course, you should be angry ---"

"You kept repeating this words, what are you trying to ---"

"Forget it."

Koumori abruptly cut the conversation.

"Truthfully, the 12 leader of Maniwa Ninja Corps are competing with each other, trying to see who can get the most blades; We will get a share from selling the swords, but if the more swords you get, the larger

the share you would attain. So at this point I was the only one who made the first cut.... The others naturally won't let down their guard, especially that Kawauso (川瀬) around, so basically --- If you work with me, it would be efficient!"

"Sadly to say it has been a lost cause!"

"You should say it was a total gain instead, because later on I could take my time to interrogate you..... Is your face turning green in fright? HAHAHA! There is a saying: " With regards to interrogation, the ninjas are the most cruel." --- This saying is a little too exaggerated, truthfully we are not that brutal."

"Hmph....."

"Relax! I won't start my interrogation yet, because lucky for you I don't have my equipment around. After the second shuriken barrage, other than [Kanna] it depleted my whole arsenal of weapons; That move I shouldn't use it twice. So I decided when I get back to the mainland, I would be happy to do what I want with your body! But beforehand, I will clean up that Kyotouryuu brat."

Kyotouryuu 7th Generation Head --- Yasuri Shichika.

"This competition to collect the swords is only big enough for my Maniwa Ninja brothers, we would find another way to eliminate Sabi Hakuhei..... HAHAHA! I don't wish that when I interrogate you, will suddenly got stabbed by some arm sword."

".....So that what it is, why then you did not finish the fight? I didn't expect you to stoop that low to that despicable level."

"Didn't I just say? Fighting the enemy with brute strength is a stupid thing to do, now the times has changed, now there are no one who would use swords to fight against each other! Well it is ironic that I am a Ninja that doesn't use swords while Kyotouryuu don't use blades either, isn't it? So I decided to be more tricky --- only that I use dirty tricks to win! That joke, do you understand? Since I am talking to a strategist, maybe I am just preaching what you already know --- To survive, one must not challenge someone who is more powerful than yourself; So even if I made a miscalculation, I won't fight with someone even with at least half the strength of what I had. When I heard about your ridiculous words, I rather not say that it is preaching what you already know, rather talking to a rock?"

"This is called a ramblings of a madman. I won't fight with some one not near my level."

"Really? It seems that our viewpoint does not match at all."

"You think that Shichika isn't someone normal at all?"

All of the Maniwa Ninja Corps Leaders, how could they allow to indict such an inexperienced member into their ranks?

"Regards to fighting him head on, it would be hard to cope; Even if I am a swordsman, I couldn't say I would win, However I am a ninja, I have more tricks up my sleeve."

"So by taking people as hostage, you don't think that the opponent won't go into the forest to find the one that kidnapper, you even dare to say such a thing?"

"No no no, didn't I just say? You are no use as a hostage. That said, to that Kyotouryuu brat, the mountain is like his house, it is totally part of his turf, any plans to fight would be not effective at all; If I would strike now, I would lose. And if Kyotouryuu found us now, it would be like two birds with one stone, I would not have even a stage to perform on."

"Two birds with one stone?"

Is that even possible?

Togame has no worth by being a hostage, and it is very dubious of her being so; And how that stupid man move after that, Togame won't even know.

Smart people won't understand how stupid people think.

Then again ---

It could be that Kyotouryuu..... is going on a rampage killing everything it comes in contact with.....!

"So I won't do a sneak attack, instead I go and face him head on."

"....."

"You don't believe, right? However you should be clear about my ability."

One of the twelve leaders of Maniwa Ninja Corps, Maniwa Koumori.

His ninjustu is not having large amounts, exceedingly long or the likes of weapons and various stuff being shoved inside his body.

This paltry tricks are just the tip of the iceberg of what his ninjutsu can do. Just now Maniwa Koumori mentioned one of his comrade, One of the 12 leaders of Maniwa Ninja Corps, Maniwa Kauso (真庭 川 瀬) and his supposedly useful skills, however Togame acknowledged that Maniwa Koumori's skills are more useful, therefore she looked to the Maniwa Ninja Corps.

Only crackling sounds are heard, and Maniwa Koumori's limbs changed shape.

Both of his hands tugged on his face as if it was clay, not only his cheeks, but his whole head was being remolded ----

"Oh..... Done! How was it? Does it look alike?"

Not even in 10 counts, his head has been reconstructed to be alike Togame, its almost like they swapped heads.

To him this is extremely easy to do.

Not only the facial structure or the cheeks, even the hair length is identical, the color of the hair is the same snowy white; So it is basically the entire package, he imitated one by one.

"Ngh....!"

Togame already knew he could do that, yet every time she saw it it was quite disturbing. And there exist a ninja who could change his appearance on a whim, even the skin color was changed!

Therefore Maniwa Koumori was the supposedly trustworthy ferryman that Togame specially picked out --- Therefore, when Nanami mentioned the matter about the ferryman, she immediately knew that the one who damaged the small is Maniwa Koumori.

It was really in vain that she was overly careful in doing her stuff, specially made sure that she wasn't follow by him; Yet she never would have dream that, he would came to the island with her together.

Of course, the real ferryman isn't in the realm of the living anymore.

"This is Ninpou: Kotsuniku Zaiku (忍法:骨肉雕塑) --- HAHAHA! Right, the body I have to touch up a little too. HAHAHA! Your body stature is not bad!"

There is a wrenching sound, and Maniwa Koumori's male buff body was transformed into a slender and gentle woman's body. That's right, with Maniwa Koumori's Ninjustu, no matter how big or small, male or female, his body can accommodate to these parameters.

To describe this as a ninja, it was really old fashioned. But Maniwa Koumori is really a [Mountain who had ever changing faces] --- No one knows whether he is originally a male or female, young or old, and his original appearance, it is hard to say whether he craft it out to suit his liking. Couldn't say that he had already forgotten how he originally looked like.

Flexible ninja, Maniwa Koumori.

With the amount of shurikens and the sword that was stuffed into his body and it does not even restrict any blood flow, and it really boost his shocking factor of his flexibility.

The flexibility that he had and within him the incomparable toughness that [Kanna] encompasses, it was like a true antonym, yet it exist with each other.

It's because Togame assigned Maniwa Koumori to obtain [Kanna], and likewise for [Hari] which was entrusted to Sabi Hakuhei.

After twisting and molding the fingers, Maniwa Koumori totally transformed into Togame; Well this time he spent more than 10 counts doing this, it is really a short period of time. Even it is a short period of time, watching him transform into the image of Togame, it sure leaves an unpleasant taste in the mouth.

"Huge success!"

Even the voice is identical to Togame's.

Koumori's laughed maniacally using Togame's voice:

"Don't you think that I sound like you? One's own voice and hearing the other people's voice, it is different; So this is how you sound like in his ears. Hearing how you sound like in another perspective, is it quite weird and disgusting?"

This is not a mimicry, the gleeful emotions aren't that simple to replicate. Koumori's changed voiced, so that means, he even changed his voice box and the rest of his body structure to match one with Togame's.

Therefore, there are not much difference in his voice and Togame's.

Togame felt repulsed, but it is not because she heard her voice from another perspective.

She didn't even think that her internal organs are even being replicated in their entirety.

"To mimic to that degree .... are you trying to get Shichika to let down his guard?"

"Ah, that's right. Well whether this trick is despicable or not, you don't have the right to judge! That is because to obtain [Kanna], it is almost the same to this method."

"....."

That's right.

That time Togame had used the shapeshifter's ability to achieve the result.

"No ---- no matter where or what situation, you have no right to criticize me."

Koumori said ominously, and yet plunged his hand into his mouth again. Togame was heavily against that he did that with her image, and since she was tied to a tree, she had no means to stop it. It could be that Koumori knew that Togame was easily provoked, therefore did it in full view in front of her.

After a while, he pulled out his arm which carries a small bag of sorts, Togame immediately could tell that the bag contains clothing. Oh yeah! When that guy impersonated the ferryman, he didn't wear that gaudy ninja uniform.

"Even if I impersonated you perfectly, wearing these clothes, I would immediately get unmasked. Tearing off your clothes to wear is not such a bad idea, it's such a pity that I wasn't capable of that; So as to cover more options, I prepared an identical set of clothing.

Koumori had put the clothes in the bag, it is to prevent it from getting went from all the saliva; And for the ferryman's disguise he also kept with it, putting the whole bundle into his body. Could it be that his body is a four dimensional storage system? This is really ridiculous, even coming to the conclusion that his body is extremely flexible is baffling; That of course, a ninjutsu is an art that is not explainable by normal means

---

"HAHAHA! When you write that report, make sure to mention that this clothing I specially prepared it, just to avoid the higher ups to let their lewd thoughts go out of control --- Speaking of which, what you will be writing that time won't be a report, but a will instead!"

".....having such a crazy and interesting ninja to appear on scene, it would be quite hard to pen down."

"Ha! Hear ye hear ye. Tch, why do you have to wear such expensive clothes? I kept bargaining and bargaining away, and I don't even know whether I could get a reimbursement for this, and also get me to package it up myself to boot, my heart aches whenever I thought of it. However comparing this to the worth of Shikizaki Kiki's blades, this spending isn't much, its just the like a drop of water in the sea."

"Other than for profit.... Don't you even feel a bit perverted?"

"I didn't felt that way. How many times do I have to say? Now the times has changed! Utilize unconventional methods, and the others would think that you had brains to go with your head. How else would you maintain your status as a strategist then?"

Koumori speedily took off his ninja attire, changed into the glamorous clothes that was in the package, he uses his arms to tie the sash around his waist in the most bone wrenching and unnatural way; He changed so quickly as if it took 3 easy steps, wore the snow shoes that he also specially prepared, and finally packed his ninja attire into the bag, and swallowed it whole.

"And then, tear this skirt at this side.... Ok! Now that is identical. HAHAHA! If I impersonated you and went back to Owari Castle, it should be interesting right? Just go there and make a din, then it will turn you into a traitor, at that point I don't think you would have a choice, just lend me your strength!"

"Bastard..... You cannot maintain your appearance that long, if you would be discovered in an inopportune moment, you farce would be exposed....."

"Don't you treat it as real! I am just joking, why so serious? If this ninjutsu can replicate whatever content your brain stores it would be perfect, it would seems that I did not hone it enough.... Oh? Yes, where was the toy that you carry on your waist? Didn't you originally carry around some generic looking sword? After the sword was confiscated, you just left it in the house?"

".....Ngh."

That's right.

Togame was not well versed in handling swords, and when she chased that 2 guys, she didn't had the habit to bring her sword along with her; And even if she wanted to, Nanami won't give it back to her easily. And she had zero ability in using a sword.

"Then I have no choice then, I have to use [Kanna] to eliminate him. Using this body alone, it is impossible to achieve a victory ..... The shuriken supply is also depleted."

"You think you can win against him?"

"Of course I can win. Since the opponent and you knew my fighting capability very well, victory is uncertain; However that Kyotouryuu brat only know that I can pull swords out of my mouth, well seeing that he was quite disinterested in other stuff, he won't know about the identity stealing stuff. Hm, living on this island, I am not surprised he would turn out this way."

"Didn't you say that you want to face him head on?"

"I said I would face him head on, but I didn't say how to face him head on. If I could impersonate that missus, it would be more effective, it's a pity I didn't get a look at her appearance. If I knew earlier I would have not just eavesdrop, but I should peep. Oh yeah, how was the missus? Is she still at the small house?"

"....."

Of course.

She need not look at the fight, and she let her brother had his way; If you want to see Kyotouryuu's ability, then you may do as you please --- Nanami said that that time.

Nanami apparently put her trust wholly on Shichika; However, when Togame thought about the situation she is in now, she felt that Nanami's trust was put in a wrong place. That said, she did not divulge Nanami's whereabouts to Koumori.

Togame didn't say a word, nor answered back.

Koumori also expected that she won't answer, and said:

"Forget it, it is not important. Even if she ran away it won't be hard to track her down. So sorry, you would have to wait here."

"Wooo --- Wait, wait up!"

Maniwa Ninja Corps and Sabi Hakuhei both betrayed her, and the whole of Kyotouryuu bloodline is about to be slaughtered, Togame really was desperate now, she didn't have another plan to collect up the swords.

No matter if it ends in failure, for now Togame could only rely on Kyotouryuu; She already ran out of strategies.

She would try it again and again!

"What's wrong?"

Maniwa Koumori gazed at Togame's face, squinted his eyes and said:

"Even if I kill or didn't kill, I believe that brat won't help you. [I have you fall for me?] Such moving words! Why didn't you tell it to me the first time? I would reply you: [In this world,there would be none that would fall for you!]"

"....."

"I originally worked for money, and if I knew you were that kind of woman from the start, I would never would have worked with you. Just now the invitation to work with me again, it was so I could betray you again."

Koumori repeated what he had just said:

"In this world, there would be none that would fall for you!"

Maniwa Koumori's entire life is nothing to speak of.

He --- after he mastered that ability that he bragged so much about, it's a wonder whether he could be portrayed as a [He], people are apprehensive of that fact; Well for convenience sake, we just called it a [He] --- He was born of a Maniwa ninja descent, yet he walked the path of the ninjas and learnt from the ninja of ninjas.

He is of no status, because no one noticed his value; But when the time comes, he became one of the leaders, and it seems until now.

As he belonged to the Maniwa Ninja Corps who had no specific ties to the country, Koumori's existence is not widely known, and especially regarding the ninja conduct. Maniwa Ninja Corps does not engage in conflict, it does not mean that they are peaceful; It is because all of them are extremely skilled, it doesn't change if they bound the hands or feet. Koumori amongst the 12 leaders of the Maniwa Ninja Corps, he is already one of the more trustworthy guy, the notion of the whole village abandoning isn't he who instigated it; However the one who brought about the circumstances, it is undoubtedly him.

Shikizaki Kiki's 12 Perfect Deviant Blades.

This is Maniwa Ninja Corps' last assignment, if they obtained them, there would not be any need for them to live under secrecy, no need to hide; Therefore, they could at least see the light of day.

But the troublesome thing is where to find the locations of the wielders of the Deviant Blades, and the ability and the capability of the swords, and the ones that are even capable of wielding these blades aren't a lot. In this country other than the Nagasaki Region there aren't any leads or clues, it seems like the blades have to go overseas to find their proper owners. Well, might as well there is an invisible barrier, since other countries had no presence in this country ever --- and had never had any contact.

"..... so the more critical task is to ---"

Koumori spoke to himself in Strategian Togame's voice:

"Lets take out that Kyotouyruu brat."

To prevent Togame which was currently tied to the tree to call out for help, lest the Kyotouryuu brat or his sister come over, Maniwa Koumori took out a piece of cloth and gagged her mouth ( Where the cloth came from, it is obvious and no need for further explanation), after that he then resumed in carrying out his task at hand.

Koumori had already sow the seeds of discord.

After Koumori carried Togame in to the mountain forest, to prevent Shichika from following, he ran in differing directions, even backtracked to a weird point; Furthermore he also left a few footprints --- Of course, they are fake --- it is to misled Shichika.

As the island was familiar to Shichika like his back of his hand, that is precisely his weak point; One who had been tricked before, naturally won't fall for this primitive trick.

Eventually he will, as this came with age.

Unsurprisingly, Yasuri Shichika fell for this trick, and arrived at the destination that Koumori wanted him to go --- And it was the spring where Shichika drew the water from earlier on. Incidentally, Koumori did not know about that. What he needed was a wide open space, and since the Yasuri household had been using this place to draw water for 20 years, naturally the place would be a little more wider and spacious.

That time Shichika was totally clueless on how the tracks would vanish midway, and he scratch his head using his hand, and Koumori observed his every single move he made.

He envy his body, but of course not the head, his arms and legs are of desirable quality; The shurikens that were embedded into his limbs were already been pulled out, it also stopped bleeding. It was so breathtaking, and his heart races when he saw the body.

This is really of a one and only choice.

Koumori used his ability in his Maniwa Village daily, therefore he can achieve this kind of standard; While Shichika practises his Martial arts everyday, and it was similar to him; Koumori originally intend to impersonate Shichika after killing him then head to the small house to kill Nanami, therefore he was scanning Shichika thoroughly; However Shichika's body was too perfect, and it made Koumori forget his primary goal, made him mesmerized instead.

Maniwa Koumori can impersonate anyone, however there are limits to the ability, those who didn't exist in the world --- for example those with extremely disproportionate limbs, extremely strong giants --- he could not impersonate. This point it was similar to mimicry, easy to mimic but hard to replicate; So in this situation, Ninpou: Kotsuniku Zaiku is not a mimic skill, but a total transformation skill.

As because that is precisely what happened, Koumori found that Shichika's body to be extremely appealing.

His that kind of reaction, really could make Shichika embarrassed.

Nay, if it was argued using the [The body and ability is worth quite a lot of money] standpoint, it is not quite counted as a bad act.

Such a pity.

It could be just said that Shichika's luck is down the drain.

Kyotouryuu is a swordsman who doesn't use swords to fight, and Shichika's first battle isn't with a swordsman, but a ninja; And this particular ninja wields a Shikizaki Blade, and it is the [Toughness] as it's focus, Zettou [Kanna] ---

Met with a sword that he could not put a scratch on, yet break it, he really met his match.

Nay, to say about luck, when Togame first laid her eyes on him, his luck already ran out; As if it is so, how then could he take the blade away from the Maniwa Ninja Corps?

However, seeing that situation, Koumori's attention turned back to Shichika's.

Why not add him to their ranks?

Using his leader's status, to bring him into New Maniwa Village ---

Not possible. If it was other circumstances, there would have this opportunity; And this is the final task the Maniwa Ninja Corps would embark on, and the competition between the 12 leaders were started by Koumori, finding out the locations of the remaining Shikizaki Kiki's blades. When he get back to the mainland he would interrogate Togame, he should be able to get the remaining locations; Therefore, he could not dwell on this further.

Shichika's luck is really really poor, it is really pitiful.

Well to have landed up in this situation, Koumori also had a part in it.

"Strange ---"

Shichika was pacing around the spring, restlessly mumbling to himself:

"--- what the heck is going on? Where did they ran off to?"

"....."

Even though Shichika was looking out in all directions, Koumori was calm, therefore he was unlikely to be noticed. Koumori thought to himself: That brat was definitely strange. Koumori didn't know that Togame had that kind of charisma that attracted people, therefore she had to rely on strategies instead; While she landed up with a guy who was really clueless, would he had fallen for her bait? It is another huge gamble. No one would have ever guessed, he easily took the bait.

Shichika used the word [They] to refer to both Togame and Koumori, seeing that he just chased Koumori after he fled, he just followed his primal instincts. That kind of simple minded reasoning, Koumori infers that Togame was kind of useless as a hostage, and it is the right judgement; It is because Togame was not worth anything to him, how could she ever be a hostage? If Koumori bet on her being a hostage, Koumori would lose it all, and the result would not be the same.

Therefore this time he must kill him, so as to not to lose anything at all.

Koumori checked the Zettou [Kanna] in his body; [Kanna]'s orientation is like this, the blade facing to the top while the grip was at the bottom. The plan is this, he goes close to the unsuspecting Shichika, took a deep breath, then spit out Zettou [Kanna]. And if he did it and not reveal his identity, it would be a mystery.

Therefore, Koumori decided to go up close to the body and do the job.

This time it is not a shuriken barrage, more like this would be a sword barrage, precisely having a knife blade to stab.



He could not obviously take a giant breath, it is because the appearance will be different from that of a normal human being; he just need to take a breath to expel out [Kanna], and need it to pierce through the heart, it wouldn't be that hard. Using Shikizaki Kiki's swords for this purpose would be extremely weird, however since [Kanna] is the only one left, he could not even use the ultimate skill.

"..... alright, time to get a move on."

Koumori had already somewhat get how Shichika looked like, the plan of killing off Nanami is already been certain. Shichika already found out that he lost the trail, no matter how he scratch his head there wouldn't be any meaning to it; If he left the area, he would lost the chance to attack --- no matter if it is the shuriken barrage or the sword barrage, the target won't ever find their mark.

Togame popping up from the treetops would be quite strange indeed, therefore Koumori climbed down from the tree, silently landing on the ground.

Then, he just stepped into the spring area.

Since it has come down to this, there must not be any suspicious nature.

How would Togame call the Kyotouryuu Brat?

Yasuri? Shichika my dear?

Nay, when she was talking to Koumori she didn't use any honorifics or additional terms to refer to Shichika, therefore when talking to the actual person it would be so.

The time for words is over, now for the great reveal.

Koumori pretended that he just escaped from captivity barely with his life intact, and sprinted towards Shichika, then embraced him without saying a word --- Koumori knew that Togame would undoubtedly do that --- and then kill.

"--- Shichika!"

"--- ah?"

~~~~~

Hearing Maniwa Koumori using Togame's voice to call him, Yasuri Shichika turned around.

Yasuri Shichika behaved exactly like Maniwa Koumori predicted, well it is because the opponent fled that is why he gave chase. He didn't know that the footprints were deliberately left by Koumori, and was misled to the spring side area.

The wounds are totally gone, and Shichika did not even realized that he fell into a trap; He was different from his sister and father, he had no knowledge of any tactics, so the opponent easily tricked him. Seeing that he diligently scanning the surrounding for any visible clues, the imagery his eyes bugging out in concentration, its not that comical already, rather quite pitiful.

---- if it is dad in my position, what would he had done?

Shichika contemplated.

If it was Yasuri Mutsue, how would he deal with the shuriken barrage? Well if it was Mutsue, in the first round when he used [Chrysanthemum] he could have shattered the sword. That sword was said to be unbreakable, however if it is in Mutsue's hands, would it be true?

Shichika don't understand.

However, having a father that is the 6th Generation Head ---

Hero of the Rebellion

"....."

Ninja.

Shikizaki Kiki's Perfected Deviant Blades.

According to Shichika, all of these are new to him, unknown aspects of the world.

Shichika had trained under the hero of the rebellion Mutsue for 19 years, it can say that no enemy dared to challenge him; However Maniwa Koumori's Ninjutsu and Shikizaki Kiki's blades combined, it is really an exceptional combination. His feelings were like, a frog that saw the sea for the first time when it is trapped in the well for it's whole life.

The sea ---

Shichika contemplated: How would the people in the mainland look and behave like? Koumori said that he was one of the 12 leaders Maniwa Ninja Corp, so to say, there are other 11 people who could do such things like Koumori? Since there is a need to collect 12 of Shikizaki Kiki's Swords, it means that there are 11 other owners of the swords ---

Just have to cross this sea, all could be seen.

"....."

However, what will happen to sis?

Since his father already died, Shichika could not just dump his frail and weak sister alone on this island --- No, he understand that this reason is not enough to fulfil his wishes.

The head of the household is Nanami, Shichika's position was taken from him, yet it is not surprising; Deep down inside, he knew that without him, his sister is able to hold her own.

Shichika just could not bear to leave his sister --- No, this was also wrong, the actual reason is a little simple.

Basically, Shichika found it a hassle; He was lazy to leave the island, sail across the island to reach the mainland. Well his sister's reason, are more close to the truth.

--- since it had came to this, how could I go back to the mainland?

--- I did not know anything about the outside world, and have no intention to find out either.

"....."

Togame said that she came here by boat; so it means, there is a boat docking at Fushoujima.

Everything is settled, everything is in place; He just needed an appropriate reason to leave the island --- However Shichika don't wish for wealth, nor wish for honor, what else can he be moved for?

---- you will fall for me.

He suddenly recalled what Togame said, and smiled involuntarily. Nah, that can't pass as a reason. However ---

---Hm?

So that means, that ninja said that he changed into the ferryman and reached the island; But upon hearing Togame words, she and Koumori seems like it was not their first meeting, even before the [Kanna] incident transpired they have met. Togame had also mentioned that the Shogun collaborated

with the Maniwa Ninja Corps on a lot of assignments.

If it what it was, how could Togame hadn't noticed that Koumori was on the same boat as her.....? She self-proclaimed herself as a strategist, and kept emphasizing on how great and infallible she was ---

Unless Koumori used some kind of mind controlling trick? No, not that easy as it says, it is hard to do that too.

".....Hm....."

At that time Shichika was deep in thought, probably he could guessed out the truth; However, having to get him to guess that Koumori strength was not able to easily change his appearance, uses his strength as his own, that was impossible.

It is a shame that his laziness syndrome strikes again, so he stopped thinking about that topic. And went back think about the reason to leave the island, finding out where the 2 went is not a pressing issue.

Perhaps I should go back to where sis was? She should be sitting at home drinking tea by now!

At that time Shichika was deciding, a silhouette appeared from behind.

"Shichika!"

it's Togame.

The kidnapped Togame was brushing aside the bushes and shrubs, striding up to him.

Of course, that wasn't Togame, it is Koumori who was impersonating as Togame; However Koumori even copied how Togame walks perfectly, it is quite hard to tell the 2 people apart.

"--- Ah?"

Shichika who was unaware of Koumori's ability, was of course unsuspecting.

"Kyotouryuu --- [Peony]!"

So this is the situation, as Shichika turned back he raised his leg, using the Kyotouryuu patented back kick --- [Peony], the left leg sword hitting Togame squarely --- squarely on Koumori's abdominal area.

Koumori having taken the full brunt of the kick, his body buckled ---

"Hurk!"

[Kanna]'s blade was ejected forcefully from the body with a sickening sound.

Koumori was totally unprotected, his whole body was full of gaps --- well it is natural, because he is impersonating Togame, if his body has protection, it would be suspicious --- and being kicked in that manner, he gotten the full force of the kick. He then violently vomited out.

[Kanna]'s entire blade laid at his side, so that means the breath that he saved up to expel the blade into Shichika was also vomited out.

The plan was a total failure.

Koumori even vomited out the whole blade, he still used Togame's face and was extremely angry.

This impersonation did not fool Shichika?

Could it be that when Shichika was deep in thought, guessed out the truth? No, rather not. The truth, is really quite out of reach of Shichika's hands.

Then, did Shichika notice the encounter between Togame and Koumori? Or is it one of the 12 leaders of the Maniwa Ninja Corp Maniwa Koumori, his impersonation skill is that bad; Therefore Shichika could easily spot that bad mistake? No, that is also not the reason. Koumori's Ninpou: Kotsuniku Zaiku is so detailed that it can mimic any spots or wrinkles.

Then is it the killing aura? Maniwa Koumori's lungs were filled with air, when he is close enough he would shoot out the [Kanna], pierce through Shichika's heart; However Shichika who was literally raised on the island to feel that kind of killing aura, to be able to more on instinct to attack? No, that was not it. Is it the temperamental Koumori, unable to erase the killing aura?

Could it be ---

".....Oh? Come to think of it, is that Togame?"

Yasuri Shichika was totally unaware that whomever behind him is Maniwa Koumori, much less detect or recognize it was Togame.

"Oh? But you just spat out a katana..... Is it a move that is known to everyone in mainland? Well come to think of it, is it Zettou [Kanna]?"

".....!"

Lets take an example.

Shichika remembers every single tree and blades of grass in Fushoujima like his back of his hand, so he can differentiate any tree, any blade of grass; It is because he already seen those things daily , even if his eyes or hearing is impacted, he naturally still can tell them apart.

Conversely, a normal person who see any dog,cats or fish, unless they really go into the various breeds, they all would group them according to their species. It is not restricted to animals, as it can happen to human beings too, since a human being look almost alike with minute differences, when finding someone that you just knew in a crowd, it would be like finding a needle in a haystack. A human mind, isn't naturally equipped with this distinction capability.

Now the question comes into mind. Since long before this incident occur he was isolated in this island, Shichika only knew his dad and sister, how could he ever distinguish between Shichika and Koumori?

Their stature?

Their difference is that big like a male dog or a female dog?

What about the difference between male and female?

How many people could tell the difference in sex of fishes?

What about the difference in voice?

How many people can tell the difference in birds calls?

Then what about the colors of the clothing, the hair style, the hair color? Such regal clothes, pearly white hair --- Shichika should have remembered!

After his father left this world, Yasuri Shichika only contact with a human being is left only with his sister Nanami. So in other words, Koumori needn't have to use his Ninpou: Kotsuniku Zaiku, he can just get

close to Shichika; If he had followed what Togame said, instead of coming from the back, attacking from the front instead ---

Shichika would have moved because there is someone behind him, and gave no second thoughts of dishing out that sword kick.

"Hu.... Hu...."

"Ah! So that what is it, I understand, so this is a shapeshifting move? I heard that foxes and tanuki has have such abilities, never knew that human beings are capable of it too, such an extraordinary move. Hm, so I guess you are that ninja am I right?"

"You --- you caveman!"

Koumori was unable to stand.

Well it is obvious it is because he got whacked and without protection to boot. Kyotouryuu's leg sword's power is not that strong, but it is hitting at the dead center of the target, one kick would render the opponent unable to battle. And it render's Koumori's [Kanna]'s attack useless, but it was in his favor that [Kanna] became his accidental shield, if it was not in his body while the kick was dished out his bones would have been pulverized, now it render him unable to move for a while, like a fish out of the water.

"Hm? So does it mean I already obtained [Kanna]? --- Huh....."

Shichika was gauging Koumori and the discarded [Kanna], muttering to himself:

"Togame wanted me to use a more flashy move, however that [Peony] wasn't that spectacular; Well whatever, I already helped her dispose of that shapeshifting thing, she should thank me. Well the report should be written easily now right? The opponent is so easily defeated, well who could tell that the one facing me would be a fake? What a hassle!"

"Ooh..... You....."

Koumori was gasping as he spoke to Shichika:

"Why are you so adamant in helping her?"

"Ah?"

"Why do you wanted to be used by her? Helping her out, you will eventually land up in misfortune....."

"No, it is not the issue of not helping or helping."

Used?

He just now said that word ---

"Well what I said just now, was to help her rightfully reacquire Zettou [Kanna] ---"

"Don't you feel the least anything strange about her story?"

Koumori was still curled up on the ground, continued to say:

"Why up to now, the Shogunate suddenly wanted issue the order to collect the remaining Shikizaki Kiki's swords?"

"Oh, isn't it because they were afraid of a revolt? The previous rebellion was started too because of the 12 swords ---"

"The reason is far from the truth, it is too convenient. Don't you think so?"

"....."

Shichika has no objection, he already thought about this thing was a little fishy.

"The shogunate today don't have the mistaken idea that the Kyuu Shogun had in the past with regards to Shikizaki Kiki's blades, well they are more pragmatic: This time the sword collecting decree was issued out by that lady's own hands, well it is all to be Strategian Togame --- the army general director to become famous."

Koumori spoke, his voice was full of spite.

"The sword collecting order wasn't issued by the higher ups in the Shogunate, it is all issued by her. Of course, the one that finally issue out that order would be the Shogun --- however it is Togame that sparked the fire, and she herself who nurture the fire to burn. Saying something like [I view things the way it would be] , [All of it were your orders, I am unable to argue], and to use it to collect the Shikizaki Kiki's blade, it is all because of her own gain, all to ride on the coattails!"

"Riding on Coattails....."

Shichika was unable to comprehend that analogy.

"She was already in the position of army general director, isn't that position high enough?"

"You are right, that position is high. However that lady wasn't satisfied, she still wanted to ascend further..... You are too truthful, don't know how to suspect people; If you really climb up to the pinnacle, she must have done a lot of dubious things. Getting to the top with the account of brute force isn't much seen in this world!"

"....."

"When I first saw her, I felt a chill. What I saw in her eyes was a fierce primal drive, a totalitarian who will get to her goals no matter what methods, a need to use the Maniwa Ninja Corps; She had no second thoughts of using us Maniwa Ninjas as an assassination unit! Such a horizon widening experience....."

Koumori said:

"Kyotouryu, you have been used. If you continue to stick with her, you will eventually be broken, it will not benefit you in any way."

"..... So that is why you betray her first?"

"That's right, if not for money, there is no way I will follow the orders of hers. She wasn't satisfied on her current position, guess what is her eventual goal? To be the right hand of the current shogun!"

"Ah.....?"

Koumori laughed out loud, well his smile was laced in pain, yet with happiness in it.

"Well it does seem that the brat who was born and bred on this island, also knows how big this ambition is. That's right, now the current Shogun is old, not long after he would retire; With his new and lovely lieutenant by his side, well, you should get the rest right?"

"The world ----"

So you can control the world.

---- would you like to rule the world?

Upon finding Shichika, that is the first thing that she asked.

It is not the preface of her getting the Shikizaki Kiki swords, it is about her ruling the world!

If it is what it said, Togame's ambition is really big.

She took the mistaken impression of Shikizaki Kiki's swords as truth, and to led it to collect up the swords are just part of her grand scheme of plans ---

"..... However ---"

Shichika was hard to shock, and continued:

"This also nothing much to be upset about. My dad taught me, to make a mark in this world, it is a natural thing to be clever to do that. Of course, it is also natural that you guys are unhappy for being used ---"

"Being used is not a problem, well in the human world, it is natural for people use people or be used. However the problem lies in the reason of being used. To be clever to make a mark in the world? Right! However this woman's ambition is too high, it takes 2 hands to clap, how could she obtain the world by herself?"

"....."

To be precise, she got the time period wrong.

The Sengoku Period is over, now it is the time of peace.

"To collect Shikizaki Kiki's blades, I have heard many interesting and useful intel. Maniwa Ninja Corps are famous for their assassination legacy, but their intel collecting skills are also not bad, especially with my specialty skill. This time I am competing with the other leaders, and since I have that unique and awesome skill, when I over heard the conversation I am able to procure some good intel..... No, I should say I obtained some juicy and valuable intel."

"Why do you always say things in ways so hard and difficult to understand? I should say beforehand, my head isn't that good; If you want to say it like that, I wouldn't be able to understand. To summarise, when you eavesdrop on us, you discovered Togame's drive to be the next Shogun, right?"

"There is no mistake about it. However I didn't stop at that stage, because there are still suspicions left. That woman isn't pleased with the position of the army general director, so she must have some ulterior motives; To even risk me betraying and Sabi Hakuhei too, to collect Shikizaki Kiki's blades."

Koumori coughed, even when he said there is some pain expressed; However his body already regenerated to normal, it is just Shichika was too distracted, he didn't noticed it.

"This woman is the daughter of the previous rebellion leader Hida Takahito."

Maniwa Koumori pointed to himself to said.

Hearing that, Yasuri Shichika was shocked.

--- the previous leader of the rebellion identity was still fresh on his mind, the thought of the rebel's motives and goals, were like an impossibility to achieve.

And the issue that Togame talked over with Shichika is actually the goals and aspirations of the rebels.

"If she was born in a different time, she might be a princess of her own country. All who supported the Takahito family was branded a traitor, and totally exterminated, none of them exist, well except for one small kid. That woman how she grew up, and how she managed to infiltrate the Shogunate, I don't know; However to get to the top, she is willing to use any means. And what she will attempt to do after being the Shogun, you should get the whole picture am I right?"

"Attempt?"

"Think about it, who would fault her for being the army general director. This position is not too low, however it is not enough for the current generation retired shogun!"

A crackling sound was heard, Koumori's body transformed again, his skin was slowly shifting; However Shichika was unnerved.

And that time Shichika didn't pay any heed to him.

Hida Takahito --- Shichika heard about this name, it is said by his father Mutsue.

The hero of the rebellion --- Kyotouryuu 6th Generation Head Yasuri Mutsue had mentioned the name of the previous rebellion leader.

"She must be thinking of revenge."

Koumori interrupted:

"It could be for revenge, it could be restarting her late father's wishes, initiate a new rebellion. HAHAHA! However I do think it's the former. It would not surprise me if she saw her family got slaughtered, and that head of white hair was the result of that!"

That time Koumori's hair isn't white anymore, and it turned into a messy black hairstyle; So he didn't say [this head of white hair], instead saying [that head of white hair], and [this woman] corrected to [that woman].

"....."

However, when Shichika saw that weird transformation in front of him, he did move an inch; Well in his heart it is quite unsure of himself, his heart was turmoil.

Hida Takahito --- The snake of the Ao Region, Hida Takahito.

A traitor and a criminal.

Kyotouryuu 6th Generation Head Yasuri Mutsue often talked about him to Shichika and Nanami --- talked about how he himself doing a heroic deed by decapitating that leader with his own bare hands!

It is just that this matter is not that widely known.

The end of the rebellion was brought about by the work of the exiled Yasuri Mutsue of Kyotouryuu, it already been associated to what the household is known for --- In actuality, Maniwa Koumori before he even stepped on this island never heard about Kyotouryuu, naturally would not know the one that killed Hida Takahito is actually Mutsue. It could be he didn't pay specific mind to this matter, even if he try to seek that information out, he wouldn't be able to obtain it easily.

Then again, Togame knew of this matter; It's because she herself was there.

--- Kyotouryuu Yasuri Mutsue, I had only heard his name, never seen him in person.

It was a lie.

She was watching the whole time when she saw Mutsue murder her father, how could she not have seen him then?

It is precisely she knew about Kyotouryuu's fearsome power, that's why she came to Fushoujima.

So that means, if dad --- if Mutsue had not died, she would even seek out the one who killed her father to collect the remain Shikizaki Kiki worlds! Even if Shichika was the son of the enemy!

Won't she ever see this as a failure?

No, she won't even admit it. Compared the people who tried to come here in the past, how could she even admit that coming on this island is a wrong choice or even a failure?

Well, she had been betrayed by both Maniwa Ninja Corps and Sabi Hakuhei, so she is left with no choice.

"That insect that was born from the rebellion, on what grounds she has the rights to criticize me on my behavior? HAHAHA! I am a ninja that specialize in assassination, of course know what that woman is planning; That pair of eyes actually doesn't contains ambition, instead it contains the burning fire of

revenge, can only be expressed as a madwoman. I am working for the sake of money, as for her? She do not need money, yet she want to throw the world into chaos, you think I personally will support it? Oi! Kyotouryuu, you spent much effort in training up your body, yet you allow yourself to be used like a tool, don't you even feel ashamed?"

--- listen carefully, I am not some kind of noblewoman.

Togame made a comparison.

It is hard to say that Shichika understands any emotions, he even unabashedly asked about the relations between Mutsue and her father; That time Togame gave him that analogy.

It is like Koumori said, Shichika was too pure and juvenile, totally did not understand what Togame is thinking and working.

To fulfil her father's dreams and wishes, she then became a strategist.

".....what you said just now ---"

Shichika lowered his voice and said:

"You said that you just overheard it --- It means that currently who knows, its only you?"

"Ah? Oh, you could put it this way. So what?"

"If it is so---"

Shichika got into a stance, his arms were like blades --- and assumed the Kyotouryuu Second Stance [Daffodil].

"So if I finish you off here, the news of Togame won't spread?"

".....? Ah? What?"

Koumori was unable to comprehend what Shichika is doing.

"What nonsense you are spouting? Ridiculous! You should be angry at that woman, why would you be so antagonistic towards me?"

Koumori do not understand.

Being cooped up for his life and grew up on this island, how Shichika's line of thinking, Koumori could never understand --- Shichika knew deep in his heart that his father Yasuri Mutsue is some kind of hero of the legend, however he did not understand the meaning of hero of the rebellion.

His intent was basically to spread kindness and love. Of course Shichika won't be able to say such mushy stuff, however his regards to the late head was duly of pure love; It is because the house that Mutsue built was broken that's why he flared up, and in addition being called filial by his sister. Even been marooned on this island, Shichika believed his father was a knight in shining armor.

Of course, he also have thought about that before --- even under the hands of the hero of the rebellion, there are victims.

It is the first time Shichika whom could not differentiate from male and female, to feel for [Them].

"Kyotouryuu 7th Generation Head Yasuri Shichika, I will show you some of my moves!"

"You.... fine!"

Koumori originally wanted to wear Togame's clothing just to get close to Shichika body, never knew that even after getting close to his body it was useless, well it could say it is a miscalculation; So in short, he

followed his original plan --- he morphed his body while healing from his wounds.

"Then I too am also Kyotouryuu 7th Generation Head --- Yasuri Shichika."

And the one who got up in front of Shichika eyes, it is Shichika.

The lanky built, the hair that was messy, no doubt it was Yasuri Shichika.

Maniwa Koumori transformed, use the matter about Togame to distract Shichika, correcting his to internal organs to rebuild his body; Well it is hard to change Shichika's intent, so to buy more time, to complete the transformation.

Koumori's voice is naturally the same as Yasuri Shichika, just only he was wearing Togame's clothing at that time, so it is easy to distinguish who is fake or not.

"..... the voice is not the same!"

Shichika retorted, however Koumori was unable to retort what the guy said about Togame's reasoning.

The pair stared down, no movement was made.

"HAHAHA! To say the truth, my ninjutsu is more suited for assassination, not suited for head on attacking; To say what is my ultimate move, it's the Shuriken Barrage, but that move already was exhausted by you. And if I revert back to my original form to attack you, the winner should be you."

"....."

Hearing his doppelganger speak, Shichika was unable to move.

"But however now? Your muscles, your strength is all mine --- No, you still have the pain from your arms and legs when my shurikens hit you, so it means I hold the advantage."

"Huh....."

Shichika still hasn't lose his cool, said:

"Since you put it that way, you could have able to transform into any insanely strong professional? Lets say even the swordsman called Sabi Hakuhei. Oh! You haven't seen him before right? So if you are very very experienced, you should transform to someone who is more skilled than me right?"

"You are really someone who like just born onto this world, people would be envious of this. That people won't be as bright as you, it is because there are some rules to follow --- like how rock will win scissors, yet could not win against the cloth that can be cut with the cloth. So in that case, how would you do it? Of course we will use rock versus rock to battle!"

"..... just to let you know, this small wound isn't anything anymore. Now my wound is vanished, it felt like a itch; But now it is not painful nor itchy now!"

"Really? So that is a stalemate, rock versus rock, equal as ever."

The transformed Koumori looked at the [Kanna] at his feet.

He just spat out that Zettou [Kanna], it is one of Shikizaki Kiki 12 Completed Deviant Blades; unable to bend or break, it can cut through steel like butter, it's definitely a match for Kyotouryuu!

"Although I have this toy, my rock would be stronger than yours!"

"....."

"Kyotouryuu Men are swordsmen who don't use swords, and those who don't use swords took up arms, naturally will be even stronger than not having any sword right? This will give me an advantage!"

Koumori was quite happy with himself.

Zettou [Kanna] just laid by Koumori's side, taking it up was too easy already; And if Shichika was to attack, the distance between he and the Zettou was more than that of Koumori, and since both of their leg power are the same, the winner certainly could be decided then.

"Using force to fight against the enemy is really stupid, if there is a way for it to make it easier, it would be perfect. Ah, you can scold me or rage at me for being despicable for all you care, so long as it is not that woman, any one who scold me would not matter --- I haven't heard you start cursing me yet!"

"I think you had a little misunderstanding here."

Shichika coldly spoke at the cheerful Koumori.

"Kyotouryuu is powerful precisely because it doesn't use swords."

"Ah? It is just what they say on the surface. It is basically the basis of the attack power, how could unarmed combat excel armed combat specialist? Unless you admit that your arms and legs are as sharp as a real sword?"

"That's why I said you are mistaken. Kyotouryuu is not because it uses arms and legs as swords, then they are classified as swordsmen who don't use swords --- Kyotouryuu swordsmen is actually a Japanese sword that took on the form of a human, so it is a sword, so it is akin to something like a 'dog eating a dog'. Basically, I don't think I can lose to me who was holding a sword, because ---"

"Alright! Enough, no need to find any more excuses; If I waited for you to finish, the cows will come home! This kind of thing for you to explain it through words, go somewhere else and do it --- like in the other world! Take this! The other me!"

"Really..... Then bring it! Other me. I will show you the finishing move to finish you off --- it is my Kyotouryuu's Ultimate Move!"

Tchhh!

Koumori took the first step, Shichika was still and unmoving, waiting for the opponent to strike.

Seeing that Koumori raised the [Kanna], he was unable to stop it, it is because his arms were akin to blades, he was silently waiting for him to strike his own body, The Second Stance [Daffodil] and the First Stance [Lily] is similar, it's both used to fight people; His palms are like creating a wall in front of him, its just that the striking range is longer than that of [Lily], and to know the difference, in the eyes of the katana there's no difference.

"DADADAADADADADA! Hofuku Zettou!"

Koumori's both hands gripped the handle of the Zettou tightly, leapt, he was even higher than that in the beach previously. It is for a reason, because the land of the spring area is better than that of the sandy beach; Well the more important point is, Yasuri Shichika's body will be pulverised --- Since he had that amount of leg power.

Koumori in the air smash down with a greater kinetic and gravitational power ----

"HA! Eh? EH!"

No, not actually smashing down.

Falling down with the power of gravity, Koumori could not even grasp the Zettou, what's there to discuss about smashing down? Zettou [Kanna] already lost it's owner, it is somersaulting over his head.

"Ri Ridiculous!"

"Even if you have to wait till the cows come home, you should hear finish what I have to say."

Shichika who was on the ground said this to the airborne Koumori:

"Just what you just said, it is true it is just what the people say..... Well to say the truth, actually Kyotouryuu men has no ability whatsoever to wield any blades --- it is not because we are not swordsmen who don't use swords, it is because we are swordsmen who CANNOT use them!"

Yasuri Shichika couldn't.

Yasuri Mutsue couldn't.

Of course, the First Generation head Yasuri Kazune also couldn't ---

It is because, the swordsman called Kazune started out the art of without using swords --- If not, how could one discard the weakness that comes with the long reach?

"Especially after I was born into this world, today is the first time I seen a sword If you want to copy the body strength, the limbs strength, it is no importance; However to copy this brute strength is not something that you should be done! The other me!"

"Ah..... Oooo, ooo... what a pity, I am about to!"

Koumori lost the sword, falling down uncontrollably; Gravity was his enemy now, no matter how he think or panic, he is unable to revert back to the air.

To trace back to the roots, Maniwa Koumori had only one loss --- to take advantage of the siblings feelings, well according to sense, the more experienced Koumori could not have lost to the battle inexperienced Shichika.

Maniwa Koumori's loss, it is due to Zettou [Kanna].

He is overly dependent on using Zettou.

Firstly Koumori wanted to use it as a introduction present, then he will be able to bring it back under control. However, Koumori isn't a swordsman, more of a ninja; Since he has exhausted the shuriken barrage, he shouldn't have repeatedly, repeatedly use [Kanna] as it's match point. It is because, it is precisely of the sword's poison affecting his body --- made him less cautious overall.

Shikizaki poison's nature --- when the sword is in one's hands, naturally will feel the drive to kill.

"However, it is a blessing that you let go of the sword --- if it got hit by my ultimate attack, even if it is [Kanna] I am sure it will break. Right, You know why I say this move is the ultimate attack? It is because I just thought out this ultimate attack yesterday!"

Shichika said this to the falling Koumori who was ever inching closer.

Kyotouyuu has 7 ultimate moves.

1st Move. [Kyouka Suigetsu] [鏡花水月]

2nd Move. [Kachou Fuugetsu] [花鳥風月]

3rd Move. [Hyakka Ryouran] [百花繚乱]

4th Move. [Ryuuryoku Kakou] [柳緑花紅]

5th Move. [Hika Rakuyou] [飛花落葉]

6th Move. [Kinjou Tenka] [錦上添花]

7th Move.[Rakka Rouzeki] [落花狼藉]

"Now to reveal the true nature of each of the moves, I will reveal it in the next month. Well for this move, it is unleashing 7 simultaneous moves on the opponent; As you said, it is the unbeatable form of [Rock,scissors,paper]. Normally when one move was used, the opponent will break in 2; And if I applied 7 moves at one time, it will tear the enemy into 8 pieces --- therefore I shall name this move."

With this, Shichika fulfilled Togame's request, defeating the enemy with a flashy move.

"Kyotouryuu, [Shichika Hachiretsu]!"

~~~~~

It won't tear, it won't unravel.

No matter how hard thrashing is done, the twine that bound here did not even budge --- it seems that Koumori has used some incredibly strong threads, or could be using some special ninja ropes. Togame gritted her teeth and think: If I weren't gagged, I would have chewed off the rope!

Will that change the matter?

Will it change her position?

She threw away her name, threw away everything --- threading on this beaten path that was carved out by blood and tears, only to end in this no name island? Collecting the remaining swords that Kyuu Shogun was unable to collect, and successfully deliver it to the Shogunate, her success to her [plan] has only a step left!

Togame embarked on the path of a Strategian, only to end up like this?

---- dad.

Just a bit more, then she is able to exact her revenge for her dad!

Father's dreams.

Father's regrets.

" -----!"

To look for Kyotouryuu, it is a failure.

She is certainly drunk in her obsession.

No matter off the beaten path she took, she should never even look to the people who killed her father; Even if it is not him, much less his son! So to say the enemy is the Shogunate, the true enemy is the Shogun, so it's part of them! Even if, even if she promise to help Kyotouryuu --- helping Mutsue to reintegrate back. Why do she have to symphatise with the enemy, helping to annul the sins of the murderer of her father!

And all to end up at this place, really embarrassing indeed.

And would she even exist as a woman then?

" ....."

If she got taken back to the mainland by Koumori to get interrogated, Togame will have divulged the locations of the Deviant Blades. Togame has high trust in her eloquency, however she is unable to withstand the torture, if a ninja really show his stuff, she confirm will not survive. There are a lot of ways to question people, and Togame knew a couple of it; However the Maniwa Ninja Corps could have known thousands of ways.

If it is like this, why not I break myself ----

"--- ha!"

Togame laughed.

She doesn't care that she was being gagged by a cloth, and laughed to herself nonetheless.

"Ahahahahahahahahaha----"

Look at the other perspective!

The one that won't tear, the one that won't unravel it is not the twine,  
it's my thoughts;

The thing that was unable to break, cutting through steel like butter, it's my strategies.

Right, I am a strategist --- no matter how bleak the circumstances, there is a strategy to get me out of this! What's past is past, what matter's the most is now!

To exact revenge and use the Kyotouryuu who was her enemy, so what? Blood begets blood, it is a war!

Knowing the status of Togame, most of the people seeing her head of hair thought that she went through a traumatic experience, well it is not far from it.

It is because she was so stressed about it that her hair turned white.

And she swore on the head of white hair---

no matter how she was shunned,

or being hated,

or being ridiculed, she will finish this even if it cost her life!

"Ough....."

There is a shadow passing through the bushes, heading towards this direction. Is it Maniwa Koumori? He's already back? It is too early --- No, if he used the sword barrage to win, the victory should take a short time; if it seems that way, it is too late.

Togame just has to clench her fists, couldn't do anything,

but to watch in fury at that direction.

Shortly, the approaching person entered her line of sight.

And said "I see".

"I see, I see. So that was what the eyes he was talking about? However what the ninja said could not be trusted, I felt that that eyes are mysterious, its pretty!"

".....?.....!"

The one who appeared is Yasuri Shichika.

How could this be?..... NO! Koumori didn't just cheerily said? After he killed of Shichika, then he will transform into Shichika to kill Nanami --- maybe he he going to head to ..... No, maybe he did all of it already! He killed off Nanami, that's why he is that late! But why would he have to maintain this image? So thats how it is, he was thinking of impersonating Shichika, then get whatever information he could from Togame. Koumori thought that he was smart, but did he think that she will fall for this parlor trick? The title of Strategian is really being looked down upon!

Thinking of which, Togame just noticed the thing on Yasuri Shichika's hand.

It is one of Shikizaki 12 Completed Deviant Blade, Zettou [Kanna].

He didn't even know how to properly handle a sword, he was grabbing the end of the handle, trailing the long blade, and the tip of the blade was scraping the ground.

However if it is Koumori, he would have kept it in his body.

Then it means, this Yasuri Shichika is ---

"Come to think of it, perhaps that ninja has parents, or could have kids too; Nope, of course he have. Will they hate me for what I did?"

"..... in short ---"

Shichika waved [Kanna] carelessly in front of Togame

Lucky this is the Zettou, not easily broken or bent.

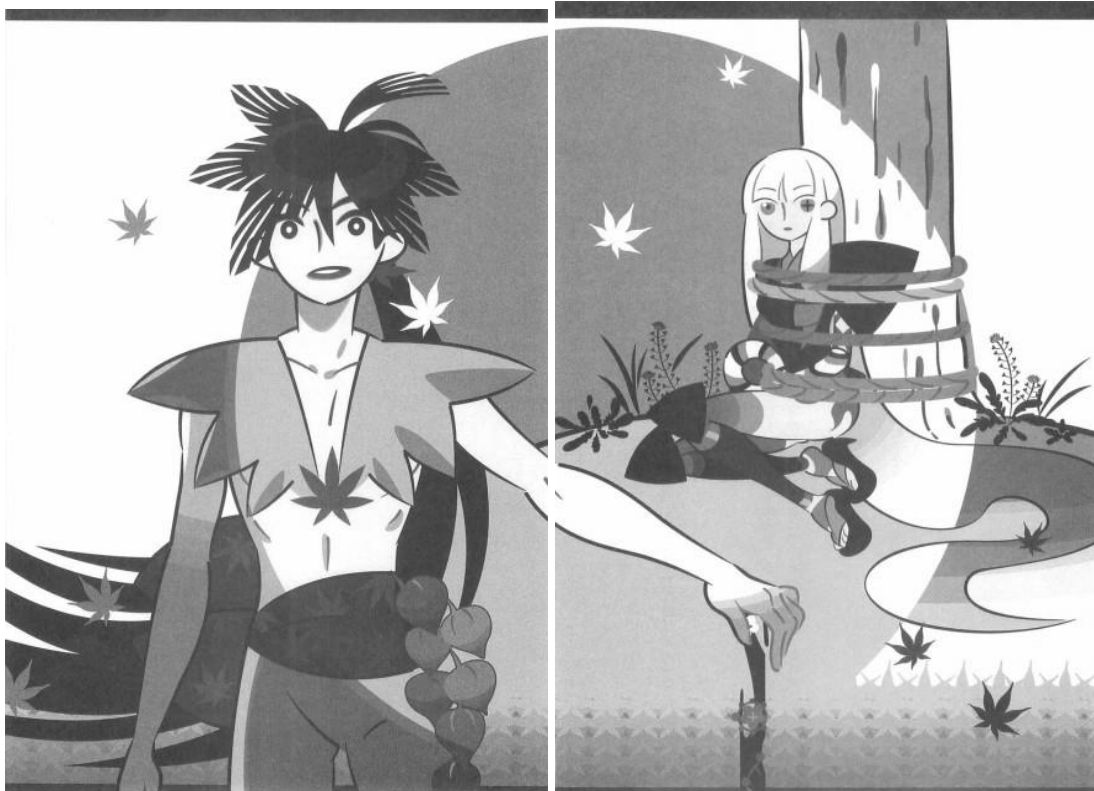
But no matter the reason he still have to handle it more carefully!

"I've got the first one, Togame."

".....?"

The first?

What does this words mean? Don't tell me it is a prelude for ---



He then gave a speech confirm this.

"Don't get the wrong idea, I am doing this all for you. I have harbor no other thoughts, no been affected by Shikizaki's poison, nor is it for the Shogunate --- I just feel like helping you."

After this, he smiled at Togame.

He said this to the future traveling companion for a year:

"I have decided to fall for you."

<Katanagatari Chapter 3: Strategian : End>

## Epilogue





--- and so, the story returned to the dojo at the beginning.

Shichika and Togame sailed across the sea, from Fushoujima and arrived at Kyoto's Kooritoko Dojo.

And at the sparring ground, Yasuri Shichika is surrounded by 6 men. And the 6 men who was rushing to beat Shichika, were all on the floor white-eyed, fainted, unable to get up and continue to battle.

The 6 men's bokutos can't even touch Shichika's body, and all of them clattered on the floor.

"---- impressive!"

Togame, who was sitting at the corner, clapped her hands in glee, talked to the silhouette of Shichika:

"It's a pity my eyesight isn't that good, I can't see it properly. Just now that move is the one that finished off Maniwa Koumori right? Let say there are 6 people, or 7 people even it can attack them simultaneously, it is really flashy indeed --- However, what if there are 8 enemies, how would you handle them?"

"Well I will count it as 8 swords --- are there any chances of this circumstances happening?"

"Naturally it would, since there are 11 Deviant Blades Owner left!"

Togame said.

Shichika sighed unrelently:

"11 people? That would be a hassle."

"Well it is not surprising. Maniwa Ninja Corps has 11 leaders, not to mention that strongest swordsman .... Nay, now he's been classified as a ronin swordsman Sabi Hakuhei; It is an eventual matter, well it is not out of the calculation. Speaking of which, I see you knew how to spare lives, it really makes me quite relieved. Those guys were just unconscious, and all of the Bokutos aren't broken --- well that is very important."

"Is it that important?"

"Of course it is. [Zettou] is an unbreakable sword, therefore there is a chance for you to be a little careless, but the next time you may not be that lucky. I now take the time to remind you again, don't think that you use your pure strength to win Koumori; What if Koumori was smarter than the smart, how would you win? In other words, you just won by luck."

"Oh, this point I would not deny. Just now the big words that you said, actually I could have lost by then."

"My responsibility, is making sure that you will not lose. The tactician could get confused by the smart ones, but the strategist is not. From today onwards how we live our lives. you will follow my directions, got it?"

"Ok, just leave it to me."

Shichika immediately replied, answered in a happy manner.

"These means I already passed your interview right? Then, Togame, what other directives for me to follow, just say it out now!"

"Now.... there are four directives."

"Four? Lets hear them."

"The First I had just said earlier on, do not break the swords. No, not actually break them, do not even think about letting the sword come under any attack, only defense. Since there exist the unbreakable and exceedingly hard [Kanna], the rest of the 12 I am afraid they are not that resistant; I hope that the condition that I can obtain the sword is not exceedingly violent. In other words --- No matter whether the sword is on my hands or the enemy's hands, you have to be extra careful."

"Understood, I will protect and guard the swords. The second?"

"Protect me. Although the goal is to collect Shikizaki Kiki's swords, if I die, it will all be in vain. Like that time I was kidnapped, this kind of scenario should not happen again. You have to protect me from any injuries or any wounds."

"Understood, I will protect you. The third?"

"Protect yourself."

Togame said:

"It is not me being considerate of you. In the process of collecting Shikizaki Kiki swords, there should be no short change. If you sustain severe injuries while collecting one sword, to obtain the next one will be nigh difficult, therefore you should not injure yourself."

"Understood, I will protect myself. The fourth?"

"Protect yourself."

Togame gave the same answer, and got up; She smoothened her clothes, turned around and walked out of the dojo, it is to not let Shichika see her expression.

"That one ..... is me being considerate of you."

"....."

"Don't die. This journey may be perilous, but please don't die. --- Understand? I don't want you to hear that you couldn't do it, hurry up and say you understand."

" --- got it, I will follow what you say."

Shichika started moving, catching up to Togame.

"So what's next? Didn't you say that you want to collect 2 or 3 swords, then head back to Owari?"

"The Kyotouryuu's name is not heard far and wide, and if I just brought you back with such a small reputation, and you had just obtained one sword, it is not very good; That said, the Zettou is actually being snatched back. The second sword that we are obtaining next is Zantou [Namakura], it is said to have sharpness as it's focus, not that tough at all; The one who held it is a man called Uneri Ginkaku (宇練 銀閣), and he is a feudal lord ..... the premise I will tell you on the journey itself, lets get you some clothes first! Follow me."

"Understood. I love you."

"Oh, you can love me as much as you want."

~~~~~

---so that it, the two of them embarked on this journey, and stepped on a journey full of perils and monsters to find the swords.

Well, up to the conclusion of this journey, they would know that the legendary Shikizaki Kiki's 1000 deviant blades --- that includes the 12 complete form of the blades --- [All] of it would be for Kyotouryuu To craft the one and only Kyotou [Yasuri]. And the Strategian Togame, is oblivious to it.



(Zettou. Kanna ---- Obtained)
(Act 1 --- End)
(Act 2 Next)



年齡	不詳
職業	忍者
所属	真庭忍軍
身分	十二頭領
所有刀	絶刀「鉋」
身長	五尺八寸三分
体重	十五貫
趣味	陶芸

登場人物紹介



真庭蝙蝠

必殺技一覧

報復絶刀(斬)	←↑↑⇒斬斬
報復絶刀(突)	←↑↑⇒突突
手裏剣砲	↓(溜)↑突
刀剣砲	↓(溜)↑斬
忍法骨肉細工	↓↓↓⇒⇒↑↑斬+突+蹴

Character Profile:

Maniwa Koumori

Age: Unknown

Occupation: Ninja

Affiliation: Maniwa Ninja Corp

Position: 12 Leaders

Sword Owned: Zettou [Kanna]

Height: 5ft 8.3inch

Weight: 93.12pounds

Interest: Ceramics

Moveset Compendium

Hofuku Zettou (Slash): Left Up Up Right Slash Slash

Hofuku Zettou (Lunge) : Left Up Up Right Lunge Lunge

Shuriken Barrage : Down(Hold) Up Lunge

Sword Barrage: Down (Hold) Up Slash
Ninpou: Kotsuniku Zaiku : Down Down Right Right Up Up Slash+Lunge+Kick



対戦相手	宇練銀閣 <small>うのり ぎんかく</small>
蒐集対象	斬刀・鈍 <small>ザン トウ ナマクラ</small>
決戦舞台	下酷城 <small>げ こく じょう</small>

Next Act:

Opponent: Uneri Ginkaku
Collecting: Zantou . Namakura
Battle Stage: Kakoku Castle



Afterword

Recently I heard stories from many people, listened to many people's experiences, and every time they lament of their lack of ability to do things. Human beings are generally lazy, if there are least motivation, they will always try to do something, well finally they will be some what landing up in the average zone; The worst one is that even with the least motivation they do not know whether to save it, they do not want to work, yet do not want to back out Being a human being , I can be emphatic with this situation. To put it more succinctly, there aren't such things such as low motivation or high motivation, they all lend a hand to hard work. And that kind of people are the ones that have a far sight in life, and hence being able to obtain much more in life than other people. It is like gaming, there is a goal in the end and a quota to meet, the longer you play the better you become; And the interaction with 2 people is like the same. There is no ambition, and there is a drive to work hard, and to even defeat the main antagonist; It is something out of a fairy tale, it really makes a human being's life much easier. Of course, we are talking about a human being, what is there to be talented at something when nothing can be obtained, it is already too good to be true; And compared with the small amount of motivation, an exceeding talent is dwarfing the small motivationBack to topic at hand, this point and saying that there they have no talent is just an excuse. There are people who spend time and effort to make their talent, just take it as a test. To summarize, to determine people on how they live their own lives, and it is not [what we can do] that drives us, it is [what we could not do] that decides it.

And for this aim of the book, will to put it simply, it should be a journey to map out the 12 swordsmen. The goal is for 12 books, and this is the first act, there are 11 books left, one book for one sword; Well to discuss the ending, it is like spoiling an end of a movie, it is not what an author had in mind. Well, I will put my heart and soul to craft out this work, and I will definitely appreciate one's input. And the one who helping me realize my works and how my people and swords look like, I don't need to say it further, all would have known by now; That's right, it is Take. To me, to put the words down and to realize it in illustrations, and Take is able to illustrate it masterfully. The future is yet unknown is what is going to be the story's theme; [Katanagatari] first act Zettou.Kanna, hereby was born.

And I would like to give my deepest thanks to the ones that follow me on this long journey.

Nisio Isin