

魔法科高校の 劣等生22

動乱の序章編(下)

The irregular
at magic high school



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魔法科高校の22
劣等生

「对抗魔法『術式凍結』。
お兄様、いえ、達也様が
わたしのために創ってくれた
对抗魔法」





「達也様。深雪様の御身は
この命に替えましても」

桜井水波

さくらいみなみ
昨年、魔法科高校に
入学した二年生。達
也、深雪の従兄弟と
いう立場をとる。深雪
のガーティアン候補。

「お兄様……」

司波深雪

しば・みゆき
達也の妹。第一高校3年A組
所属。生徒会会長を務める優
等生。冷却魔法が得意。兄を
溺愛する『重度のプラコン』。

「他の二十七家と
対立しても構わない？」

「達也さん、四葉家は
貴方の判断を支持します」

司波達也

しば・たつや
司波兄妹の兄。第一高
校3年E組所属。妹であ
る深雪を『ガーティン』
として守るべき存在だと
認識していること以外、
全てに達観している。

四葉真夜

よつば・まゆ
達也と深雪の叔母。深夜の双子
の妹。ある不幸な事件によっ
て心が崩れかけていたが、深夜
の精神構造干渉魔法によって
立ち直る。四葉家現当主。

二十八家の若手会議

開催日時 二〇九七年四月十四日

開催場所 横浜 日本魔法協会関東支部

概要

二〇九七年三月三十一日、南アメリカ大陸旧ボリビア、サンタクルス地区にて戦略級魔法『シンクロライナー・フュージョン』がブラジル軍の手により使用された。

これにより、『魔法が使えない人々』による反魔法主義運動はさらに勢いを増していくこととなる。

魔法師に対する攻撃的なプロパガンダの蔓延を危惧した、七草智一、十文字克人らの呼び掛けにより、十師族及び師補十八家の若手を集めた対策会議が開催された。

次代の魔法師のトップが集まるサミットとも言えるこの会議には『二十八家』から二十三名が参加。参加メンバーは大半が二十歳~三十歳未満で、十代は克人、達也、将輝、琢磨の四人のみであった。

若手会議の主な参加者

- | | | | |
|--------|------------|-------|------------------|
| ・十文字克人 | じゅうもんじ・かつと | (19歳) | 十文字家現当主 |
| ・七草智一 | しそくざ・ともかず | (26歳) | 七草家長男 |
| ・司波達也 | しば・たつや | (17歳) | 四葉家次期当主・司波深雪の婚約者 |
| ・一条将輝 | いちじょう・まさき | (17歳) | 一条家長男 |
| ・七宝琢磨 | しちほう・たくま | (16歳) | 七宝家長男 |
| ・六塚温子 | むつづか・あつこ | (29歳) | 六塚家現当主 |
| ・五輪洋史 | いつわ・ひろふみ | (21歳) | 五輪家長男 |
| ・八代隆雷 | やつしろ・たから | (27歳) | 八代家次男 |
| ・三矢元治 | みつや・もとはる | (27歳) | 三矢家長男 |
| ・二木結衣 | ふたつき・ゆい | (27歳) | 二木家長女 |
| ・九島蒼司 | くどう・そうし | (24歳) | 九島家次男 |

尚、二十八家の内、三家は子女が国防軍に所属している為、二家は子女が防人在籍中の為、欠席した。

●遠山つかさ(24歳)

国防軍情報部所属。階級は曹長。

師補十八家『十山家』の魔法師。

国防陸軍の女性下士官で、軍の名簿には「遠山つかさ」で登録されている。

対外的に『遠山』を名乗っているのではなく、本名として届け出られている。

Chapter 1

Yokohama, April 14, 2097, a branch of the Kanto Japanese Magical Association. The meeting, which brought together young people from the Ten Master Clans and Eighteen Assistant Houses, was completed before noon as planned.

It finished without any results.

When the end of the meeting was announced, the first person who hurried to leave the conference room was Tatsuya.

"Yotsuba-dono, please wait!"

But hearing a voice from behind him, he stopped and turned around.

Tatsuya's name is not "Yotsuba". But he did not act like a child who ignored going to him for that reason.

"What, Saegusa-san?"

However, instead of the traditional style for the Ten Master Clans of the Saegusa-dono, Tatsuya responded to the ordinary Saegusa-san.

To Tatsuya's question "what?", given with unconcealed impatience in his voice and on his face, Saegusa Tomokazu replied:

"For those who visited, we prepared a modest meal after the meeting.
Will Yotsuba-dono join us?"

Naturally, Tatsuya knew the schedule of the meeting.

"I'm sorry. I already said earlier that after meeting, I have an urgent matter."

Indeed, when he left the conference hall, he stated that he had "one thing to do."

"But it's not going to take much time..."

"Unfortunately, my tight schedule does not allow me to accept this tempting offer."

Tatsuya could understand Tomokazu's desire to detain him. But he himself had his own circumstances. He did not do this to annoy Tomokazu.

"Saegusa-san, all the best."

"Shiba-sama." Tatsuya, bowing to Tomokazu, this time the voice of a young woman called out.

"Yes, what is it?"

She was an employee of the Magical Association. Upon recognizing Tomokazu, she showed slight indecision, but quickly restored the behavior of the official employee of the person.

"A VTOL arrived on the roof to pick you up."

"On the roof? I understand."

He had not previously been informed that transportation would be sent for him, but he thought it would be faster to go and see than to think about it. Having once again bowed to Tomokazu, Tatsuya followed the employee.

On the roof, he expected a small VTOL with built-in rotary rotors in the wings. It was a small plane for 6 seats, not counting the pilot. Standing next to the plane, a young man in a double-breasted suit bowed courteously to Tatsuya.

"Tatsuya-sama, here please."

He had a very polite manner of speech. The use of the Tatsuya-sama greeting said that he was a Yotuba man. They met for the first time, but Tatsuya knew who this young man was.

"Pleased to meet you. As it seems, you already know, I am Shiba Tatsuya."

"Oh, I sincerely apologize. My name is Hanabishi Hyougo. Humbly happy to meet you."

Looking at the exaggerated gesticulation of the apologetic young man, Tatsuya mentally nodded. As he guessed, this young man turned out to be the son of Hanabishi the butler.

Among the servants of the Yotsuba family, Hanabishi was the No. 2 ranked butler after Hayama. He was responsible for personnel and equipment for illegal activities related to combat operations. Tatsuya heard that his eldest son is being trained in the British PMC (private military company) under an assumed name, but apparently he has already returned from there.

"Today I have an important role to play: bring Tatsuya-sama and Miyuki-sama to their place. First, I ask you to take a seat inside."

"I got it. I rely on you."

Tatsuya unlocked the back door of the VTOL with the Yotsuba electronic key and went inside. It was a procedure for identifying a person. Not showing embarrassment that the door was opened in this way, but rather expressing a face showing that he is so used to it, Hanabishi Hyougo courteously closed the door behind Tatsuya.

The manned VTOL landed on a helicopter pad located on the roof of a ten-story building, recently built in Tefu.

The first three floors of this building were occupied by offices, and from the fourth to the tenth were living quarters. However, Tatsuya did not remember this building. It was unnecessary to say that it was not a destination.

As soon as the turbines and the wind stopped, three people appeared from the penthouse. Two young girls and a woman who looked about 30 years old. Tatsuya first thought that landing on this building was for charging (this VTOL was on electric motors), but it turned out that he was wrong.

Tatsuya opened the door from the inside and extended a hand to the girls to help him up.

"Thank you, Tatsuya-sama."

The two girls were Miyuki and Minami. It was planned that they would wait for Tatsuya's return home, but apparently on instructions from the main house, they were brought here.

"It's my pleasure. Have you been waiting for me for a long time?"

"Fifteen minutes." But the waiting room it was quite comfortable."

It seems that this penthouse was a recreation area for users of this helipad.

"It's clear."

"Tatsuya-sama. Thanks for waiting." Tatsuya nodded in response to Minami. Entering the plane after Miyuki, she closed the door and said that you can go.

"Hanabishi-san, please." Nodding to Minami, Tatsuya turned to Hanabishi.

"Yes."

Minami looked surprised, because she did not know Hyougo in person. For the return a few days ago in Yotuba Hyougo, such a reaction as Minami was familiar. Even without introducing himself to Minami, he started the engines and started taking off.

The small VTOL in which Tatsuya's group was flying did not fly directly to the hidden village of Yotuba, but landed on a helicopter pad near the Kobutizawa railway station.

"Here please."

Hyougo led Tatsuya and the girls in the direction of the control building. Tatsuya thought that they would cross the building to a car that would take them to the main house. Under that assumption he was not mistaken, but the route turned out to be different. Instead of going through the control building to the road, they entered the staff elevator.

Gathering doubtful looks, Hyougo opened the door of the emergency control panel with an old-fashioned iron key. The elevator doors closed at the same time, as if on command. Behind the panel door was a biometric sensor.

Hyougo put his right hand to it. After a brief pause, the elevator car began to go down.

"We're going down a long way..." With a little alarm in her voice, Miyuki spoke to Tatsuya.

"We're heading for the floor, located 80 meters underground." explained Hyougo. Immediately after his words, the elevator began to slow down. Soon the elevator car stopped and the doors opened.

Leaving the elevator, they were in a large spacious room. In addition, an underground tunnel lit by an artificial light was visible. Nearby was a large-sized sedan car, looking very expensive and upscale. The driver's seat was empty. Hyougo opened the back door, and invited Miyuki and Tatsuya to sit down. Hyougo himself took the driver's seat, and, confirming that Minami had boarded the passenger seat beside him, led the car.

"This underground tunnel leads directly to Honmour. Unfortunately, the view behind the window leaves much to be desired, but we will arrive very quickly."

Monotonously passing lights of the artificial tunnel showed that this huge dark sedan rushed forward at a speed inaccessible on public roads. As Hyougo said, within ten minutes they reached the helipad to the main house.

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The Chiba family dojo was located near the border between Tokyo and Kawasaki. Among the students there were many people working on the weekdays, so on Sunday the dojo looked more lively.

And on weekdays at noon, there were usually no students at all. Attending magic High School Erika was also a rare guest, coming only on weekends.

After the loss of the eldest son of the family, Toshikazuu, and until now, the training in the dojo passed in a depressed mood. You can even say in a tragic atmosphere. However, with the arrival of Erika, the heavy atmosphere shifted a little towards improving the mood. After all, Erika certainly had a talent in raising the mood.

And the two guys brought by Erika also had a role in the formation of the fighting spirit.

"Oria-a!"

"Ghu-y!"

There was the sound of a heavy fall to the floor. Everyone looked in the direction of this sound and found a man with a long hair falling on his back and moaning. Before him stood a guy with a large build breathing heavily.

"Saburou, do you need to rest?"

"I can continue!"

Saburou jumped to his feet. He shook slightly, but with an effort of will he tensed and pretended that he had not suffered any damage.

"Saijou-senpai, please, once again!"

"Wow." Answered Leo bent over in a bow at 90 degrees Saburou. Saburou himself asks Erika. "Can I continue?"

"Of course. I mean, keep going while you can stand up."

Grinning, Leo looked at Saburou. He looked at Erika with a very serious face. Continuing to grin, Leo looked at Erika again.

"'While you can stand' and treats me?"

"Show yourself in a bad light before a junior high school student."

"Understood-understood."

Leo shrugged, seeing that there was not a hint of a joke in Erika's voice and voice.

Then, turning from a rack with a shinai in one hand he faced Saburou. Saburou instantly responded the same.

He had the same stance with a one-handed grip, but the weapons were different.

Leo's shinai was longer than usual, and played the role of an odachi.

On the other hand, the Saburou's shinai corresponded to the length of the Wakizashi.

The length of the weapon is not an undeniable advantage or disadvantage. However, an indisputable fact is also that for each combat style, the use of a suitable weapon is required. It is generally believed that a long weapon is well suited for a preemptive strike. And for users of short swords, the favorite tactic is to evade enemy attack and then approach them.

However, this time the first who started to act was Saburou. He immediately went on offense with Leo.

Naturally, Leo did not even have to simply watch the enemy in his thoughts. With a quick movement of his right hand, he slashed from top to bottom exactly at the moment when Saburou entered the zone of the long shinai.

Saburou could not evade the blow being struck from the previously prepared position of the sword. Not only the speed, but also the power of this blow exceeded even the blow with the two-handed sword of an ordinary man, so he decided to parry the blow, helping the second hand.

One hand against two hands. But despite this counterattack, Leo's stance was not broken for a single moment. Like a covering wave, the pressure of the sword swept over Saburou.

Despite the fact that it was still a bamboo shinai, its heaviness from the long swing of Leo, began to push back Saburou who lost his balance.

And then a training sword the size of a knife suddenly attached to Saburou's belt came into motion by itself. Yes, Saburou did not abandon him. It broke out from behind Saburou's belt and rushed to Leo's face.

Leo stopped the onslaught with a shinai and repulsed the knife with the base of the blade. However, the small knife that looked unreliable did not fall to the floor. Little, in comparison with the form of Leo's *odeati* shinai, the blade suddenly went in different directions and surrounded Leo from two sides.

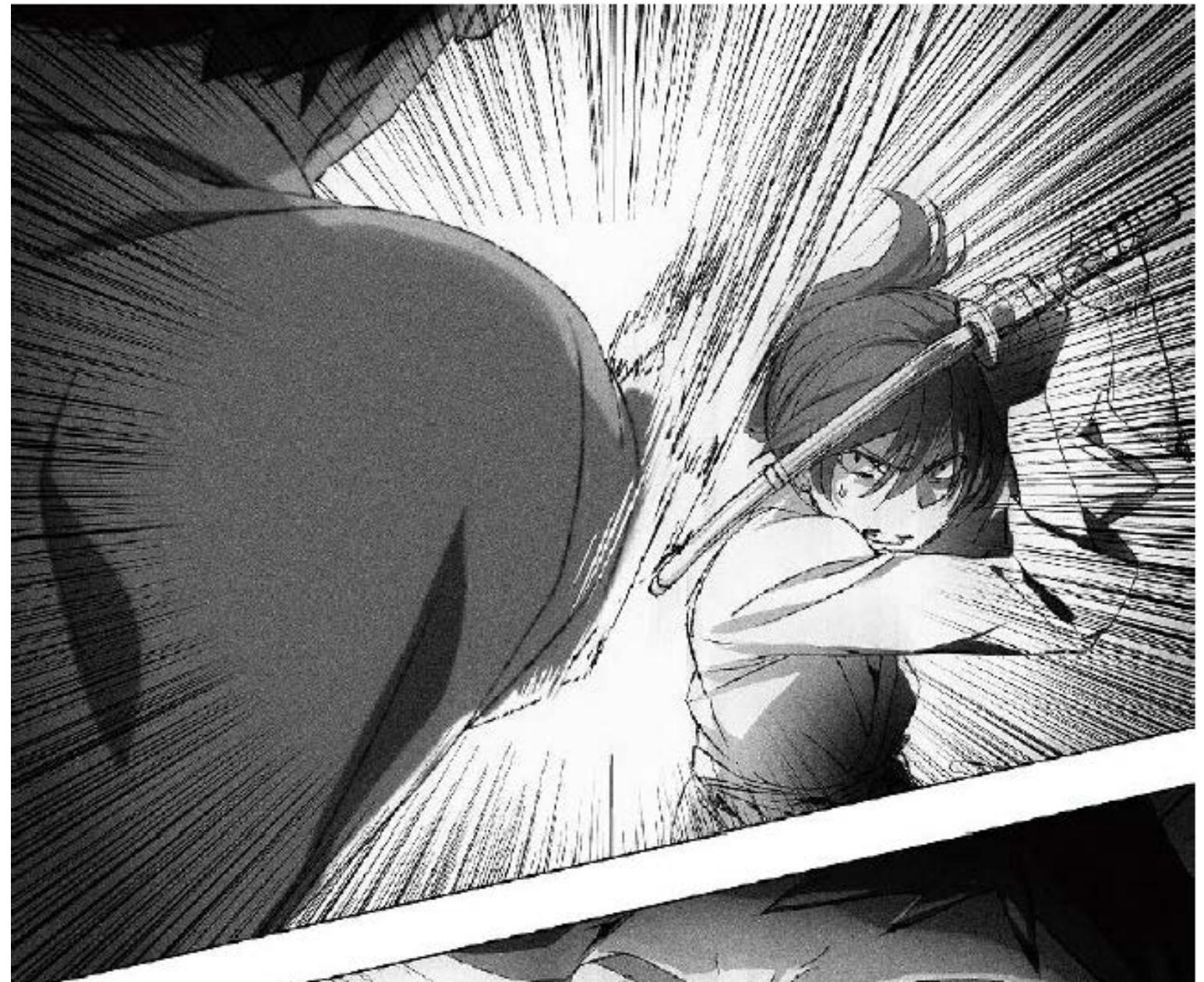
Yes. At some point, the knife flying in the air split into 2 parts. Leo's face tightened. Instead of knifing, he stepped forward. The distance became too short for the style of combat. Even the most effective shinai movements will now be ineffective.

However, this was not a kendo match. Although they have shinai in their hands, no one forces them to treat them like a real sword.

Leo added his left hand to the grasp of his shinai, which he held only with his right hand. Now he held the shinai like a spear.

Saburou, meanwhile, left the previous blow to the side. Rotating in the air the knives suddenly fell to the floor, like puppets, which cut the ropes.

Nevertheless, Saburou's evasion shifted him too far. He came out of a point considered too close for his style.



Finally, the time has come when the distance turned out to be ideal. Leo's warrior nature simply could not allow him to miss this moment.

"Seiya-ah!"

Leo swung the shinai from top to bottom. Saburou tried to parry the inevitable strike coming from the maximum possible distance. Standing on one knee, he threw up a short shinai over his head, holding it with both hands.

Their fighting spirit was so blazing that the bamboo swords seemed real. The Odachi was approaching exactly in the middle of the wakizashi...

And this blow overwhelmed not only the short sword, but also the body that it covered.

Saburou fell down. Even though the blow was on the shinai, and despite the fact that most of Leo's blow went to the blocked shinai, he took a lot of damage.

Leo looked at Erika with a guilty face. But Erika looked at Saburou with a stern, cold stare.

"Heal, please."

"Yes, Erika-Odzosan."

A man of about thirty came running to them. Kneeling in front of the head of the lying Saburou, he activated his CAD.

After that, he put both hands on Saburou's forehead. Healing magic was activated. The big red lump on Saburou's forehead immediately disappeared.

Healing magic was a technique that deceived the world, forcing it to believe that the target human body was not injured. The fake result manifested itself immediately. However, after a while, the world will notice that it was deceived. Therefore, before the effect of "Healing" disappears, a new "Healing" must be imposed. The essence of therapeutic magic is to maintain the cured condition until the real treatment is performed.

In other words, after using healing magic, those on whom it was imposed can continue to fight, as if they did not receive any injuries at all, as long as the effect of healing magic is active.

Saburou quickly woke up and got up.

"To stand."

Rising, he tried to continue the fight. However, Erika's voice caused Saburou to freeze.

"Yaguruma, that's enough for today. If you continue, the consequences can be disastrous."

"...I understand."

Saburou, who did not have enough magical power to be considered fit for an escort in the Ten Master Clans, still had enough knowledge about magic, as he had an education worthy of serving a Mitsuya family. Therefore, he also knew the limitations of healing magic.

"...Many thanks." Saburou turned to Leo and bowed. Bowing to Erika, he lifted his leg slightly to take a step.

"Wait. Why are you leaving? There is no need to rush so much."

Erika readily read Saburou's intention. This reproach of Erika made him sharply turn his foot on the floor of the dojo.

Erika motioned to him to understand that she wanted him to sit down. In order not to disturb other students, Saburou went to the wall and sat down on his knees. Erika sat in front of him in Japanese style, and Leo sat on the side in Turkish.

"Yaguruma would have won if he had not stopped psychokinetic control."

"Would it be a draw with simultaneous attacks?" Leo objected to the sudden withdrawal of Erika.

"Simultaneous, you say?" Erika did not unequivocally deny it. "But your attack Yaguruma landed on the wakizashi. On the other hand, you did not have protection from Yaguruma's knife, did you? In this case, you would have definitely been hit."

Leo did not object, but he still did not look fully convinced. But Erika did not care anymore, and she turned to Saburou.

"It seems that Yaguruma thinks that his psychokinesis is useless, because it does not allow moving heavy things. Even a small blade weighing 100 grams can kill a person if you send it to a vulnerable point. There are very few magicians who know how to create object-directed barriers, and magicians who can maintain such protective magic for a long time are even fewer. Yaguruma's skill is effective not only as a deterrent. It can also be used as a weapon capable of inflicting a decisive blow. This is what you need to understand first."

"I understand."

Saburou answered Erika immediately. However, Leo, who was sitting on his side, realized that this answer was rather reflexive rather than said with complete certainty. But it would be more accurate to say that Erika, who was sitting across from him, looking straight into his eyes, simply would not have allowed him to leave the answer.

"Then do not understand, but believe. In your strength."

Not having anything to say to Erika, Saburou clenched his teeth. Even without her words, he himself believed in his strength. He trained just because he believed that he had the strength to become a shield to Shiina. However, the brutal reality told him that this is not enough.

Believing once again after belief already betrayed him. It was not an easy task.

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About an hour after leaving the Kanto branch of the Magic Association in Yokohama. Tatsuya arrived at the main house of the Yotsuba in less than half of the planned time.

"Miyuki-sama, Tatsuya-sama, the lady is waiting for you. Please follow me."

Only Tatsuya, who arrived at the main house, met Hayama himself. Hayama is the main servant in the hierarchy of the main house of the Yotsuba, and also the confidant of the head of the family, Maya. His presence was a way to show that the status of the heiress and her fiance are not just titles in words.

Miyuki followed Hayama, Minami followed her. Hyougo followed Tatsuya behind him.

With Minami everything is clear, but for Tatsuya it was unexpected that Hayama did not say anything to Hyougo. Was Hyougo only a simple escort who knew how to fly an airplane?

Before he could ask this question, Tatsuya found out that they had come to the dining room. The same room where the candidates were gathered at the New Year's meeting, and where Miyuki was named the next head.

Shibata Katsushige. Tsukuba Yuka. Twins Kuroba Fumiya and Ayako. They were the same faces present as at the New Year's meeting. However, unlike the previous time, the head of the Yotsuba family, Maya, was already in place.

"We apologize for keeping you waiting."

"You are not late, so do not apologize. First of all, take a seat."

Maya quietly responded to Tatsuya's apologies.

"Thank you. I'm sorry."

Tatsuya slightly bowed, and Miyuki followed him with a full bow.

Tatsuya looked at Miyuki's place, thinking that it was necessary to push back her chair, but found it already prepared by Minami. Nodding to the eye of Tatsuya looking at her, assisted Miyuki.

Hyougo put forward Tatsuya's chair.

Perhaps the head of the family regards Hyougo as a candidate for a personal servant for me? Such a thought came to Tatsuya's mind.

However, now was not the time to be distracted by the reasons for Hyougo's presence. Tatsuya focused on Maya.

Maya looked at Hayama standing behind her. In response to this, Hayama rang a bell in his hand, it was not clear from where it came from.

No sooner had the echo of the ringing sounded, and, as if waiting in advance, the maid came into the dining room, pushing the cart before her.

It was already late for dinner, but Tatsuya's group was called up to the main house without having had time to grab a bite.

Before Tatsuya and Miyuki were arranged a variety of light snacks.

More snacks are not given to anyone else, not even Minami. Although she, but for her it would be an insult to her official duty if she started to eat here.

Tatsuya, who understood this, with permission from Maya, started eating. Miyuki also followed the example of her brother.

Of course, they did not go away from talking, focusing on food. They participated in a conversation between Maya, Yuka and Ayako, periodically responding. Having finished eating, they waited until the dishes were cleaned, after which they felt that the atmosphere around Maya had changed.

Tatsuya and Miyuki immediately straightened their backs.

"So... Now I'd like to hear about the events on Saikashin Island."

"Good."

Tatsuya responded to Maya's request. He briefly summarized the events on the main island of Okinawa, Koum   Island, and also on an artificial island and its environment.

"Agents of the Australian Army, Captain James J. Johnson and Captain Jasmine Williams, were eventually transferred to Miyakijima."

"I've already heard about these two. Good work."

Miyakijima is a small island formed as a result of underwater volcanic activity in 2001, the year of the snake, and was 50 kilometers east of the island of Miyakejima.

The name Miyakijima [巳 燒 島] was derived from the original name of the neighboring island of Miyakejima [三 宅 島], which was recorded as Goyakidzima [御 燒 島], with the first character [御] replaced by [巳] (snake)], in honor of the year of the snake in which it appeared.

It was also sometimes called the "New Island of the 21st Century," because it appeared in the first year of the 21st century.

During the 20-year-old World War III, there was a base of the defense forces. However, due to repeated volcanic eruptions, in the 2050s the base was abandoned, and at the moment the island is used as a prison for magician-criminals.

With the assistance of Toudou Aoba, this island in fact became the private property of the Yotsuba family. In fact, the owner is a certain company engaged in real estate, however, through the chain of owners, the Yotsuba family holds the bulk of the shares.

In other words, the Miyakijima prison is an object entrusted to the Yotsuba family that is designed to secretly isolate dangerous magicians. Maya has free access to viewing data about prisoners sent there. Tatsuya mentioned Johnson and Jasmine, because he personally accompanied them there.

"Miyakijima?" "Was it not planned to reconstruct it as a place for experiments?" Asked Shibata Katsushige. After Miyuki was declared the next head of the family, he decided to tackle the affairs of his branch family, and began to work in the Ministry of Defense. So he knew about some of the projects promoted by the Yotsuba family.

"Thats not a problem. Soon we are going to get rid of them."

Hearing Maya's answer, Katsushige slightly frowned. Among the young people present at the table, this was the strongest reaction. But there was no one who didn't understand what Maya meant by the word "get rid". But despite this, not only Tatsuya and Yuka, but Miyuki and Fumiya listened to this with disinterested persons, as if they were saying "That's how it is?". And Ayako did not react at all to this part of the conversation.

"Head-sama. Miyakijima is the place where Miyuki onee-sama was trained in using Niflheim? So the object for experiments, being built there, will be designed to test large scale magic in the open air?"

Ayako was interested in a new place for testing. As she said, during the high school days, Miyuki used the land of the island of Miyakijima as a training ground for the development of the Niflheim casting.

Then this island was considered just a prison for dangerous magicians. But only a small western part of the island was used for this purpose. Continuing underwater volcanic activity increased the area of the island from the frozen lava to 8 square kilometers. This is roughly equivalent to the Tokyo area, Kunitati. So there was plenty of room for practicing cooling magic over a wide area.

"Although this is not yet the final decision... Okay, probably, you can already tell."

Maya seems to be really thinking, not trying to give the words importance.

"Are the buildings here very old?"

Everyone, including Tatsuya, nodded in response to Maya's question. The equipment used by the Yotsuba family for the most part consisted of what was left of the Fourth Laboratory after World War III. Although preventive maintenance and repairs were performed on a regular basis, no one could deny that in general the equipment was out of date and incompatible with the modern era.

"However, just sorting out the existing equipment and replacing it with a new one will be very difficult."

This time, only Tatsuya and Katsushige nodded.

Among the equipment received in wartime there were many rare components, of which replacements are almost impossible to find. Fears that after a complete update of the equipment some studies may be interrupted, were quite understandable.

"That's why I thought it would be better to build a new experimental facility on Miyakijima."

"So you got the army's consent to abolish the jail entrusted to us?" Yuka asked. Unlike Katsushige, she was not informed about this plan.

"Officially, it will still function for some time. Also, new facilities will be nominally called defense laboratories."

"Would it be a problem that the so-called defense forces laboratories will in fact be the property of the Yotsuba family?"

"All the details are already negotiated."

It seems that, without considering it necessary to explain what kind of negotiations they were, Maya looked from Yuka to Tatsuya.

"Better let's hear the continuation of Tatsuya-san's report. It seems that it was called "Gatekeeper". Tatsuya-san's magic that neutralizes magicians. Can it be used by other magicians other than you?"

"The sequence of magic still needs improvement, but magicians with a good predisposition to mental interference magic, in theory, will be able to use it right now."

In addition to Maya, Yuka and Fumiya showed great interest. Among the living members of the Yotsuba family, these two had the highest abilities in mental interference magic. Although their skills were still inferior to their parents' generation, in terms of talent and potential, the two competed for 1-2 place among the whole family.

"Could you translate it into code?"

"I brought it with me."

Coding created the description of magic through the activation sequence. In most cases, a new magic is created in the magician's imagination.

At the moment, this is the biggest obstacle and bottleneck for those who want to share magic skills, because specialized skills are required to describe the magic algorithm in the form of an activation sequence.

However, for Tatsuya to develop the code for the activation sequence of the new magic, there was no difficulty. Maya knew this, so she asked about the availability of the ready activation sequence.

"I see. Will you transfer it later to Hayama-san?"

"Of course."

"Yuka-san. Take a copy of the activation sequence from Hayama-san."

"I understand."

"I think further improvement of Gatekeeper can be entrusted to the Tsukuba family. Tatsuya-san, do you mind?"

"Of course, I do not mind."

Tatsuya from the very beginning did not intend to keep "Gatekeeper" a secret. Because he knew that she could not hurt the magicians, who had an order of magnitude higher than the usual psion reserve, such as Miyuki and himself. He did not want to disclose it to everyone, but he intended to share it with the Yotsuba, at least.

However, Tatsuya did not have a predisposition to mental interference. He used "Gatekeeper" with the help of his other ability. He himself was not suitable for working with mental interference magic. Therefore, the decision to leave further work on improving the magic to the Tsukuba family, which has many users of mental interference magic, looked reasonable. Thinking it over, Tatsuya nodded.

Only Fumiya had a slightly disappointed face, but apart from Tatsuya, no one else said anything. It seems that everyone decided that the events in Okinawa should not be discussed anymore.

"So..." After taking a sip of tea, Maya continued, changing the subject.

"Further, I would like to hear details about today's meeting."

"Of course."

When Tatsuya's story reached the point where he mentioned that they wanted to make Miyuki an advertising face that would work on the image of the magicians to improve public opinion, an atmosphere of indignation began to build around Fumiya and Ayako.

"Already many people treat us like friends. Is it not better, at last, to show the world its seriousness?" Yuka said sarcastically. The word "world" used by her meant "magic world," that is, the world community of magicians.

"Whether we like it or not, we do not need any unnecessary actions." Katsushige responded briefly to Yuka's words. Although he was thinking in the opposite direction, it was clear that his feelings were also hurt.

"Tatsuya-san, the Yotsuba family supports your decision. We simply ignore this and all subsequent plans trying to use Miyuki-san."

There was no irritation or anger in Maya's voice. However, there was no room for misunderstanding in her words.

"You are not even worried about a possible confrontation with the other 27 houses?"

Even under the pressure of Tatsuya's difficult question,

"Yes."

Maya answered quickly and without hesitation. Perhaps Maya in advance foresaw the plan of Saegusa Tomokazu, that is, the Saegusa family.

"Can we just ignore it?" Asked Fumiya. It seems that he meant whether it would be normal not to respond with counter actions to attack opponents.

"Of course, we will not sit quietly if they attack us."

Maya's answer implied a ban on creating conflicts first. However, Tatsuya's behavior at today's meeting, where he refused to cooperate, fell under Maya's policy of ignoring it, because it was clearly provoked by the other side. You can even say that he was forced to do it

"But do not relax. I think you understand that we are not invincible. It cannot be said for sure that a Yotsuba magician will absolutely always defeat the magician's of another family."

Although it was not read by face, it was not difficult to guess that everyone was thinking that "it's too late to say that". However, one could not say that in their minds there were no such arrogant thoughts as "we will never lose."

"Special attention should be paid to the families Juumonji and Tooyama. And also Kudo Minoru."

Most did not understand what she meant. Only Tatsuya and Katsushige were not surprised by Maya's words.

"Kudo Minoru... Second-grader from Second High? Is he such a formidable opponent?"

"Last fall, he helped in Zhou Gongjin's case, and he is undoubtedly an enemy, demanding special vigilance." Tatsuya answered Yuka's question. But he was surprised by the answer Katsushige, and not Yuka. He read the report on the case of Zhou Gongjin and knew about Minoru's cooperation. Indeed, there he was rated as a magician with high combat performance. Perhaps its danger at the level of Yuki or Fumiya.

But Katsushige did not think that Tatsuya would lead him by the nose, saying that the enemy "requires vigilance."

Nevertheless, he showed no doubts. Doubt in the abilities of Minoru means doubt in the words of Maya. For the first time you can still get forgiveness, but the second time you cannot wait for mercy. Katsushige could not have known this. But that's why his doubt was not lost, and firmly entrenched in his mind.

"I saw the strength of the Juumonji family during the Yokohama incident. Does the Tooyama family have the same level of strength?"

It seems that Miyuki decided to change the subject to stop Katsushige, who at any moment could say something superfluous.

"The official line of research for the Tenth Laboratory is "magic with a large coverage area, creating virtual structures," but the real goal was to create magicians, which will be the last line of defense of the central government. The "products" of these studies, the Juumonji and Tooyama families, received combat power, placing them on a completely different level than the rest of the 25 houses."

When Maya talked about 25 houses, it was not a mistake in her calculations. Among the 28 houses, the Juumonji, Tooyama and Yotsuba families were those they consider "different."

"The last line of defense of the central government? Not the entire capital?"

From the published results of the Tenth Laboratory's research, one can easily remember the key phrase: "In case of emergency, the magicians of the Juumonji family will be the last line of defense of the capital." This means that if the magicians of the Juumonji family are on guard, they will be able to prevent even a direct attack on the capital. This was the basis of Miyuki's doubt.

The magic of the multiple barriers of the Juumonji family is not very suitable against infantry, but manifests itself fully against mobile troops, aviation and missile weapons. Their powerful magic barriers boast of the power to stop not only artillery shells and large bombs, but also hypersonic missiles and even tactical nuclear weapons (although they are in fact prohibited).

There is no need to encircle the entire metropolitan area with a barrier. It is enough to form a barrier on the trajectory of the projectile's flight. If it's a bomb, then you can wrap it with a barrier that will absorb the explosion. And such accuracy, speed and strength are possessed by the magicians of the Juumonji family.

Their characteristics are enough to "protect the city from attack," so they can be called "the last defense line of the capital."

However, Maya said that the real purpose of the Tenth Laboratory is "the last line of defense of the central government." If this is not just a play on words, then the magic that the Tooyama family possesses will be different from the magic of the Juumonji family.

"Yes. It seems that Miyuki-san does not know. The magic of the Tooyama family is designed to protect people."

"I did not know either. So, the magic of the Tooyama family is designed for personal protection?"

Asked by Yuka, Maya shook her head imperturbably.

"Not personal. To protect a group of people, it creates for everyone an individual barrier. This is the magic of the Tooyama family."

"Simultaneous targeting? Or is it a Multiple Casting?"

"I do not currently know such details." With a smile Maya answered the question of the interested Fumiya.

Tatsuya felt that further questions to Maya might turn out to be not good.

"I understood. We will interact with Juumonji, Tooyama and Kudo Minoru with extreme caution."

He intervened in the ongoing conversation, bowing his head showing his consent. Perhaps Katsushige like Tatsuya, realized the danger so he did not continue to talk about the magic of the Tooyama family.

"And yet, is it really good to adopt a policy of one-sided confrontation? I cannot accept the plan to use Miyuki-san as an advertisement, but I do not think that completely refusing to cooperate with other families in the fight against anti-magic movement is a good idea."

Instead, he expressed concern about the appointed policy of disobedience.

"If there is nothing more, there will be no confrontation... But cooperation is impossible, until the other side apologizes? Because they wanted to use the next head of our family. This is the limit."

Katsushige responded to Yuka's speech with a surprised face.

"Yuka-san... Why are you so belligerent?"Setting the conditions is, of course, good, but when it comes to isolation, the balance will clearly not be in our favor."

"Is that true?" Those who expressed their disagreement with Katsushige's rather judicious opinion were Fumiya, not Yuka. "Isolation from the whole of society is undoubtedly fatal. However, will isolation only from the society of magicians somehow harm us? Moreover, the conversation is about the problem of isolation only within the framework of the 28 houses, which are only a small part of the magical community. There is no reason to be afraid of such isolation."

Fumiya's arguments proved to be compelling. It seems that this was the thinking of a young inexperienced person when unnecessary details were discarded.

"Society", which provides the Yotsuba family with the products of civilization, is indispensable. And the magical skills necessary for their existence, like magicians, they have enough of their own. The Yotsuba family had the power to defend itself only by themselves, even in the event of a conflict with the Stars from the USNA, which have a reputation as the world's strongest magician unit.

"In case of emergency, even if it comes to total war with other Numbers, all the forces of the main and branch families should be thrown to the support of Tatsuya-san and Miyuki-san."

"My instructions do not change. Completely ignore all plans for turning the next head into an idol. In case of an attack, you can answer at your discretion."

It is unclear whether she supported the last utterance of Fumiya, but with these words, Maya put an end to the discussion of this problem.

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His shoulders rose and fell to the beat of his heavy breathing. His legs almost did not obey and could hardly stand on the floor. However, the light of fighting spirit has not yet extinguished in the eyes of Saburou standing in front of Erika. These eyes were not looking with malice. He merely watched.

Erika's lips curved in a smile. And the next moment her silhouette disappeared. The image of the knife fell from Saburou's belt.

A dull sound was heard twice to the left of Saburou.

Starting to move to the right, Saburou turned to the left. A wooden sword with a length of wakizashi, which he held in his right hand, he exposed in front of his face.

Erika's wooden sword touched the wrist of this right hand.

"Well, it's much better than before."

After Erika lowered her wooden sword, Saburou also left the fighting stance.

There was no pain from the received impact. After fights began with Leo, the long training with Erika was only now completed.

This could be called an additional occupation. Erika tried to attack at a level of strength just slightly above Saburou's skills, and Saburou, using his psychokinesis, tried to slow Erika's moves and get a chance to counterattack. And this has been repeated many times.

Since he did not receive any real blows, there was also no need for medical magic. However, he had to constantly move all this time, so now all the muscles of his body ached from spasms.

"Okay, we'll finish up for today. I will not tolerate negligent work."

"...Thank you very much!"

Because of fatigue, the language of the bowed Saburou twisted, and his words sounded like "Spa... shoe."

When he lifted his head, Erika had already disappeared from the dojo. It looks like she went to the shower.

Saburou's body collapsed to the floor, as if he had been paralyzed. Leo seated in the vicinity, looking at the half-chilled Saburou, thought about Erika.

The training that Erika appointed Saburou was not her style at all. Leo could not tell what was going on, but it was clearly different from the approach to his training technique "Usub Kagero."

Erika took helping Saburou's very seriously. She wanted to give him the power, not skills.

At least, so it seemed Leo.

And this, in Leo's opinion, was not in the style of Erika.

Leo came to the Chiba dojo, because he was asked to become an opponent of Saburou in training. Leo himself believed that it was rather "forced", rather than "asked." Therefore, since Saburou's training ended, he no longer had any reason to remain here. Leo said goodbye to Saburou who was still unable to get up, and went to the shower room for the dojo pupils.

The last time Leo was deceived and he came across Erika in the bathroom. At that time, the compensation for seeing Erika's body wrapped in a towel was such that, compared to her, the cauldron in hell would seem like a cool bath. Although he thought that he was lucky enough to get rid of it easily, he swore to himself that "the second time it will never happen again."

In the distant past, the dojo adhered to the rules of "taking a cold bath when sweating," but in the present era, a modern hot shower is simply irreplaceable. The huge Chiba family dojo has a shower room, where there are ten fully enclosed shower cabins in a row.

The problem is that there is no division for the male and female areas (and most of the students are men), but there is no reason to worry about spying, since the cabins are locked from the inside, and there is enough room to change.

In addition, women were allowed to use the bathroom of the main building, so the shower room of the dojo in fact was used mostly by men. Only one booth was occupied. Not caring about this, Leo walked into the next booth with a bag of change clothes in his hand.

Without much fuss, in automatic mode, it took him about three minutes. Just standing, smeared with all the universal liquid soap-shampoo and quickly washed off the sweat. He massaged his hair with his fingers, and while washing his face with his hands, the rest he left to the shower machine, thereby he quickly finished taking a shower.

But the automatic shower cabin was only for the washing of the body. Drying off and changing clothes were also necessary. Having included these actions in the total calculation, he left the shower cubicle 5 minutes after entering.

On the opposite side of the shower walls was a mirror, and next to it was a simple dressing table. Leo usually just wiped his hair, but today he suddenly wanted to use a hairdryer.

Now he was in a T-shirt and shorts. The jacket remained in the locker in the dojo. Now, in the middle of April, on the street in this form it will be pretty cool, however here, in the shower room it was warm, because the heater worked.

Perhaps, because of the relaxed atmosphere, he succumbed to the temptation. Standing in front of the mirror, he strained his biceps. The kind of strong hand was enough to satisfy the pride of the young guy.

Feeling better, Leo, who had only strained his right hand, added a left. He puffed out his chest and bent his elbows over his shoulders and stood in the most famous pose, called "Double biceps in front".

Then he put his hands on his waist, and straightening his shoulders, stood in the pose "Wide back muscles in front."

The developed latissimus muscles of the back formed the shape of an inverted triangle (the shape of the letter V).

Then, slightly bending forward, taking his fists slightly forward from the waist, straining at the same time the muscles of the arms, chest, shoulders and neck, this was the "Most Muscular" pose.

Leo returned to the original pose with one right hand raised, looked at that hand and sighed contentedly.

"...What are you doing?"

"Ueeaa!?"

Leo, who had lost his alertness, did not notice Erika reflected in the mirror until she spoke.

"Yes, and you took a hair dryer."

Leo, who was flushed, hurried to turn away. In addition to the thought that he was found in this shameful activity, there was something else.

"W-why are you in this form!?"

Leo simply could not look directly at the reflection of Erika in the mirror in such an unseemly appearance for a girl.

She was wearing a T-shirt, the length of which was barely enough to cover her breasts. And from below there were only short tight shorts, covering the legs only slightly at the base of the thighs. The slender waist, arms and legs, as well as the skin on the top of the chest (so called "décolleté zone"), reddening from the rush of blood, were completely naked.

"Ha-ha? It's a normal look when you get out of the shower. All the necessary clothes are on me."

"T-this I understand! B-But why are you here...!?"

"Why not? I was too lazy to go to the main building."

Saying this in a tired voice, Erika sat on a stool next to Leo and held out her hand to the fan.

"Well, do not you want to dry your hair quickly now? It looks like your wonderful behavior has already subsided."

"N-no, I, perhaps, I'll go!"

Leo threw the hair dryer in a sharp movement, quickly turned and walked towards the exit from the shower. Seeing the departing Leo, Erika shrugged her shoulders. Having finished drying her hair, she threw a robe over her T-shirt and shorts and went to the extension, which plays the role of her room.

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At a meeting that continued with tea drinking, the theme of Tatsuya's report flowed into the story of a magical attack that was supposedly "Tuman Bomba."

"That is, even Tatsuya-kun could not recognize the user of this magic?"

"Yes." Tatsuya confirmed Katsushige's guess.

"But if this magic was "Tuman Bomba", then..." Katsushige thought for a moment, then expressed his thoughts. "...This means that the New Soviet Union has really begun to implement the ultra-long-range auxiliary targeting system in practice."

"Auxiliary targeting system in ultra-long range... Like the Third Eye, used for the Material Burst?"

Katsushige nodded to the inquiring Yuka.

"Although, because of the supposed properties of this magic, the accuracy of aiming, like the Third Eye, is not needed. On the other hand, it seems to me that the computing power of just one magician will not be enough to compute the copying of an infinite number of magic sequences, changing the values of variables for simultaneous activation. I think they use a complex system that includes a large computer that helps with calculations."

After the first sentence, the rest he spoke, turning to Maya.

"Really. Tatsuya-san, what do you think?"

"I think that's a reasonable assumption. Moreover, when using a large CAD that has such integrated functions that allow all variables to be preliminarily entered into the activation sequence, the load on the magician must be heavily reduced."

"That is, the magician will only have to count the ready activation sequence?"

"Even reading the activation sequence can be automated."

"Does all this really reduce the burden on the magician?" Yuka expressed her doubt about the discussion of Maya and Tatsuya. "After all, if magic is activated by automated reading of the activation sequence, then the magician can get into a situation when the finished magic will exceed his capabilities?"

"Magic, beyond their abilities, simply will not activate. Although, if you use the "Sorcery Booster", then, perhaps, it will." There was no hesitation in the voice of Tatsuya responding to Yuka.

"Speaking about the amplifier, did you mean " Sorcery Booster", which was distributed by the Hong Kong mafia? Was not the organization that produced them destroyed?"

"This does not mean that the manufacturing method was lost. Well, all this are of course just guesses."

"That's right."

It seemed that Yuka still wants to say something, but the tone of Maya's response made her retreat.

"I'm also interested in how this magic works, but there is a more urgent question..."

Finishing her sentence, Maya looked at Miyuki with the question "Is it interesting, did she understand?" in the view. Perhaps there was some teaching lesson for the next head.

"I think the most urgent task is how to protect ourselves from magic, which is supposedly "Tuman Bomba"."

Fortunately, Tatsuya had already told her about it last night, so Miyuki was not troubled to answer. Maya nodded in satisfaction. She did not know that Miyuki's answer was actually overheard from Tatsuya, or she did not care that you can get answers by fraud.

"To begin with, let's put aside the question of whether the magic that generates a detonating gas and explodes it is Tuman Bomba. How would Miyuki-san defend herself against this magic?"

About this Tatsuya also gave her a lecture, only on the way here on VTOL, not last night.

"If you can predict the activation time, then I think it can be stopped by the "Freeze Flame". But to catch the right moment is a rather difficult task..."

"Freeze Flame" is magic that prevents a fire, keeping the temperature of the target object below a certain level. Even if the "Tuman Bomba" magic combines hydrogen and oxygen without application of heat, the synthesis still releases heat, which can be stopped by the "Freeze Flame", which is precisely designed to prevent heating.

"Understood. What about Katsushige-san?"

"Hmm... I think, depending on the scale of the attack, I can get by using the "Density Manipulation" to isolate the oxygen from the hydrogen immediately after their creation, thereby causing an error in the logic of the attacking magic and forcing it to fail activation."

"What does Fumiya-san think?"

"I think I will not be able to do anything other than trying to protect myself with a barrier, but my sister's "Perfect Diffusion" will probably be able to prevent the activation of the magic."

One by one, the so-called detoxification facilities gradually created an optimistic atmosphere.

"It is theoretically possible to neutralize with the help of "Density Manipulation" and prevent activation with the help of "Perfect Diffusion", but..."

At this point, Tatsuya intervened with criticism.

"As Miyuki said, the main problem is whether the moment of activation of the enemies magic can be guessed. This high-speed distribution of magic sequences by copying, I for convenience called "Chain Casting". I believe that it will be quite difficult to have time to call up your magic before the end of the call of enemy magic."

"However after all this, supposedly Tuman Bomba requires water on the whole area of the attack zone? On the sea or the lake everything is clear, but on land it is necessary to create first a fog or a puddle of water? I think, in this case, to some extent it is possible to predict the attack in advance."

This time, Yuka spoke in an unexpectedly serious tone. However, Tatsuya refuted these arguments without saying anything superfluous.

"If I were the user of that magic, I would just wait for a rainy day. We are in Japan, not in the desert in the Middle East. Finding the opportunity will be easy."

Yuka only shrugged her shoulders. Tatsuya could not understand whether she expresses any meaning in this, or does not think about anything at all. He only worried for a moment, and decided to give up thinking about it.

"Chain Casting copying is extremely fast. If the right moment cannot be precisely determined, it is better to be protected by barrier magic if possible."

When the words "Barrier Magic" sounded, the views of all those present, except Tatsuya and Miyuki, involuntarily rushed behind Miyuki's back. Standing there and kept silent all the time Minami cringed under the gaze of five people.

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After returning home and entering his room, Leo immediately went to the videophone. He could not get rid of the thoughts that haunted him all the way home, and could not suppress the desire to talk with someone.

After a long call waiting, an image appeared on the screen of the videophone. There was an interior of the room in Japanese style. Given that the owner of the room is a schoolboy, one could call it "a study room," but because of the availability of bookcases that reach to the ceiling and are completely stuffed with paper books unusual for this time, this room was more like a "library."

"Leo, a call from you is quite a rare occurrence." Mikihiko said from the screen of the video-conference.

"Oh, Mikihiko. Did I interrupt you?"

"...Did something happen?"

Seeing Leo's unusually depressed expression, Mikihiko also changed in the face.

"Yes, I wanted to hear someone's opinion on one issue..."

The atmosphere of seriousness was transmitted even through the display. However, at this point something completely unexpected happened.

"Yoshida-kun, in the bathroom... Ah, I'm sorry."

On the side of Mikihiko, the microphone caught the girl's voice calling from far away (possibly from the entrance to the library). But that was not all. At the very edge of the display, partially appeared the figure of a girl who looked in the doorway, in which Leo recognized Mizuki.

"Excuse me! I interrupted you!"

"Wait! Leo, you're wrong! You've misunderstood everything!"

The panicking Leo trying to turn off the video, he tried to stop the even more panicky Mikihiko.

"...I do not know what I misunderstood. I do not think you called to your house to do something n-indecent."

"Wh-What does it mean n-n-indecent!?"

"W-well, that's it. Between a man and a woman..."

"I would not do anything like that! I would not be so rude to Shibata-san!"

"Yes, I said that I do not think you did it!"

"Yoshida-kun, did you say something about me...?"

Mizuki reappeared at the door at a time when the confusion between Leo and Mikihiko reached the limit. However, unlike the previous time, not only Mizuki appeared on the screen.

"Mizuki-and, for a long time?"

This time, Mizuki did not just look in the room, and entered, and behind her was another girl.

Leo remembered the face of this girl. It was his classmate who is a member of the Arts Club.

"Ah. Yoshida-kun is talking on the phone. Then we will postpone the work on the ice sculpture and do something else. Because there is not much time left."

This schoolgirl took Mizuki's hand and dragged her along.

"...I suppose that other members of the art club also came?" Waiting until the girls disappeared from the screen, Leo asked.

"That's right. Shibata-san and I are not alone here alone. So do not say stupid things."

Did he mean that something could happen if they were only two?

Thought Leo. However, he decided that continuing to talk about it would be rude.

"Sorry."

"...Come on. Tell me, what did you want to hear about my opinion?"

Leo felt relieved that his misunderstanding did not turn into a conflict, and the conversation returned to the original theme. And then he remembered why he even called.

"Yes. The problem is not that big, but..."

"I'm listening."

"Have you noticed Erika's strange behavior lately?"

"Erika? What happened?"

"Not that something with it was radiant... You see, today Erika called me to the dojo in her house."

"To the dojo?"

"Yes. And she says this: "I want you to help me with one first-grader." I was supposed to help Erika in training the technique of "Usub Kagero," and to look at the first-grader who liked her was interesting too."

"Erika attracted by first-grader... Likely you are talking about Yaguruma-kun?"

"Mikihiko, do you know about Saburo?"

"I saw him a little after the ceremony... And indeed, there are rumors that Erika trains Yaguruma-kun. And what's wrong?"

"It feels like Erika... well, somehow is too hard on training."

"...Yes, this is unusual for her."

Mikihiko, who knows Erika's approach to training "you want to learn technique - do it yourself," was slightly puzzled by these words of Leo.

"In my case, it can be said, there was also an exception. But Saburo's teaching is even fundamentally different from mine. From the very first glance, it is felt that this is not a learning technique, but an attempt to become stronger."

"This is really... not like Erika."

The face of Mikihiko on the screen became serious. Knowing him for a long time, Leo knew that this betrays his strong sense of alarm.

"...And then, after that, I came across her in the shower room."

"...And?"

Trying to speak, suppressing indecision, he created a long pause in the conversation. And Leo and Mikihiko did unnaturally serious faces.

"I meant the shower room of the dojo. The one that students usually use."

"...Yeah, I get it. And what?"

"After the shower, Erika went out in short T-shirt and shorts. With a naked stomach, just like in a swimsuit."

"Leo, this sounds quite safe ..."

My whole body was trembling, and it was not shaking with excitement.

"Mikihiko, do you also think so?"

"Uh, what are you talking about?"

Seeing Leo's suddenly serious expression looking straight at the camera, Mikihiko rounded his eyes and froze in that form.

"I'm not talking about the fact that I saw her naked or in one underwear. And about the fact that it's not strange that she did not care that a guy saw her figure, covered only in a couple of places, after she came out of the shower? Was it pretending, did she really care?"

"It's... more like your misunderstanding, Leo. Erika herself said that for her this situation is normal?"

"I think so too. That's why it's strange."

"....."

Mikihiko could neither confirm nor disprove Leo's remark. Because he realized that the situation could be much more serious than he first thought.

"Is she overextending herself too much? After the death of her older brother, she looked calm, but it seems, in fact, she is very hurt?"

"I think so, but... Are you saying this has something to do with the current state of Erika?"

"It's just a guess, but... Is not it like she wants revenge?"

"Revenge... For Toshikazu-san?"

Leo silently nodded in response to the question of Mikihiko.

"But to whom? After all, the criminals responsible for the attack in Hakone who killed Toshikazu-san are already dead?"

For the rest of society, the search for those responsible for the attack in Hakone is still underway. However, the lost the eldest son of the Chiba family was partially revealed the truth. Leo and Mikihiko also were briefed on the incident, except for classified information.

"Is it not... Tatsuya?"

"Uh...?"

Hearing this completely unexpected opinion, Mikihiko lost his speech. However, immediately realizing himself, began to deny.

"Tatsuya is not to blame. Perhaps, those who stopped Toshikazu-san were Tatsuya, but... it was he who freed Toshikazu-san from the dark magic. The people of the Chiba family should be grateful to Tatsuya."

"Mikihiko, this is the reason. Emotions are in fact what constantly goes against the mind?"

Mikihiko again could not find anything to say.

"However, I do not think Erika wants anything, like Tatsuya's death."

"Do not say such dangerous words...!"

"Sorry sorry. I wanted to ask you if Erika would do something so self-willed."

"What do you think? In any case, in our company, you've known her the longest."

"Willfully...?"

"Well, you understand me... I mean, she wants to defeat Tatsuya at any cost. Even so much that he rejects her femininity, if only to stun him."

"...Are you exaggerating?" Mikihiko muttered with a shocked face. But then he shook his head."I believe that she did not think about such extreme measures, but... and to say that our fears are totally unfounded, too."

Leo looked silently at Mikihiko from the screen of the videophone.

"Let's watch Erika for a while."

"Yes, that's right."

Having said this, Leo smiled unintentionally and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if Erika is going to use me for something, then I have no particular choice."

A small smile appeared on the face of Mikihiko that was displayed on the screen.

"Yes, you are a good couple."

"Stop it."

Leo frowned, as if he thought something unpleasant.

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Minoru, invited to the house of Saegusa, in addition to a late lunch, was also invited to dinner.

"I sent a message to your onii-san."

"Many thanks, Mayumi-san."

"We can also provide a helicopter for delivery home."

"Thank you, Kasumi-san. I'm taking you up on your word. Saying this, Minoru looked shyly around."

"What is it, Minoru-kun? Do not worry."

"No, nothing... Izumi-san, is your father at home?"

Laying the table has already been completed. The dishes were prepared for four: Minoru, Mayumi, Kasumi and Izumi. The place of Koichi was not prepared. Koichi did not show up for lunch either. Its not that Minoru wanted to talk about something with him, but thought it necessary to at least greet him properly.

"It seems that he went somewhere without telling anyone anything."

Minoru's question was answered not by Izumi, which he asked, but by Mayumi, having previously specified from the servants.

"They seem to be having dinner with my older brother together outside the house. I'm sorry that I will not be able to greet you."

"No, it's worth it to apologize. I should have welcomed you when we first arrived."

"As Izumi-chan has already said, you do not have to worry about such things. Because Minoru-kun is our guest."

"Haha... thank you very much."

Minoru relaxed slightly. He laughed because it was rare for him to relax in this way. Usually, Minoru's daily life is full of tense moments.

Outstanding magical power and a weak body, which constantly drives him to bed, gave Minoru pain that he could not live up to his expectations. His exceptional intellect and even his beauty, mercilessly piercing the eyes of other people, exerted strong pressure on him.

Despite the presence of talent. Despite the availability of abilities. Only a weak body prevents him from fulfilling his duties. These are the thoughts of Minoru himself that pushed himself into a corner.

I cannot perform the duties that must be performed.

The feeling of guilt for this made Minoru adopt a lifestyle with uncertain behavior towards the surrounding people.

He was able to relax in the company of the Saegusa sisters because they were not worried about his beauty.

Minoru was surprised and grateful that they looked at him as a friend, for the first time after seeing him for a long time.

Although they had behaved this way before, but until now it was not natural. He could not understand why. For him it was not clear that the reason was that they were accustomed to the even more perfect beauty of Miyuki.

It was inevitable. After all, Minoru was first impressed by Miyuki as an "outstanding magician", and beauty was secondary. In addition, it was because people close to Miyuki also showed an interest in Minoru's appearance.

In this regard, Minoru recalled "the girl next to Miyuki, looking at his face."

A slight smile surfaced on his face as he remembered how the blushing Minami ran away from him, lying in bed. Remembering her, he did not feel any discomfort.

The views of the opposite sex directed at him for Minoru were oppressive and overwhelmingly gloomy. It was always like this, but, remembering Minami, he felt warmly.

She seemed sweet to him, charming. Minoru had such feelings for the first time.

"...Minoru-kun, what happened? You are noticeably cheerful."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I remember something pleasant..."

Minoru's cheeks slightly reddened. He was embarrassed by the possible ambiguous meaning of his smiling face, which the girls saw.

"At such moments, Minoru looks like an ordinary boy." Kasumi said with a smile. To hear from these sisters say that he was "ordinary" for Minoru was a refreshing taste of a sense of comfort.

"...By the way, have the wounded students already recovered?"

Dinner began with innocuous topics, however, unfortunately, it was not possible to finish with secular conversations alone. Because it had bothered them ever since they heard, and they had to be sure. Mayumi asked about the condition of the Second High students who were seriously injured as a result of the "Humanists" attack on their way home from school.

"Fortunately, there were no difficulties, all of them have completely recovered."

"Thank God..."

Izumi sighed with relief. She was also attacked by fanatics from the anti-magic movement, although she herself did not suffer. So the suffering of the pupils of the other school were not alien to her.

"And what about the "Humanists"? The charges were not pursued?"
Minoru smiled with restraint when he heard Kasumi's question.

"That's all right. Taking into account the serious injuries, it was concluded that the use of magic was justified."

"Well, it was quite natural. By the way, were the attackers arrested?"

If the self-defense of students of Second High was recognized as legitimate, then all severity of the prosecution was to be transferred to the "Humanists". Under the intense gaze of Kasumi thinking so, Minoru's expression took on an apologetic look.

"The attackers... were diagnosed that their mind was clouded with drugs, and as a result they were acquitted."

"How so! The pupils of Second High suffered greatly from their actions! Is it justified by insanity to apply to such serious crimes!?"

"...I've also heard a couple of conversations. Since the pupils of Second High are magicians, they should not be badly injured from attacks by ordinary people. In fact, there are no complications from injuries, so it was not a serious crime... that's the case."

"What now, if the victim is a magician, then the criminal is not to blame!?"

"Are you saying that laws apply to us magicians, and ordinary citizens unequally?" Izumi in a voice besieged with sarcasm, exploded in the wrath of Kasumi. This argument of the sister had nothing to refute not only Kasumi, but also Mayumi.

"You're right."

Minoru also agreed. More precisely, on this occasion he resented even more Izumi.

"If it were so, the coexistence of people and magicians would be impossible."

But Saegusa' sisters did not hear this whisper. If they found out about his despair about this, then in the future it could deliver some problems...

◊ ◊ ◊

Tatsuya's group returned to Tokyo at 8 pm. The place of return turned out to be the roof of the building in Tofu, on which they met the day on the way to the main house. From the small VTOL, six came out: Tatsuya, Miyuki, Minami, as well as Katsushige, Kotona and Kanata.

"Tatsuya-sama, on this I have to say goodbye to you."

"Thank you very much, Hanabishi-san."

"These are undeserved words. Please call me Hyougo. Now, I beg your pardon, I will wait for our next meeting."

Tatsuya did not ask Hyougo which meeting he had in mind, but only escaped the departing VTOL.

"Tatsuya-kun, Miyuki-san."

Hearing the voice of Katsushige, Tatsuya turned around. Miyuki looked at Katsushige with caution.

"Have you two heard about this building?"

Neither Katsushige, nor Kotona, nor Kanata showed any concern with the suspicion read in Miyuki's glance. Katsushige asked the question in a formal, polite tone.

"I can assume that this is the property of the Yotsuba family, but..."

With a face expressing that the answer is only partially correct, Katsushige nodded at Tatsuya's answer.

"This building was built to move the headquarters of the Yotsuba family to Tokyo."

"Earlier I was wondering if such a plan exists. It seems there is."

"The whole living area will be occupied by Yotsuba's people. The apartments will also be used as temporary accommodation for battles participants."

"Clear. That's why the structure of the building resembles a fortress."

This building was located in the middle of a large undeveloped site. It is not difficult to guess that this site played the role of a "serf trench" and was stuffed with a large number of protective systems.

The office part up to the third floor had absolutely no windows, and its lighting was organized by a fiber-optic structure. Residential areas, located from floors 4 and above, instead of windows for the most part had balconies, so it was difficult to see the interior from outside.

Completely covering the top floor and the roof, the protective fence was installed not to protect it from falls, but to protect it from outside penetration. Instead of the blinds on the windows, armor plates may be provided.

"We too will soon move here."

"It's clear."

Katsushige's words were not unexpected. They did not just build it all. To grant the residence to the next head of the branch family is reasonable in many senses.

"Tatsuya-san, you will also move here."

However, Kotona's words which continued beyond Katsushige, were unexpected.

"But there is nothing to worry about, because a complete replacement of the training equipment is already under way."

"Did she both say that?" Instead of Tatsuya hovering in surprise, Kotona was asked by Miyuki.

"Yes."

"That's what they asked us to convey." Following Kotona's nod, Katsushige added, after which these three (including Kanata) entered the building.

Having settled on the couch in the living room at home, Tatsuya and Miyuki first chose the topic of the discussion, which was reported by Katsushige.

"Onii-sama, did you know about this?"

The question was expected. Without any hesitation in using Onii-sama's appeal, Miyuki asked Tatsuya about moving. It seems that Tatsuya would become Tatsuya most definitely, for Miyuki she still needs some time.

"I remember that I heard something about moving to the Yotsuba base in Tokyo. But I did not think that this would happen so soon."

For Tatsuya, this also turned out to be a surprise, which he admitted to Miyuki.

"Perhaps both of us believe it necessary to strengthen our security with you."

"Does this mean that someone has aimed at us?"

The face of Minami, who came with tea, became tense.

"Perhaps it is. However, I think this is a preparation for the fact that Yotsuba's people in the future may have more chances of being disturbed."

"Are you thinking about confrontation with the other 27 houses?"

"Not only the 27 houses."

"Do... do you mean a protest against the government?"

According to Miyuki's voice, it was noticeable that she began to lose her composure.

"No. Since the government is not a monolithic structure, it should not become a confrontation with state power. But if this happens, then those who pull the trigger will not be both, uh, and I."

"Onii-sama..."

Tatsuya gently stroked Miyuki's hand, not concealing her anxiety.

Feeling Tatsuya's hand, Miyuki's fingers relaxed a little.

"I think that both sides have no intention of a conflict with the Japanese government. But the probability of a conflict with the self-defense forces is not zero."

Miyuki again tensed, hands clenched into fists. With a smile, saying "Everything will be fine," Tatsuya gently stroked Miyuki on the head.

"Do not worry, I will not let it reach a full-scale armed battle."

"...Miyuki is happy to hear that."

Miyuki took advantage of the moment and clung to Tatsuya. Looking at this, Minami did not want to run away this time, as usual, but also felt that the worry was disappearing.

Chapter 2

The day after the meeting of young people from the "28 houses", the Mitsuya family met an unexpected guest.

The name of this guest was Tooyama Tsukasa. On the lists of the military she was registered as a junior officer of the army of defense, Tooyama Tsukasa. Tooyama's name was not only used as an external cover, but was actually registered in all documents, like the real one.

This was not just a violation of some unspoken rules, but a full-fledged crime, but no one blamed her for this. Because it is the policy of the army, to hide the use of the strength of the Tooyama family. The magic of the Tooyama family was hidden by the authorities because of its nature.

It seems that power-hungry people wanted to keep it a secret from the civilians and have it ready to help key government members in case of emergency.

On the other hand, the Mitsuya family, besides the management of the Third Laboratory and associated with the Ten Master Clans of Affairs, also dealt with the sale of weapons. Therefore, like arms dealers, and not like magicians, they had connections leading to the shady side of this world.

As an exception to the family that has the genealogy of powerful magicians, the Mitsuya family, with the tacit consent of the government, is negotiating with foreign forces, so family members often secretly travel to other countries. And the information obtained in this way can be useful for the army. Also, secretly supplying weapons to foreign armed groups, they are intermediaries who promote the military actions desired by the Japanese government.

Relationships between the Mitsuya family and the military are not mutually beneficial. In these relations, the army receives much more benefits. Nevertheless, even the only advantage that they are allies of the self-defense forces, gives them the right to be aware of the intentions of the army. Magicians and government are not equal in status.

Tsukasa is a magician from the same 28 houses. Since the Tooyama family cannot be selected as one of the Ten Master Clans, its rank among the 28 houses is lower than that of the Mitsuya family. However, with Tooyama Tsukasa, deeply connected with the top of the self-defense forces, the Mitsuya family could not scornfully disregard her. On the contrary, the relationship between the Mitsuya family, the army and Tsukasa was such that they had to at least listen to it to some extent. The acquaintance of Shiina and Tsukasa happened precisely as a result of these relations, in which the Mitsuya family was to help the Tooyama family.

The adults from the Mitsuya family, who knew the truth about these relations, naturally, were unfriendly towards Tsukasa. Tsukasa herself understood this perfectly, but she did not care at all that they did not like her.

"I'm sorry to bother you when you're so busy."

"No, do not worry. So, what business do you have for us today?"

In response to the formal greeting of Tsukasa, the head of the family, Mitsuya Gen, immediately went on to the question of the visit. In his words the thought of "quickly finish the business and go away" was clearly read. The elder son Motoharu, who was present here, looked reproachfully at his father, but Gen did not pay attention to this look. All his attention was focused on Tsukasa.

"I heard about yesterday's meeting."

However, Tsukasa did not seem to intend to end the conversation quickly.

"...That's it." Muttered Gen with a helpless voice.

"I thought that Tooyama-san would also come there."

If he had left it to his father, he could have reached a quarrel. With this feeling, Motoharu sitting next to him a polite voice intervened in the conversation.

"The younger brother is busy with family affairs."

With her usual glued on polite smile, Tsukasa answered with words, which you cannot name the answer. Since Motoharu was also familiar with the circumstances of the Tooyama family, he did not elaborate on the details of this strange answer and decided to continue the conversation:

"So, what's going on with yesterday's meeting?"

"In such a very friendly atmosphere, you all strengthened your friendship."

"Yes, it was..."

"But unfortunately, in the end some people violated this harmony."

"...Everything was not so serious."

"Really? "To Tsukasa's words Motoharu answered with an icy glance.

"It seems that the man from Yotsuba did not stay for dinner after the meeting."

"It seems that he had a previously planned arrangement."

Motoharu tried to protect Tatsuya from being drawn into a conflict between the Tooyama and Yotsuba families. If it is decided that Tatsuya violates the unity of magicians, the Mitsuya family will have to cooperate with Tsukasa to solve this problem.

But it was a futile attempt.

"We are also concerned about the attitude of Shiba Tatsuya-san, who refuses to cooperate."

The opinion of Tsukasa was determined from the very beginning.

"By we do you mean the National Defense Forces?"

"Right. This is our area of responsibility, and we consider it necessary to verify whether Shiba Tatsuya impedes public safety."

"Shiba Tatsuya-dono is not military. The army does not have such powers. Even the Ten Master Clans, even the Tooyama family, should not have the authority to check the people of the Yotuba family."

Feeling that he can no longer remain silent, before this left the conversation with his son, Gen, inserted his words.

However, these arguments did not confuse Tsukasa.

"There is no authority, but you can check it out, right?"

Tsukasa smiled broadly at Gen. In this smile there was not a single drop of friendliness.

"...And what does Tooyama-san want from us?"

He decided that Tsukasa wants them to help her with some of her next tricky plan. To the question of Gen, in which the consent was already read, Tsukasa responded with a polite smile.

"I would like to take Shiina-chan for a short time to participate in our exercises."

Without giving anything to say who began to change in the face of Gen, Tsukasa immediately continued.

"Even though I said "teachings," nothing dangerous will be there. In addition, I already received the consent of Shiina-chan."

"When did you..." muttered the shocked Motoharu, and Gen irritatedly clucked his tongue. He did not care that it was impolite.

"In any case, I do not have the right to forbid it."

"This is not true. I would like Mitsuya-san to collaborate on his own."

Seeing Tsukasa's face, in which the provocation was clearly being read, Gen again clucked his tongue. It was nothing more than a manifestation of submission.

◇ ◇ ◇

In First High, after graduation.

Entering the school boardroom, Tatsuya, with the permission of Miyuki, went to the repair room of the Robotics Club.

Not on patrol. Sometimes he also occupied the Robotics Club room for Pixie's service, but today he did not go there for that.

"Senpai, I'm sorry for disturbing you for something like this."

Here he came to call on Shippou Takuma.

"Nothing. Is this a secret conversation?"

"Secret, you say...? I just did not want the president to hear about it..."

"Tell me." Tatsuya called on to continue to hesitate to tell Takuma.

"This is about what happened after yesterday sempai went home."

"Are you talking about lunch after the meeting? I believe my evil words caused a resurgence of indignation?"

"No, there was no indignation..."

In other words, it means that all the same it was said about Tatsuya's antagonizing.

"Sempai knew that his words would cause dissatisfaction to the other people present, and still decided to confront the current atmosphere of the meeting? Why did you drive yourself into a disadvantageous position by your behavior? "

Tatsuya was not obliged to answer Takuma's question. There was no sense of duty either.

"Even if the strong begin to respect the weak, the fear of the weak will not disappear until we abandon the very power threatening the weak."

However, at his whim, Tatsuya decided not to deny him boldly came with the question.

"...Do you mean that ordinary people will be afraid and envious because we are magicians?"

"People who are not magicians do not necessarily envy magicians. But fear is usually inevitable. Because for unarmed people, we are the ones who always carry weapons."

"...And so you objected to the appeal to society? Because the effect will not be good?"

"The reason for my refusal was that it was quite obvious that they wanted to force the next head of the Yotsuba family to take the burden."

"If there were intentions, like to force her to bear the main burden... Indeed, I think the way to bring the discussion to this was rather straightforward."

First, Takuma turned to his feelings, and spoke in defense of people unknown to him. But now, he expressed criticism of the methods of Tomokazu and the Saegusa family, apparently recalling some previous events relating to them.

"Shippou. I think you also understand that even if we have good intentions, we cannot always wait for the same from opponents."

"It seems... it is. I think I understand."

"Even if magicians conscientiously serve non-magicians, not everyone will appreciate it. I think that the probability that accumulated envy will grow into a flared hostility is not just a pessimist's nightmare."

"Is this pessimistic belief too much? But this..."

Takuma wanted to say that this is an exaggeration. But he could not utter these words. Because at that moment he noticed that this is a self-deception when he denies it as impossible.

"Of course, if my bride becomes an advertising idol, then you can expect some success. Still, she is beautiful, no matter what she says. In advertising, you do not need to use the "law of three B", because beauty alone is enough as an influence force."

Law 3B is an experimentally derived rule that shows that the use of Beauty, Children and Beast for advertising is very attractive to the public and easily gives a positive impression. And the use of beauty is not limited to advertising. Men tend to weaken before beautiful women, and women - in front of beautiful men. But in the case of Miyuki, this is a beauty that surpasses personal preferences, and can have an impact not only on the opposite sex, but also on women.

"However, the higher the effectiveness of advertising activities, the more stubborn people who do not like it. It can even reach fanaticism. If everything goes, as the Saegusa family expects, then Miyuki becomes the target of fanatics. I cannot allow such an obviously dastardly plan. Even to argue about this is outrageous."

"...I understand, to some extent, what the sempai thinks. But was it normal to talk about it in that situation? I think it was a bad decision, enter into a dispute, and finish it without explaining anything."

"In your opinion, Shippou, there's truth."

He was right. But Tatsuya carefully thought everything through before going to such actions.

"However, if I started arguing with the Saegusa family at that moment, it would bring even more hostility to me. Thus, the Saegusa family would still retain face, making me a bad guy."

Takuma listened in silence, slapping his eyes. He did not even think about this point of view.

"I do not mind helping magicians with society. I just think that we must take into account the risks associated with this. Extremists can take dangerous actions if they decide that society does not support them. For the sake of trying to "destroy the evil," they can go to suicide bomber attacks."

"Evil...?"

"Imagine that there were some strong outsiders. Since they are strangers, no one will consider them their defenders. People will not know if they will harm them. But they will understand that they will not be able to defend themselves. And it does not matter whether these opponents really think to harm them. But only for the reason that they can be in danger, unless people will not want the existence of these opponents to stop? And if you think about how to call this existence, then, I think, it will just be 'evil.'"

"For supporters of the anti-magic movement, magicians are... 'evil'?"

"It seems so to me. I do not mean that magicians are absolutely strong in everything, but in terms of harm, they are certainly one of the strongest. And the weak do not trust the strong. And in this they are right. After all, a strong one can trample a weak one at any moment."

"So the weak call the strong as evil...? To escape from fear of ignorance when they are trampled?"

That is, Tatsuya wanted to avoid Miyuki becoming a symbol of this "evil". After all these explanations, Takuma finally began to understand what Tatsuya was worried about.

"The situation cannot be solved by the oppression of the weak. As long as there are strong people, like us. We cannot stop being strong to solve this conflict. Magic is the natural power of a magician. The magician cannot get rid of the power of magic."

"Sempai... do you think that the coexistence of magicians and non-magicians is impossible?"

"Coexistence with a partner who does not want coexistence is an extremely difficult task."

After answering the tautology*, Tatsuya left. But Takuma did not feel cheated by Tatsuya.

[*]a phrase or expression in which the same thing is said twice in different words

◇◇◇

The sun was already deep in the west, and the time was coming to go home from school. Leo, who ended up clubbing, went to a cafe to quench his hunger.

By exchanging greetings along the way (sociable Leo knew more than two-thirds of the total number of pupils of the 2nd and 3rd years of schooling), he went to an automated counter and exchanged a food voucher with a built-in chip for a sandwich. As he took a drink of plain water. He looked around the cafe for a free table and found a first-grader he had recently dealt with.

"Sabrou, can I sit with you?"

"Sai-si-senpai! Please."

Immersed in his thoughts and staring at an empty cup of coffee, Sabrou, when he heard the voice, finally noticed Leo. To Sabrou's troubled tone, Leo said "I apologize for the disturbance" and sat opposite him.

"Are you waiting for someone?"

"Yes, Shiina."

Hearing Sabrou's answer, Leo thought: "Was it worth asking?". Becoming his opponent in training, he learned about Sabrou's situation. Even about the fact that before entering First High he was dismissed from the position of bodyguard.

Leo did not feel uncomfortable about this, but decided to change the subject.

"Did you train with Erika today?"

"Yes..."

He did not have any bruises, but on closer examination, it was noticeable that Saburo was severely drained. It's clear that he worries if he will be able to protect his childhood friend on his way home in such a state, but Leo decided that this does not concern him. When Saburo was removed from the post of guard, of course, she should have been appointed a substitute. And the responsibility should be borne by those people, not Saburo. Until Saburo returns to the defense of Shiina.

"I am very grateful to her. For the fact that she trains an inexperienced person like me..."

"I think, you cannot worry about this. Because she likes it."

"It is, but when you say it, it sounds somehow disgusting."

"Ova-ah!?" Suddenly he heard the voice of the one under discussion, Leo jumped upright in the chair. Erika was standing right behind Leo. From his place Saburo could see her appearance. But despite this, Saburo was surprised no less than Leo. "Wiped the presence and crept up! Are you a ninja or what?"

"The technique of erasing ones presence is not only used by ninjas. This is an indispensable skill for attacking melee fighters."

"It's an absolute lie, is not it...?" Leo groaned and fell on a chair, as if he had lost all his strength. On this comical scene with Leo falling apart in the chair, a chuckle sounded from behind Erika's back.

"Oh, is Mizuki here too?"

"I just arrived."

Seated opposite Leo, Saburou fussed. From the appearance of an unfamiliar girl from the third year he felt uneasy.

"Saburou."

Erika having managed to make the first movement, Saburou stopped, who with his whole appearance showed that he wants to escape.

"This is Shibata Mizuki. Unlike us, she is an ordinary peaceful pupil First High, so you cannot involve her in all sorts of dangerous things."

"I would not do anything like that..."

Saburou involuntarily stood up and began to protest. But then he remembered that he had to do something.

"Uh, nice to meet you. My name is Yaguruma Saburou."

Saburou made a bow with the entire upper body, bent at the waist.

Realizing what his behavior was with excitement, Mizuki did not say too much and laughed.

"My name is Shibata Mizuki. Glad to meet you."

From her emanated a warm, kind atmosphere, which somehow reminded him of Shiina.

"...Yaguruma, why are you blushing?"

"I'm not red!"

"Do not even think about it. Because Mizuki is the girl of Miki."

"E-Erika-chan!?"

"My name is Mikihiko."

The agitated Mizuki, who tried to protest, was interrupted by Mikihiko's standard phrase who entered the cafe a second ago.

"... And? What about me?"

It seems that in the noise of the chatter of many visitors to the cafe he caught only the "Miki" he knew, and did not understand what the conversation was about.

This proves that, despite the protest, in the depths of consciousness he takes the nickname "Miki".

Smiling Erika did not have time to answer Mikihiko.

"Nothing!"

Because it was ahead of Mizuki's cry.

"Sh-Shibata-san?"

"And..."

Mikihiko was dumbfounded, Mizuki blushed. Erika shrugged, looking at the two who had fallen into this ridiculous situation.

"Miki. Is it normal that the head of the disciplinary committee skips school in such a place?"

Erika thought that continuing to joke about Mizuki is bad form, and she decided to change the subject.

It seems, understanding the purpose of Erika, Mikihiko scowled his face. "It's almost time to go home. It's okay if you leave a little early."

His tone of voice this time was not tense, but he felt lightheaded.

"Aha, extra time... During the spring battle of the disciplinary committee, the newcomers clubs recruitment week."

"This year, because there are much less problems than in the past. Things are now much easier."

"Is this true?"

There was an unexpected question from Mizuki, who had almost lost her face. She herself did not participate in the recruitment of newcomers, this was done by other members of her club, so she was not aware of what kind of struggle was going on this year.

"Miyuki's influence, after all? Even if you do not take into account the name of Yotsuba, at the induction ceremony, newcomers also realized that Miyuki is not an ordinary person."

A bitter smile came up on Mikihiko's face in response to the words that said this with Erika's sly grin.

"And of course, the fact that Tatsuya is looking after everything helps too. Regardless of which incident occurred, Tatsuya's appearance on the spot makes any of the 2nd and 3rd year students stop and look at him."

"Tatsuya-san, in my opinion, is not at all a terrible person..."

Mikihiko nodded, saying "true" in response to Mizuki's opinion.

"Tatsuya in particular does not try to intimidate anyone at all. But they cannot ignore him. His presence, so to speak... In any case, this is how people feel at first sight."

"What kind of person is Shiba-sempai?" Saburou suddenly asked who had sat silently after trying to escape. After experiencing a painful encounter with Tatsuya on the day of his arrival, Saburou did not blame him for it. In fact, he was not interested in details about Tatsuya.

Saburou just wanted to learn something about the guy who is next to Shiina in the school board.

This question was addressed not to Mikihiko, but to everyone present. The four third-graders looked at each other and chose who would answer by their eyes.

"He's an outstanding man. I think his knowledge of magic has long exceeded the level of the university. "The first to say Mikihiko.

"He is strong. In school, strength and scale do not really play a role, but in a real battle he is very strong. In addition, I feel that there is still more unknown force hidden in it." followed by Erika.

"Tatsuya's power is not only in magic. I have confidence in my physical strength, but with Tatsuya I do not compete. I do not think that I will stand up against him." After them added Leo.

"Yes, but he's not a terrible person after all." He behaves like a gentleman, and not as a tyrant."

Deciding that the other three exaggerate, saying this, Mizuki wanted to protect the missing Tatsuya. "But what Yaguruma-kun wants to know is a little different, is not it? What exactly did you want to know?" She asked Saburo.

Not expecting a counter question, Saburo could not answer her. Or, perhaps, he himself did not understand what he wanted to know.

"If you wanted to know about the character and temperament..." Erika threw him a life line. "He is a person who does not hesitate when it is necessary to prioritize. When his priorities are set, then at least threaten, even persuade, even cry, though tempted, he will be unshakable. He will not worry. In a sense, one can rely on him more than anyone else, but in another sense, he is a man more heartless than anyone."

Leo and Mikihiko looked discouraged. Mizuki could only squeeze out "Erika-chan...", but Erika continued, as if it did not concern her.

"Miyuki is the main priority of Tatsuya-kun. This is the truth about his steadfastness. If he has to choose whose life to save, one Miyuki or all of us with you, Tatsuya-kun will not hesitate to choose Miyuki."

"Hey..."

"Erika, that's a bit..."

Trying to object to Erika, Leo and Mikihiko could not find the words. Because whatever the words, they both understood that Erika was right. According to this silence, Saburo, who heard about what happened at yesterday's meeting of young people from the Ten Master Clans, understood: *That's why Shiba-sempai went to such recklessness.*

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On his way home in a separate cab of an electric train, Saburo told Shiina about what he heard in the cafe from Erika and the others.

"Ha-ha, so yesterday's behavior of the sempai was for such a reason?"

About the young people's meeting, Shiina knew exactly the same as Saburo. It would be more accurate to say: "Saburo knew as much as Shiina." When the eldest son of the Mitsuya family told his younger brothers and sisters about what was said at the meeting, Saburo was there as the guest to listen to Shiina.

"Well, there's nothing to be done." Such were the impressions of Shiina from the story of Saburo.

"Cannot be helped?"

Saburo could not understand how she came to this conclusion.

"He did not want to flaunt his bride, in love with him. I think this is quite obvious."

"But about the necessary contribution of the Ten Master Clans for the sake of the magical world... did he not even think about it?"

Seeing in the middle of his sentence that Shiina's mood was spoiled, Saburo wanted to interrupt, but eventually decided to finish the sentence. Because he noticed that before he had finished, there was no point in stopping.

"What did you say? It's disgusting."

Annoyed at Saburo's words, Shiina's voice exploded in the enclosed space of the booth.

"Wh-what's disgusting...?"

"Saburo-kun, do you think that since this is the Ten Master Clans, then they should be patient enough to make a show of themselves? And did you know that behind these idols the reporters are running around, and they can simply forget about privacy?"

"No, such reporters disappeared several decades ago. Now you can be called to account, even if you talk about such matters. Besides, aren't most of the current idols a 3D avatar?"

In addition to idol-avatars, there are people. In addition, reporters are not the only problem, which also must always be remembered.

She looked at Saburou with an offended face.

"...You can just stay away from the reporters. Now they do not have anything to do with this."

(For some reason Saburou-kun was obsessed with reporters.)

Although Shiina first mentioned them as an example, but Saburou continued to uselessly cling to them as an argument.

"At yesterday's meeting, no one said that President Shiba's personal life would be sacrificed? That Shiba-senpai reaction was too radical?"

"This is true. But, if I were a guy, I would not want my beloved to become a *kyangyaru."

[*] The Japanese term "Kyangyaru" (abbreviated from the English campaign girl) - means girls who act as advertisers of various events or goods. They are shot in advertising and conduct a variety of public activities.

"Kyangyaru... She will not be asked to wear a swimsuit or a short skirt..."

"At first perhaps, it will. But later, I think such requests will start coming. After all, President Shiba is so beautiful."

Shiina inclined her head and looked from below into Saburou's eyes.

"Saburou-kun, would you not want to look at the president in a suit "tight mini"? With legs open or in thin stockings."

Saburou did not answer Shiina's question, he could not say a word at all.

"...The vulgar."



Did not Shiina talk about this?"

Under a look of unfounded contempt, Saburou could not protest much.

"In the idea of using the president in advertising, after all, there is an expectation of using not only magical power, but also using female charm? Then, if the media will ask for a "costume that the audience wants," then I think it will not be possible to refuse. From such a beauty as the president, they will want only sexuality. And media employees who do not do this can be called incompetent."

"...Not all men are so disorganized."

"But you still want to see it, yes?"

Saburou felt very awkward. On such a question it was difficult to answer the interlocutor of the opposite sex. In addition, it was difficult to answer "yes" or "no" when the interlocutor herself is "beautiful", and yes even "a childhood friend who knows a lot about him."

Answering "yes" was too embarrassing, and the answer "no" would be immediately exposed as a lie. In other words, Shiina came straight to the top ten with her question.

"I think, for such things, candidates should be selected. Because this is the Ten Master Clans, there should be no compulsion on the part of others. In addition, when a person does not call himself, but the assembled crowd tries to force him - is this not a villainy? Am I not right?"

"...No, I think you're right."

Shiina did not blame Saburou. However, he more and more wanted to escape every second.

"I do not want to speak ill of my older brother, but... I do not think Shiba-sempai is wrong."

Before Saburou had time to say anything else, he was interrupted by this unexpected conclusion of Shiina. But now he felt that his childhood friend really was right.

Chapter 3

The morning of the second day after the meeting that brought together the representatives of the next generation of the Ten Master Clans.

Tatsuya, who finished the morning training, was called by his sparring partner Yakumo.

"What is it, Master?"

"Tatsuya-kun, it seems, really smells fried."

(Editor note: not sure what the fried is about)

"Smells fried?"

"The military intelligence department came into motion."

"Intelligence department?" Tatsuya asked with unconcealed surprise.

The fact that the intelligence department is plotting something in itself was not a surprise. After all, its job was to weave intrigues.

Undoubtedly, it was amazing that Yakumo was aware of the intelligence department's movement, but this information was not enough to understand what kind of movement it was. Tatsuya often came across situations in which it was clear to him that Yakumo was more competent in such matters than the Intelligence Department of the Self-Defense Forces.

The reason that he did not hide his surprise was that Yakumo gave him a concrete warning.

"This time they did not aim directly at you. But the consequences of their deeds can soon become a problem for Tatsuya-kun and others."

"And what exactly will happen... you cannot tell me?"

"If you do something, the situation will get worse. No, the incident can, of course, be prevented, but for you it will be inconvenient."

"I understood. I will not interfere."

Easily giving an unbiased answer to Tatsuya, Yakumo responded with a big smile:

"Okay, then I'll tell you."

"Ha-a?"

"You'd better finish your training as early as possible. About countermeasures for the future should also think about."

Having said this, Yakumo dragged Tatsuya into the main building of the temple.

◇ ◇ ◇

It happened the same evening in the area of Makuhari New City Center.

Late in the evening the Japanese plant of the American equipment manufacturer "Maximilian Devices" was attacked.

The plant was not deserted. More precisely, as the plant worked only in part of the premises in the territory. At the urging of the USNA Army, this plant was built as an operational center owned by the USNA.

On this secret base of the USNA Army, a member of the Stars magician unit under the control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the USNA, a planetary magician with the codename "First" in her code name (which showed that she was the best among the owners of the code name of the same planet), warrant officer Silvia Mercury fought with despair, corroding her heart.

"No images from the surveillance cameras."

"This is not good. The interference is too strong, it is impossible to contact our country."

"Why do they use so much interference near the city center? Are the attackers - the Japanese army!?"

Listening to the conversation of the base commander with his subordinates, Sylvia tried to understand the situation, using her special magic, which can be called her superpower.

"Charlie Leader says half of the detachment has already fallen! Request support!"

"Headquarters, accepted. Bravo Leader, is there any way to help Charlie?"

"Bravo Leader, accepted. However, we are also in combat now. It is not known whether we can unite with Charlie!"

Sylvia's specialization - a magic "Voice Transmission."

It recognizes information about air vibrations from the target's voice, copies it, and reproduces it directly inside their ear canal.

First of all, it is "Remote hearing", which can be used, both for communication and for listening. It allows you to hear the voice of the target regardless of distance and obstacles.

And yet, this "Remote voice", which recognizes information about the vibrations of the air from your voice, copies it, and reproduces directly inside the ear canal of the target.

Simultaneous use of these two magics is an ability that can replace intercoms in the case when radio communication is difficult.

Managing this magic, Sylvia was not the commander of a detachment of magicians, but performed the work of a control officer.

"Accepted. Delta Leader, Charlie requests support."

"Delta Leader here! We also cannot provide any support. Who the hell are these guys... Uwaah!"

"Delta Leader, what happened!? Delta Leader!"

The situation was worse than ever. From the very beginning, the magicians chosen for this mission were far from being called elite in combat skills.

It could not be said that the Stars class classified as combat personnel, the class of Satellites, also involved in this operation, is suitable for protection against direct enemy attack, because it was chosen for alleged guerrilla warfare within the city.

The task of the Planetary class, which includes Sylvia, is support from the rear and sabotage activities. Compared to the classes of stars and satellites, in direct combat they are weak.

On the other hand, the attacking magicians had the impression that they were all the perfect match for melee type. Their magic, using a small number of processes, focused on speed instead of power.

They were armed with so-called compact rifles for small-caliber ammunition. In addition to high-performance silencers, it seems that noise cancellation magic was used, which made no sound at all.

Perhaps it was a weapon with a built-in CAD.

Many of them fought with katanas or throwing knives as the main weapon. Perhaps due to the proximity of residential urban areas, the enemy detachment acted according to the concept of a surprise attack and the rapid capture of points.

"...To all the detachments, prepare for retreat." With bitterness in his voice, the commander voiced his decision to leave the base. Sylvia agreed with this decision. However, it seems that this decision was made too late.

Immediately after pressing the data erasure button set to start the emergency procedure for leaving the base, the door that should be locked was severed with a loud noise.

Soldiers defending the command center opened fire at the entrance from rifles with increased power, created for battles against magicians. However, all bullets were stopped by anti-objective barriers deployed by enemy soldiers.

"Impossible!"

It's unclear, who gave the cry, the commander, or his assistant.

Sylvia could understand what the screamer felt. High-powered rifles were weapons manufactured, neglecting cost and durability, with only one purpose - to shoot through magician anti-object barriers. Despite the fact that the body of this expensive weapon was wearing out in just one battle, it had the power to justify a high price. Even among the Stars, the only ones who could say for sure that they could defend themselves against a high-powered rifle were only fighters of the First Star Magnitude class. That is, from the bullets of ordinary soldiers who do not have magical abilities, even the soldiers of the Second Star magnitude class, who had passed all the necessary training, could suffer. However, all intruding enemy soldiers showed that they are able to protect themselves from bullets of high-power rifles.

This meant that, at least according to the level of protection, they were all combat magicians comparable to Stars of the First Star Magnitude class.

Among servicemen from all over the world, it was generally recognized that the military power of the Japanese army was significant. In addition, Lina warned Sylvia about this right before the mission.

However, she could not hide her surprise.

(Did they include special elite troops in the detachment, even on an ordinary working mission? Or are they the ordinary troops of the Japanese army...?)

During that short time, while she stood in a stupor, the defensive detachment was completely destroyed. All the units sent to the interception were also silent.

Suddenly, a line of soldiers holding Sylvia and other officers in the sights of compact rifles parted, and a young woman soldier came out because of them. No, unlike other soldiers who did not have insignia, on their form, if it's true, there were signs that her rank was Sergeant.

"I'm from the Intelligence Department of the National Army of Self-Defense, the counterintelligence unit of the capital region, the sergeant-major Tooyama Tsukasa. Who is the commander here?"

"J. Subordinated to the Stars of the USNA, a detachment of special magicians, first lieutenant Gary Jupiter."

Tsukasa's eyes slightly rounded. In Japan, it was also known that the code name "Jupiter" was a special code that was given not only for the ability of the magician, but also for military merit.

"I think if the first lieutenant-dono has the code Jupiter, then he already realized that the next battle is meaningless. Surrender, please."

Gary gritted his teeth in annoyance.

"...Can you guarantee the security of my subordinates?"

However, even if he did not say so, as Tsukasa mentioned, they all have lost the ability to resist. They had no options.

"You are violators caught in illegal activities. I think you should understand that in your situation you cannot demand treatment as prisoners of war."

Gary tried to start an argument. But Tsukasa continued faster than he said anything.

"However, we do not intend to harm a friendly military country. Earlier we also used only special paralyzing bullets."

"...Can we be sure of this?"

"Please."

At the direction of Gary, a member of the command post checked the condition of the nearby soldier from the defense detachment. Sylvia also checked the pulse of a soldier who had fallen next to her and examined the wounds.

As Tsukasa said, the wounds were nothing more than bruises.

"First lieutenant-dono, you are convinced?"

"...Yes."

"All of you will be arrested right now, and if you do not take hostile actions, like attempts to escape, I promise you that you will soon return home."

Gary understood why a completely natural deterrent condition such as "do not try to escape" was voiced. But was afraid to ask about it out loud, thinking that it might end badly.

"Thank you for your humane attitude. In the end," Gary said, and commanded them to lay down their arms.

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The Headquarters of Stars learned about the loss of the base in the Makuhari district of Shintosin 3 hours after the incident.

"Commander, this is Major Sirius."

Lina rushed to the commander's office as soon as she learned this bad news.

"Come in."

Despite the fact that the visit was not scheduled, the base commander, Colonel Walker, allowed Lina to enter.

"I'm sorry."

Entering inside, Lina rounded her eyes. There was not only Colonel Walker. Next to him sat Colonel Balance.

"So, Major, what have you got?" Asked Walker. Lina only saluted and did not say anything.

"That's right."

Although she squeezed out a formal answer, but to continue, she needed to gather strength, taking another breath.

"I heard that a detachment penetrating into Tokyo was attacked."

"It's true."

Walker did not hesitate to confirm what Lina said.

"I'm assuming that all members of the detachment are arrested."

"It's not clear yet. But at the moment it is known that there were no corpses left."

Lina clenched her teeth. She understood that the absence of bodies cannot be used to judge survival. She could only believe that Sylvia and the others were alive.

"While bodies are not found, it is necessary to consider them, as alive."

"Well, that's also true."

"And what?"

Only now did Lina focus on her intention.

"...Please send me to the rescue operation."

"You, the valuable commander in chief of Stars, want to personally go to Japan to rescue captured soldiers?"

"To Walker's question, pronounced slowly, word for word, to convey seriousness,"

"Yes."

Lina did not hesitate to give a positive answer.

"Sorry, but I cannot allow this."

Those who easily answered "no" to a determined Lina were not Walker, but Balance.

"Colonel!"

"The major says that she can easily save them? But where exactly do you intend to save them?"

"I do not think it will be easy!"

"So you are looking for a long-term stay in Japan? I think the major understands that this is an impracticable situation."

Lina struggled against the pressure of Balance's indifferent look.

"I'm not going to waste time saving them."

"How are you going to locate the detainees? We do not even know who our opponent is."

"...We will ask for cooperation from a local."

To talk about this, she needed to collect all her courage. These were words for which one could be suspected of having a connection with the Japanese government or the armed forces if evil intent had been discovered in them.

Lina was ready to go even to this to save Sylvia.

"Wow... Is there someone in mind?"

"...During my previous mission in Japan, I met a ninja with outstanding skills. Initially, we were at enmity, but then reconciled."

"Is this the "Priest Yakumo" which you mentioned in your report?"

"That's right."

"How do you get the consent to cooperate with this person? After all, he is a self-proclaimed "hermit" and money will not be enough to arouse his interest in the negotiations."

"This is..."

"Okay, say, the priest Yakumo's cooperation would have been obtained..." Balance rose, walked over and stood directly in front of Lina.

"But we cannot send you abroad. Last year's mission was an exception to the exception."

"...There is."

"Do not worry."

Balance laid her hand on Lena's shoulder. Through this palm was transmitted not only physical warmth, but also spiritual.

"You are soldiers who report directly to the main headquarters. The General Staff never refuses to send troops. We always, without exception, never abandon troops. That's why I came to this meeting."

Sylvia, caught in a distant Japan, separated by the Pacific Ocean, cannot be saved, even if we spend a hundred meetings here in New Mexico.

"Thank you very much, I rely on you." Because of military discipline Lina could only leave, having answered so.

At that moment, she somehow remembered Tatsuya's words.

"If Lina wants to leave the Stars..."

"If you want to stop being a soldier, I think I could help."

This was the night that the parasites were killed. Tatsuya said then that Lina might want to leave the army. It was like the belief that Lina is not suitable for military service.

Despite the fact that it was obvious, Lina could not understand why she remembered about it.

Chapter 4

The Magic University had a special training program, but otherwise it differed little from other universities. If you look at the uniqueness of the atmosphere, then in the schools of magic assigned to the university, it is much more different from ordinary schools.

In the afternoon the dining room was crowded with idle students, who had free time. Communicating among themselves, they did not talk about fashion or food, most of the topics of conversation were related to magic.

Nevertheless, the students seemed to be having fun. Even the fact that they are magicians living in such a troubled time could not prevent young people from enjoying youth and freedom.

However, not all students in the dining room were busy with conversations. There were those who read books quietly, and those who were absorbed in their thoughts. For example, a lonely Katsuto, who looked worried.

"Hello, Juumonji-kun. Can I sit with you?"

And there were quite a few such students who interfered with the aforementioned people.

"Saegusa?"

However, only Saegusa Mayumi was the only one who could come up to interrupt Katsuto, known throughout the university, as the head of the Juumonji family, and also supporting the corresponding image.

"Of course. Sit down."

"Then I'll use your suggestion."

Featuring a complete lack of manners, Mayumi sat opposite Katsuto. ... From such behavior, a wave of rumors, such as "The head of the Juumonji family and the eldest daughter of the Saegusa family will soon get married!", spread without stopping. Although Mayumi did not like rumors about herself, she had a principle of not noticing them.

"Juumonji-kun, you seem to be worried about something?"

"No..."

Responding with a negative, Katsuto looked irritably at Mayumi. This view read "do not go to me in such a place." But, unfortunately, Katsuto's desire was not transmitted to Mayumi.

"It's because of the Sunday meeting?"

Katsuto unconsciously moved his eyes to either side. The head remained motionless so that the surrounding students could not understand that they were wary.

"Everything is fine. I put up the soundproofing field." However, Mayumi did not seem to understand Katsuto's alertness level.

"...Saegusa, do not you know about the technique of reading on the lips?"

"Chet-no-e-na-gu-bam * [1]? Telepathy?"

"...Not at all. In any case, do not talk about it here."

"Mmm..."

Mayumi showed that she was thinking, putting her index finger to her chin, and looking upwards. Although it did not fit her child's image, but she radiated cunning from the very beginning.

"I got it." With a smile Mayumi answered. Katsuto half-instinctively prepared to defend himself. "And where then it is possible?"

Katsuto's intuition did not fail him.

"...Do you want so much to get into this business?"

"It's a shame to hear such words. Does not this at least superficially concern me? Or am I, in your opinion, not 'young people from the Ten Master Clans'?"

"...Understood. Do you know the 'Serenity' cafe, near the station?"

"I think I know of it."

"Then how about a meeting there on the second floor at 5:30?"

"I got it. Sorry for bothering you. Well, I've got to run."

Saying this, Mayumi stood up.

Only now did Katsuto notice that Mayumi did not order a drink, or anything else.

On the way home, Mayumi went into an old-fashioned cafe. It was called "Serenity". It seems like it meant "a place where silence resides" * [2].

"Hmm... 'People who love silence, we are waiting for you'? Is this their orientation? Very straightforward."

"And it's true..." answered a completely indifferent voice. Mayumi was not alone.

"What is it, Mari? You look a bit tired."

"I do not just look, I'm really tired."

"What, old age came early~?"

"Unlike the Magic University, the Defense Academy has a big workload on the body!"

Students of the Defense Academy, in addition to basic training and combat practice, are required to attend special martial arts courses designed for combat magicians. Today, Mari was completely exhausted. In fact, now she wanted to take a quick bath and jump into bed. Because of this course of special martial arts, she was freed from the restrictions present in the hostel, so she could afford such a luxury.

"Okay, let's go faster. We are waiting for an important conversation?"

Apparently, Mari just wants to sit down fast, thought Mayumi.

"That's right."

The voice of Mayumi felt the care of an elderly woman.

When Mayumi told the waitress that they had a meeting here, she told them to go to the second floor. It seems that Katsuto was already there.

On the second floor there were four separate rooms. All the doors were closed. The location of the windows did not allow for spying. While Mayumi was puzzled at what door to knock, the near right door opened.

"Saegusa. Come in." Called Katsuto holding the door. Mayumi and Mari walked past him into the room.

Inside there was only one table for four people. At first Mayumi thought that this was not suitable for a cafe, but after looking closely, she saw that the windows were double glazed, and the floor, ceiling and walls were soundproofed. It was like a place for private conversations. She realized that this is a separate paid room.

"Watanabe also came...?"

Offering the girls to sit down, Katsuto sat himself and sighed.

"I would very much like to keep this conversation private."

"Then should I leave? Mayumi brought me here by force." Without trying to argue, Mari stood up.

"No, really. You yourself said that the conversation is important?"

Mayumi pulled her by the sleeve, and Mari sat down again. Reluctantly, she ordered coffee through the console on the table. Mayumi ordered tea with milk after her. After the waitress who brought the drinks left, Mayumi looked again at Katsuto.

"So... What is troubling Juumonji-kun - this is something about Tatsuya-kun?"

"That is correct"

Katsuto decided that there was no point in hiding it. He calmly nodded to Mayumi's question.

What are they talking about? A question mark surfaced over Mari's head. But she did not impatiently ask about it. She decided to wait, because in any case she will hear everything along the way.

"I don't think Mari knows, but last Sunday a meeting was held, which brought together young people from the Ten Master Clans.

"It is said 'young', but a restriction 'up to 30 years' was established."

"I heard about the meeting. There they discussed what to do with extremists who aimed at magicians?"

"They did not talk about measures against extremists."



Katsuto said in a tired voice that Mari's answer was only partially correct.

"At this meeting, it was discussed how we, magicians should react to the anti-magic sentiments spread in the society."

"Is that not... meaningless? I still understand the fight against criminals, but can you make those people who already have their own opinion 'love magicians'?"

Although Mari herself is from the Watanabe Family, but she does not belong to the mainstream community of magicians. Her connection with the society of magicians, known as the "magic world", is weak. In comparison with people like Mayumi, her life values are closer to ordinary soldiers.

"We cannot get it, but can we ask for it? Having told in his address that magicians are useful to society, is it not possible to reduce hostility?"

"Who knows... with excessive obsession, you can get the opposite effect."

At the moment when the conversation Mayumi and Mari was ready to grow into an exchange of meaningless arguments, Katsuto intervened.

"Maybe Watanabe is right, but that day during the meeting the idea similar to Saegusa words, met the support of the majority of those present."

"Hmm... Well, as an idea, it can be approached. But what exactly do you need to do? Send Mayumi to speak on TV?"

"Mari! Why me!?"

"Because of good looks, of course."

"What? Are you saying that I'm a hypocrite?"

"Regardless of the reasons, this turned out to be the plan."

When the conversation was ready to turn into a verbal skirmish, Katsuto again intervened.

"But the plan, which gathered a large number of support votes, suggested making the successor-dono of the Yotsuba family the magicians representative."

"The younger sister... that is, Shiba's bride? And she was at a meeting?"

"No. Shiba came alone."

"Tatsuya-kun? Yes, that's not good."

Mari quickly understood everything. More precisely, rejected this plan.

"The excessively caring Tatsuya-kun will not allow his bride to do such things. Does Tatsuya-kun allow Shiba Miyuki to be publicly displayed?"

"Right. This is what happened at the meeting. Thus, everything ended in an unpleasant atmosphere. In the end, Tatsuya-kun refused to participate in the dinner after the meeting and gathered the hostility of the participants."

Hearing what Mayumi said, Mari was surprised.

"All of them? Was there no one who would support Tatsuya-kun?"

"There were no participants who showed that they are on Shiba's side." From Katsuto's answer, Mari's face appeared an annoying expression.

"Psychological pressure? This is an unhealthy approach. Looking at such a scene, magicians seem like ordinary people."

"Of course. Magicians can only use magic, and otherwise they are ordinary people."

"I was close to exposing Yotsuba's successor-dono. I think Shiba had reason to resist this."

Katsuto returned the conversation, which had gone elsewhere.

"The problem is that because of Shiba's isolation, the Yotsuba family can turn to a way of refusing to cooperate."

"Hey, when you say it, it looks like the parent's interference in the quarrel of the children..."

"Mari now that Tatsuya-kun is the bridegroom of the next head and the son of the current head of the Yotsuba family.

When Juumonji-kun says something, he never exaggerates.

Mari leaned back in her chair and sighed heavily.

"How complicated is the world of politics and aristocracy."

"Since blood relationship is essential, the appearance of an aristocratic system is inevitable. But I want to believe that this will not look like a feudal class society, but as a secular society with blood relationship, which was in the ancient city-states."

"In my opinion, it will be even worse. Because society, as in the ancient city-states, presupposes the existence of slavery."

"Ara. And if you replace the ancient slaves with machines, it will not be inhumane?"

"Saegusa, Watanabe, stop. The conversation will not move from place to place, as long as you constantly leave the topic."

"...I'm sorry."

"...I'm sorry."

Katsuto sighed slightly, looking at his guiltily bowing friends.

"In any case, something needs to be done about this situation, when Shiba is seen as isolated from the other 28 houses. At the top of the magical world of Japan at the moment are the Ten Master Clans, but this does not mean that no one is dissatisfied with this."

"If the Yotsuba family leaves the system of the Ten Master Clans, then everything can come to the fact that they form a new faction... Is this what Juumonji-kun is worried about?"

With an acidic face, Katsuto nodded at Mayumi's question.

"Nevertheless, the conversation now does not mean that someone should apologize. Neither party violated the rules. Both Shiba and the other participants spoke in accordance with the established goal of the meeting, and acted quite logically."

Katsuto looked in turn at Mayumi and Mari.

"Since you tried so hard to make this conversation happen, then let me hear your opinion."

"Really..."

Mari was the first to react to Katsuto's question.

"If the problem is that the meeting was broken, how about holding it again?"

Mari's proposal was unexpected for Katsuto. He looked at her silently for a while. And then Mayumi spoke.

"But under what pretext?"

"It was a meeting to counter anti-magic sentiments, was not it? If so, then this time it would be nice to call a meeting to discuss more concrete measures."

"Now, after the meeting ended with quarreling and separation from each other, how many families will accept the invitation?"

"Precisely because there was a quarrel and separation. The Sunday meeting was organized by the Juumonji family?"

Marie looked at Katsuto. He nodded with the words: "Yes, that's right."

"Initially, were specific measures defined at this meeting?"

"No. The original goal was to have a free exchange of views."

"In other words, the real goal was to help establish interaction between young people. Is it not obvious that the participants, at a minimum, should act, suspecting others of hidden intentions?"

"Yes... So it is."

Agreeing, Mayumi sighed, lamenting the thoughtlessness of her brother, because of which plans to strengthen friendship were violated.

"In such a situation, I would not be able to calmly support the nomination of the next head of Yotsuba as an advertising idol. This is the same as if the personnel of the military base would have said: 'And let's make the daughter of the base commander the base mascot for advertisements of this base.' If a person wants to do it himself, then it's okay, but when a person has not even been asked his opinion, this is undoubtedly a problem. Read the atmosphere - that's what I wanted to say."

The example of Mari was imbued with military metaphors, but Mayumi and Katsuto understood what she was saying.

"Well, about reading the atmosphere, this phrase can be attributed to Tatsuya-kun. With the influence of the Yotsuba family, you could get away from this problem later. Frankly, it was stupid to resist this directly. With this approach, he is still a child."

"Tatsuya-kun... child?" Having experienced a strong sense of discrepancy, Mayumi half-unconsciously, questioned with doubt.

"No, Shiba most likely specifically objected. He does not care about the hostility of the rest of the 27 houses, except for Yotsuba. It looks like it was a demonstration of this intention."

"It's already... To begin with, Tatsuya-kun still had to give in."

"It's true, but... Even if the next meeting takes place, Tatsuya-kun's absence will be meaningless, not to mention that it can have the opposite effect."

"Hmm..." Katsuto thought a little, sighing slightly. He also thought about what would be best if Tatsuya could compromise. It's just that he did not think about the meaning or reasons for that act.

"How about the fact that the three of us try to convince him?" Guessing Katsuto's concern, Mayumi suddenly made a proposal.

"The three of us?"

"Yes. For example, let's say to him that it is necessary that Juumonji-kun retain face. In this case, Tatsuya-kun can and will agree."

"...And do I need to be there for this?"

"Hey, is he not your friend?"

"Well, for starters, I'm not from the 28 houses..."

Mari voiced that she was simply confused, not refusing. Mayumi's face, whose cheeks had just been inflated, was transformed.

"It does not matter~. Because alone, I cannot support the conversation between Juumonji-kun and Tatsuya-kun."

"Mayumi, well, you..."

Mari put a hand to her forehead and sighed.

"...Good. I have already gone too far. Juumonji, will this suit you?"

Katsuto's head was packed with too much, and he could not quickly answer this question.

"As a result of the disappointing meeting, the Juumonji family was in a position close to losing their reputation. I do not know about Tatsuya-kun, but other participants should be concerned about this."

"At the Mari's words Mayumi, she reacted with a face that says 'exactly!'. "

"Therefore, if Juumonji-kun sends an invitation calling for another discussion, other families will have no choice but to agree."

"And Tatsuya-kun, as Mayumi said, we will convince the three of us. No, using Juumonji's honor as a shield, Mayumi and I try to convince Tatsuya-kun, and with him, if possible, and his bride."

"Miyuki-san, too?"

"Shiba's bride... For some reason it's difficult for me to say that. Are you worried about being with Shiba's former sister? Still, she is involved in all this. In addition, I think that Tatsuya-kun will behave more mature when the former sister is around. In a sense he will behave more moderately."

"And really... I'll contact Tatsuya-kun myself. Juumonji-kun, are you satisfied with this?"

- Yes. I count on you.
- "If possible, let's meet on Saturday." On weekdays it will be hard for me.
- "Why not Sunday?" - Mayumi asked in a teasing tone.
- Next Sunday I'm leaving for training at an open training ground.
 - ... It's hard for you.

Hearing the answer of a close friend, she changed her tantalizing tone to a sympathetic one.

- Thank you for your concern.

On the faces of Mayumi and Katsuto there were bitter smiles. Thus, they showed that they understand what it is doing.

Chapter 5

In addition to the magical education that Miyuki received at magic high school, she also attended various lessons for girls from noble families. Miyuki having a good memory, most of the lessons (for example, Japanese and Western dances, Ikebana (flower arrangement), tea ceremonies) were mastered before the end of secondary school, and now only attended a general school for children from elite families once a week.

The day of the week could be chosen at your discretion. In order not to become the target of the kidnappers, the visit schedule was drawn up a month in advance, but perhaps it was not completely meaningless. These were measures not for Miyuki, but for the other helpless children who are not magicians.

"Minami, I'm counting on you."

"Yes, Tatsuya-sama. Even if you need to give your life for the safety of Miyuki-sama."

This school forbids entry to men. Tatsuya could not enter even under the pretext of escort. He used to transfer the duty of an escort to school guards at the entrance, but with the advent of Minami, he began to entrust Miyuki to her.

Visiting this school was also planned to be completed before the summer. This was planned because of the approaching entrance examinations to the Magic University, but under the current circumstances, when everyday life is becoming more complicated, the schedule also had to be revised and accelerated.

To, as usual, kill the time before Miyuki's lessons end, Tatsuya went to the nearest cafe.

He voluntarily tried not to approach the family restaurant next door which caused problems during the vampire incident. In order to wait a while, there were other suitable establishments.

(...Such a pace, suitable for this institution, seems to soon disappear.)

Tatsuya paid through the machine and left the cafe, leaving more than half the coffee in the cup. Because he did not want to interfere with the cafe. Last time there was no real damage, like broken windows or injured visitors. This time Tatsuya also planned to finish everything so that the problem affected only one of them.

The hostile presence he caught was very similar to the last time. If he had not heard about it in advance from Yakumo, he probably, would have fallen into confusion.

In confusion from the question of why the magicians of the USNA army are again attacking him.

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"Deserters have discovered A's goal."

"Continue to observe. Did the removal of civilians cause problems?"

"The civilian operation zone is free."

Listening to the conversation between the place of events and the commander of the operation, Tooyama Tsukasa silently smiled. At the moment, the operation went smoothly.

"There are no problems with the control of the puppets yet. It's a pity that the Puppet Law* does not work on the Satellites class, but it's also not bad, because the response became better."

The strategy of this operation was developed by Tsukasa. The commander present here was a lieutenant, but Tsukasa was the real power, which was only in the rank of sergeant-major. Through a secret agreement between the self-defense forces and the family of Tooyama, she had a strong influence on the head of the intelligence department.

Tsukasa deliberately reproduced the situation that occurred in February last year, when Tatsuya was attacked by Lina and "Brionac". This was done to confuse Tatsuya with thoughts about the similarity with that situation. While it seemed that it worked.

(The absence of the main part of the situation in the person of Angie Sirius is compensated by the absence of an assistant in the person of Chiba Naotsugu, therefore, as a result, this situation should be approximately the same. Boy from the Yotuba family, justify my expectations.)

Tsukasa quietly watched the development of the situation with her invariably glued on smile.

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(Twelve enemies, without firearms? Strange.)

Tatsuya read information about his enemies around him through the information dimension.

(They look like last year's "Star Dust", but there's a strange noise in the information body.)

It was Eidos' familiar body, ready to break. However, this noise seems to have been a trace of an exotic psion information body.

(It seems like the magic of manipulating the corpses of Gu Jie... but these guys are not corpses. Instead of just controlling the mind, they surgically intervened or drug-injected the brain, deprived them of their will, and instead built in ancient magic spells to control their actions... so what?)

Not lucky for them, Tatsuya muttered mentally.

(Now I want them to return home peacefully.)

From Yakumo at that time he recognized two things.

First, about the fact that the intelligence department of the national self-defense forces is going to allow a mobile detachment of the USNA army to invade the Tokyo suburbs.

Secondly, the captured soldiers of the army of the USNA intelligence department plans to collide with Tatsuya and Miyuki.

He was not of the purpose it is being done for, or what they want to know.

Tatsuya too, did not try to ask for more information. The information already received was already something that could not be known, so the knowledge that a surprise attack was planned could be considered a kind of scam.

It was not a test that required honesty, so cheating could not be considered something bad.

Tatsuya decided to go in a direction where there were more passers-by. Not because he decided to attract unrelated people. And to provoke the people who planned this situation.

However, after leaving the cafe, Tatsuya noticed that there were no passers-by. It seems that by adjusting the accident or street lights, they redirected pedestrian traffic. I wonder how indecisive the information department will be if it is possible to involve civilians in the case?

Tatsuya thought that if he suddenly goes to a side where there are a lot of people, then he will force them to start acting before they reach the crowd. Accelerating the time of the collision, Tatsuya tried to break the plans of the "enemy."

Is the enemy, as Yakumo said, the intelligence department of the national self-defense forces? Or did Yakumo lie?

For Tatsuya, this was more important than the battle itself.

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"The direction of the movement of target A is a large number of people. Commander, there is a possibility that isolation from civilians will not be accomplished in due measure."

Analyzing information from the scene the soldier reported to the lieutenant of the commander of the operation.

"...It's unavoidable. Start the puppets!" The commander reluctantly gave the order.

Tsukasa, who only watched the developments, was also a little disappointed. The situation came from the planned route. Lying on the palm of the hand, the situation was ready to come off this palm.

However, at the same time, the idea was born that this is why it is worth trying. At least she has already managed to understand that a guy named Shiba Tatsuya is not an idealist with the rule "I must protect civilians at all costs."

"Puppets came into contact with target A. The operation goes into phase 2."

According to the plan, the escaped soldiers of the American Army attacked target A, that is Tatsuya. They were members of the "Star Dust" magician unit, subordinated to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the USNA Army, who became part of Tsukasa's plan, losing their free will from ancient magic "The Puppet Law." Magical soldiers who did not get into the Stars, and agreed to take measures to increase their strength by not living as "ordinary people", were reprogrammed and now received a command to attack Tatsuya.

"Does not use 'long-range magic'?"

Tsukasa, using the access legally left, watched through the street cameras for the events that were taking place. She was a little surprised that Tatsuya did not use long-range magic to deliver a preemptive strike.

Although Tatsuya had a good physique for the Japanese, the attacking soldiers of the American Army had growth and muscle mass at least equal to him, and even higher than him. With such superiority in numbers, it would be common practice to try to keep the enemy at a distance from afar by the distance.

"Knows that he's under supervision...?"

The probability of this was not so small that it could be ignored. Those magician's accustomed to illegally using magic in the city must be honed by intuition, suggesting that his use of magic can be observed. There was no scientific justification for this, but many believed that this was so. Tsukasa was also one of those who support this superstition.

"There is no such record in the intelligence database, but it seems likely that Shiba Tatsuya is already taking part in the illegal activities of the Yotuba family."

At a time when Tsukasa was reflecting on this, the battle between Tatsuya and Stardust turned into puppets began on the street Freed from passersby.

The puppet soldier waved a huge knife, aiming at Tatsuya's tendons. If you use a numerical advantage, usually tactics first involves weakening the enemies combat potential.

The intelligence department did not provide firearms to the puppets. It seems that they feared accidental damage from stray bullets.

When both sides do not have magical means of attack, the battle becomes close combat using knives, clubs, or your own extremities. However, both Tatsuya and Star Dust were magicians. Becoming puppets, they have not lost their magical abilities. Tsukasa and other members of the Intelligence Department expected that the battle would evolve according to a scenario of fighting with magic with some unreachable distance for close combat.

However, the very first attack, which laid the foundation for the battle, was the swing of a knife. But this does not mean that magic was not used at all. Movement of the puppets knife was accelerated by magic.

This attack did not hit Tatsuya. Tsukasa, who looked through the street cameras, also could not understand exactly how Tatsuya was behind the puppet. If there was still a human will in the puppet, he would be shocked with thoughts, like "when did he have time?".

Tatsuya struck with the edge of the palm over the back of the puppet.

The body of the puppet, as if theatrical, fell forward. Tsukasa, in a hurry, looked at the readout of the psion sensor attached to the street camera. No signs of using magic were detected by the sensors.

"...It looks like there are ways to use magic without detection by psion sensors."

Cut down the enemy only by a blow to the back of the head. This cannot be done in the usual way. Without the use of special techniques, everything can end only with complications from a trauma received from a strong blow.

A technique was used to stun a person with a blow without any preparation for the accumulation of force. So Tsukasa considered, rather than suggesting that this third-year student in high school can possess such physical techniques, it seemed that he was using the magic technique of deceiving sensors that suited the name Yotuba.

Not upset by the fall of his accomplice, the other puppets attacked Tatsuya. They did not know fear not because they became puppets. The law of the puppets, used by Tsukasa, only took away free will and inserted orders into the mind. If feelings of loyalty or belonging can still be erased, then those used for self-preservation, the functions of the mind, like fear, cannot be erased. These guys did not know fear because when they became Star Dust, their body was not only redone, but their mind was rebuilt.

Tsukasa did not consider this inhumane. Like many people in her industry, she also used magic to manipulate people, brainwashing them and making them do what she wants.

The fact that she now frowned, was for another reason.

The display showed the battle of one Tatsuya against twelve, or rather already against nine people. It must have looked like a bad situation, in which one person is surrounded by a crowd. But instead, the puppet soldiers with the brainwashed magic fell to the ground one by one.

"Commander. At this rate, target A will be released earlier than a separate unit will come into contact with target B"

It seems that other employees noticed this almost at the same time as she did.

In February last year, the USNA army could not capture Tatsuya with the help of a detachment, including Star Dust and a magician, supposedly Angie Sirius.

Knowing this, not only Tsukasa, but other members of the intelligence department understood that Tatsuya could not defeat the Star Dust alone.

The role of the puppets in this phase of the operation was to detain Tatsuya. Victory over him is not needed.

Tsukasa's goal was to gather information about Tatsuya, but such a result did not work here. With this operation it was planned to obtain data on Tatsuya's fighting power, however, in fact, Tsukasa wanted to learn something else.

"Hurry to attack target B."

"Puppets are completely destroyed. Target A left the scene."

Immediately after the commander gave the order, the remaining four American soldiers fell down. Tsukasa raised Tatsuya's abilities in melee two ranks higher than expected. The psion sensor did not catch the use of Tatsuya magic until the very end.

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At the etiquette school, which Miyuki visited, only girls from respected families were gathered. Simply put, only girls from high society who can afford a huge tuition fee could go there.

The security was appropriately, serious. Women with a level of skills sufficient to ensure that at least private criminal organizations could not do anything were employed. That's why the feelings of every parent (but not all of them) entrusted their daughters with them, having established the outdated rule of the "ban on men."

However, this evening it is time to be destroyed by this "myth of security."

"All of you, calm down, please!"

The lecturer who raised her voice to shout over the howling siren, panicked even more students.

"Please evacuate to the safe room in accordance with the emergency manual! The safe room is reliable. Calm down and quickly evacuate, please!"

It's the screaming female lecturer who should have calmed down more than anyone else.

A total of ten pupils (10 today was by chance, usually a different number) whispered to their separately hired family guards. Among the pupils, except Miyuki, there was only one magician, but among the guardians they were all magician's.

"Miyuki-sama, what are we going to do?"

"In a safe room, I see only the future of a cornered rat." Miyuki smiled confusedly.

"However, to disturb the rest of the people from school with a problem that only affects us... For now we obediently abide by the sensei's instructions. In case of emergency, Minami-chan, you will protect us if anyone approaches. You must hold out until Tatsuya-sama comes to pick us up?"

"As you like."

Deciding what to do next, Miyuki began to act quickly. Turning to the students standing next to her: "Come along", she, without waiting for an answer went to the place indicated on the school plan as a safe room.

The other students, their personal guards and the lecturer, followed Miyuki, who went behind Minami.

The School guards fought valiantly. At least it seemed so to Miyuki. But the current situation developed in the enemies favor.

Suddenly an electric shock attack flew from the side of the passage ... but was stopped by Minami's shield. The anti-object barrier stopped the electric shock attack because it was not an air discharge, but a thin wire, over which an electric current was launched.

"Minami-chan, she understood well. As expected."

"Thank you."

Miyuki praised Minami for blocking this attack not as a barrier against electricity, but as an anti-object barrier. This was a manifestation of a high level of mastery of the magician, when, without wasting time on the high complexity of magic, the nature of the magic of the enemy became clear and immediately activated the appropriate magic for defense.

From the magician's of the guard following them, came expressions of surprise and understanding.

Surprise was associated with the age of Minami. And understanding with the personality of Miyuki.

Surprised at the skill and experience of Minami, unusual at her age, but remembering that she was entrusted to guard the next head of the Yotsuba family, they realized that high skill would be natural in this case.

The other accompanying "Ojou-sama" guards also did not play the fool. Attackers came not only in front. Side attacks were a rarity, because almost all the way was down a direct corridor, but from behind magic came more than one or two times.

"Covering from the rear, I wonder what house they work for? I cannot remember to see them here. Minami-chan, do you know them?"

Looking back at the very end of the walking group of people, Miyuki asked Minami, looking at the reflected enemy attacks of two women about twenty years old.

"I think it's Tsunashima-sama. The guard appeared as Tsunaga-san."

"Tsunashima-san and Tsunaga-san... I'm sorry, but I do not remember hearing about them."

While not as good as Tatsuya's, Miyuki's memory was also excellent. It is unlikely that she would forget the names of the pupils with whom she studied. The surname of the magician, if he was from the Stamy Semey, she would also know.

"Tsunaga-san said that they started attending classes quite recently."

"Oh?... It was unlucky for them to immediately encounter such a sudden catastrophe."

Listening to this carefree conversation, it would seem to many that they were relaxed, but these two quickly moved forward, in the course of the matter, rebuffing the suddenly appearing offenders.

Protected by Miyuki and Minami at the head of the column, and Tsunashima and Tsunaga from the rear, the students (plus a personal guard and lecturer) arrived at the safe room.

Miyuki and Minami waited at the door for Tsunashima and her escort, Tsunaga, who were fighting off attacks from intruders. Not because they thought they had a duty to help. Instead simply because Miyuki was stronger than anyone else. Stronger than all escort guards, stronger than all the intruders.

Minami took a CAD from her handbag in the form of a mobile terminal and gave it to Miyuki. Until then, Miyuki used a CAD with full mind control, which is completely invisible to an external observer.

Miyuki took a more familiar CAD with a smile, turned it on, and ran her finger across the screen.

Behind the fleeing students and their guards, two black intruders were already prepared to release magic, but were thrown back. The delay was below the recognition limit.

Tsunashima involuntarily froze at this overwhelming magical power. However, Tsunaga, who had not lost her composure, dragged her into a safe room.

At the other end of the corridor, there were also intruders. Frowning at the thought of how many more of them there are, Miyuki prepared to reactivate the CAD.

Space around them filled with psion noise. Reflecting the light of the corridor lamps, a brass ring flashed.

The intruders used "Cast Jamming".

"Miyuki-sama!" Minami tried to close Miyuki. In her right hand she was already holding a small but reliable combat knife.

"Do not worry, it's all right, Minami-chan." Unlike Minami's painfully frowning face, Miyuki remained calm. "It's a good opportunity to test the new magic that Tatsuya-sama gave me."

Fearlessly stepping forward against two big men rushing along the corridor, Miyuki activated her CAD and released two magics sequentially.

And at the same time psion noise was frozen.

The next moment, after the psion waves became calm, those two men were already frozen. Frozen not in the sense of being frozen. It was "Frozen" in the sense of a complete stoppage of movement. Minami's bulging eyes looked at Miyuki, who frowned, hoping that defenselessly falling bodies that could not help themselves with their hands would fall without injury.

The surprise was not due to the magic which neutralized those two magicians at the same time. Her surprise was from the magic that stopped the previously released psion noise, which prevents the activation of magic.

"Cast Jamming", which is currently actively used in practice, is considered the most effective means of obstructing magic.

Although this requires a rare mineral called Antinite (it is believed that this is not a natural mineral, but is an artifact a relic of prehistoric civilization), but with it even a person who cannot use magic will almost certainly be able to prevent the activation of magic.

For people who are not magicians, this is the strongest weapon to counter magicians. And Miyuki showed how she, on the contrary, destroys "Psion Noise."

"Counter-magic 'Freeze Gram'. Counter-magic which Onii-sama, that is Tatsuya-sama created for me. It cannot stop any magic, like 'Gram Demolition' or 'Gram Dispersion', but it's enough for 'Cast Jamming'."

Miyuki did not show this with her face, but her mood increased significantly. So much so that she inadvertently called Tatsuya "Onii-sama", while explaining.

Freeze Gram was an enhanced version of Zone Interference. It could neutralize such types of magic as non-systemic magic, area of effect magic, as well as any magic that has not yet been activated. It is not capable of eliminating magic that has a specific purpose, but, as Miyuki said, "Psion Noise", being a subset of non-systematic magic, was easily neutralized.

"The amount left... is less than ten people. In my opinion, eight."

"I think so too."

Minami nodded, feeling a strong desire for confirmation in Miyuki's voice.

"Then... We'll leave the next defense to the local guards, and we'll wait for the arrival of Tatsuya-sama."

"Yes."

Miyuki and Minami entered the safe room. Miyuki sat on one of the sofas along the wall, and Minami closed the door to the safe room and stayed with her, ready at any time to activate barrier magic.

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When Tatsuya arrived at the school, less than ten minutes had passed since he was attacked. From the moment Miyuki entered the safe room, it took about five minutes.

Tatsuya did not receive a message that the school was attacked. The jamming of communications by invaders was organized at a level impossible unless the intelligence department was involved.

From Yakumo, there was also no information that they would also aim at Miyuki.

During the attack on himself, he did not have any conclusions that it was a diversionary maneuver.

He came here only because his main priority is to guarantee the safety of Miyuki.

There were no more battles at school.

However, it was evident at first glance that a forced invasion occurred.

Looking at it, Tatsuya was not alarmed. He knew that there was not a scratch on Miyuki, even without seeing her with the naked eye. Because he was "always seeing and defending her."

He could find out where Miyuki was, simply by sending his consciousness to the "information dimension." At the same time, he learned that within the region of a radius of ten meters around Miyuki there are signs of many people.

The location of Miyuki he recognized with Elemental Sight.

And he defined the location of invaders with a technique that reads signs of a presence.

The accuracy of the information in the first case was an order of magnitude higher, but in the current situation, when the presence tags were not particularly hidden, there were no errors in reading the presence.

Absolutely not worried, Tatsuya entered the forbidden for men, but already trampled by them flower garden.

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"Although we deviated greatly from the plan, it all worked."

Looking at the image from the hacked school surveillance camera, Tsukasa ordered herself to cheer up.

Distorted feelings that make you consider yourself a third party. And also a serious defect of the human being, when, as a result of a lack of self-identity, carelessly treat the actions necessary for life support, such as eating or sleeping.

This was the price that the Tooyama family paid for its strength. Not only puppets from Star Dust, but her personal subordinates were sent to the school.

"Commander."

"What is it, Sergeant Major?"

"I'm thinking of joining the operation. Is it okay if I leave my post?"

"...Understood. I'll authorize it."

The lieutenant commander frowned doubtfully, but remembering what the higher officers said when giving him this task, he gave permission to Tsukasa.

He was then told: "Maximally satisfy the requests of Sergeant Tooyama."

He wanted her to go quickly, because she was incapacitating the system of subordination. Therefore, he granted Tsukasa's request to leave.

"Many thanks."

Tsukasa saluted the lieutenant with an impenetrable face, over which she could not understand whether she knew that he considered her a nuisance.

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Tatsuya did not know that the room in which Miyuki was hiding was a so-called "safe room", but he suspected that this would be a room of that kind. But this was not the reason for his calmness. Not paying attention to the guards lying on the floor of the corridors, Tatsuya was heading straight to the safe room.

Along the way, he did not encounter the enemy.

All those who attacked the school gathered at the safe room and tried to break open its heavy door.

Tatsuya pushed himself away from the floor soundlessly. It was a jump not upwards, but forward, for a quick reduction in the distance from the offenders.

The enemy noticed Tatsuya before he approached a sufficient distance for close combat. They did not panic because their mind was suppressed. Attackers tried to apply the skills obtained during their training as Star Dust. They switched the movement magic to Tatsuya that they were preparing to launch at the door.

Earlier than this magic is activated, Tatsuya fired a compressed psion projectile from his right hand.

It was a magic trick he did not know in the last battle with the USNA army in February of last year, an Armor-Piercing Psion Bullet.

Initially, this magic was created to inflict damage on the true body of the information life form called a "Parasite", but now he often used it to attack the psion information body inside the human body. Its effectiveness has already been tested on the powerful psion armor of Tomitsuka Hagane, which could absorb other's magical attacks.

Star Dust soldiers, who do not have a dense psion veil, like Tomitsuka, flew backward, as if they had received a large-caliber projectile in the chest.

Psions do not have physical striking force. However, in humans and animals in the body there is a psion network that repeats the shape of the body. That is why, with the help of psion influence, it is possible to move your body at a speed exceeding the reaction speed.

Tatsuya fired shells of compressed psions, one by one. Anyone able to perceive psions would see how he shoots from his palms luminous balls of energy.

Having received a blow to the psion information body that copies the structure of the physical body, the human mind tells the physical body to reproduce the damage in the form of an illusion that such damage is actually obtained.

In fact, such a spell exists in non-systemic magic. It is called "Phantom Blow". Tatsuya decided not to use "Decomposition" to damage the bodies of opponents, but to neutralize them with Armor-Piercing Psion Bullets so that they would think he was attacking with "Phantom Blow".

He did this to confuse the people watching him. If the military is involved, it was natural to think that the internal surveillance cameras were hacked. Tatsuya came to the same conclusion.

If he had not heard the story of Yakumo, he would have dealt with the enemies much faster. Therefore, he had to think about such troublesome things, such as reducing the battle to close combat. But he had to switch from melee to psion shell attacks, because he was noticed before he could make contact with the enemy. He did not want to disclose his capabilities for as long as possible, at least until he learns the intentions of the self-defense forces.

There were eight attackers in front of the door. All of them were already lying on the floor.

There was no counterattack, the preemptive attack by Tatsuya put an end to the battle. If the enemy had firearms, it would be a little more complicated. Tatsuya again felt that this was suspicious.

Magicians of the United States prefer small arms with a built-in CAD. Their way of fighting was to increase the magic of their own attack on the weapon itself by introducing a CAD into this weapon. Tatsuya heard that they prefer a combination of various small arms. In fact, during the attack last year, from the very beginning Star Dust had integrated CAD based on submachine guns.

Why were they now unarmed? The self-defense forces, or rather the intelligence department, easily had to have enough money to supply them with weapons. They were disposable brainwashed agents of another country. Even if the police found this out, the story would go nowhere as no one would recognize anything on them.

Tatsuya felt that the other side might consider that he was not fighting at full strength.

He felt an unpleasant feeling that he was being trapped. But in a situation where you do not know what it will be, you cannot avoid it. Tatsuya began to wait for Miyuki and others to open the door from the inside, realizing that someone is watching through the cameras after the situation.

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All the puppets were cut down by Tatsuya. Tsukasa confirmed this in a separate room from the command post.

In the safe room there were no surveillance cameras. To her regret, Tsukasa did not know what the next head of the Yotsuba family (in other words, Miyuki), and her guard, who had escaped there, were doing.

But now the invaders were eliminated from the outside, and they must open the door and exit.

And there will be a chance.

She checked the magic circuit, which establishes a connection between her and her subordinates.

The connection status is satisfactory.

Even if she used ancient magic called "Puppet Law", she was not a user of Outer-Systematic Magic interfering with people's minds. She was a magician from the Tooyama family, whose people received zonal magic developed in the Tenth Laboratory, generating magic barriers in the form of strong virtual structures.

Even with a magical connection, Tsukasa could not read the mind of the person on the other side. She could not receive the flow of information from the five senses, and could not directly control the will. At the moment she could only count the location of the other side of the magical connection. It was a link only to determine the coordinates in the information dimension.

The most important thing is that this was enough for the user of the magic of the Tooyama family.

If you need physical information about sounds, conditions, and something similar, then you can simply use wireless equipment. The equipment for secretly listening and surveillance used by the intelligence department was not useless garbage unable to work with muffling or physical obstacles.

The key to the activation of magic was the coordinates in the information dimension. This can not be obtained by electronic equipment. Also there were rumors about the existence of magicians and magic support systems that can match the resulting video image from anywhere in the world with the corresponding coordinates in the information dimension.

However, Tsukasa considered these rumors fiction.

The system for aiming specialized CAD also reinforces the senses to the maximum, so that they can obtain information about the distance.

But the users of Elemental Sight, directly looking at the information dimension, are probably able to calculate the coordinates in the information dimension based on the video image. However, there must also be restrictions. For example, there is a limit to the distance that a person can really feel. Infinite space exists only in the abstract concept. And the breadth of knowledge of man has limits.

There cannot exist such people who violate logic, who, ignoring the harsh reality of physical distance, can concentrate consciousness on the information body in the information dimension only on the basis of knowledge obtained from the image. Tsukasa thought so with an eye on her own shortcomings.

But this thought did not cause her any inconvenience. With the magic that the Tooyama family possessed, the role given to it did not require concentrating on a goal that is at an extremely long distance only with the help of a video image.

This mission also did not require such things.

She concentrated her mind on the image from hacked surveillance cameras to provide proper support to her subordinates.

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The door, decorated with old-fashioned ornaments, opened before Tatsuya, slipping sideways and entering the wall. To hide his playful mood, Tatsuya pulled a bitter smile on his face. He realized that unlawful offenders (Tatsuya did not notice that he was also an illegal violator) could not open the door, because they tried to push and pull it.

Right outside the door stood Minami. Upon recognizing Tatsuya, she bowed politely. From inside the room, Miyuki approached him with an elegant step. She did not hurry, apparently understanding that she was under the sights of other people.

"Many thanks for saving us from danger."

In appearance, this situation was not particularly dangerous, it was just words of politeness.

"It looks like you are more than safe."

"Because Tatsuya-sama got there so quickly."

This time it was not a formal phrase, but the true feelings of Miyuki. She did not doubt that Tatsuya would come to help her, but when she really saw his face, she began to overflow with growing delight.

Moreover, Miyuki was happy that Tatsuya came much ahead of her expectations. She openly radiated this feeling.

It was unconstrained. It could be said that she emitted an aura of happiness. Somehow, without any words, the room was filled with an atmosphere of immobility.

The first who woke up from this sweet prison, there was another pair of magicians, a master and a servant.

"Sorry, thanks for saving us from the danger. Shiba-sama, please accept my apologies that I too thank you so late."

Her polite speech sounded a bit awkward. For some reason, he had the impression of an acting game.

"My name is Tsunashima. This is Tsunaga. Tsunaga-san, thank him too."

Following the direction of Tsunashima-jo, Tsunaga went ahead. She moved from Tsunashima to Miyuki.

Tatsuya instantly switched from a stationary state to maximum speed. He pushed Tsunaga back with his hands.

Tsunaga, who was trying to grab Miyuki, clasped her hands around her neck, fell, flipped over from the blow.

"Do not move!"

"Minami!"

There were simultaneous voices of Tsunashima and Tatsuya.

Tsunashima grabbed the unfortunate student and put a knife to her neck.

Minami, following Tatsuya's orders, dragged Miyuki back, and took her place, closing it with her back.

Tatsuya called Minami for this.

"If you move, I cannot vouch for the safety of this..."

"That I do not vouch for the safety of this unfortunate girl," Tsunashima probably wanted to say.

However, Tatsuya completely ignored her words. He released magic at Tsunaga who attempted to harm Miyuki.

Miyuki and Minami were not the only ones who heard the illusion of the sound of broken glass.

It was the "sound" of destroying the magic barrier.

Falling, Tsunaga surrounded herself with a barrier. This was destroyed by the magic of Tatsuya.

Without revealing it on his face, Tatsuya remembered his big suspicion.

When he pushed Tsunaga away, his hand felt something else besides her body. At that moment, a magic barrier was unfolded in an instant, which he wiped out with the decomposition magic activated from his palm.

After that, slightly pushing his hand, he added to the attack a small psion wave with a high compression ratio.

The Barrier magic collapsed, and it was expected that under Tatsuya's psion stream, the further creation of magic should not happen. Psions of another magician - an extraneous "stream." The psions flowing through the body and the magic calculation zone existing in the subconscious are separated from each other, but are not completely independent. When the activation sequence is output from the CAD, it is read by the area of magic calculation area, passing through the body through the psion network. When there is something foreign, like a stream of strange psions, the activation of magic right after that should be impossible.

But despite this, Tsunaga tried to get up and deployed a magic barrier. If you look in chronological order, you could see that the magic was built right after the infusion of Tatsuya psions. The use of magic is not necessarily impossible when the body is paralyzed, but she did not seem to be a magician who can do it.

While Tatsuya was putting his filled with doubt mind in order, he was not idle. He raised his right hand and released a narrow stream of psions into the still lying Tsunaga.

Gram Demolition.

Initially, it was used to blow off the sequence of magic, but if you use the stream of psion elevated permeability, then it shows an effect similar to the infusion of psions upon contact.

Tsunaga's body jerked again, after which it finally stopped moving. It looks like she lost consciousness.

If she hit her head or had a load on her heart, then there is a chance that she might die. Despite the fact that the consequences can become unpleasant, he still used the enhanced long-range version of Gram Demolition, and it looks like it worked.

Reflecting on this, Tatsuya stepped in the direction of Tsunashima.

Blood ran from the neck of the hostage. But it was not "overflowing like a fountain", but only leaked out a little. The balanced use of force in such a situation indicated that her appearance and experience do not match, or that she had some special training.

But, to her regret, it did not matter.

In this place for Tatsuya, only Miyuki mattered as a hostage. Using Minami's life as a shield, he preferred neutralizing the enemy.

Although Minami can repel most enemies, but if Miyuki were still taken hostage, he would, rather than counteract magic or worry about the safety of the enemy, simply turn them into a puddle. Undoubtedly, the tactic of taking the hostage against Tatsuya was not the smartest choice.

Tatsuya tried to shoot a psion shell at the magician, who called herself Tsunashima. But at that moment he noticed that Tsunashima and the hostage were surrounded by a magic barrier.

Tatsuya could not help but wonder. From the woman who called herself Tsunashima, there were no signs of activation of barrier magic.

(From where?)

Someone formed a magic barrier around this magician. The other did not come to mind.

The magic barrier disappeared.

Tatsuya's left hand extended to Tsunashima's knife. It was worth it to grab the blade of the knife with his hand, as it dissipated into dust.

The latter phenomena was the result of Tatsuya's decomposition magic. The doubt that sat in his head was not an obstacle to the battle.

Tatsuya grabbed Tsunashima's right wrist and turned it out.

Tsunashima, instead of wrestling, jumped and made a somersault in the air.

Tatsuya let go of her hand and grabbed the hostage instead, dragging her toward him. Then he pushed her to the rear of Minami.

Minami helped the shaken and ready to fall hostage to stand on their feet, supporting her.

Tatsuya swung his foot on the side of the landing Tsunashima. But before the impact a magic barrier was able to form. Not paying attention, Tatsuya struck.

At the moment of touching the barrier with his foot, he "crashed". Controlling both magic and body, Tatsuya struck Tsunashima with his foot in the chest. Unlike Tsunaga, he no longer held back.

Tsunashima's heart stopped. Arrhythmia of the heart from stroke.



At the same moment, when the magician fell to the floor, Tatsuya hit her chest with lightning magic.

The weak electrical discharge performed by Flash Cast played the role of a defibrillator, and fortunately, the woman's heart resumed beating.

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Tsukasa opened her tightly closed eyelid. She could use her magic even with her eyes open. But she sensed that the accuracy of magic was enhanced by partially blocking the five senses or some of them.

Therefore, she usually closed one eye, when it was required to deliver magic to a place remote from her current position.

"Merciless, even if the enemy is a woman...?"

She was sitting in her own private office. So she spoke aloud to herself, without worrying that she would be heard.

"And yet, in order to break my magic barrier at one point... Although its power was lower, because it was not used in its original form, but it seems that now my self-confidence has significantly dropped.

Tsukasa put a false smile on her face and waved her head slightly.

"No... As expected, he should be recognized as a Yotuba magician. In any case, what kind of magic broke my barrier? It seemed that the very sequence of magic was destroyed... Could it be that this is Gram Dispersion?"

Tsukasa again shook her head. This time with a smile, mocking itself.

"...No matter how similar it seems, this is definitely not it. This magic can exist only in the research laboratory. It cannot succeed in a real battle."

"However, it seems that even the Yotsuba's magician was unable to neutralize magic while waiting. Well... If he could influence me from such a distance, he would no longer be in the category of magicians. He would be a monster, superior to humans."

Tsukasa looked at the image from the surveillance camera.

Tatsuya was squatting next to Tsunashima.

The camera in the corridor just looked inside the safe room through the open door, and by the look of Tatsuya from behind it was not clear what he was doing.

"...In this country there is no place for those who exceed humans. If you turn out to be a monster of inhuman nature, it's a pity, but you'll have to disappear."

Do not go, but disappear. Tsukasa whispered these words to Tatsuya's image on the display, as tenderly as she could.

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Tatsuya crouched beside the defeated magicians and began to search for traces of magic.

Those magic barriers were not created by these women. The magician who activated this barrier magic was not even in this building.

Remote magic with the exact target of activation. The first thing that occurred to him was that these women were used as the magic point of transfer. Magic techniques that use people as the magic point of transfer, although rare, are not surprising. Just two months ago, he saw the criminal Gu Jie, the operator of ancient magic, use the young "humanist" as the point of transmission for summoning and controlling the magic of the DS.

However, on these magicians he did not find the seals carrying the magic identification signal. Even with his "Elemental Sight" he could not find any traces.

Does this mean that the coordinates in the information dimension are computed from an image?

Technically, this was possible. Moreover, Tatsuya's own "Third Eye" used images from the stratospheric cameras and the low-orbit satellite to assist in targeting. In addition, Tatsuya now had a strange feeling that he was being watched through the surveillance camera.

(The magician who created the barriers... I cannot track him. The footprints are too weak.)

Tatsuya's elemental sight is also not omnipotent. It is quite difficult to find out the identity of an agent who carefully completed his work without leaving "information" tracks. Perhaps he could, if he could use the ability to 100%, but in the current situation that was impossible.

"Tatsuya-sama?"

Miyuki called Tatsuya in a troubled voice. It seems that she was worried why he had such a grim face.

"Do not worry. It seems it's over."

Tatsuya stood up and smiled at Miyuki. She smiled back at him.

"Minami."

"Yes, Tatsuya-sama."

Minami has already returned the hostage girl to her guard and, hearing that she was called, came and stood behind Miyuki.

"Contact the police. I'll go look for the wounded. At this time, I trust Miyuki to you."

"Yes, I understand. Rely on me."

"Miyuki, I will not be long."

"Yes, Tatsuya-sama. Be careful."

Not showing that she almost reflexively said, "Onii-sama," Miyuki bowed in an adult manner.

Chapter 6

Saturday, April 20, after school.

The President and the Secretarial Chief were absent from the school board of First High.

Two days ago, Miyuki informed the other members of the school board that she and Tatsuya would be absent from the school board that day. It was because on Wednesday evening she received a request from Mayumi to meet to talk.

But to Honoka and Izumi, she did not say the reason. Miyuki herself did not know what the conversation would be about, perhaps about something secret. Although Izumi might know something because she was the younger sister of Mayumi, but Miyuki still said only that she will have a business, without explaining what.

Honoka did not come today either. In the school board room there was only Izumi, Shiina and a member of the disciplinary committee (that is, an outsider) who was Kasumi. "Today I will not be here" said Miyuki, "It's all right, rely on me," Izumi replied enthusiastically, after which there were so few people left. Of course, Minami was also absent here, because she accompanied Miyuki.

Kasumi, Izumi and Shiina were friends from childhood. There was a relaxed atmosphere in the school boardroom. Despite this, Izumi diligently processed reports on the activity of each club during recruitment week. Shiina helped her. And Kasumi... carelessly sipped coffee.

"Listen, Izumi."

Sitting at the central table, Kasumi turned to the back of Izumi and spoke to her.

"What, Kasumi-chan?" With reluctance in Izumi's voice asked, not being distracted from work.

"The business of President Shiba, is this after all the same, yes?"

"What same thing?"

It does not matter that they were twins, but the communication between them did not seem to be at the level of understanding the words "that" or "it."

"Well, did she not say that today too that she was going somewhere? What if the president and Shiba-senpai were called by our onee-chan?"

Izumi stopped and got up from her chair. It seems that she decided to take a break.

"Why not? Pixie, tea, please."

Izumi sat down next to Kasumi. And Pixie, on the contrary, got up from her chair in the corner of the room, saying "I'm listening."

"Of course, there is a possibility that this is just a coincidence... Thank you."

The last word was for Pixie's tea. There was green tea in the cup. Izumi enjoyed both the Japanese and Western directions in food: for example, she preferred Western sweets, and Japanese drinks.

"Onee-sama seems quite sociable, but her circle of close acquaintances is limited."

"Yeah, she's just like a cat." Said Kasumi and took another sip of black coffee. She did a lot of boyish things, for example, did not particularly like sweets.

"And the truth." *And Kasumi-chan is just like a puppy.*

The second half Izumi did not say out loud. To joke over Kasumi was fun (although such fun is many times one-sided), but there was still Shiina, so she took care of Kasumi's reputation.

"In addition, the president, it seems, also has quite a narrow circle of friends."

"Since Miyuki onee-sama is the embodiment of the goddess, this alienation is natural for her."

Kasumi leaned back in her chair, whispered: "Oh, it starts ...". But Izumi did not bother with such a blatant attitude. On the other hand, she felt sorry for Kasumi, because she was unable to understand it.

Shiina looked puzzled at the two.

"...Shiina, do you also want to rest?"

"Exactly. Let's rest a little together."

"Ah~, yes. Okay."

Shiina sat in front of the twins. In her hands she had tea with milk and a lot of honey, which she made herself. In contrast to Kasumi, Shiina is a great lover of sweets. Nevertheless, the sweets she made never turned out to be too sweet, which was surprising, with such a passion for her.

"So, on what business could the divine president-san and the commemorative onee-chan meet?"

"Well, if it was said that it will be in a restaurant in Akasaka, then..."

"Er, okay?"

Izumi began the conversation with an obvious fact for her, but for Kasumi this was what she first hears.

"Yes. It's just that you, Kasumi-chan, seemed to be not interested when listening, and so did not remember."

"It does not mean that I was not interested! Izumi, did I really hear that, too?"

Despite the fact that they were still in school, but there were no strangers here, and Kasumi used the "side" to refer to the first person.

"Probably..."

"H-Probably?"

"When I asked directly about it, did not Kasumi-chan listen?"

Kasumi allegedly heard in these words a second voice, saying that she had to ask if she was interested in this. In this case, she could only mooch helplessly.

"So what is it that Mayumi-san still wants to discuss with the president and Shiba-sempai?" Maybe not intentionally, but Shiina threw her a lifebuoy.

"I will not be surprised if they will discuss the meeting."

Izumi ceased to bully her twin sister, it seems, only as a sign of respect for Shiina.

"Is that the meeting that was last Sunday?"

"Katsuto-san, probably, will also come to try and reconcile with Shiba-sempai who ripped off the meeting, based on his sense of guilt for it.

"Ripped off? Izumi..."

"Really. Regardless of whether I was right, it was inappropriate words."

"...Izumi, do you have something against Shiba senpai?"

"I would never have thought I'd hear this from Kasumi-chan, who has always had hostility when looking at sempai."

"I do not look at him with a hostile look! Just a little dissatisfied!"

"Is this not the same as a hostile look...?"

"What did you say? I told you, it's not so!"

Izumi was silent without saying a word. But despite this, Kasumi answered exactly as if it was a normal dialogue.

It was not by chance that Izumi came to feel comfortable with such a reaction. Was this a sense of unity between the twins? Such a state when you become absolutely understanding of people, able to understand without words.

"Well, I also have various complaints about Shiba-senpai..."

And only I myself realize them, thought Izumi. Kasumi, it seems, only felt something like that. With this sense of superiority over the twin sister, Izumi was able to evade her argument.

"I appreciate that he rates Miyuki onee-sama most important. But when he has too much time to help others, he will not help. Possessing insight to understand what a partner feels, he will not show concern... And if I express it in one word, then Shiba-senpai is heartless."

"... Yeah, yes, there is."

Although he himself was not at school now, but the unrestrained words of criticism about her sempai made Kasumi fall back into the chair.

"As I understand it, Shiba-sempai has a lot of abilities...?"

Shiina, on the contrary, wanted Izumi to continue. She was interest in Tatsuya not as the opposite sex, but as a sempai from the same school board.

"He has insight, but there seems to be no sympathy."

"In other words, even if one does not understand the feelings of the speaker, he will still be able to understand what he is thinking about...?"

"If I could, I would not be so annoying..."

Izumi sighed and made an understanding face.

"Shiba-sempai it seems, is able to somehow analyze the change in our emotions."

"Analyze...? Not feel?"

"Yes, it is to analyze. Therefore, he can easily ignore the feelings of the speaker, if he considers that at the moment it is not necessary."

"Izumi, this is already more than an exaggeration..."

"No, Shiba-senpai is like that. Usually he just looks a bit cold-blooded, but when it's not about Miyuki onee-sama, he's really heartless."

From the resolute statement of the twin sister, Kasumi began to twitch her face muscles.

But Shiina somehow put her hands to her cheeks and flushed.

"...Shiina, why are you so excited about it?"

"Well... is not it wonderful? And delightfully..."

"Ha-a?"

Kasumi thought that she misheard. She could not understand where in the conversation there was at least one element that a young girl could admire.

"Well... In the heart of Shiba-sempai there is only a place for President Shiba. Are you not envious of a girl... who has a guy whose thoughts are only occupied by one person?"

"Is this how...? For me, there are a few difficulties..."

"Well. So, Kasumi-san is cold-blooded too."

I - cold-blooded?, thought Kasumi?

Kasumi-chan is cold-blooded?, thought Izumi.

"...Indeed, if an innocent girl thinks so thoughtfully, luck can turn away from her. In any case, let's get back to the main topic of the conversation."

"Ah, let's go."

Izumi carefully changed the subject, and Kasumi supported her. It seems that neither Kasumi nor Izumi saw Shiina as an innocent girl.

"Maybe it's an exaggeration that they want to reproach or reconcile, but I think it's my intention to at least discuss what to do next with Shiba sempai."

"It's clear from the onee-chan that Katsuto-san seems to be seriously concerned. Will he not get it? Yeah, most likely."

"But what offers can she make? Since we're talking about Shiba-senpai, he will not behave in a hostile way without thinking carefully..."

"You mean he's ready for hostility? That is, Shiba-senpai would not have missed what she can say?"

"I do not know about it, but he may listen to Katsuto-san's words. He is still the head of the Juumonji family."

"I also think that it is difficult not to hear Katsuto-san's words, regardless of whether he is a leader. But the use of the family name Juumonji is not so useless. If the rumors about the Yotsuba family turn out to be true, nothing will change for them, even if they leave the Ten Master Clans. If the hostile behavior of the sempai stems from the intentions of the Yotsuba family, then I do not think that they will compromise."

"That's the truth. I feel that I would like to see how Miyuki onee-sama debuts on TV, but... if everything is considered calmly, then I think it's a terrible thing to try to use the next head of the Yotsuba family for promotional purposes. But Tomokazu onii-sama also should be aware of the thoughts of the Yotsuba family."

"Tomokazu onii-sama simply did not know Shiba-senpai. Therefore, I think that he naively assumed that speaking on TV is not such a big deal and it will not cause any disagreement. If Katsuto-san stopped him... No, is this possible?"

"It's Katsuto-san."

Shiina looked curiously at the twins exchanging twisted curves, because she, unlike them, did not have the opportunity to get to know Katsuto closely.

"...I'm worried about something. Did onee-chan and the others step on a mine?"

Kasumi suddenly became openly alarmed.

"Kasumi-chan, do not say such strange things. What kind of mine?"

When Izumi said this, her face also turned a bit pale.

"Listen, Izumi, you know where the onee-chan and the others are meeting? Maybe we'll go and see?"

"And what will we do when we get there...?"

Izumi shook her head, showing denial, but the uncertainty in her words was noticed not only by Kasumi, but also by Shiina.

"Maybe we cannot do anything, but..."

"...But anyway, it would be better to go, yes?"

"Yeah..."

Shiina silently watched from behind Kasumi and Izumi, who exchanged remarks with anxiety in their voices, looking each other in the eye. The long silence that followed was interrupted by the visitors who came.

"Izumi-chan, Shiina-chan, thank you for your work."

"Kasumi... what are you doing?"

Two people did not enter through the main entrance, but through the side door. They were Honoka and Shizuku, who came from the headquarters of the disciplinary committee through the staircase leading from it.

Honoka with a kind smile said words of gratitude to her cohais. And from Shizuku went a subtle impression that she frowned. "Kitayama-sempai!"

This impression was stronger than everyone present at Kasumi. She suddenly jumped up and stood at attention.

"It's... I... because I have free time now...!"

"Yeah."

The contrast between the panic-stricken Kasumi and the calmly spoken Shizuku caused a feeling of tension in the observers.

"I know that Kasumi is not on duty right now. I just thought, what are you doing, staring at your sister."

The tension in the air disappeared. Kasumi's stiffened body also went limp.

"So, what did you do? Have you looked admiringly at a face that looks exactly like yours?"

"N-there was no such thing!"

Kasumi immediately rushed to justify herself.

"Kitayama-sempai! We are not daffodils!"

Not only Kasumi thought that it was necessary to wash this stigma. Izumi also stood up and began to protest.

"The daffodils? How are the lilies?"

By Shizuku's tone it was difficult to understand, she jokes or speaks seriously.

"No, no!"

"Narcissus * [2] is a narcissus! And not the lily!" Izumi shouted after Kasumi.

"Was not the daffodil not from the lily family?" Having measured the overexcited sisters of Saegusa with a cool look, Shizuku turned to Pixie.

"In the • outdated • system • Cronquist • narcissus • classified as • belonging to • the family • lily. At present time, it is classified as belonging to the family of Amaryllis."

"Pixie instantly counted the answer from the database and gave it to Shizuku."

"I see. It means I made a mistake. Pixie, can I have some tea?"

"Yes."

It seems that Shizuku had nothing more to add, and she went and sat down at the table. Kasumi and Izumi also settled on their chairs, spending all their energy on a state of heightened tension. The plan to penetrate the meeting of Mayumi also came to an end.

Kasumi and Izumi with a tired look, and the other three sat relaxed and drank for one was black tea, for another was green tea, and the last was coffee, when suddenly Pixie came up and stood next to Shiina.

"Shiina-sama. In the • reception • you • have • a visitor."

"Visitor?"

Shiina hastily returned to her terminal and checked the messages from the school. There really was a new message that notifies her of a visitor.

"Thanks, Pixie."Mitsuya-senpai, Izumi-san, can I leave my place for the reason you heard?"

"Oh sure." Answered Honoka Shiina. Izumi also did not object.

"Many thanks. Pixie, clean up for me, please."

"Understood."

Approaching the door, Shiina turned around.

Then she went, bowed, then opened the door and left. She left the bag with her personal belongings in the school boardroom.

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Behind First High was a vast artificial forest. The reason for its large size was that magic can be practiced in it without disturbing the surrounding private houses. The land on which it was located was uneven, covered with hills and pits. There was also an outdoor pool and a long water channel.

A student of this school ran through this difficult terrain. It was not just a run. Periodically, he looked back and changed direction to hide behind the surrounding trees.

This student was a first-grader named Yaguruma Saburou. He's hiding from pursuers.

No, the territory of First High was not invaded by terrorists or any other villains. At the request of Erika, the Mountain Club was helping with Saburou's training. The evading Saburou was pursued by 10 members of the club, including Leo.

Saburou was required to run 5 kilometers and at the same time not get caught by the pursuers. You could choose any direction. Naturally, leaving the path and going deep into the forest was not forbidden.

The pursuers had toy knives, the touch of which meant that it was necessary to start everything from the beginning. This was the condition imposed by Erika.

Saburou was full of optimism when Erika explained this condition to him. Just do not get touched by the toy knives. So, even if they catch up with him, you just have to handle the knives to be able to run away again.

However, he quickly realized how naive his expectations were.

After all, the pursuers with the knives were not alone. Even if the opponents were amateurs, it was difficult to evade the attacks, being bound by a restriction in the form of a complete ban on counterattacking.

Should he hesitate the pursuers instantly surround him. And the most difficult thing to cope with was Leo's attacks.

He heard that Leo learned to handle the sword less than a month before the Yokohama incident. But he was a genius of close combat, whom Saburou had already come together against several times in a training battle.

The third laboratory was constantly visited by military servicemen. Being a subordinate of the Mitsuya family, he participated in joint training with these soldiers from childhood.

Although his magical skills did not develop, his skills in hand-to-hand fighting were approaching the level of fighters of the rapid reaction squad of the self-defense forces, the confirmation of which he received from the praises of training partners. He was sure that he had become stronger.

However, enrolling in First High, Saburou received an important lesson that he still has to grow and grow. With Erika, he could do nothing at all. The same could be said about the president of the kenjutsu club, Aizu. Once he had a chance to fight with Vice-President Saito Yayoi, and she launched him (without exaggeration) in one blow, with a power not peculiar to the girl. It was "Tiger's Cut", Yayoi's favorite technique and her specialization. Having taken this blow, Saburou thought that he would die, despite the fact that he was in training armor.

And then there was Saijou Leonhard.

When they confronted each other in the dojo with the shinai, he thought only that he was strong, but not a genius. At that time, he left the impression that he was a man of the type who, for victory over his enemy, relies not on techniques, but on strength and endurance, as well as on rough, uncouth intuition.

Since that time, impressions of strength, endurance and brute intuition have not changed. But when the battles began in the open air, he realized something in the first battle. He experienced with his own skin that it was no longer a contest of the shinai. For Leo it was a full-fledged battle with arms and legs instead of weapons.

You cannot let him catch up. He must run away under any circumstances. He realized this by the time it came to be the beginning of the third attempt. And now it was the sixth restart.

In total, he ran about 10 kilometers. The pursuers, except Leo, have already been replaced several times by others.

If he does not complete it this time, on the next attempt he will fall down in exhaustion. So Saburou estimated his current state.

Hearing the trailing sounds of footsteps behind him, Saburou changed direction and went deeper into the forest.

These were the sounds of Leo's footsteps. He had run as long as Saburou, but the rhythm of his steps did not at all seem fatigued. Sensing the trembling of inexhaustible physical strength, Saburou moved to the depths of the forest, trying not to make noise.

"Found you!" From far away came the voice of Leo.

This is bad, thought Saburou and ran faster.

This cry was calculated to confuse Saburou, so that he would make a mistake. He doubted that he had really been noticed. However, this voice still penetrated his mind and made him forget caution, as a result of which he gave out the sounds of his steps senselessly.

From the thickets behind him came the sound of the rustle of leaves and the crunch of the branches that were moving away. He realized that this time he was indeed found.

Saburou rejected all attempts at secrecy and desperately jerked forward.

In the forest glade, located in the territory given to the Mountain Club, Saburou was lying on the ground, stretching his arms and legs. In the end, he could not run to the end, and he was completely exhausted.

"Saburou, are you okay?" In the voice of Leo sitting next to him there was no alarm.

"...Yes." Saburou had to gather all his strength to utter one short word through his heavy breathing.

"Though you did not manage to win, it was not so bad. I believe that you showed yourself quite well against the physical strength of these idiots from the Mountain Club."

On Erika's jab, members of the Mountain Club did not make any complaints. Leo just smiled wryly. All of them, it seems, realized that they are "strong idiots".

Not only the members of the Mountain Club ignored Erika's remark.

"Shibata-san, it's dangerous to approach too close."

"I do not think that it will hurt if I falls, because there is water, but if the album gets wet it will be awful?"

Mizuki, who was painting something in the album, nodded "OK" to the members of the club and moved away from the edge of the hole she was looking at.

The distance to the surface of the water at the bottom of this large pit was 5 meters. Its purpose is a rock wall for free climbing. Mizuki was made the new (you can say appointed) art club president, on the instructions of the school board.

According to Leo's policy, the Mountain Club will have to increase activities related to its name, and often leave last year's activity in the form of a "club of picks", a "survival club", a "club of miners" and others. For this, this "pit" was needed. Right now, a member of the club who did not take part in the "game of catch" joyfully stormed the sheer slope of this "rock". There were no safety ropes, but instead, the bottom of the pit was a 3 meter warm water pool with a temperature of 30 degrees, so the punishment for the fall was a bath. After that, the clothing becomes soaked with water and pulls down, wet shoes slip, and it all boils down to an endless cycle of attempts to climb and fall. Well, in fact, there is a staircase installed, so the situation is not so desperate.

The current theme of the art club was "muscle dynamics," chosen because of the undisguised infatuation of some girls for the club. Mizuki came here to paint free climbing, suitable for this topic. At first, Mizuki screamed lightly every time the "climber" broke and fell, but then, after spending almost an hour, she adjusted herself to draw a sweaty and panting student, clinging to the ledges of the rock.

"Leo."

Leo standing next to and preparing to conquer the wall from the depths of the forest, a voice called out.

"Mikihiko. We rarely see you in such a place."

Mikihiko appeared from the thickets. He was in school uniform, but he was not soiled in mud. Among the club members who noticed it, exclamations were heard, like "after all, he is a friend of the president" or "head of the disciplinary committee and really breaks common sense", although they seem to have forgotten about the presence of Leo and Erika.

"I received a report on a disappeared student and came to see. "Having said this, Mikihiko caught the look of Saburo lying down. "But it seems that everything is in order."

Nobody wanted to joke about this. Looking at Saburo, anyone would ask the question, "where is he in order?" But if they said "he's not right!", It might come up as a problem that happened during club activities. Their silence was something of a self-defense.

"Yes, and Saburo did not object to this."

"Saburo, are you able to get up?"

"...Yes."

Saburo rose after Erika's question. He was still shaking and it seemed he was holding on by willpower.

"If it's the case, practice with the head of the disciplinary committee. Miki, can you please?"

"Err? Is he all right?"

Hearing Erika's request, Mikihiko was very surprised, rounding his eyes.

"Please."

Erika's reaction turned out to be a repeated request, not an answer to doubt.

"If without magic, then I do not mind..."

"That's good."

This meant that the head of the disciplinary committee could not take the initiative in violating the school rules on the prohibition of unauthorized use of magic.

Which is quite natural. Erika it seems, from the very beginning was not going to ask for such unreasonable things.

"Sabrou. Even if the head of Yoshida is without magic, he is one of the strongest in this school. Do not think about winning, think about the chance to fight a strong opponent."

"Got it! Yoshida-senpai, please!"

With great difficulty, Sabrou rearranged his legs to stand upright.

Mikihiko for a moment hesitated, but with the expression "there's nothing you can do" (he did not say so, but Erika understood so) on his face, he unbuttoned the buttons of his jacket.

He took off his jacket and handed it to Mizuki, who had already come to see what was going on.

The next moment, Sabrou lunged at Mikihiko.

Reflectively dodging Sabrou's lunge, he grabbed his wrist and turned it out. Sabrou's body easily succumbed and fell to the ground.

Mikihiko let go of his hand, so that Sabrou's joint did not suffer.

Raising himself, Sabrou realized this, and from that moment he began to closely monitor the movements of Mikihiko.

"Why did not you attack during the length of time while I was removing my jacket?" Mikihiko asked with curiosity.

Realizing his mistake, Sabrou's consciousness set off into the past. But it was just a new mistake. Taking advantage of this moment of distraction, Mikihiko again immediately reduced the distance.

Mikihiko hammered his left hand without much force from the right side of Sabrou.

Having received a fist in the jaw, Sabrou cried out and fell, rolling a couple of times.

Immediately, the knee of Mikihiko crushed Sabrou's chest, with his left hand he immobilized his right hand, and put his fingers to Sabrou's eyes.

Saburou patted Mikihiko's knee free with his left hand, showing that he was giving up.

Mikihiko rose and turned his back to Saburou.

Saburou tried to grab Mikihiko from behind.

But he, suddenly turning around, avoiding his hands. Slowly, Saburou was slumped face down, Mikihiko grabbed his hands and twisted them behind his back, then sat on him like a horse.

"Uwaa, so awesome!"

Mizuki clapped her hands happily when she saw Mikihiko's fight, which was superbly held, which was a rare sight.

"Uee... That's sick..."

Leo drunk a hell of a mixture of tea, green cabbage juice and juice from a bitter gourd. Erika, too, had an acidic face from disappointment in Saburou and Mikihiko's smart approach to the duel.

"So you want to continue?" Asked Mikihiko, releasing him from the hold.

"I ask you to!" Saburou answered without hesitation.

Thirty minutes later, the moment came when Saburou could no longer stand on his feet.

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"Shiina-chan has been there for a long time." muttered Izumi with concern in her voice interrupting her work on reports from each club.

"That's the truth. For a simple meeting this is taking far too long." Kasumi, who took the work of the disciplinary committee (despite the fact that Shizuku was aware of her free time) to the school boardroom, raised her head and agreed.

"Who came to see her? Pixie, do you know?"
Kasumi asked unconcernedly, as if referring to an ordinary human servant.

"Disclosing private information is prohibited."
However, Pixie's response was a typical machine phrase. Such pre-programmed AI phrases for her were easier, and she could pronounce them more smoothly.

"Well what kind of a stamped answer...?"

With a tense smile, Kasumi tried to protest. Both she and Izumi knew that was Pixie.

"The Master • instructed me • to act as • an ordinary • machine."

Kasumi's protest was cut to the ground.

"Asking for the contents of someone else's messages has always been bad manners."

"...Yes, I'm sorry."

Having received in addition to everything else reproach from Shizuku, Kasumi surrendered. It seems that there is already a stronger bond between the two than the sempai-kohai relationship.

"Shiina's still at the meeting?" But Shizuku, it seems, is also worried.
"No. Mitsuya-sama left the school."

Not only Shizuku reacted to Pixie's reply with a surprised face and an escaped "Eh?".

"When!?"

"16 minutes and 50 seconds • back."

Pixie answered Honoka's question immediately. In theory, this information should not be available to Pixie, because she had only the function of passing commands to the school boardroom system, but now no one paid attention to it.

"It's strange."

"What's strange?" Hearing Shizuku mutter, Honoka asked with an ominous premonition.

"She did not take her things."

With anxiety on her face, Kasumi jumped up from her chair in a hurry.

"Sempai, I'll go, I'll try to learn more."

"Kasumi-chan, where are you going!?" Izumi asked, not the "sempai" Shizuku and Honoka.

If she goes to the teacher's office for information, she will also be refused under the pretext of prohibiting the issuance of private information. The same story is waiting for her in the classroom.

"I'll look for Saburo. It seems that he said that today he will be somewhere in the territory of the Mountain Club."

Kasumi explained her plan to her twin sister and left the school boardroom.

◆◆◆

With a troubled look at Saburo's heavy breathing, kneeling, hands buried in the ground, Mikihiko put his hands into the sleeves of his jacket that Mizuki held.

Kasumi did not care what stage this was, and how to react to it. She did not have time for this.

"Sabrou sempai, I beg your pardon!"

Kasumi approached Sabrou resolutely and, without worrying that her clothes would get dirty, rose to her knees next to him, so that their eyes were at the same height.

"Where did Shiina disappear to so suddenly!"

Hearing these words, Sabrou forgot how to breathe. His face has became pale, but not because of a lack of oxygen.

"Shiina... is gone?"

"Sabrou, you do not know?"

Gathered around these two Erika, Leo and Mikihiko simultaneously frowned. Sabrou was seized by a fit of hard cough.

"Hey!? How are you?"

"All right."

The normal Sabrou rose after Kasumi got up, but he hardly stood on his feet. Collecting all the remaining energy, he staggered and stumbled, jerked to his bag. Unhooked the wireless voice module from his mobile information terminal, he inserted it in his ear. Forgetting about any manners, as soon as the line was connected, he shouted into the microphone.

"Father! Shiina is gone! Do you know anything!?"

On the other side of the telephone line was his father, Yaguruma Shirou.

"Shiina ojou-sama? Wait a minute, I'll call you back soon." Shirou answered and cut off the connection from his side.

His father's name appeared on the terminal's display after about a minute of Sabrou's agonizing expectation, who did not take his eyes off him.

"This is Sabrou! Father, did you find anything out!?"

"It seems that there were no orders from the Mitsuya family. What happened, tell everything in order?"

Shirou did not scold Saburou with claims, like "why did not you look after Shiina?". I did not blame him as a guard of Shiina. This would have even more exerted pressure on Saburou's spiritual wounds.

"Yes, I just heard it myself..."

"...Motoharu-sama now asks for information from the school."

Saburou thought that this was a very quick reaction, as if the older brother of Shiina gave him instructions while standing next to him.

"At the moment, you do not need to do anything. Hasty actions under unknown circumstances can only worsen the situation."

"...I understand. Let me know if anything becomes known."

"Okay. The probability that Shiina-sama will simply return to school is not zero. Just wait a little. Ok?"

"Got it."

Saburou pressed the end button. He looked confused.

"Kasumi, what does all this mean?"

In this state, he, most likely, for some time will not be able to respond. With this thought, Erika turned not to him, but to Kasumi who was standing in front of him.

"Yes, this is..."

In fact, Kasumi did not understand much either. Nevertheless, she told in order everything she knew herself.

"She was called to the reception, hmm..."

"If you just think about it, did the visitor take her with him?"

After Erika's muttering, Leo voiced his idea.

"No, there are other options besides kidnapping. She could leave with him and at will, or leave separately from the visitor."

Mikihiko rejected Leo's hasty conclusion. But Kasumi refuted all peaceful guesses.

"Shiina left her things in the school boardroom."

"In any case, let's go to the school boardroom."

Hearing the suggestion of Erika's frown, Leo expressed doubt.

"Why should we go to the school boardroom? To find out who came, would not it be better to go straight to the teacher's office and find out by force?"

"Tatsuya-kun or Juumonji-senpai could and would find out what happened. But to us in the teacher's office we will be answered only by a firm refusal."

"That does not explain why we need the school board."

"In the school board room there is Pixie."

"Ah, there it is." Leo understood with an understanding face, but then Kasumi objected.

"But Pixie will not answer, saying that this is private information..."

"If Pixie is informed that this is an emergency, she will respond. Machines are more flexible in such situations."

"Right. Let's go to the school board room."

"Uh. Maybe I'll visit it for the first time."

Leo just voiced what he thinks, he did not try to defuse the atmosphere with a joke.

"It's strange that you have not been called there yet. Ah, that's why you were called to the disciplinary committee."

"They did not call me there either!"

But from the comical scenes of the debate between Erika and Leo, the tense atmosphere eased a little.

◇ ◇ ◇

"Pixie, we have an emergency situation. Could you tell us who came to see Shiina-chan?"

"I cannot • answer • without • Masters • permission." Answered Pixie's refusal to Honoka's request.

Pixie woke up inside this shell, reading Honoka's thoughts. The spiritual informational form of the life of Honoka, which was infused in Pixie, was given by her, that is, it could be said she was her spiritual mother. But anyway, she did not have any feeling or desire to follow Honoka's orders. The owner of Pixie, and those to whom she wants to entirely dedicate herself, was Tatsuya alone and unchanged.

"Pixie." Instead of Honoka, who could not think of anything else to convince, she began talking to Shizuku with Pixie. "Your Master is absent from the school board because of an important matter."

"This is true."

"If we now contact Tatsuya-kun, we can prevent this important matter."

"This is a reasonable conclusion."

"I'll do it if you do not admit it's an emergency."

"Interfere • Master • not • allowed."

"Then tell us. Even if I have to interfere with Tatsuya-kun for this, I want to find out what happened to Shiina-chan."

Pixie was silent. Behavioral principles "cannot disclose sensitive information without Tatsuya's permission" and "cannot interfere with Tatsuya" conflicted with each other. If Pixie was a simple machine, it would be hanging from a contradictory task in which it is impossible to prioritize. But Pixie's electronic brain functioned under the control of a spiritual information entity called the Parasite. "She" set her own priorities.

"Yes."

This caused surprise and joy of those present. However, they all quickly calmed down and focused their attention on what Pixie would say next.

"The visitor • named • himself • the envoy • of the Mitsuya • family."

"But we heard that the Mitsuya family does not know about this."

In response to Erika's objection, Pixie turned her head with a mechanical movement, pointing to the side of the large display.

"Please • check out • the video."

The display shows the recording from the school video surveillance camera. This proved that it required breaking into the school systems, but nobody worried about that now. Since the minds of those present were filled with only the one problem.

"This woman • was called • the envoy • of the • Mitsuya family."

The image showed two people. A woman who is about 20-25 years old and a man who is about 30 years old. Contrary to age, it seemed that the man is respectful of a woman.

"She... I think I've already seen that face somewhere..." Izumi mused thoughtfully.

"These two are military." Erika said, only a few seconds of watching the behavior of these people.

"If I'm not mistaken, the Third laboratory seems to be constantly visited by the military?" Asked Mikihiko, looking at Kasumi.

"Yes, it is, but..."

"I think there are no people among the members of the Mitsuya family who are in the service of the self-defense forces." Izumi refuted Mikihiko's guess.

"This means that the military deceived Mitsuya?"

"It seems... the suspicion of Leo about kidnapping may turn out to be true."

"Miki! Do not say such dangerous words, like 'kidnapping'!" Erika chided, raising her voice. Mikihiko, noticing that Saburo's complexion was even paler than before, hastened to apologize.

"But still. When the schoolgirl is taken away by the military, is it not unusual?"

When Leo again pointed to the truth, Erika and Mikihiko clenched their teeth.

"...If it turns out that these two are her acquaintances from the Third Laboratory, then there is a high probability that our concern is unnecessary."

"But we were told that the Mitsuya family does not know about this?" Said Mikihiko, this time refuting Erika.

"...I think we first need to wait for confirmation that Shiina-chan did not really return home."

"Right." Shizuku supported the opinion of Honoka.

"Exactly. Saburo." Saburo's head hung in despondency, when he heard his name from Erika, sat up sharply, straightened his shoulders and raised his head. "Go home for now."

Saburo did not reply with a nod to Erika's direction.

"But ... my father said to stay here .."

"Yes, that's right... So, you have nothing to do but wait for a call from your father?"

Erika bit her lip in an irritated way.

"In any case, if it turns out that the First High student has been abducted, then for us it will not be someone else's business. We cannot just ignore that."

"That's right." Leo agreed with Mikihiko.

In truth, unlike the chief of the disciplinary committee of Mikihiko, Leo should not have to worry about other students, but no one here made a stupid remark about this.

"Shizuku. Is it really good not to get Tatsuya-san and others involved...? After all, Shiina-chan disappeared while working in the school council..."

"Yes, I think it would be better to contact Miyuki." Understanding Honoka's thin hint, Shizuku agreed.

"You do not want to interfere with the president's business?" Izumi expressed her concern. As expected, after reading the atmosphere, she did not call her "Miyuki onee-sama."

"You can just send the same message?"

"I'll write to Miyuki." Honoka picked up Shizuku's idea and went to the terminal.

◊ ◊ ◊

When Miyuki received a message from Honoka, she was in a well-known beauty salon.

The meeting with Mayumi was scheduled for 17:00. There was still a lot of time left, and she decided to do the hair styling. It was a high class institution for important people who demanded security, which operated on the principle of "entrance by invitation only." The price was high, corresponding to the skill of the workers, but this was compensated by the low number of clients, so a sudden reservation before the visit was not a problem. At the same time they decided to entrust the salon and hair dressing to Minami.

Because of this client-oriented nature of this institution, there was a place for bodyguards. Tatsuya sat directly behind Miyuki and read the book. The book is not paper, but electronic.

It was not an article related to his work at FLT, it was not documents related to his work on the Yotsuba family, but just some useless reading-book for killing time. In other words, Tatsuya was not doing anything right now.

On Miyuki's terminal, the incoming message sounded. The signal was different from usual - it was a sound tuned to urgent messages from a group of close friends.

"Tatsuya-sama, I'm sorry." Miyuki, who was unable to verify the message, decided to ask Tatsuya to help.

"What?" Tatsuya answered, tearing himself away from reading.

"Could you take a look at my terminal?"

"A message?"

"Yes. It seems that it is something urgent."

Tatsuya was not so unfeeling that it was easy to read Miyuki's personal messages, but since she herself asked, he could not refuse her. He took out of her purse Miyuki's mobile terminal and clicked on the icon of the e-mail application.

"It's from Honoka. She writes that Shiina was kidnapped from school."

"Shiina-chan?"

"Please do not move your head." The hairdresser, startled by surprise, strictly warned Miyuki. He was good at pretending that he did not hear their conversation. Tatsuya was not against reading aloud the contents of the message, because he trusted in this man's job the ability to keep his mouth shut.

"Shiina disappeared right after she was visited by a couple of visitors, a man and a woman who seemed to be military. There is a high probability that she followed these two."

"It's not a kidnapping?"

Restrained, Miyuki asked, trying not to move her head.

"Maybe she was forced to go with them, but at least it's not like kidnapping with violent methods."

Miyuki was aware of the strengthening of the First High security system, which was held after the lesson learned from the incident with the invasion of terrorists in the year before last. It is almost impossible to kidnap a student who is under the strict supervision of that system, in no way was it inferior in its reliability to that of the central government.

"...Should we go back to school?"

"Even if we return, we cannot do anything. Moreover, if it turns out that this is really kidnapping, then the police should deal with this."

If this unlikely event, like the abduction of Miyuki happened then Tatsuya naturally would not say that.

"So, let's leave it to the police?"

"At this stage it is still not possible to say exactly what this abduction is, so it will be problematic if one learns about it. However, Shiina refers to the direct line of kinship of the Mitsuya family. And the Mitsuya family have their connections in the police, and Erika seems to be motivated to help too."

"Erika?"

"Yes. I do not know why, but it seems that Leo and Mikihiko are also involved in this matter."

"And they really can this situation be?"

Miyuki worried about whether they themselves would not do anything, but Tatsuya did not show at all that he saw the problem.

"We also have our own affairs."

"...That's right."

Tatsuya was telling the truth. Even if it were not he who said it, Miyuki would also agree. Only Miyuki could not do anything about her anxiety about what his friends would think about Tatsuya.

◇ ◇ ◇

In the Mitsuya family house, the head of the family Gen and the eldest son of Motoharu had a private conversation.

"My father seems to have taken Shiina."

"...It's clear."

Hearing about the message from Saburo, in which it was said that Shiina was gone, Gen and Motoharu immediately realized what "cooperation" Tsukasa was talking about. The answer received after this from First High was the image with the visitors which confirmed that it was Tooyama Tsukasa.

"Saburo-kun did not seem to notice Tsukasa-san. Because he never met her."

"Really?"

Gen's answer was a surprise for Motoharu. Despite the fact that Shiina was quite familiar with Tsukasa, it was difficult to believe that Saburo, who was always together with Shiina never met Tsukasa.

"Tsukasa-san really carefully chooses people she reveals herself to. Because of the circumstances of her official duty, which is carried on the shoulders of the Tooyama family, they believe that it is better to have as few people as possible knowing their personalities."

"But she met with Shiina quite often, yet never showed herself to Saburo-kun..."

"Perhaps she is such a person because of her work, like walking on a tightrope. No, not only Tsukasa-san. The entire Tooyama family has long been involved in such secret activities."

"...The magic of the Tenth Lab - it seemed like they were barriers against physical and magical attack?

Gen shook his head at his son's question.

"Initially, yes. But because of the peculiarities of the form of activated magic, the Tooyama family got the role of being something more than simple shields. The Tooyama family was included in the intelligence department of the national self-defense forces in the form of a counterintelligence unit."

"That is, their whole family cooperates with the army? I believe that we, the Mitsuya family, are also contributing to helping the army, helping to collect information throughout the East Asian region."

Gen shook his head again.

"This is not cooperation. The Tooyama family has become a full-fledged part of the intelligence department and has a secret influence on it."

Gen was silent. Motoharu held his breath, waiting for the continuation of his father's speech.

"...The Tooyama family does not have such unlimited power as the Yotuba family. If we talk about magical power, the Juumonji family of the same Tenth laboratory are stronger than them. They also do not have political power like the Saegusa family. They do not have fame, but they do not have a bad reputation either. Being in the shadows, they will protect the interests of the faction to which they belong by any means."

Gen gave a deep sigh.

"If the goals they pursue are in the interests of the country, in the interests of magicians and in the interests of 28 houses, then I would say that their behavior is quite tolerable. However, they can also secretly plan hostility between 28 houses for their own interests. This is more annoying than a simple threat to understand, like the Yotuba family."

"...So, this time there is a chance?"

"...What do you mean?"

Motoharu's question was unexpected for Gen.

"The promise that Shiina will not threaten anything... If Tsukasa-san is aiming at Shiba Tatsuya-dono, this will be a confrontation between the Tooyama and Yotuba families, this may be a chance to get rid of the potential threat to the Tooyama family."

"I cannot say that there is no such probability, but... we ourselves cannot do anything. Even if it comes to confrontation between the families of Tooyama and Yotuba, we ourselves will have no choice but to remain observers."

"Is this the best option, that we will only look, hoping that the desired result will be achieved?"

"It's just consolation. But it's better with him than without him."

In any case, until it ends in some form, Shiina will not return. Gen grinned at how easily he accepted this fact.

◇ ◇ ◇

The big sedan car that drove Shiina was not only spacious, but also comfortable. Not as comfortable as a limousine, but was on an acceptable level.

Departing from the First High parking lot, a large sedan arrived in Karuizawa without using a road train (transportation of cars like a ferry, but on land). In this era, not using this advantage during long trips was a strange choice.

The car drove up to the old Western-style mansion, which left an impression of itself "really in our time there are still such buildings?". The atmosphere around this house was as if it were a scene from some horror film. Shiina went out of the car with a light tremor all over her body.

"Shiina-chan, is it not cool outside? Do not be shy, let's go inside."

It was already the middle of April. In Karuizawa it was not so cold. But there was no point in standing outside, so Shiina took advantage of Tsukasa's invitation and went inside.

"Uwaa...!"

Shiina's involuntary burst of surprise. Externally looking like an old Western-style mansion, inside it was a classic setting, exuding an atmosphere of luxury.

"Shiina-chan's room is right here. Use it at your discretion."

The room she was lead to by Tsukasa was as luxurious as the vestibule, furnished in the best aristocratic preferences. A huge bed with a canopy attracted special attention to Shiina. And a dressing table with gold trim in an antique style. Even accustomed to luxury, Shiina wondered how much it could cost.

"In the closet there is a change of clothes. The size should fit. Although according to the plan you are here for only one night, you will probably need it?"

"Ah, yes. Many thanks."

Tearing her mind from the bed and table, Shiina thanked Tsukasa.

"It's my pleasure. It's because I asked you to help, so to provide everything you need is natural to me."

"Sorry..."

Shiina wondered for a while whether she should ask now, but in the end decided to ask.

"I cannot contact my family, right?"

"I'm sorry. Can you just think it's part of your job?"

"I understand." Shiina said, while thinking: "I knew it."

I'll call you when the food is ready Tsukasa said and left the room. The sound of the door locking was inaudible, but Shiina did not even think to check it.

She had to leave her bag with her personal belongings in the school boardroom, but she had her personal mobile information terminal in her inner jacket pocket. Grabbing it, she checked the signal level. As she thought, the antenna icon was crossed out.

"I signed it myself, I cannot refuse now."

Shiina opened the closet and took off her school uniform. Dressing in simple room clothes, she layed onto the sheet to check the softness of the canopy bed.

She did not know how Tsukasa had persuaded her father and her brother. She felt guilty for leaving school without telling Saburou and the senpais from the school board, but she believed that her family would tell them about this situation.

She did not even think it possible that she was considered missing.

◇ ◇ ◇

The emotions that surfaced on the face of Honoka, who had finished her reply, were a mixture of confusion and disappointment.

"What does Miyuki write?"

"It's from Tatsuya-san." Erika asked Honoka a question with an unconcealed shock in her voice. "He writes that we'd better leave it to the police."

Erika's face was also disappointed.

"What kind of a template answer is that..."

"Show me."

Shizuku glanced at the display that showed the message. After reading, she, in an uncharacteristic manner, heavily frowned.

"...And that is true, he has written that it is better to leave it to the police.

"Ah, yes."

Reproaching herself that "it was necessary to explain more clearly," Honoka sent Tatsuya's response to a large wall display.

"Wait... So, Tatsuya also believes that there is a high probability that Mitsuya has been deceived..."

"But, since there is no evidence, we do not know if the police will respond... They most likely wont."

Leo and Mikihiko frowned on their unfavorable expectations.

"And still if this is confirmed, and the Mitsuya family will turn to the police, then just leave it to the police... it's not normal!"

"...But this can be the most sensible decision. What we can do outside of school is very limited."

Izumi tried to reassure the indignant Kasumi.

"If you leave everything to the police, then what will you do if it becomes too late!"

Kasumi screamed in rage at Izumi.

"Then tell us, what can you do, Kasumi-chan?"

Izumi calmly responded to the twin sister, absorbed in emotions. Perhaps Izumi herself could remain calm just because Kasumi was already shedding all the emotions.

"...Why not use the search network of our family!?"

"But she's in Kyoto now. Kasumi-chan knows who to contact and what to say?"

"We'll ask onee-chan!"

"Onee-sama went to a meeting with Shiba-sempai."

"That's good! At the same time, I'll complain to her about it!" Kasumi ran out of the school boardroom.

"Hey, Kasumi-chan! Do you even know where she went?... Well, everything! I beg your pardon, Mitsui-senpai. For today we will finish, good-bye!" Said Izumi and left after Kasumi.

Shizuku looked disappointedly at the departed terminal of the disciplinary committee.

"Honoka. Can I leave it here for now?"

"Of course, there are no problems."

Kasumi on Monday is waiting for something not so very funny. After thinking about it, Honoka shrugged, deciding that it was not her business.

"So, what shall we do? As Tatsuya advised, will we sit back and wait?"

On Leo's inciting question, Erika answered in a malicious voice.

"If he says to leave it to the police, then we will. But this does not mean that we will sit idly by."

"Erika, what are you going to do...?" Asked Mikihiko anxiously. He was worried not because he did not know what she was planning, but because he guessed what she was going to do. "You've already decided? In the dojo, after all, there are a lot of people connected with the police?"

"Abuse of power for personal purposes."

"H-nothing."

From the straight faced Shizuku to the anxious Mikihiko.

"When such links exist, it is a sin not to use them."

The old Erika would now have a mischievous smirk. But the current Erika did not smile.

◇ ◇ ◇

The place where Mayumi invited Tatsuya and Miyuki was a traditional Japanese restaurant in Akasaka.

Tatsuya thought that he would need to be three times older to visit such a place. Moreover, for this institution having that age would not be enough, it would also be necessary to, at least, have status, fame and wealth.

Tatsuya's group arrived at the restaurant 3 minutes before the appointed time. A restaurant employee lead these three young people who were not suitable for this place, showing nothing but a smile on their face.

Exactly at 17:00 Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami entered the room that was in the traditional Japanese style.

There they saw Katsuto waiting alone.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting." Tatsuya said and sat down, without asking permission to sit down.

"No, you are just in time." Katsuto confirmed that they have nothing to blame themselves.

With a small gap from Tatsuya and Miyuki, followed by Minami. Miyuki sat on the pillow next to Tatsuya, and Minami sat right on the floor behind Miyuki.

All four sat in the "right" posture on their knees [Seiji]. None of them did any relaxing movements, showing that it was uncomfortable for them to sit like that. All looked long accustomed to the seiji.

"I'm sorry!"

When Tatsuya and Katsuto's eyes had already met and they were about to begin, the front door opened and Mayumi and Mari entered the room.

"Excuse me, did we make you wait?"

"No, we just arrived."

When asked by Mayumi, Tatsuya answered immediately. Katsuto was already ready to answer, but eventually closed his mouth, without saying anything.

Mayumi, with a sigh of relief, took her place next to Katsuto and opposite Miyuki. And Mari sat down next to Mayumi.

While sitting in Seiji Mayumi looked better than ordinary female students, but compared to Tatsuya, Miyuki or Katsuto, she looked awkward anyway. Even Mari looked better in this matter.

"Okay, right away..."

Mayumi wanted to start negotiations (or better to call it persuasion), but suddenly from behind the front door a voice was heard: "I'm sorry." Mayumi answered: "Yes, I'll ask." The door opened, and on the other side there appeared not the waitress, but the young mistress of this restaurant.

"Visitors came to us who called themselves your comrades..." The hostess spoke with an impartial face.

The surprise was natural, because everyone who was supposed to come was already here.

"Er, and who are they?"

Although Mayumi was also confused, she quickly recovered and asked.

"They introduced themselves as Saegusa Kasumi-sama and Izumi-sama."

"Er...!?"

Shortly after losing her speech, Mayumi asked Tatsuya and Miyuki "to wait a moment," and, without waiting for the mistress, walked to the entrance to the restaurant. Saying "I'm sorry," the landlady bowed and closed the door on the other side.

While they waited, Miyuki asked Tatsuya: "They are here for that matter, are they not?"

"What business? Tatsuya-kun, do you know anything about why the younger sisters of Mayumi interrupted us?" Mari asked Tatsuya, hearing this question from Miyuki. Katsuto frowned at the fact that Mari's mannerisms had not changed since First High, but Tatsuya did not care, and he responded with an air of ease.

"Yes. Today the first daughter of the Mitsuya family was taken from First High, and there is a possibility that she was abducted. That's what it was about."

"Kidnapped?" Marie was surprised, slightly rounded eyes. "The youngest daughter of the Mitsuya family, that is, Shiina?"

"Watanabe-senpai is also familiar with them?"

"A little familiar through Mayumi. So, this year, Shiina entered First High?"

"That's right."

"Well, what about the kidnapping?"

Tatsuya briefly retold everything he knew himself.

"This is a serious matter! Tatsuya-kun, and Shiba, too, what are you doing here!?"

Mari seemed incredible that the president of the school board and another important member of the school board do nothing while the student may be involved in something criminal.

"In what sense...? "But Tatsuya only smiled crookedly. He was invited here. Although Mari was only one of the participants, but she treated the invited party, and such accusations from her sounded ridiculous.

"Shiba." Katsuto turned to Tatsuya.

"What is it?"

"Can I address you not from the position of the families Juumonji and Yotuba from the same Ten Master Clans, but as a sempai to the cohais of the same First High School?"

"I do not mind."

Immediately after Tatsuya nodded, there was a feeling that Katsuto's massiveness had increased significantly.

"Let's postpone this conversation. You should give priority to the first-year student who may have been kidnapped."

Tatsuya again wore a crooked smile. This time it was more ironic than in the previous one.

"Juumonji-senpai, I dare to call you that. In the role of representatives of the Yotuba family, the daughter of the Saegusa family invited us to this place, indicating that the meeting will be held with the participation of the head of the Juumonji family. In this case, your words about the postponement of the conversation can be regarded no more than the remark of the Juumonji family of the Ten Master Clans."

Katsuto could not respond to Tatsuya's words.

"Based on this, neither I nor Miyuki will object if you say that we should postpone this meeting" said Tatsuya and looked at Miyuki. Miyuki's elegant nod-bow became a dumb sign of agreement. "However, it seems to me that there is no point in postponing the meeting."

"...What do you mean?"

"It is still unknown whether the incident that happened to Mitsuya-san is a crime. Since it is known that she left First High, then, with the authority of the police, after studying the records from the street cameras, you can easily find out where she was taken away."

Hearing this, Mari wedged an irritated conversation.

"If you know so much, then why did not you do anything?"

"It could have happened because of her own will." Tatsuya replied in an indifferent voice. "Yes, Mitsuya-san definitely was taken away. But if she left by her consent, the attempt to save her would be an illegal invasion of her personal space."

"This remark is not in the style of Tatsuya-kun, who without further ado, invaded Blanche's base." Mari objected with obvious sarcasm.

However, not only Tatsuya, but Miyuki also did not show an emotional struggle. Because it was obvious to them that Mari's sarcasm was not a logical deduction, but a desperate search for a reason.

"At that time, I did not have to check whether I was free or busy." Tatsuya said in refutation of Mari's words. After that, he looked from the clenched teeth of Mari back to Katsuto. "As students of First High, we cannot do anything publicly. But if you insist that the meeting should be postponed, then we will not protest."

Katsuto folded his arms and thought. At that moment the front door opened sharply and noisily.

"Shiba-senpai, you're mistaken!"

"Kasumi-chan, stop!"

"Kasumi-chan... Oh, Miyuki-senpai, Shiba-senpai, I'm sincerely very sorry for that!"

Raging Kasumi, Mayumi in a step behind her, and pale and apologetic Izumi. It was the invasion of the three sisters of Saegusa.

"Kasumi-chan, in any case, let's go home? Well?"

Mayumi tried to calm her younger sister by talking to her like a little girl, but Kasumi's gaze was clearly fixed on Tatsuya.

"We cannot ignore it silently! Is it really possible to just sacrifice Shiina?!"

"Yes, you can," such an answer did not follow.

"So you heard this conversation?" Instead, Tatsuya answered the question with a question.

"I heard it. Overheard! This is bad!?" With a reddened face, Kasumi, in a fit of despair, responded with a defiant tone.

"Eavesdropping is bad." Tatsuya with the usual tone said the obvious.

"...!"

"But, as you already heard, it will save me time. Shiina is a minor. Even if she wants this, the police can protect her only with the consent of her guardians."

"And so what?"

"Kasumi-chan. Shiba-senpai says that you turned to the wrong address." Izumi said, pulling Kasumi by the sleeve.

"The wrong address?"

"Shiba-senpai means we should talk to Shiina-chan's family, not with him."

"To talk about what!?"

Izumi grabbed Kasumi's right arm.

"Let's go. We have already received valuable advice from Shiba-senpai, we should not stop him further."

"Right." Said Mayumi and took Kasumi's left hand.

"Izumi? Onee-chan? Hey... What are you doing!?"

"Tatsuya-kun, Miyuki-san, I understand that it's rude to say this after I invited you here, but do you mind being finished for today? I will take care of compensation for this."

"Yes, it's alright."

The existing atmosphere no longer had serious conversations. Tatsuya readily accepted Mayumi's apologies.

"Kasumi-chan, let's go."

"Okay, we're going."

That said Mayumi and Izumi, dragged the silent Kasumi to the exit. Tatsuya and Katsuto exchanged glances and at the same time sighed.

"Juumonji-senpai, in that case, please forgive me."

After these words, Miyuki, who was silent for most of the time bowed with a serious face, on which there was no shadow of a smile.

"You two, I'm sorry that it happened." Katsuto could only say that. Mari said nothing.

Thus, the private meeting between the families of Yotsuba, Juumonji and Saegusa ended without any specific conversation.

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It was almost 18 hours. It was not long before sunset. Erika and Leo left school and now were in the Chiba Dojo.

"Erika, I'm sorry for making you wait."

While she was questioning the students, Mikihiko came up.

"Did you send Mizuki home?"

"I led her home." Responding to Erika, Mikihiko seems to have been a bit embarrassed.

"It's clear."

However, Erika ignored Mikihiko's sincere reaction.

"Erika, what have you got? Did you find any clues?"

"At the moment, records from street surveillance cameras are being studied."

"Clear. If it is known that the car started from First High, then it can be tracked through the street cameras, even if they used the railroad crossing."

"And why did I not think about such an obvious thing before?"

Mikihiko reproached himself for not paying attention. But Erika turned away with an uninterested face. So Leo had to answer.

"A proposal to check records from street cameras came from a message from Izumi."

"From Izumi-san? Yes, then there is no reason to be surprised."

Mikihiko mentally compared the parameters of Kasumi and Izumi.

"I do not know what you thought, but Izumi seems to have received this advice from Tatsuya."

"Haha..."

Now Mikihiko realized what Erika's behavior was about. Although the fact that this advice was given by Tatsuya, in this case was only Leo's assumption, no one in this place even doubted this.

"Sorry, please allow me to pass."

At that moment, Saburo came up to them.

"Saburo, any news from the Mitsuya family?"

From the question of Erika, Saburo's face darkened. In this expression of the person was hidden not only disappointment, but also anger.

"...It seems that both the head-sama and Motoharu-sama still do not consider it necessary to make a big deal of this situation."

"Motoharu... who?"

"The elder brother of Mitsuya-san."

Leo and Mikihiko exchanged phrases in a whisper. Saburo did not seem to have heard them.

"Strange and somehow ... suspicious!"

Saburo was confused by his guess.

"For the gentlemen of Shiina's family, it seems like they are not paying attention to her - like this is common! Allegedly, she does not have a strict injunction to go straight home! It's because she was assigned a real guard instead of me! They do not know where she is, and they tell me 'do not fuss,' I do not understand this!"

"Listen, maybe her guards secretly follow her?"

To Leo's question, Saburou sharply waved his head.

"I asked the Yaguruma family. Shiina is still outside their field of vision."

Erika's face showed that she was thinking about something, but she did not comment on it aloud.

"So, Saburou, what are you going to do now?"

"Let me wait here. I came for this."

"I see. Then it's good."

More and more people were going to the dojo. Soon the evening training section for working adults was going to begin. Erika's father also had to participate as an instructor.

"You three, follow me."

Without waiting for an answer, Erika left the dojo.

She led them to a small separate building, which was considered Erika's room.

"This way."

The door that Erika opened was less than 170 centimeters high, and the three guys had to duck to enter. It was a room on 4.5 tatami in traditional Japanese style, in the center of which there was a stove in the floor, and in the wall there was a niche with scrolls of calligraphy.

"Heh, this is the tea room"

"It's funny, right? They pretend to be kenjutsu. Although the traditional kenjutsu and our kenjutsu are completely different things."

Erika replied with contempt to the surprise of Leo. And this contempt was not for himself, but for other people. Mikihiko darkened when he saw that her enmity with the family had no sign of relief.

"And I thought that the entrance to the tea room should be even smaller."

It's unclear whether Leo did not notice this, or pretended not to notice, but he completely ignored Erika's insulting remarks.

"A small door? If you want such limitations, try, come in from there."

Erika casually pointed to a small sliding door 70 cm high, then retired to the inner sliding wall-door, are located opposite the door through which they entered.

"Why stand, take a seat."

Erika returned, holding a tray with a teapot and a few cups. Erika slowly sank to her knees and placed cups for 4 people on tatami mats. Three guys sat opposite each of the cups, placed on saucers.

Under the expectation of what she will say, with the looks of the guys, Erika sipped her tea and raised her head.

"What? Or do you want me to hold you a tea ceremony?"

The three guys waved their heads sharply. Erika, narrowing her eyes slightly, looked at them with her eyes.

"I do not want to be engaged in such tiresome things."

"Ahaha... and the truth."

There was a sincere apology on Mikihiko's face, but Erika ignored him. After that they sat for a while in silence.

Sometime later, Erika suddenly jumped up and ran away with the words "wait a bit", then returned with an armful of pies-manju. After that, all four again spent some time sitting almost motionless. "Almost motionless" meant that there were movements of hands holding pies to the mouth.

The further development of events began closer to 8 pm.

"Erika-Odzosan." On the other side of the miniature door the young man's voice was heard. Erika quickly got up, walked over and sat on her knees next to the mini-door and opened it. A small sheet of electronic paper was pulled out from there.

Erika took it and went back to the center of the room.

"...What's there?" Mikihiko quietly asked, after waiting for Erika to finish reading.

"It was confirmed the place where Shiina was delivered by car."

Hearing this, Saburo leaned forward and laid his hands on the tatami. Nobody called him to calm down. Erika, Leo, and Mikihiko fully understood that Saburo was looking forward to the news.

"It seems that there were no stops and on the way, the car came to Karuizawa."

"It's surprisingly far..."

In Leo's words, the meaning was "it means it would be good if we understood this earlier."

"It's better to spend time to get ready for anything possible."

This phrase was invested with the sense that it would be difficult to make it possible to use data from surveillance cameras. Hearing Erika's indirect answer, Leo shrugged slightly.

Erika turned the sheet of electronic paper so that everyone saw it.

"It looks like a western style haunted house."

"Miki. When you say this, it does not sound like a joke."

Saying this, Erika did not seem to mind the part about "ghosts."

"...Can I get a road map?" Saburo looked at the report and looked up and asked Erika.

"Good. Just do not think to go there today."

"Why!?" Saburou shouted fiercely at Erika. For Saburou, who wanted to save Shiina as quickly as possible, these words of Erika were completely unacceptable.

"For two reasons. First, we are not yet ready for this."

"I'm already ready!"

"Do you want to go alone? Stop it. You'd just dig your own grave."

Not "fail," but "dig your own grave." Hearing this, Saburou finally realized that this might be a trap.

"And yet, after we finally found it...!"

"We cannot say that we found it. We only know that the car brought Shiina to this mansion. We watch the building, and find out if they start moving on."

"....."

Seeing that Saburou, at last, was silent, Erika voiced a second reason.

"Secondly, the necessary agreements with the police have not yet been completed. If you yourself do not care that you're jailed, then I do not want to see the dumbhead here who neglects the necessary preparations."

Having understood the hint of the possibility of being sent to prison for magicians who broke the law, Saburou did not say anything else.

Saburou himself would not have regretted losing his life for Shiina. But he could not force his sempai from school to do it. And alone he most likely cannot do anything.

"Saburou, go back to your house and discuss this with your family. It would be good to enlist the cooperation of people working for the Mitsuya family. And even in the worst case, do not start acting alone."

"...I understand."

Indeed, it was just like this. His actions in the end could bring problems not only to his family, but to the Mitsuya family. Saburou reminded himself again that he was not in a position where one can freely do anything.

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At the same time, Shiina relaxed carelessly, lying in the tub.

"Ah... Saburou-kun is probably worried..."

Feeling guilty for leaving school, without warning her senpais from the school board and not saying anything to Saburou, always worried Shiina, like a fish bone caught in the throat. Thus, even though the tension was removed by the relaxation from the bath, it again and again came to the surface of her consciousness.

And about this she could not do anything. Because in the school waiting room Tsukasa asked her to keep it a secret that the self-defense forces are engaged in such things.

Since these "military exercises" were regarded as military secrets, it is natural that communication was forbidden about it. While she had no idea why they took a high school student for these trainings, she did not even think about going against the instructions of Tsukasa.

Moreover, she could not say that an adult 10 years older than her, whom she admires, can do something bad to her.

Justifying herself with this, Shiina, in order to not suffer even more, focused her attention on bathing.

Unfortunately, in this western house, in which she was under a kind of "house arrest", there was not a big bathroom like at a hot spring. Instead, there was an antique bath with curved legs.



Calculated for large Europeans, it was considerably more spacious than standard Japanese baths. Little Shiina could easily pull her legs in. Thus, she had to worry about not going completely under the water, if you relax your legs.

A faint smell, mixed with steam, said that aromatic oils were added to the hot water. It was an aroma that calmed down, slowly penetrating into the depths of the mind. At first, she was tormented by doubts whether it was some sort of narcotic substance, but very quickly she did not care.

Needless to say, that while bathing, Shiina took off her headphones, playing the role of ear plugs. Even the sound of water from the shower that was washing her hair was heard for her like the sound of pouring rain, so she had no other choice. Even though Knowing that her magical abilities at this time will be weakened she was washing her hair and body while she used sound-blocking magic.

However, while she was just lying in the water, trying not to make too much noise, she could directly encounter the outside world of pure sounds without her "ear plugs". At this time, not only was her acute hearing manifested, but also, according to her subjective opinion, magical perception also became much sharper.

All the waves in this Western-style mansion were caught by the "hearing" of Shiina, who was just sitting with her head on her arm, lying on the edge of the bathtub.

Before the door to the bathroom stood guard, a female soldier. The weak psion waves emanating from her sounded like the noise that a CAD produces in the standby mode. In other words, this female soldier was a war magician.

And not only her. Those who moved through the building, both men and women, all kept their CAD in standby mode while being ready for battle.

Conversely, among the five people patrolling the building from the outside, there was only one magician. And the psion waves emitted by him, unlike the soldiers inside, were suppressed. Perhaps this was done so that that from the outside it was not clear that there are magicians inside this western-style mansion.

...Such information Shiina was able to draw only from waves scattered in space.

And that was not all she noticed. Waves emitted by magicians inside the building carried a clear aggressiveness. It was felt that they were waiting for the enemy. The purpose of their counterattack was not just resistance to the enemy, but his destruction or capture.

This fully corresponded to the explanation of Tsukasa about this "work-in-progress".

Tsukasa asked Shiina to play the role of an important person in training to save the VIP. In other words, this meant that some main force playing the role of saviors would "come to the rescue" of Shiina.

That is, now the kidnapped party is in a state of waiting for the attack of the rescue squad. The treatment of Shiina seemed unsuitable to the concept of a hostage, but here, undoubtedly, the meaning of the words "important person" was reflected.

Reflecting on this, Shiina realized something important.

Playing the role of a hostage, she did not know when the rescue team would arrive. It could be right now. She was afraid that if this happened, she could be taken out in this form, only wrapped in a towel.

She could no longer relax, sitting in the warm water. Trying not to make too much noise, Shiina got out of the bath.

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At the same time, when Tatsuya and the girls returned home, as if knowing that they had come, the sound of a videophone sounded. The name of the caller - the head of the house of Yotsuba, Maya - was displayed on the screen.

Fortunately, they had not yet changed into homewear. Tatsuya exchanged glances with Miyuki and pressed the call acceptance button.

"Good evening Tatsuya-san, Miyuki-san. Ara, did you go somewhere?"

Maya spoke in a friendly manner from the screen. Today she also looked friendly.

"Yes, we were invited by Saegusa Mayumi-jo." There was no particular need to hide this, so Tatsuya answered honestly.

"Ara, then an invitation from the Saegusa family?"

"Not really. Since the head of the Juumonji family was present, they probably wanted to talk about what happened at the recent meeting."

"Hu-huh-hu, this sounds just like that young lady."

Tatsuya agreed that it was in the style of a good-natured Mayumi.

"However, there were some difficulties, and we were forced to cancel the conversation immediately after entering the prepared room."

"...I think it was rather impolite, what happened?"

Tatsuya told Maya the whole story, from the moment of the disappearance of Shiina.

"The youngest daughter of the Mitsuya family... This is a very entertaining story, but now we do not have time for it."

In other words, it meant that there was some urgent matter. And there's nothing to be surprised about, because when Maya calls them directly something almost always happens. Tatsuya stood still and waited for her next words.

"It turned out that yesterday, when Tatsuya-san and Miyuki-san were attacked, it was the work of the agents of the USNA army penetrated into the country, which the intelligence department of the national self-defense forces brainwashed."

"So this is the work of the intelligence department?"

For Tatsuya, who received a warning from Yakumo, this story was only a confirmation, but he could not help but admire the ability of the family to collect information that gathered evidence in just one day.

"Many USNA Army agents are still under arrest."

Tatsuya was interested in what these agents came for. He believed that, with a high probability, their goal was finding magician using "Material Burst", that is himself, but he would not even have thought to try to convince himself of this by interrupting Maya.

"So, I would like Tatsuya-san to release them."

"The agents of the American army?" Tatsuya asked, slightly surprised.

The intelligence department attacking Miyuki is not forgiven. Sooner or later she was going to let them understand this.

But their work was to detain foreign agents who commit illegal activities. It would be bad to interfere with this for the sake of revenge.

"Among these agents there are Star members."

This Tatsuya also assumed. True, he believed that the Stars were almost all of them, and not a few "among them," as was said.

"Instead of helping them only, it's better to let everyone escape, is not it?"

"Got it."

This meant that there was some connection between Maya and the Stars. And on this route came a request for salvation.

Now the interests of the Yotsuba family and Tatsuya's interests in revenge for the attack on Miyuki have united. And since this will benefit Miyuki, the effort will not be wasted.

Tatsuya accepted Maya's order, including also his "differences" from the events of the previous evening.

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Early the next morning. Leo, Mikihiko and Saburo arrived in the Chiba family dojo.

"Saburo. Have you talked to anyone in your family?" Dressed, Erika went to them and turned to Saburo.

"Yes. I was told that I can do whatever I want."

"...That's good."

It was like saying that it was useless, but Erika did not care. It was important that Saburo learned to be responsible for his own interests.

"I understand that Leo wanted to participate in the fun, but I did not think that Miki would come too."

"My name is Mikihiko." It seems that he could not just not say this phrase. After his daily complaint to Erika, Mikihiko added a serious voice. "How can I remain indifferent when I'm so drawn into this?"

"Ahaha... What a kind-hearted person."

"...Call it what you want. It's better than being tough."

"Well, maybe. Well, are we going?" Having said this, Erika climbed onto the passenger seat of the police car parked on the road opposite the dojo. Three guys squeezed into the back seat, and the police car started off.

"By the way... is this normal?" Leo turned to the policeman in uniform, sitting at the wheel.

"Was it not because of the irrational behavior of Erika-Odzosan that we had to start so soon?" Answered the policeman, without changing his face. Leo thought it was not the result of Erika's adoration, but because of the inability to smile. He mentally swore that he would never become like this in his life.

The police car reached the Karuizawa station on a road train (it was more economical and faster than even driving at full speed). There they met with the local police. Needless to say, these policemen were also under the auspices of the Chiba family.

Leo thought that in fact the Chiba family was more terrible than the Yotsuba family, but he was not so reckless as to voice it.

Saburou, who has a direct relationship to all that is happening, did not have time to think about such things.

Saburou attached his gaze to this western-style mansion he saw in yesterday police report. Or maybe even tried to look inside with the help of some magic.

Erika was busy instructing the assembled policemen.

Therefore it is natural that the most relaxed of Erika's group, Mikihiko was the first to notice the approach of these girls.

"Yes this is Kasumi-san and Izumi-san."

Two identical faces turned to the side, from which the unintentional voice of Mikihiko sounded. Haircuts and behavior were completely different, but facial features were exactly the same.

"Yoshida-senpai."

"And also Chiba-sempai and Saijou-senpai? And Saburou-kun also came?"

Saegusa sisters ran up to Mikihiko and the other guys who stood at a distance from the rest of the adults participating in the meeting.

"Are you also here for Mitsuya-san?"

"Yes."

In their exchange of questions and answers, many unnecessary words were missed, but among them there were those who did not understand what the conversation was about.

"It would be foolish if we interfere with each other, maybe it will be best to unite?" Said Erika, appearing from behind Mikihiko.

"Really." Agreed Izumi. From Kasumi, too, there was no objection. Neither Izumi nor Kasumi doubted that Erika would be honest with them. Those who felt this discomfort, were Leo and Mikihiko.

Such reasonable care was not at all in the style of Erika, which they knew. In such cases, last year's Erika, would defiantly disregard tactics, preferring simply to go on ahead.

Now everything was completely different.

Both Leo and Mikihiko, both thought that this was, in some way, similar to Tatsuya's way of thinking.

Nevertheless, it was senseless to interfere with this. Here, as Erika said, there was a scene in which everyone, in order to avoid friendly fire, should act in an organized manner.

Keeping this light puzzlement in mind, the two joined in to discuss tactics.

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When she opened her eyes, it was already light outside. At the same moment, when her consciousness finally awakened, she was overtaken by a stream of unbearable noise. Shiina hurriedly put on her headphones.

The abnormal, amplified hearing of Shiina works only when she is conscious. When drowsiness exceeds a certain threshold, sounds to her become normal. This was the basis of the hypothesis that her excessively sensitive hearing is a magical effect.

Evaluating her position, Shiina came to the conclusion that, in the end, she was never "saved" overnight. Tsukasa told her that this "work" would take only half a day, but it looks like the schedule was extended.

Shiina was hungry. But not so much that the stomach is already rumbling. Remembering that she could be taken away at any time, she decided to change into her school uniform first.

In this room, or rather in the private space of Shiina on the second floor, similar to the room in a luxury hotel, there was a separate bathroom, toilet and wardrobe.

Wearing only the dress from her school uniform she, while in the dressing room, was engaged in what became her everyday morning habit - brushing her unruly hair. Since there were the same cosmetic accessories that she used to use (although she wondered how they knew this), she quickly did her make-up, having magically checked beforehand whether any harmful substances were mixed in.

Just at that moment, there was a commotion. From the corridor, there were claps and sounds of the running of people running around.

Wanting to find out what is happening there, Shiina pulled at the doorknob. The ancient pin did not fall.

"Locked!? ...well, yes, that's as it should be."

Her reflex surprise lasted only for a moment. Shiina calmed down, remembering that she played the role of a "kidnapped important person." She mentally told herself that everything was all right.

Her CAD was not taken from her. She can use magic at any time. If necessary, she can escape, knocking out a window or making a hole in the floor.

Her thoughts on this was evidence that the situation in which she fell into began to seem very suspicious. However, she suppressed suspicion of Tsukasa and decided to continue to consider herself as a "captive princess" for a little while longer.

"I want to eat..."

With these thoughts, she distracted herself from the growing tension.

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"The image from the surveillance cameras has been restored!"

"Is this a special magical assault force? Why are the police attacking us?"

The commander of the operation, the lieutenant (this time Tsukasa did not bear the official responsibility for the task), shouted with misunderstanding visible on her face.

A Special Magical Assault Team, abbreviated SMAT . It was an organization that brought together the military magicians of the police, created as a result of a rethinking of the fact that the police could not adequately react to the incident in Yokohama the year before last. The decision to create it was taken immediately after the incident, but after the signing of the peace treaty with the Great Asian Alliance, protests rushed in from all sides, and as a result, the formation was completed only a month ago, under the influence of the incident in Hakone.

Being under the sights of major media, accused by the new non-profit press by "taking too long to set up", this squad was finally formed. However, despite the attacks from these short-sighted reporters, the morale of the detachment's members was high. And their main feature was that almost all of them were graduates of the Chiba dojo.

The lieutenant appointed by the commander of this operation belonged not to the division in which Tsukasa was.

He was not informed about the secret details hidden behind this operation. And the details lying on the mind, he did not really understand. The mere fact that this building now had SMAT storming it forced him to now build various assumptions...

(...So, that fighter from the Chiba family intervened?)

With the thought of "how troublesome..." Tsukasa sighed. With the use of Shiina as bait, not only was the appearance of those two (Tatsuya and Miyuki) from the Yotsuba family expected, the calculations also provided for the intervention of the Saegusa family.

Tsukasa knew that the "Saegusa twins" loved Shiina and took care of her. That's why she facilitated the departure of the head of the family, Saegusa Koichi, to Kyoto, to an "important conversation" with "important people."

As planned, several magicians of the Saegusa family still appeared. This meant that the Saegusa family itself did not interfere in the drafting of the strategy. If only there was no intervention from the police... that is, from the Chiba family.

Despite the fact that the intervention of the Chiba family is a very significant factor, it was not such a serious miscalculation, which would have a fatal threat for this operation.

But there was another miscalculation, made with the original meaning of this operation.

(Shiba Tatsuya did not appear... He did not go for the bait?)

The main miscalculation was that the main goal did not appear.

(I thought he would be more selfish, but it's more like the middle class than expected.)

From the school, in which the next head of the Yotsuba family is the president of the school board, the first-grader was kidnapped. Tsukasa assumed that it would be a matter of honor for Tatsuya to come to return her.

Based on observations of the day before yesterday's attack on the etiquette school, Tsukasa came to the conclusion that Tatsuya has absolute certainty in his power. If he is this type of person, then for him the honor should be above all.

Tsukasa's theory was that in his ability to sacrifice his honor, he would consider it equal to a defeat inherent only to children or the elderly.

However, the guy named Shiba Tatsuya, apparently, had a character that was not obsessed with these boring notions of honor. Tsukasa acknowledged her miscalculation. She planned to observe how carefully Tatsuya would handle state forces in the rescue of Shiina. If he did not take into account the lives of the military, she was planning to destroy him as a dangerous man for the country.

But, unfortunately, she did not manage to observe whether he would act hostilely or not, knowing that the enemy is the self-defense force.

"It's a pity that things did not go as planned..." Tsukasa muttered in disappointment. Then she went to the commander of the lieutenant.

"Commander-dono."

"What is it, Sergeant Tooyama?"

"Let me, as your subordinate, go to watch our prisoner of war."

The term "prisoner of war" had a clear definition of military law.

For the military, the use of the word "prisoner of war" in any conditional sense "captive" was not a rare occurrence.

In antiquity, even captured horses of the enemy army were recorded as "prisoner of war".

It is unlikely that the lieutenant could have thought of anything other than the fact that the "prisoner of war" mentioned by Tsukasa is the girl who is held in this building, that is, Shiina.

"I'll authorize it."

"Many thanks."

Tsukasa wanted to go first to Shiina's room. But she did not plan to stay there.

With the permission of the commander, she planned to go to the place where the "prisoners of war" were kept by the agents of the American army. Although in fact they were not considered "prisoners of war" yet. And the rule that illegal agents cannot be considered "prisoners of war" until they themselves recognize them, she decided not to notice.

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"Three minutes before the assault."

"Got it. I leave the command on you."

"It's an honor for me."

Rather the commander of SMAT squad smiled. When he still went to the Chiba dojo, he was the chief of the "Erika's Guard". Recalling the past on this smile, Erika turned away in confusion.

There, among the waiting assaults, she noticed that Kasumi and Izumi, surrounded by a group of guardian magicians from the Saegusa family, were straining to look at the mansion.

Erika felt that they would be unable to move if they were so nervous, but quickly changed her mind, deciding that this was normal.

She had seen it before. These two were having their first real battle. Although there was a case of confrontation with helpless activists, they did not have the opportunity to encounter an enemy of equal firepower.

Even if they study at a magic high school, high school students usually do not take part in real battles. Only after entering the Military Academy, climbing into the zone of military operations under a hail of bullets - would this be normal.

Erika remembered that she herself was involved in the riots and immediately after jokingly said: "I thought high school would be a more boring place."

Now she believed that this was not a joke. This time, she did not say it out loud, but thought about it.

The Blanche terrorists attack on First High, a sudden attack of the army by the Great Asian Alliance, Parasites and Stars, ancient magic magicians who became pawns in the hands of foreigners. All these incidents were not caused by her, but she was involved in all of them.

And the same thing could be said about Tatsuya. So thought Erika.

When a major incident occurs, Tatsuya participates in it.

Tatsuya participates, she also participates. Together with Tatsuya always comes trouble. And in the end, the family...

"Erika-san, what happened?"

"Nothing."

A member of the SMAT detachment asked Erika in a worried voice, to which she shook her head. It was another, besides the commander, a member of the "Erika's Guard."

"By the way, it's almost time, right?"

"Yes, another 20 ... 15 seconds."

You will not lose to evil fate. You will become stronger. But this is most clear when you are strong. Even if you are against the angel of death.

Last summer, one person was involved in similar circumstances. This man is strong. Therefore, being so he remained calm.

When you become strong, you start to be less afraid of fate. You become capable of outsmarting the angel of death without causing a tragic outcome.

Although Tatsuya attracts misfortunes, he also makes the people involved more powerful. So much so that they, with a smile, cut their way through these troubles.

"Therefore, Sabrou... become stronger, so that even if your childhood friend is in trouble, you could cut your way with a smile."

Erika mentally turned to the guy who looked like he was trying to restrain himself so as not to rush forward, risking his life.

A girl named Mitsuya Shiina seemed to Erika born under a star of adventure. Even if not as much as Tatsuya, but still she was like him.

So that Shiina will not lose the troubles that can be called upon, Saburou should be made stronger.

For Erika, training Saburou was a precedent. Everything was for the sake of retribution.

...The name of the rival who Erika wanted to surprise was "Fate".

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Shiina turned to hear the sound of the door unlocking. It was not her imagination.

"Tsukasa-san."

"Shiina-chan, I'm sorry to have detained you longer than expected."

"No, this room is quite cozy."

"Really? That's good." Tsukasa smiled at Shiina. There was no sense of guilt in that smile. "Now that we've reached the final stage of the exercise, you need to stay a little longer in this room. There was a small mistake and the schedule was extended, but soon rescuers will arrive in this room, and this will all end."

"So, I will no longer be moved anywhere?"

"Yes."

Relief appeared on Shiina's face. She did not doubt Tsukasa's words that she received permission from her parents, she just thought that they would worry if she stayed longer.

"I need to return to my post, so we say goodbye."

"Ah, good. Thank you for everything."

"This is for you, Shiina, thank you in advance for your work."

Shiina did not doubt Tsukasa until the very end.

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The battle began between the self-defense forces and the police, between the intelligence department and SMAT.

Despite the fact that it was called a battle, the number of participants from both sides was small.

Police, conducting a siege, stormed using a small number of elite fighters. And the self-defense forces initially allocated a few soldiers to this case.

However, the level of preparation for a real battle was higher with the self-defense forces. Both sides attacked the enemy with non-lethal weapons, and in these conditions, the losses of SMAT were higher.

"Summoning a sacred wind!"

"Panzer!"

The efforts of Leo and Mikihiko were notable among the others. Mikihiko ruled the winds and when he called them it was like the barricades were demolished with a sledge hammer, while Leo, in the event of a breakthrough of the defenses, defended those positions, enveloping himself with armor from Fortification magic.

"Shiina! Where are you!?"

Sabrou shouted, forgetting about fear and his own safety. Thus, he broke away from Leo and caught a magical attack from one of the military magicians who met them.

A soldier dressed in urban area camouflage and a bulletproof vest, performing a maneuver under self-acceleration magic, along with this movement magic fired a small metal ball.

Having been hit in a stomach by a steel ball the size of a ball for table tennis, Sabrou stopped.

The military magician pulled out a stun baton. Unlike the batons available on sale, this was a combat model, with the power of a real crushing weapon.

Approaching Sabrou's head, the club attack was halted by Erika's short sword, which had come from somewhere. With her next move she hit the soldier in the face with the side of the blade.

It was not a strong blow like with a swing, but rather like a blow from a whip. From the blow, the soldier did not fall with broken teeth, and he fell not to his side, but straight down.

"Sabrou, you're too impatient! You are becoming sloppy!"

"Got it! Sorry!"

It seems that the intelligence department decided that a turning point had occurred. They concentrated the main forces at the stairs leading to the second floor.

The level of magical abilities of the main forces was quite high. Their magical power surpassed SMAT, in which magicians with better fighting power were gathered than from among the police.

"Mikihiko, you do not feel that there is something wrong with these guys!?"

"Perhaps they temporarily raised their magical powers with drugs!"

It was the feeling of Leo fighting with his fists, and Mikihiko's shooting magic.

"Uh, almost knocked!"

Erika repulsed a short missile with a flying projectile. The enemy was only a few meters away, and the police began to experience difficulties in invoking magic because of these "bullets" arriving from close range.

The initial speed of these projectiles was about 200 km / h. But the radius of danger was small, because the projectiles from light alloy quickly slow down. And for the same reason they did not possess any penetrating ability. Catching such a shot at close range, you can get a fracture-level injury, but at a distance of more than 2 meters it will be just bruises and light burns.

The problem was precisely in the "burns". At the moment of contact, the projectile shell emitted a high-voltage electric discharge, which hit even through clothing.

In other words, it was a kind of wireless taser gun. Both the side of the self-defense forces, and the police, were cautious against the same representatives of the Japanese authorities as they are. Nobody dared to use attacks that could kill the enemy.

In such a battle, from the point of view of ease of use, a weapon with which one cannot worry about killing an opponent will show its superiority. Especially from the point of view that when both opposing camps are approximately equal in magical power, then there is a possibility that the outcome of the battle will be determined at the moment when someone can overcome their indecision.

And this balance was broken by two fragile girls protected by a group of reliable comrades.

"Izumi, our way in!"

"Yes, Kasumi-chan!"

Hearing these voices, Erika, Leo and Mikihiko jumped aside.

"Three!"

"Two!"

"One!"

"Start!"

The countdown was voiced by two alternating voices. The last joint cry was a signal to activate magic.

In the narrow space of the corridor, a violent wind raged. It was assumed that the descending wind would simply surround both enemies and allies, but in fact it turned out that squeezed together in a narrow space, the military and police were densely attacked by the wind from behind and from the side. Only those who managed to instantly lift magical airtight barriers could stand on their feet under the impact of a frantic wind.

"Nitrogen Storm".

Hypoxia, caused by exposure to air with a markedly increased concentration of nitrogen, neutralized part of the fighting magicians.

"Next step!" Kasumi shouted. The compound magic of "The Saegusa twins" was a process in which to cast one magic, roles are assigned to construct a sequence of magic and control the interference force in an event. Although their abilities in magic were absolutely equal, most often for the construction of a sequence of magic, Izumi answered, and for controlling the interference force of the event - Kasumi. And also Kasumi had the right to decide what type of magic will be used next.

The choice of Kasumi fell on the magic of "Dry Storm". This magic collected carbon dioxide from the air displaced by the Nitrogen storm to the center of the room, created a hail of dry ice and sent it to the enemy. Airtight shields designed to protect against gases, could not protect from solid dry ice.

Thus, at the current moment, all the soldiers of the self-defense forces from among the defenders of this point, were defeated.

"Kasumi-chan!"

"I know!"

The magic that Izumi asked for, and which was finally called, was called "Oxygen chamber."

Translated from English, this "chamber" meant "a closed room, a capsule with oxygen." It was magic for the treatment of hypoxia by creating a zone with increased oxygen concentration.

"Yoshida-senpai, Saijou-senpai, please take care of binding the enemy!"

Policemen who fell under the "Nitrogen Storm", began to recover and rise.

And Leo, Mikihiko and the police, who did not fall into the danger zone, began to bind the unconscious soldiers of the self-defense forces, who did not get the curative benefit of the Oxygen Chamber.

"What... happened?"

Sabrou, recovering from a half-fainting state, staggering, hobbled to Erika.

"Uwaa, those two did not hold back~"

"What?"

"Nothing." Involuntarily expressing her thoughts about the twins, Erika replied to the interrogated Sabrou. "Okay, let's go for Shiina."

Leaving the cleanup of the consequences of the police battle, Erika and Sabrou went to the second floor.

Near the entrance to the room in which it seems Shiina was held, stood a female soldier. Erika pointed her sword at her. A moment before she activated the magic of self-acceleration, a female soldier threw a weapon with built-in CAD on the floor and raised her hands.

"...Are you giving up, or what?"

Erika did not think that she would be answered.

"Yes, I give up." But this woman soldier easily confirmed Erika's words. "With my surrender, these exercises end with the victory of the rescue party."

"What? Exercises?"

Neither Erika nor Sabrou could immediately understand the meaning of these words. The female soldier opened the lock and flung open the door.

Still not understanding what was happening, before the mind itself realized the situation, Saburou's body entered the room in search of Shiina.

Entering inside, Saburou looked around the room. He heard Shiina's voice before he could notice her.

"Saburou-kun!?"

"Shiina!"

Saburou walked briskly forward, but then suddenly stopped. His body thoughtlessly tried to hug Shiina. But by force of will he was able to restrain himself. Immediately stop at it did not work, and by inertia he jumped closer.

"Saburou-kun, what are you doing here?" Shiina asked, looking at Saburou with her eyes wide open, not hiding surprise.

"I came to the rescue! Shiina, are you unhurt? Did they do anything wrong with you?"

"For help? What for?" In her question it was heard that she was sincerely surprised. But for Saburou, this reaction of Shiina seemed even more incredible.

"Really... brainwashing...?"

"Uh, I really do not understand what you're talking about, Saburou-kun. I just helped in the self-defense forces exercises?"

Saburou vacantly opened his mouth.

"Exercises...?"

Muttering aloud what he heard, he continued to stand with his mouth open.

Erika turned to the woman soldier, who raised her hands again after opening the door.

"Can you explain what's going on here?"

Erika pointer at her not only her sword, but also a sharp look.

"This is an interrogation of a prisoner of war?" Said the female soldier in a calm voice.

"That's right!"

"In that case, lower your sword, please. Intimidation of prisoners of war through hints of physical harm is prohibited by military laws."

"Oh you!" involuntarily broke out from Erika, but looking into the eyes of a female soldier, she clucked her tongue and lowered her sword.

"So it will go down?"

"Then can I drop my hands?"

"...It's good."

A female soldier dropped her arms and took a pose at the bar "freely."

"The theme of these exercises was the rescue of an important person. We were divided into a rescuing and defending side. Initially, in order to win, the rescuing party needed to rescue the person playing the important person of the civil from this mansion and deliver it to a certain place before 18:00 of today. However, due to some problems with the rescue party, the conditions were changed so that the victory will be achieved at the moment the rescue party reaches that room."

Erika's left-handed sword was on her head.

"What does it mean? Do you want to say that Shiina is the 'important person'?"

"Correct. Mitsuya-sama has been cooperating with us since yesterday."

"... But we are not part of the self-defense forces."

"We already guessed. But, since there was no notice of the interruption of the exercises, we continued them with you as a rescue party."

"~~~~!"

Without hiding her irritation, Erika ruffled her hair.

"...You can go. I'm not an enemy of self-defense forces, so I do not consider you a prisoner of war."

"Thank you, all the best."

The female soldier saluted Erika and walked briskly away down the corridor. She did not take the weapon, apparently in order to show that she really does not have any hostility.

"No, well, really... that was an unexpected turn." Erika muttered gloomily.

"Shiina... What she said now is true?" Saburou asked Shiina still not believing in the voice.

"You mean the doctrine? It's true. I was asked by Tsukasa-san, and I helped the military."

"Tsukasa-san?"

"Tooyama Tsukasa-san. She is a sergeant from the Intelligence Department of the Self-Defense Forces. Saburou-kun, did not you meet her? She often comes to the Third Lab."

"...I'm hearing her name for the first time."

"More important than another!" With an expression on her face, as if she "realized something important," Shiina suddenly jumped closer to Saburou. "Why did you intervene in military exercises!? You could have been seriously injured! Besides, what will you do if you are arrested, accused of obstructing official state affairs?"

"We did not interfere with the implementation of state affairs." Said Erika standing next to them.

"Chiba-sempai..."

Shiina remembered that there was a third party present and blushed with shame.

"Even for the self-defense forces, it is unacceptable to arrange such exercises in the city.

"Since there was no official request for the exercise, the police will arrest those who are involved, so these guys."

"Ah... But is it not true that the same judgment would be applied to the sempai who also participated in the riots?"

"No, because we are here in cooperation with the police. By the way, Mitsuya-san, it seems that you know me?"

Co-operation with the police is not the reason that you can run around the city, waving arms, but there was not a drop of guilt on Erika's indifferent face. And then she suddenly realized that, in fact, this is her first meeting with Shiina.

"Please, call me without 'san.' And, if it is possible, I would be glad if you would call me Shiina. ...Chiba-sempai is well known among first-graders."

"I see. Then, Shiina. I'm not trying to protect Saburou, but I think you should not be so reckless to scold him. After all, he thought that Shiina was kidnapped."

"Err?" Shiina was petrified. After a few seconds, she woke up, turned to Saburou and asked: "Is that true?"

"Yes! In addition to the Chiba-sempai, Kasumi-san and Izumi-san also came. Mitsuya-senpai and Kitayama-sempai were also very worried... It was a big mess."

"How so... After all Tsukasa-san said that she will tell everyone who needs it."

"I'm not saying that Shiina is to blame. But in any case, it would be worthwhile to tell us about it in advance."

"Aw..." Shiina howled in a thin voice, when she realized what she had said. ...No matter how cute it looked, Erika did not possess the habits of the "older sister" from a women's school that loves "younger sisters", so there was no strange atmosphere.

"But because we were so worried about you, you should properly apologize."

"Yes. Chiba-sempai, I'm very, very sorry."

Shiina bowed sincerely. But Erika was not angry at all.

"...No, not in front of me. Before Honoka, Shizuku, Izumi and others."

"Okay, I got it."

"...It will be quite difficult." Erika whispered.

There was no such feeling of naturalness as Mizuki had. Shiina seemed too incomprehensible, that for Erika it was quite difficult.

Luckily, Shiina did not hear Erika's whisper.

"Let's talk about something else."

"Good."

"Shiina, did you mention the intelligence department before?"

"Yes, as far as I understand, Tsukasa-san works in the counterintelligence unit of the intelligence department of the national self-defense forces."

"Is there something wrong with this?" with such a question in her eyes Shiina looked at Erika.

"Intelligence department, hmm... No, I do not mean anything."

Erika thought that this could be a prejudice against the intelligence department. But she could not deny the aftertaste of understatement in this dubious story.

Chapter 7

For Katsuto today was the first Sunday in a long time without work for the Ten Master Clans.

In the morning he slowly completed his homework from the Magic University, had breakfast, and now relaxed listening to music. Listening to classical analog stereo tracks could be called the only hobby of Katsuto. At the end of the 21st century, analog recordings were an expensive pleasure, but due to constant demand from connoisseurs, they were still released every year, mainly with orchestral music. Katsuto was one of these connoisseurs.

Katsuto did not have a special "audio room" with soundproofing or something like that. He felt uncomfortable in an environment with complete blockage from noise. You could say he was a man who, instead of playing in a concert hall, prefers an outdoor concert.

Lying on the couch in an open spacious room, he listened to his favorite symphony through a stereo system that looked antiquated, but inside was crammed with modern components that improved the sound quality.

Honestly, Katsuto preferred live chamber music and solo, but, unfortunately, he had no time to learn to play himself, nor the time to call for musicians. Not only he, but all the people of the Juumonji family almost did not have free time, spending it on maintaining their bodies in a state corresponding to their title "The Power of a Thousand."

"Katsuto, I'm sorry that I'm disturbing you."

"Father."

The former head of the Juumonji family and Katsuto's father, Juumonji Kazuki entered through the open door. He was only 44 years old. Although he was still too young to retire, he was forced to do so because of the fate that inevitably awaits the carriers of the trump card of the Juumonji family, so he took the chance, and handed over the family's management to Katsuto in the February 2097 Master Clans Conference.

"Come Tooyama-dono."

"Tooyama-dono?"

Kazuki called "Tooyama-dono" only the head of the Tooyama family, Tooyama Shinobu. Feeling suspicious, why not Tsukasa, and personally her father, Katsuto stopped the recording and went to the living room.

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Tatsuya arrived at the tip of the peninsula of Boso. From the mountain road, with his "Elemental Sight," he looked at a facility similar to a prison camp, located on the slope opposite. There were magicians in the prison who he must now save.

Tatsuya received this order from Maya last night. However, Tatsuya left home only this afternoon.

He was not going to blindly follow Maya's orders, there was no need for this. But this time he did not sit still for such an emotional reason. Because he did not feel the need to go against Maya's orders.

He delayed the departure because he did not know where to go. At the time of their conversation yesterday, neither Maya nor the entire Yotsuba family have yet determined where the captured agents of the USNA Army were being kept.

Tatsuya returned to the back of the truck, the driver of which was Hanabishi Hyougo. To his surprise, he had the license to drive large trucks. Hyougo said with a smile that he could legally move any heavy equipment, and it looks like he was not joking. Tatsuya thought he would not be surprised if he could fly a large airplane.

Hyougo was also the one who gave him information about this place. On the phone instead of a specific place, he instead reported the meeting place, but it seems that it was not done because of possible spying, but that Tatsuya got into the truck in advance.

Hyougo was not in the driver's seat, but descended from the cab and waited for Tatsuya.

Seeing how he nodded, he quickly turned to the rear of the cargo bay. This cargo compartment in the form of a large box, outwardly looking like simple aluminum, was in fact made of titanium alloy and ceramic composite armored plates. When Hyougo pressed the button on the remote that was held in his hand, a door opened on the back wall of the body and a small ladder moved out of the resulting passageway.

"Tatsuya-sama, please."

Hyougo invited him to enter the body. It was not dark inside. It seems that it was designed so that the lighting is switched on simultaneously with the descent of the ladder. The space inside the body resembled a research laboratory.

There was a black electric motorcycle with a full fairing, and something like a riding suit hung on a hanger on the wall.

"It's... a mobile suit?"

"As expected from Tatsuya-sama. You could understand at first sight."

Looking not so surprised, Hyougo nodded. Who was surprised here is Tatsuya. He reflexively analyzed the parameters of the suit using Elemental Sight.

"You were able to accurately reproduce the Mobile Suit of Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion..."

"Full recreation was impossible. We did our best to add the function of establishing a connection with the CAD assistant in ultra-long targeting, but the power amplifier function had to be sacrificed."

Already aware of this Tatsuya was experiencing a slight shock now. This mobile suit, disguised as a normal commercial suit for riding, could connect with the "Third Eye."

"However, due to the sacrifice of the power amplifier function, the effectiveness of protection and stealth has become higher compared to the original. I'm sure it's much better than the original suits for Tatsuya-sama, who prefers to act alone."

Although the Mobile Suit was the development of a Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion, this did not mean that only national self-defense forces had such technologies.

For example, the USNA Army, with a delay of 3 months from the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion, developed the so-called "Pulling Suit", a flying armored suit with characteristics similar to the Mobile Suit.

But in the private sector, the first to develop a flying armored suit was the Yotsuba family. Even if you do not pay attention to the fact that flying magic was originally developed in the FLT laboratory under the auspices of the Yotsuba family, this indicated that it has unimaginable technological power.

"Also, this motorcycle has the function of establishing a connection with this flying suit."

"That is, you can fly on this motorcycle?"

"That's right."

Tatsuya sent a "look" to the motorcycle. The very concept of riding an open bike meant that the rider would not be protected from the sides and from behind. But he realized that the protective properties of the front armor was not inferior to the performance of armored vehicles. The entire motorcycle, including tires, was made of exceptionally strong materials. It was a military model, outwardly disguised as a commercial model of a well-known brand.

"Tatsuya-sama, this suit has no name yet. Could Tatsuya-sama come up with a name for him?"

"No, I, perhaps, refuse."

Tatsuya was not touched, but was surprised. As the future wearer of this suit, Tatsuya would be ashamed if the chosen name was not suitable.

It was not necessary to ask again that this suit was intended for Tatsuya. This means that the Yotsuba family assumed that an abyss might grow between Tatsuya and the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion. They predicted that in the future it may be impossible to freely use the Mobile Suit.

The main weakness of Tatsuya was a weak defense. Even with regeneration, close to invulnerability, in combat you can face a situation where you cannot immediately use "Regrowth". There are also cases when priority should be given to the destruction of the enemy. A highly effective protective suit was an ideal means for Tatsuya to demonstrate his fighting qualities to the maximum.

In this costume, unlike the Mobile Suit, you will not feel uncomfortable in the city. Even with a helmet on, he looked just like a little unusual sled suit. And if you throw a jacket over it, even the feeling of conspicuousness disappears completely. This flying suit was made just for Tatsuya. There was no doubt about that.

"In that case, you can use the temporary name from the development stage: "Freed Suit". If you ever get a good name, I'd like to hear it."

For Tatsuya "Freed Suit" was good enough. This probably meant "A suit freed from restrictions". It seemed strange, why not "Suit free from restrictions", but this, apparently, was just a problem of consonance.

However, the chatter about what to call it would only cause a series of new questions and answers, which would take time away. Thinking about this, Tatsuya decided to keep silent.

The name does not matter. But the benefit of this suit was obvious.

Tatsuya refused the phrases like "I accept this with gratitude" and silently began to change into the Freed Suit.

Unlike the suit, the black motorcycle had a name. It was called Wingless. This meant that he would fly, even without wings. *Someone has a pretty good fantasy*, thought Tatsuya.

Saddled on "Wingless", he went to the prison where the captured agents were held. On this mission Tatsuya went alone. Hyougo remained in place in the event of an emergency, and according to the plan the released agents, will themselves have to steal a car from the facilities parking lot.

Lack of support did not bother Tatsuya. From the very beginning, his fighting style was that of a lone soldier. Although there are no friends who will help in combat, but with it there are no comrades in arms which you need to take care of.

You need to only think of yourself. Under such conditions, he can fully demonstrate his combat power.

Keeping to the legal speed to avoid unnecessary trouble, he still quickly saw the target building.

To test the recently received toy, Tatsuya decided to jump the surrounding prison fence on a black motorcycle.

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Tooyama Tsukasa left the private residence in Karuizawa for a secret prisoner of war base on the peninsula of Boso, not because she wanted to do something with the captive magicians of the American Army. She was just looking for a way to escape from that place. She managed to slip away before Shiina and the plainly not informed military men were interrogated.

Prisoners that were not used for brainwashing, were not valuable for Tsukasa. With prolonged constant exposure to drugs and other substances, it is possible that something could have happened. However, there is a high probability that before magical abilities are compromised, the destruction of their personality is likely. There was no hurry in their use, and it was not so inhumane that it was so destructive to human lives. At least, she thought so herself.

It is necessary to get rid of the caught agents. Penetrating into a foreign country with an illegal mission, they must be ready for this. Tsukasa thought so.

There was no question of liberation. Survivors can disclose the fact that the Japanese army used brain-washed prisoners as puppets.

If they are not executed, the probability is high that the facts about experiments on human bodies will surface, which will cause unpleasant consequences.

Well, only she alone will be punished for this story, but to put the army, let alone the whole of Japan at a disadvantage was impossible. Because the Tooyama family cannot live without Japan, and "Tooyama Tsukasa" cannot live without the Tooyama family.

The matter is not that inaction is evil, the fact is that among people there was a widespread tendency to the appearance of bad thoughts about what would happen if nothing was done. And the more busy a person is, the stronger this inclination is for him.

"...Right. It will be best to get rid of them as quickly as possible." Tsukasa muttered, being alone in this room. It was a rest room for the "jailers", but all the staff were now at their posts.

In turn, the room where the captured agents were held was completely airtight. If deadly substances enter the ventilation system the room will immediately turn into a gas chamber. She stood up with the intention to go to the camp director and ask him to carry out the execution.

It was at that moment that an alarm sounded.

"What could have happened?"

Although Tsukasa was talking to herself, but the soldier rushing into the room gave her an answer.

"Sergeant Tooyama, we have an invasion! Come forward, please!"

The wounded soldier was the rank of sergeant. Having made sure that the title is lower than her, Tsukasa asked for the current situation.

"What is the scale of the invasion? You cannot answer by security forces?"

"Only one invader was discovered, but this is a powerful magician! The guards cannot stop them!"

Really? the thought in Tsukasa's head rushed past. But she quickly abandoned her "delusion."

The Yotsuba family should not benefit from the attack on this camp.

"I got it. Where is my outfit?"

"I brought it with me."

Tsukasa took the sergeant's dark glasses with an information terminal function built into one of the lenses, and also with a built-in microphone and an earphone in one ear.

The glasses displayed information about the coordinates of the offender and the soldiers sent to intercept him. Allied soldiers were within the normal range.

"I'm starting support." Said Tsukasa and activated the Tooyama family magic.

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Having received from the terminal in the security room the data about the place where the captive agents are held, Tatsuya, first of all, just in case, destroyed the ventilation system with "decomposition".

(What is this place where prisoners are locked in gas chambers?)

From the very beginning he did not have good impressions about this place, so he decided that this is an place where illegal experiments are conducted.

It looks like I really cannot hold back. Tatsuya muttered in thought.

Nevertheless, he did not hold back from the very beginning, because he was at a place in the mountains, of which the immediate vicinity was deserted.

He pointed the CAD "muzzle" at the security guard who got in his way. His suit was built with a full mind control CAD, but in this battle, he preferred to use a more customary for him CAD, which has the form of a pistol.

Specialized CAD custom modification "Silver Horn Trident" instantly derived the activation sequence.

Activated for an even shorter moment "Decomposition" pierced the soldier who had tried to intercept him.

He did not kill him. However, soldiers, getting holes in the joints of the hands and feet, could not rise, or even crawl. Well, there were no attempts, because they lost consciousness from acute pain shock.

Then reinforcements arrived. Tatsuya reflexively tried to attack them.

The soldiers who appeared from around the corner of the corridor were surrounded by anti-magic barriers. There was a difference in the strength of the barrier, but the soldiers were exactly the same as the previous ones. Tatsuya decomposed the magic barrier and immediately after that tried to "decompose" the soldier's body.

However.

Immediately after he decomposed the barrier, it was instantly rebuilt. The soldier counterattacked from a rifle of increased power.

Instantly changing the magic, Tatsuya decomposed the bullets and, using the capabilities of the suit to accelerate, left the line of fire. There was no shelter in this corridor. He decomposed part of the ceiling and jumped into the hole. A group of three soldiers followed him.

Tatsuya bent over the hole and activated Gram Dispersion. The anti-magic barriers of the three soldiers disappeared. And they were instantly rebuilt. The next moment the barriers disappeared again. And before they were again rebuilt, the magic of Tatsuya's decomposition managed to make holes in the bodies of soldiers.

Six barriers destroyed and four holes per person. A total of 18 phenomenon modifications at the same time, which for the current Tatsuya was not difficult.

But these altered barriers were just an annoyance.

(This is not Phalanx)

If you think about the regenerating magic barriers, then anyone will remember the famous Phalanx of the Juumonji family. But this magic was not Phalanx.

Tatsuya saw Katsuto's Phalanx in action. Therefore, he could draw such a conclusion. The current barrier magic was very similar to the magic of the Juumonji family, but it was still another spell.

(The only thing that comes to mind is that it's magic from the same Tenth Lab...)

Descending from the opening in the ceiling, Tatsuya continued to run along the corridor.

(The Magicians developed in the Tenth Laboratory, is the Tooyama family involved in these events?)

The present magic was the same as he had seen the day before yesterday in the course of an attack on the etiquette school. Does this mean that the Tooyama family was secretly pulling strings in that attack too?

(Maya said not to deal with them... But if they tried to hurt Miyuki, that's a different situation.)

With the advance into the interior of the building, the frequency of collisions with the guards increased. All the emerging soldiers were surrounded by these magical barriers, but they could no longer stop Tatsuya's advance.

"This is troublesome magic, but it has good compatibility with me"

Calmly assessing the enemy's magic, Tatsuya finally reached the prison zone.

◇ ◇ ◇

Why is my magic... the magic of the Tooyama family not working!?

Tsukasa's supportive interceptors cried mentally.

The magic of the Tooyama family is the projection of many simultaneous personal magic barriers. This spell, using the body of the person being protected, as a starting point, builds a magic barrier around it.

Since the goals of the magic are registered in advance, there is no need for direct observation or for resetting the coordinates. If the abilities of the magic operator allow it, this magic armor can be summoned many times over many people.

By itself, this spell is designed to help important people escape. This magic should be used to cover important government figures from bullets and explosions in case the enemy penetrates deep into the country.

The Tooyama family is the last line of defense of the central government. That is why, unlike the "last line of the capital's defense," the Juumonji families, they are called "the last line of defense of the central government." The government is understood not as a building, but as people engaged in politics. If you let the people who are at the top of the control apparatus run away, you will still be able to counterattack. Using this concept, the magicians of the Tooyama family were developed.

The Tooyama family should only protect important government people. Ordinary citizens are not their goal. Proceeding from this position, the Tooyama family is forbidden to appear on the political scene. It is for this reason that the Tooyama family, having entered the 28 families, never tried to become one of the Ten Master Clans.

This magic was developed with such an extremely negative motive that the goal must escape and civilians should be sacrificed, but this does not mean that it cannot be used for such a positive purpose as deterring enemy soldiers. If you activate this magic on targets identified as allies, the soldiers, having received powerful magic protection, superior to their abilities, will be able to concentrate on the attack. Thus, magic protection can be received even by people who are not magicians.

The visor, which was now on Tsukasa's head, was intended just for this. It was a technology developed by the Intelligence Department of the National Self-Defense Forces. With the help of this technology, the Tooyama family was able to free themselves from the label "magicians only used for escape."

The Tooyama family also wanted to make a positive contribution to the development of the state. Because of this nature of the magic activation, when the point of reference is other people, the Tooyama family has a birth defect in which they equate many other people to themselves, which causes the boundaries of their identities to become blurred. More precisely, this defect was deliberately grafted.

Nevertheless, they still had a desire to contribute to the organization to which they belong. No, perhaps the desire to help the group was strong precisely because their "individuality" was blurred.

And the magicians bearing Tooyama's surname to fulfill this desire were the result of bidding with the Intelligence Department of the National Self-Defense Forces. Tsukasa became the second generation of this treaty. In its second generation, the presence of Tooyama became irreplaceable for the intelligence department.

When trying to arrange a sabotage in another country, the detachment will almost always contain magicians. Because magic is a force that can be considered as a military potential, concentrated in the hands of individuals. Therefore, it is inevitable that counterintelligence will require the presence of forces capable of resisting such diversions.

With its magic, which allows them to protect with magic barriers even people who are not magicians, the Tooyama's family quickly increased its presence in the counterintelligence unit.

Soldiers defending positions counted on the magic of Tsukasa. The realization that her magic cannot help them will seriously reduce their morale. And this can lead to the breakthrough of defensive positions.

That's why Tsukasa could not afford an anxious expression.

Because of her congenital defect, psychic abilities began to decrease from the feeling of anxiety.

But, while retaining this poker face *, she hardly avoided major problems. [From the translator: Using such words is not my whim, but the author's style. I thus conveyed the moment that the author used the English word in the Japanese text.]

But, regardless of her zeal...

The results in which the enemy cannot be stopped, could only be called a complete failure.

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The prison, which contained agents of the USNA Army, was in a block surrounded by a spiral corridor.

If they were in a separate building, it was faster to penetrate from outside. The prison and the surrounding corridor had a structure, as if it were a courtyard inside the building, and in the center of this courtyard was the prison building. Confronting the guards, Tatsuya invaded this yard.

However, going so far, there is no longer any need for such stupid things such as the straightforward passage of this corridor.

Tatsuya aimed Trident at the inner wall. The decomposition magic pierced the wall of the corridor. In the next moment, in all the walls, up to the prison itself, holes appeared of a size sufficient for a person to pass.

Then he directed Trident to the ceiling. The splintered pieces of the shattered ceiling crashed into the guards. Tatsuya "saw" that anti-magic barriers immediately switched to anti-object.

In this case there will be no victims. But getting out of such a blockage will be problematic. This situation was convenient for Tatsuya.

He ran to the prison. From there no one tried to run out despite the fact that he had already provided them with a passage. It looks like they were in a state in which it's impossible to escape.

Tatsuya's guess was confirmed, but it was far from the worst possibility. The captives were only paralyzed by medical preparations. If, for example, they had cut off their limbs, it would be difficult to get them out of here.

He directed his "Elemental Sight" at the drug that paralyzed the bodies of the prisoners. Fortunately, they used the same drug on them all.

If so, he can manage it all at once.

Tatsuya focused on the concept of the relevant substance and activated decomposition magic. The substance of the drug, which corresponds to this concept, was decomposed at the level of individual chemical elements.

Some of these chemical elements were harmful to human bodies, but the main thing now was that the paralysis began to recede.

The first woman who came to herself, after a violent cough, passed into vomiting. After waiting for her to catch her breath, Tatsuya turned to her.

"Can you stand up? If you can, then tell your companions. You are released."

"I'm in... order... This voice, Tatsuya Shiba?"

Tatsuya frowned inside his helmet. This suit did not have the function of changing the voice, but the face under the helmet was not visible.

"Do you know me?"

It was hard to believe that you can understand only by voice who it is without knowing this person for a long time.

"I, ah-oh, I'm a warrant officer, Sylvia Mercury First of the Stars, USNA army. Last year I spent some time in Japan as adjutant of Lina."

"Lina's adjutant? Everything is clear."

Tatsuya did not think that she was lying. It is inconceivable that soldiers who are on an illegal mission, would so easily open their personalities. But they must have known that they are already known, like the soldiers of the army of the USNA. If the drugs paralyzed the prisoners, they could also use the appropriate drugs for interrogation.

In addition, if she can recognize Tatsuya's voice from the few words he said, this only proves that she really worked with Lina.

"I was ordered to release you. If this is possible, I would like you to walk on your feet."

"It's possible. Now I will tell this to my colleagues."

It seems that the nausea has already receded, and Sylvia responded with a firm voice without coughing.

Following Tatsuya, they ran from the prison building.

Nobody attacked him from the back. As expected, there were no stupid people among the agents of the American Army.

It seems that the soldiers who met them were among the last. The cases of resistance on the way back were very rare.

Seeing a troops transport truck, they ran to it. It seems that they went through a good training, because by this time, by their running it was clear that they had already recovered.

Tatsuya entered coordinates into the trucks navigator the place where Hanabishi Hyougo is waiting for them.

"The place where my assistant is waiting is marked in the navigator. You can escape if you follow this person's directions."

After a few hesitations, Sylvia nodded.

"...I will not ask about the reasons. In fact, we would not have escaped execution if not for your help, thank you very much."

Sylvia saluted Tatsuya. Tatsuya responded with the same salute in the army style.

As he watched the truck with Silvia's group, Tatsuya returned to the main building.

It was not a problem to escape right now. It is impossible to determine who committed this attack, having only an image of a figure in a riding suit and a darkened helmet. Before exposing himself to Sylvia to prison, he first destroyed surveillance equipment, including hidden microphones.

Moreover, studying the structure of the internal premises through the terminal in the security room, as insurance, he recorded the experiments conducted here on people. It was not data from the experiments themselves, but the recording of corpses discarded after use in experiments. Even if they find out that he was the attacker, this data will be enough to negotiate.

He returned to the camp in order to erase in advance all the records of him being there, in order to avoid unnecessary time spent on it in the future. This was not necessary, but it was better to do this in order to avoid subsequent cleanup.

He aimed Trident at the top floor of the building. The decomposition magic turned the roof of the buildings management room into dust. Using the function of the flight suit, Tatsuya penetrated the command post from above. In the leadership room, where the roof suddenly disappeared, was the camp director and several staff personnel.

...All of them raised their hands.

"We surrender. We are not able to withstand your combat power."

Tatsuya nodded and answered in a magically synthesized voice. With the help of Flash Cast, he reproduced the magic that Sylvia specialized in. Possessing a weak interference force, he could not control it at a level where the voice is reproduced in the ears of the target, but he could capture the voice inside the helmet and create air vibrations right next to his face.

"I will delete all the surveillance system data."

Not wanting to test fate, the director immediately replied: "I understand." Tatsuya reached out to the terminal next to him.

He did not intend to trouble himself with working with him. He simply cast magic to all information bodies that have electromagnetic properties.

Suddenly looking away, he saw the operator looking at him with fear in his eyes. Tatsuya did not react to this and returned his gaze to the commanding captain.

"Where is the magician of the Tooyama family?"

"...Sergeant Tooyama is in the next room."

Although for a moment the captain hesitated, he remembered that he was in a position where he could not refuse to answer, and answered in a detached voice. His thoughts for Tatsuya did not matter.

"Do not follow me." Tatsuya said and turned off the voice synthesis magic.

He took off and looked into the next room from above. Of course, there was already no one there.

From the sky, he easily noticed a woman running along the building. This woman fled to the parking lot, from which he recently escorted Sylvia and her people. Tatsuya landed so as to be right in the way of Tsukasa.

"Shiba Tatsuya-dono from the Yotsuba family, is it not?" Suddenly Tsukasa expressed her guess of his name.

Tatsuya answered with magic. He removed Tsukasa's magic barrier without raising his Trident.

Tatsuya raised his right hand. The Trident took Tsukasa in sight. At this time, the creation and destruction of magic barriers was constantly repeated.

Tsukasa, exhausted, fell to her knees. The rate of destruction became much higher than the speed of creation. Tatsuya pulled the trigger.

"Stop!"

It is unclear what this loud voice, or the appearance of an anti-magic barrier surrounding Tsukasa were from.

The speed of construction and the strength of this barrier were an order of magnitude higher than that of Tsukasa's. The barrier was rebuilt almost immediately after the destruction of the magic of Tatsuya's decomposition. It was repeated again and again, many times. But this event of destruction and creation, repeating dozens of times, actually lasted only 3 seconds, before one person fell from the sky.

"I will not let you kill this woman."

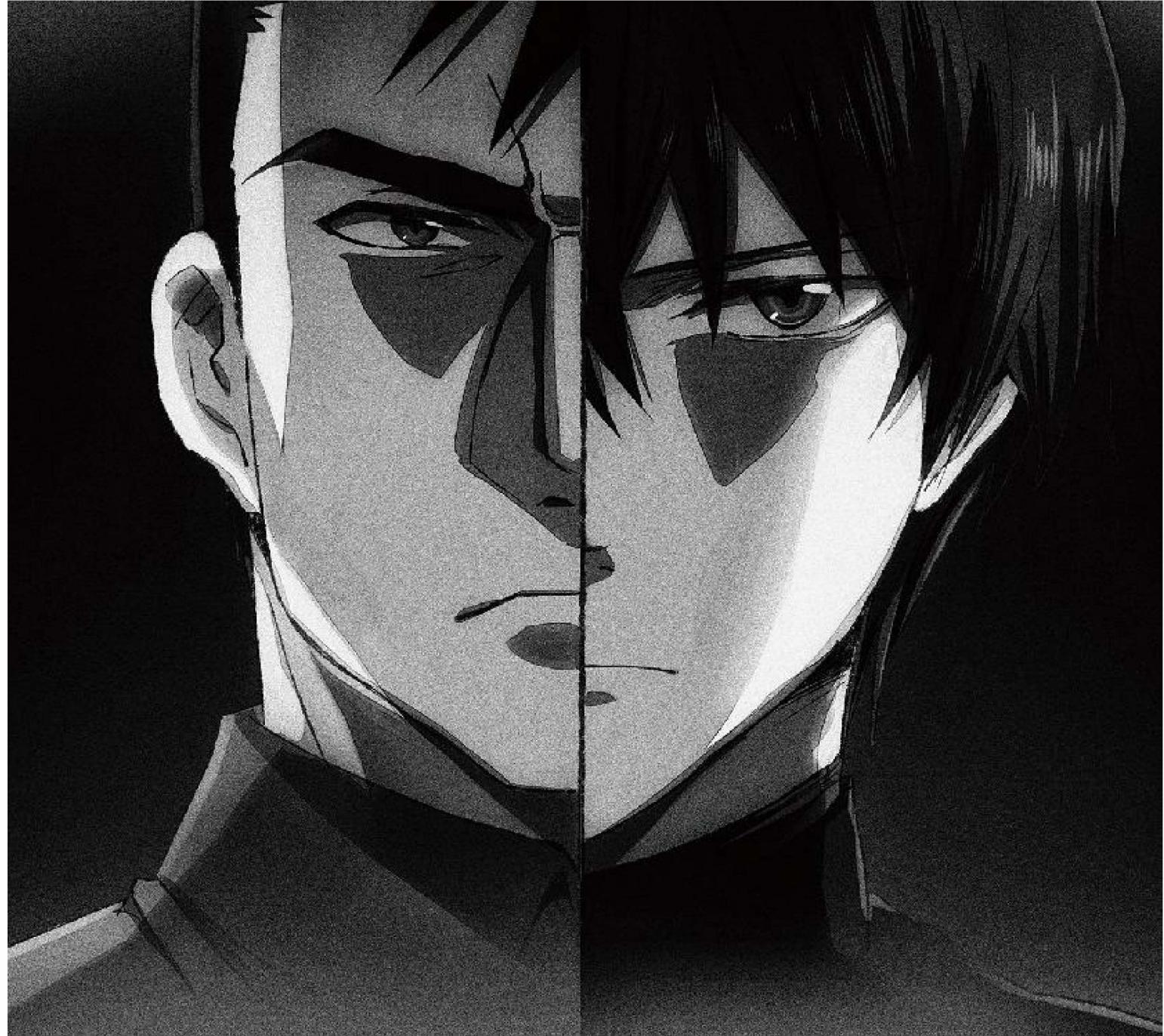
It was Katsuto jumping off the helicopter. Tatsuya continued to keep Tsukasa in the sight of Trident. Katsuto stood between them.

"I do not know the circumstances. But you better just leave..."

"Shiba," Katsuto's lips moved. But he did not say it aloud. Tatsuya lowered Trident.

"I will not attack if you just leave. I promise."

Tatsuya silently nodded and turned his back on Katsuto. Not showing any excitement about the attack from Katsuto, he activated flying magic and went to the place where "Wingless" was parked. Shortly thereafter, Katsuto followed the figure of a flying rider on a black motorcycle.



Chapter 8

A week after the invasion of the illegal prisoner of war camp. Tsukasa came to Katsuto's house.

"Katsuto-san, I'm sorry to distract you from your work."

At the same time as Katsuto entered the living room, Tsukasa rose and bowed deeply.

"Many thanks for that time."

"It is not necessary, I have already received enough thanks."

You should not bow any more, Katsuto said with such meaning.
Tsukasa understood the subtext and raised her head.

"Please sit down."

Following the words of Katsuto, Tsukasa returned to the sofa.

"Are you feeling better already?"

"Thanks to your help, I have completely recovered."

The battle with Tatsuya caused Tsukasa to overload her magic calculation zone. Although there were fears of serious consequences, fortunately, after a week of rest, she returned to normal.

"I heard that my father asked for my help last week."

"No, your father only reported on the personal struggle between friendly magicians. To stop this is the duty of the Ten Master Clans. Do not worry about it."

In fact, this was due to the duty of friendly magicians from the Tenth Lab, but Katsuto adhered to the official version.

"Personal struggle...?"

Tsukasa had a barely noticeable bitter smile. If you look at it from the attack on the camp, then this is just a one-sided destruction, but if you include Tsukasa in this action, then the matter definitely becomes a personal struggle. Undoubtedly, Katsuto was told about it by her father.

"So, that violator, and the truth ..."

"Tsukasa-san."

Katsuto was interrupted by a speech by Tsukasa, who wanted to say "... Shiba Tatsuya-san from the Yotuba family."

"We cannot guess at this." You do not have to talk about it anymore. All right?"

"...This time, I was saved from a hopeless situation, so I'll follow your words." Tsukasa answered in words with a hidden meaning. But Katsuto did not ponder the search for a dirty trick. "...Can I just mention one thing that has nothing to do with it?" Taking a short pause, Tsukasa spoke with her usual smile, which does not contain emotions.

"What exactly?" In his usual manner, Katsuto asked for an answer without moving an eyebrow.

"When I saw that battle a week ago, I was convinced. Katsuto-san. With you, we will defeat him."

But even Katsuto could not help but change in these words.

◇ ◇ ◇

After dinner, the tea time was approaching. Miyuki was preparing for exams sitting at the table.

With her magical abilities, she will never fail the entrance exams.

Regardless of the recommendations set for each magic school, she will undoubtedly receive a request from the Magic University with an invitation to attend.

However, Miyuki intended to do the right thing by passing all the exams. She wanted to get grades for which she would not be ashamed, not only in magical disciplines, but also in the general course disciplines. She believed that if she did not do so, then she could not be a suitable bride to Tatsuya.

At the moment when she raised her head with the thought of "it's time to break for tea," the videophone sounded. Before the hand reached the answer button, the signal was interrupted. It seems that Minami in the living room took the call.

While she was thinking about who this call could be from, there was a sound of call forwarding.

"Minami-chan, who is calling?"

"This is an international call. She introduced herself as Lina-sama."

During video redirection, the video signal was not transmitted. But with only one voice it was clear that Minami was puzzled.

"...Connect."

Unwittingly, for a moment, Miyuki held her breath. Because Lina's name came as a shocking surprise for her.

The screen of the videophone showed an image. There was a face resembling that of Miyuki, but contrasting with her, a radiant beauty.

"Hi, Miyuki. How are you?"

"Lina. You do not seem to have changed at all. But what happened? Isn't it night there now?"

"Yes, almost 23 hours... But at other times I could not call... The authorities, on an exception basis, allowed me to secretly call from the headquarters."

"I see... So? What's your business?"

Miyuki could understand that such a call is a special exception. She softly asked about the case, feeling that Lina is finding it difficult to start talking about it (or articulate).

"Um... is Tatsuya there?"

"Onii-sama?" Relaxing from the fact that before her a person is not one with whom she usually communicates, she unknowingly called Tatsuya "Onii-sama." "He's not here... But what's your business with Onii-sama?"

It was not a lie. Tatsuya at the moment was in the third development department of FLT.

"Then, Miyuki, please pass something on to Tatsuya."

"Well... But what exactly?"

Lina on the screen straightened.

"Many thanks for that time. Thanks to your help, I have not lost my valuable subordinates and dear friends."

Miyuki quickly realized what Lina was talking about. She heard about the incident last week from Tatsuya. She guessed what "friends" Lina said.

Miyuki also guessed how difficult it was for Lina the commander-in-chief to make a phone call to a Japanese magician, much less known as the next head of the Yotsuba family. Nevertheless, Miyuki was happy that Lina's feelings forced her to overcome these difficulties in order to express her gratitude for Tatsuya's efforts.

"Lina, raise your head. I will definitely pass this on to Onii-sama."

"Thank you, Miyuki."

Miyuki and Lina exchanged glances through the cameras.

"...I do not have much time left. Of course, I would like to meet with Tatsuya personally, to thank..."

"But in Lina's position, it will be impossible to do this?"

"Hu-hu, and that's right."

Lina smiled slightly in response to Miyuki's joke. "... But I'll look forward to meeting you again."

"...Me too, Miyuki. I'll see you again."

"Yes, before the meeting."

"And Miyuki and Lina looked at each other, not blinking, until the screen went out."

The end of the arc " Prologue of Disturbance."

(Grammar and structure edited by englishmuffins10)

AFTERWARD

How do you like the 22nd volume of the series, "The Beginning of the Unrest (Part 2)"? Did you like it?

In the previous volume, I basically outlined the worsening situation in the world, and the main theme of this volume was a change in the situation around the main character. The reason for a possible bad balance is, most likely, that originally calculated for 1 volume events were eventually divided into 2 parts. Well, it serves us right.

The thought-giving end of volume 21 is not associated with this 22 volume, but with the next volume, 23 volumes.

Events will move on even faster. Starting with volume 21, events can be considered not "arcs" with pauses between episodes, but one continuing to develop a plot.

You could have an impression that in this 22 volume of the place of "hero" and "heroine" the duet of Saburo and Shiina could take, but after 23 volumes they will become ordinary secondary characters. I feel it will be a loss.

Along with the Kurob twins, Shiina and Saburo are ideal candidates for the main roles in the side stories, but I do not get to that hand at all. There is a feeling that I have run out of characters. This is a serious problem.

At the planning stage of this series, two main themes were highlighted. First, these are the contradictions between those who possess the power of magic, and those who do not possess it. This is the current storyline.

And secondly, it is a struggle for the legacy of a prehistoric civilization that used magic as the basis of its entire technology. This story is somewhat reminiscent of the series "Alien" by Kikuchi Hideyuki-sensei, and also by "Spriggan" Minagawa's Ryouji-sensei. But this was not based on a historically authentic "occult" theme, as in the two works. All the legacy and relics were completely invented. We are talking about "antinite" and "relics", often mentioned in the text.

Unfortunately, since the series has already reached the stage, when the ultimate goal is visible, from the current moment it will not be possible to insert into the narrative material with the history of prehistoric civilization. If it does, it will be the first story written after Tatsuya and Miyuki are released from school. But at the moment there is no chance for that.

So, in the next issue we have a new arch. I'm thinking of calling it "Isolation."

Look forward to the next, 23 volumes of the series "The Unkempt Student in the School of Magic."