

*The irregular
at magic high school*

魔法科高校の 劣等生 26

インベージョン編

佐島 勤

Tsutomu Sato

illustration / 石田可奈
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電撃文庫

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illustrator assistant / ジミー・ストーン 末永康子

design / BEE-PEE





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。妹である深雪を守るべき存在だと認識していること以外、全てに遠隔している。

七草香澄

ななぐさかすみ

魔法科高校2年生。七草真由美の妹。真由美の双子の姉で、快活な性格。

桜井水波

さくらいみなみ

昨年、魔法科高校に入學した2年生。達也、深雪の従兄弟という立場をとる。深雪のカーディアン候補。

丸島光宣

くわじまのり

かつて世界最強の魔法師だった『老師』丸島烈の孫。魔法の才能に秀でているものの、病弱だった。藤林響子の異父弟。

七草真由美

ななぐさまゆみ

先々代の生徒会長。現在は魔法科大学に進学している。十師族・七草家の長女。遠小柄な身体だが、体型はグラママー。遠魔法科魔法の分野で十年に一人の英才と評されている。性格は小悪魔的。

七草景美

ななぐさけいみ

魔法科高校2年生。七草真由美の妹。香澄の双子の妹。大人しく理やかな性格。



「お祖父様、僕はっ!」

「せめてもの情けだ。
光宣、この祖父の手であの世へ逃げ」

九島 烈

32才

世界最強の魔法師
の一人と目されてい
た人物。敬意を以て
「老師」と呼ばれる。

Chapter 1

It was an unthinkable incident.

Early in the morning of Tuesday, June 18th, 2097.

In the base headquarters of the magic unit supervised by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Stars, located in the outskirts of Roswell, New Mexico, members of the Star class staged a revolt.

It was not just the rebellion of one of the members. The Stars are divided into twelve troops, each led by a Commander of the first-class.

Commanders of three of these twelve troops spearheaded the start of the rebellion.

Regardless of whether it could be called luck, only a few of the leaders participated in the rebellion. However, that does not mean the situation was trivial.



71 hours before Lina arrived at Tatsuya's and Miyuki's house.

At the Stars headquarters from where Lina escaped, the battle between her fellow Star class soldiers continued.

In addition to ordinary classes, the soldiers of Stars are divided according to their magical power: Star of the first-class, Star of the second-class, Constellation class, Planet class and Satellite class. The comrades, who are the strongest among those of the Star classes, were not training. They were fighting with magic seriously.



Those who tried to assassinate Lina – Commander of the 3rd Unit Captain Alexander Arcturus, 3rd Unit first-class Star First Lieutenant Jacob Regulus, Commander of the 4th Unit Captain Charlotte Vega and 4th Unit first-class Star Second Lieutenant Leila Deneb.

Those who assisted Lina in her escape – Commander of the 1st Unit Major Benjamin Canopus, 1st Unit second-class Star Second Lieutenant Ralph Hardy Mirfak and 1st Unit second-class Star Second Lieutenant Ralph Algol.

From these, Mirfak gave Lina a ride on a pickup truck – an experimental vehicle – and is escaping from the base with her.

Canopus is fighting three people, Arcturus, Regulus and Vega, all by himself.

And Deneb, who chased Lina until just before she escaped, was knocked off the truck by Algol.

“Leila!”

After falling from the cargo bed of the pickup truck Lina was in, Deneb and Leila wrestled in their fall. Upon seeing this, Vega shouted. She had also rushed outside in pursuit of Lina shortly after she escaped from the experimental vehicle warehouse, but she could not ignore Canopus and stayed there.

“Major Canopus! Are you not aware of Major Sirius’ betrayal!?”

Canopus didn’t know whether Vega’s words were excuses for rebellion or if she truly believed them. Probably the latter, but he knew that was nothing more than his conjecture.

11th Unit Second Lieutenant Ariana Lee Shaula declared that the 3rd Unit, the 5th Unit and the star class members of the 11th Unit, excluding Shaula herself, were converted to parasites. She excels at protection against Mental Interference Magic. A part of it comes from her abnormally high ability to sense Pushion waves. As such, Canopus considers her guess to be reliable.

If what Shaula says is correct, Vega and Deneb of the 4th Unit are not affected by parasites. So, if the rebellion was caused by the initiative of parasites, it is very likely that Vega is being manipulated by fake information provided by those who were converted.

It is not a secret that Vega does not approve of Lina. Many members of the Stars understand that this is due to jealousy.

Whether it is Vega’s influence, 4th Unit’s Second Lieutenant Deneb is also defiant towards Lina. Similarly, despite 4th Unit’s First Lieutenant Spica not sharing the same degree of blatant attitude as Vega and Deneb, it is not very hard to see that her real thoughts are similar.

Perhaps those emotions were being used.

Military personnel should not let their emotions lead their actions. Officers are trained to be good at controlling themselves at any time.

But people are weak when it comes to a cause.

Given a good reason, it’s easy to deceive oneself.

Oneself is not moved by emotions, but by following the cause.

One allows themselves such excuses.

Canopus is not just understanding it in his mind. Up until now, he has seen many such examples.

“The Head Commander would not betray the Stars! Captain Vega, your actions are nothing but mutiny!”

So, while replying to Vega, he indicated that her words would not persuade him.

Vega’s response was Weight-Type Magic ‘Double Press’. This magic generates two repulsive gravitational fields and simultaneously applies pressure from two directions. The most common usage is to generate the fields on opposite sides of the target, in order to flatten it.

Canopus used 2 Weight-Type Magics ‘Press’ simultaneously, cancelling out Vega’s magic. The magic itself was not cancelled, but the definition of contradictory event modifications caused mutual breakdown of the magics.

“Wha...”

Sounds of surprise escaped from Vega’s mouth. Invalidation of the opponent’s magic by definition breakdown is a technique that is incorporated in the Stars training. Naturally, she should be aware of it. But to intentionally create a definition breakdown to gain an advantage over the opponent you have to either read their magic and wait until they create their own magic to release your magic at the appropriate coordinates, or make an accurate prediction of magic the opponent will use.

For the former, even if it’s not the same as Gram Dispersion, it has the same kind of difficulty.

The latter means the opponent’s, that is, Vega’s hand was being read.

Vega’s visible loss of composure was an opportunity for Canopus.

Turning towards Vega, Canopus closed the distance. He did not slash using ‘Molecular Divider’, as his plan was to take her body’s freedom by showering her with an electric shock from close range.

But Canopus stopped his feet on the fourth step.

Unwillingly looking behind, he deployed a slanted ‘Mirror Shield’ to his right rear.

His anti-high energy ray weapon shield repelled Regulus’ laser bullets.

The laser bullet Regulus shot grazed on his own face.

Cold sweat slowly spread on his back.

In a rush, Regulus – It would be a lie to say he was not becoming flustered – carried his armed device and moved.

Up until now, Regulus has not actively received any attack from Canopus. Is Canopus unable to find Regulus position, or is he putting priority in Vega and Arcturus?

It is Regulus who is attacking with a sniper.

But Regulus was also being pressured.

Due to the nature of Regulus' specialty 'Laser Sniping', firing a shot will alert the opponent magician of his location. Immediately after the attack, there is a risk that the opposing magician will be able to discern his position if live ammunition is used, so compared to normal magic which can be used to attack from the opposing side of an obstacle where it can't be seen, it can be said that it is lacking in its secrecy.

Regulus understands his specialty's weakness very well. After every shot he took, he carried his rifle-shaped armed device and immediately ran away.

Use of magic for movement was kept to a minimum. Anyhow, in order to not be caught by the opponent – in this case, Canopus – he needed to change his shooting position by more than a certain amount of distance.

There is no doubt that it is worth doing to prevent any attacks other than counterattacks from Canopus.

But those counterattacks chase Regulus mentally.

For some time now, the laser bullets that returned from Canopus' 'Mirror Shield' have often been grazing Regulus' body.

It goes without saying that laser light is travelling at the speed of light. Naturally, the energy bullet returned is also travelling at the speed of light. The time lag between shooting and arrival of the reflected light is basically zero, so there is no time to block it by creating a reflection shield.

There are two main types of defensive shields against energy bullets.

The first blocks energy above a certain amount. This is the normal kind of defensive shield.

The other one reflects electromagnetic waves. 'Mirror Shield' belongs to this kind.

The latter is more effective against laser bullets. 'Mirror Shield' only reflects light from the outside, it does not block light coming out from the inside. Even with the shield deployed, attacks with 'Laser Sniping' will not be obstructed.

However, the aftermath of the event modification from generating a shield can be sensed. It's like loudly announcing your location to your opponents. In that case it ceases to be 'Sniping' and simply becomes 'long range attack'.

In theory, it is possible to block the returning energy bullets by deploying a 'Mirror Shield' just before shooting. There is an inevitable delay between the invocation of the 'Laser Sniping' magic and the shot. Therefore, there is no real harm in deploying 'Mirror Shield' and immediately after invoking 'Laser Sniping'.

However, unfortunately, Regulus' armed device was not prepared with this Activation Sequence. Without the Activation Sequence for 'Mirror Shield', it is impossible to deploy it instantaneously. After unification with a parasite the ability to control energy bullet magic has increased, but there is no such benefit when it comes to forming shield techniques.

If he was shooting Lina, there would also be no issue over not forming a shield against reflected light. Lina's 'Mirror Shield' was set in such a way that regardless of the laser's angle of incidence, the reflected light will hit the ground two meters in front of her to protect against damage caused by someone else's stray bullet. This is a very advanced technique, but it is undeniably generous for a soldier as it doesn't threaten the enemy.

and it nullifies all threat from opposing soldiers.

On the other hand, Canopus' 'Mirror Shield' is set to reflect laser bullets by changing their direction by an angle of approximately 180 degrees. As it is not strictly 180 degrees, Regulus has avoided a direct hit so far, but there is no guarantee that his luck will last much longer. The angle of reflection is not strict because of 'vibration' involved in the definition of magic, and not because it is set for 178 or 179 degrees. If it were to be represented in mathematical terms, it would be '180 plus or minus 3 degrees'. When the calculation error becomes zero, the laser bullets will be returned straight to Regulus.

The fear of being shot by a laser you fired yourself.

Slowly but steadily, it cut down Regulus' spirit.

About 200 meters away from the confrontation between Canopus and Vega in front of the experimental vehicle warehouse, 4th Unit's Second Lieutenant Leila Deneb and 1st Unit's Second Lieutenant Ralph Algol were engaging in a one-on-one fight. Deneb had jumped onto the vehicle Lina was in using Movement-Type Magic, but Algol, who was hiding in the cargo bed, fought her off and fell together with her.

Deneb and Algol stood up almost at the same time and began fighting without any discussion. Deneb thinks Algol is supporting 'Sirius' betrayal' -- except for the 'betrayal' part, Deneb's judgement is not incorrect -- and started slashing Algol, who was willing to fight back regardless of the relationships involved.

Deneb aimed a long barrel pistol in her right hand and pulled the trigger.

But it was already too late, Algol was not in her line of sight anymore. He instantly closed the 10-meter distance and held Deneb at knifepoint.

Algol brandished a large combat knife. The length of the single-edge blade was one foot (about 30cm). Unlike a survival knife, its thick back was not sawed. Its curved blade was attached to a long hilt, perhaps to catch the opponent's knife and take it. It doesn't seem to be a magician's equipment, but a genuine fighter knife favored as a specialized weapon.

Deneb and Algol are the same type of battle magician.

Their specialty is the use of high-speed movement magic. And Deneb was already in conditions to invoke magic continuously to move herself.

This is an application of the flight magic developed by Taurus Silver. Flight magic is a technique that allows free flight by successively invoking Gravity-Type Magic invocations, each lasting less than one second. This was reapplied for the Stars' movement magic.

Successive invocations of very short movement magics. Particularly, the destination is undefined unless consciously set and the movement magic is automatically cancelled without showing any effect, so the magic will move the body in a linear trajectory only there is intention to move. With this technique, the Stars solved the problem of the time lag in CAD operation hindering sudden movement that affected magicians engaged in close-quarters combat.

Therefore, Deneb, who has become able to use this technique to use movement magic at all times, thought she could evade Algol's attacks. But Algol was able to catch the knuckle guard of the knife in her left hand.

Even if she retreated with movement magic, Algol was able to use the same technique in the next instant, catching up with her. She came to the conclusion that it would just repeat the same situation even if she avoided it. But more than that, Deneb's mind was strongly dominated by militant feelings.

Deneb believed in Lina's betrayal from the bottom of her heart. She strongly resented Lina and considered her breach of trust to dishonor the name 'Sirius'.

The title 'Sirius' is the symbol of the military magicians of her home country, USNA. The betrayal of the 'Sirius' is a dishonor to the pride of magicians of the USNA army. Deneb's righteous indignation - though a misunderstanding - was driven by such feelings.

Deneb aimed the gun on her right hand towards Algol.

Algol's left hand rose and, with an underhand grip on his knife's blade and hilt, he caught the pistol Deneb was holding. The long hilt that curves forward is not usually seen on a combat knife. It is similar to a *main-gauche*¹ or a *Sai*².

Algol twisted the knife that tightly secured Deneb's pistol.

Deneb released her hand from the grip before her wrist was crushed.

Deneb retreated several meters before the pistol fell on the ground.

As he saw the situation unfold, Algol talked in a strange voice.

"What is that!"

¹ main-gauche: A type of parrying dagger which often had guards curved towards the blade to trap the enemy's blade and prevent it from slipping into the defender's hand. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parrying_dagger#Main-gauche

² Sai: Traditional Okinawan (other oriental countries also used it) melee weapon with curved guards. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sai_\(weapon\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sai_(weapon))

“Hyahahahahahaa! This knife can be used like this too!”

This knife with long hilt was custom-made for the purpose of catching enemy specialized weapons. Even in this sense it was similar to a main-gauche. Algol’s eccentric fixation towards knives became clear.

“You Ripper!”³

“Hyaahaahaahaahaa! Things like guns and knives are so foolish!”

Algol’s body vanished, leaving behind an afterimage. In the next instant, he appeared to the side of Deneb.

Algol, holding his knife with a reverse grip, slashed diagonally.

Deneb’s right hand was empty. As such, she tried to stop Algol’s slashing attack with the knife on her left hand.

Algol’s left hand subtly changed its trajectory.

He struck Deneb’s knife’s blade with his own knife on purpose.

Then he slid his knife down, creating a situation where the knives are locked.

Algol pointed the tip of the knife towards the left side of Deneb’s abdomen, which was practically defenseless.

In Deneb’s face, the influence of impatience and fear was reflected.

Canopus had no time to thoroughly observe the battles of his subordinates. Even if he understood the situation, providing backup was impossible.

Right now, the battle was evenly matched. But it is a one-on-three battle, the numerical disadvantage is undeniable.

Vega’s gravity magic was cancelled by using the same kind of magic.

Regulus’ ‘Laser Sniping’ was reflected by ‘Mirror Shield’.

Arcturus’ ‘Dancing Blades’ was intercepted by ‘Molecular Divider’

The fierce battle against the three members of the first-class Stars continued.

This was a hard fight, even for someone of Canopus’ caliber.

If this was a real war, he may not have had any trouble until now.

If Canopus was serious, he would have already killed Vega.

³ 切り裂き魔 (ripping demon) seems to be the Japanese equivalent for the word “ripper”, used to refer to serial killers who mutilate their victims with bladed weapons.

Although Commanders are equal in rank, Major Canopus outclasses Captain Vega in terms of ability. It is rumored that since the previous 'Sirius', there was nobody stronger than Canopus at close-quarters land combat. As such, Vega had no chance in a direct confrontation where both parties could see each other. Indeed, while against Lina it could not be seen, Vega's face now occasionally displayed the color of impatience.

Regulus too was an opponent that Canopus could not ignore, but he was not a substantial threat. Regulus' 'Laser Sniping' has the structural disadvantage in that it requires about a second between invocation and the shot.

This shouldn't be the only card on Regulus' hand, but for some reason he hasn't been using any magic other than 'Laser Sniping'. As long as Regulus limits the range of magic he uses by himself, Canopus has the ability to confront him and Vega at the same time without difficulty.

Even with both Regulus and Vega and the inability to fight for real, this battle would have ended in Canopus' victory in a short time. Even with the two of them, there was no doubt.

But Arcturus was a formidable opponent.

Commander of the 3rd Unit of the Stars, Captain Alexander Arcturus. A battle magician who is learning mainstream modern magic at Stars as well as the Ancient Magic of the indigenes of the North American continent - Spirit Magic - both at a high level. Though parasite assimilation has made him unable to use Spirit Magic, being able to pull out the power of the parasite to its full extent was a more than adequate substitute.

Canopus repelled Regulus' laser bullets and urgently rushed to Vega.

But a rush of wind from his side forced Canopus to step back.

It was Arcturus' 'Wind Hammer'.

Its killing power is low. Though the purpose of the magic is to disturb an opponent's balance, Canopus had to move back more than 5 meters in order to dodge the localized gust of wind travelling at 60 meters per second in a 2-meter-wide diameter.

After Canopus' retreat, stone arrowheads flew towards him. Not arrows. Just the arrowheads. Pointy, sharpened and properly shaped obsidian arrowheads from 'Dancing Blades'.

Normally, 'Dancing Blades' uses knife-shaped weapons integrated with the CAD. Reason is that there is certainty that it can be done in one action from magic invocation to launch.

But that doesn't mean 'Dancing Blades' must use special weapon devices. The entity that invokes the magic is the magician, not the CAD. This is a principle that doesn't change regardless of the magic.

To begin with, 'Dancing Blades' is a magic that manipulates the flight trajectory of a throwing weapon, the weapon itself can be anything. It doesn't even have to necessarily be an edged tool. At its extreme, even rocks at the roadside can be 'bullets' for 'Dancing Blades'.

Four arrowheads attacked simultaneously from different trajectories. All of them were shot down by 'Molecular Divider' extending from Canopus' katana-like armed device.

The obsidian arrowheads, split into two pieces, fell on the ground. The defined shape of the objects used in 'Dancing Blades' was modified, causing the forced termination of the magic due to definition breakdown.

But Arcturus' attack did not end. Because of Arcturus unleashing out magic in rapid succession, Canopus is unable to discern his hiding place.

The wind blew, and bird feathers danced. The feathers of the bald eagle - though just an imitation. Feather-shaped darts, made of synthetic fibers and titanium needles. Super fine, high strength fibers that can cut not just human skin but also leather protection, depending on their speed.

Dozens of feathers rode the wind and started to attack Canopus. Arcturus' specialties are Spirit Magic and Movement-Type Magic. He is especially proficient at techniques that manipulate airflow. The feathers are not being manipulated by herd control, they just fly with the air current.

'Molecular Divider' is not able to interfere with gas. Given that each feather is being controlled by the wind, knocking them down with an armed device is meaningless.

Canopus fought by using the magic 'Blast' to explode the compressed atmosphere. Protecting himself from the blast using an anti-fluid shield, Canopus rushed to Vega once again.

Regulus was observing Canopus from just behind him.

He can't overcome the three-on-one disadvantage because his attacks look forced? Such guesses came to Regulus' mind.

A large scrapped car that had been setup up for training danced in the air.

It was Vega's gravity control magic.

Canopus knocked it down with Weight-Type Magic. Even while running, Canopus shows no disturbance in his CAD operation. Still, he turned around to be fully conscious of the large vehicle flying towards him.

Regulus made a decision.

Armed with his rifle-shaped integrated CAD, he pulled the trigger.

From reading the Activation Sequence until the magic was invoked, 0.2 seconds elapsed. Even for a specialized CAD this was quite fast.

From the start, Regulus was an expert in 'Laser Sniping', and the technique's power and speed were further amplified by the specialized CAD's performance. Magic invocation speed improved even further under the influence of the parasite.

However, amplification of laser bullets is a physical and mechanical process that cannot be sped up. The time can be shortened by generating a higher energy laser beam from the start, which is possible if you increase the event interference with parasites.

But to achieve this, Regulus' armed device has to be remodeled to use higher energy. Or maybe create a new armed device altogether.

It has been only three days since Regulus became a parasite. It was not possible to upgrade the armed device in just three days.

Nevertheless, Vega has taken Canopus' attention now, Regulus will not be counterattacked by a delayed attack. That was his prediction.

But, exactly before the laser bullet was about to be fired.

Canopus' retreating figure vanished from Regulus' scope.

He did not become transparent.

The silhouette of a person was replaced with the appearance of a cut landscape.

It was being projected in the hangar where Regulus was hiding.

A laser bullet was fired.

It is impossible to deal with energy bullets returning at the speed of light by looking at them.

Inverted 180 degrees, the accurately reflected energy bullet destroyed Regulus' armed device, and burning fragments crushed his right eye.

Loudly screaming, Regulus retired from the battle.

(First one.)

Canopus muttered to himself upon hearing Regulus' screams.

He did not specifically mean to set Regulus up for a trap. He wanted to get close to Vega to neutralize her without causing serious injuries, but he didn't want to be on guard for Regulus' counterattacks. Canopus just didn't narrow his field of vision like Regulus expected him to.

But with this the battle will certainly become easier. Put simply, without Regulus' magic, it went from a one-on-three to a one-on-two, a big difference.

Immediately after he pondered this, two cries of pain struck Canopus' eardrum.

He turned his eyes towards the direction the voice came from. At the same time, he retreated and increased his distance to Vega. This action for the sake of guaranteeing safety was an unconscious choice.

There, Algol was sticking his knife into Deneb's side.

That's excessive, Canopus harshly reprimanded Algol in his mind.

But Deneb was not the only one who staggered and collapsed. Algol's body also leaned forward and fell. Even from a distance it was evident that he was not attacking, as it looked like he was pushing down.

From Canopus' position it was not possible to see that Algol's back is covered in blood. No, perhaps if he were to look closely, he would understand, but while in this situation where he is on alert for enemy attacks, he could not spare the time.

But he understood that Algol had been attacked by a new enemy.

Because that enemy was now aiming at him.

The gravitational field of the thin, sharp, spear-like deformed 'Molecular Divider' extended towards Canopus.

He used the same magic to clear away the gravitational field.

(Lieutenant Spica!)

Even before visual confirmation of the opponent who released the magic, he knew the identity of the caster.

Among the Stars, there is only one user of this modified version of 'Molecular Divider', 'Molecular Divider - Javelin'.

Stars' 4th Unit's first-class Star, First Lieutenant Zoe Spica.

Directly in Canopus' line of sight, a woman who, despite being early in the morning, was properly dressed in the summer uniform, stretched her right arm straight ahead to point at Canopus.

A straight, metallic nail was attached to the tip of her extended index finger. It was a Japanese *anki*⁴ similar to a 'cat's paw'⁵, which acted as the sights for 'Molecular Divider - Javelin'.

A thin and sharp gravitational field of molecular destruction once again extended towards Canopus. As an exchange for narrowing the attack, the medium range of the 'Molecular Divider' was extended.

For a second time, Canopus cut off Vega's spear, who used a gravitational field to keep him from retaliating with his katana.

No, to say that 'Molecular Divider' cut off the 'Gravity Control-Type Magic' would be misleading. Gravity Control is magic that modifies a property of space called distortion degree. 'Molecular Divider' too modifies this property of space. Both magics collapsed, as the event modifications

⁴ Anki - A small weapon that is easy to hide. Used in Chinese martial arts.

<https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%9A%97%E5%99%A8>

⁵ Cat's paw - A type of Japanese anki. Used mainly by ninjas in assassinations. Its name comes from its shape.

<https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%8C%AB%E6%89%8B>

'Modify only the gravitational field of normal space' and 'Modify only the electromagnetic properties of normal space' collided.

At that moment, Canopus' 'Molecular Divider' was also in an interrupted state.

Arcturus' tomahawk closed in.

Canopus jumped sideways with all his strength while reactivating 'Molecular Divider'.

The Tomahawk cut apart Canopus' afterimage.

The tomahawk started turning around in mid-air and attacked Canopus who stood up after rolling on the dry ground of the practice field.

This attack cannot possibly be 'Dancing Blades'. 'Dancing Blades' is a magic that pre-programs the flight trajectory of the thrown weapons, it should be unable to remotely control the specialized weapon.

Using Spirit Magic, a kind of divine state was created during which 'thoughts' were put into the weapon, and through this new path 'Dancing Blades' was overwritten. This was an ability unique to Arcturus, who is both a Modern Magician and an Ancient Magician.

This does not circumvent the requirement of higher interference power to overwrite the different magic definition. There is a limit of five times for the creation of new trajectories. However, the trajectories created are not straight lines nor parabolas, the 'Dancing Blades' can ascend, descend, and turn at will. By throwing them once, even if trajectory is only changed three times instead of five, most enemies will not escape.

Because of Arcturus' parasitization, he is unable to use Spirit Magic. However, just because he lost the ability to access 'spirits' defined as independent Information Bodies, that doesn't mean that Ancient Magic techniques are also lost. Rather, the assimilation of the parasite has improved his Ancient Magic abilities that don't use independent information bodies.

Canopus intercepted the attacking tomahawk by slashing while standing on his knee.

Regardless of the speed, a swing has no strength in this position. The blade was not even raised. It was more like wielding a stick than a katana.

Nevertheless, the tomahawk magically reinforced by Arcturus' thoughts was split in half by Canopus' slash.

It was not cut by the katana-like blade. The purpose of Canopus' armed device was not to slash with a steel blade. The blade is a simple guiding tool, the magical sword is the one responsible for cutting. If the intermolecular binding inversion force field is formed correctly, there will be no harm even if the blade's inclination is slightly off.

Split into two, the tomahawk stopped flying and fell to the ground.

Even if thought is put into the weapon with this divine state, it is the same as a normal armed device in that the magic will fail if the defined shape is lost.

Arcturus' pursuit came to an end. Since 'Dancing Blades' requires the use of tangible objects, the number of 'bullets' that can be prepared in advance is limited. Arcturus was 'out of bullets'.

Canopus has not yet been able to find where Arcturus is hiding. But Arcturus' temporary cease fire was an opportunity to erase the enemy's combat power.

Currently, the opponents Canopus sees are both Vega and Spica.

Relentless slaughter is the nature of Spica's 'Molecular Divider - Javelin', but it is not difficult to deal with if you are aware of the technique's nature, since it shows no effect beyond the narrow line it is pointed at.

Canopus decided to disable Vega first, as she is the more troublesome opponent.

He released diversion magic towards Spica, then slashed Vega with 'Molecular Divider', or pretended to, releasing ionized air bullets instead.

Vega, who was cautious of the 'Molecular Divider', was unprepared to receive the direct blow from the plasma bullets. Canopus didn't raise the density of the plasma much to avoid fatal wounds, but it was still enough power to paralyze the whole body temporarily.

Vega fell on her back. Maybe she hasn't completely fainted, but it doesn't look like she has freedom in her limbs.

Canopus looks back to Spica. He was going to settle things with Spica to bring it to a one-on-one.

But in Canopus line of sight was not only Spica's slender silhouette but also Arcturus' thick body.

"Major Canopus, I want you to stop resisting."

The silhouette of new people entered his vision.

Second Lieutenant Ian Bellatrix and Second Lieutenant Samuel Alnilam.

The two members of the Stars' 6th Unit who had parasitized in the micro-black hole experiment a few days before were dragging an unconscious and badly wounded Algol by both his arms.

Spica's eyes were wide open. To her, reinforcements were unexpected.

"...Is that a hostage?"

While addressing Arcturus, Canopus' tone did not conceal his disgust.

"I secured Second Lieutenant Shaula not long ago."

Without answering Canopus' question, Arcturus played his cards.

"Major Canopus. Your goal was to let Major Sirius escape. This goal has been achieved. Do you not think extending this fight and increasing injuries is meaningless?"

"It is you who started this senseless rebellion."

To Canopus' accusation, Arcturus responded with silence.

This kind of logic does not work against parasitized opponents, but Canopus also knew that from the start.

Canopus dropped his katana-like armed device.

“...surrender.”

“I guarantee your physical safety.”

“Only the body?”

To Canopus’ ironic remark,

“I do not intend to make you a comrade.”

Arcturus replied, showing no interest in his countenance.



Contrary to his expectations, Canopus was not accompanied to a solitary confinement cell, but to the private room used by a senior officer from another department whenever they visited the base.

Of course weapons, including the armed device, were taken, but it seems like breaking out isn’t too hard. Right now, it can be said that CADs are an indispensable tool for a user of modern magic, but it’s not absolutely essential for the use of magic. Even if there are ways to make using magic more difficult, general techniques that make magic completely unusable still haven’t been developed. Canopus also heard discussions about the potential to obstruct other people’s magic invocations using special Mental Interference Type techniques, but at least no members of the Stars can use magic like this.

But Canopus did not leave the room let alone escape. Food was not taken to him for many hours, so until evening arrived he only had the mineral water that was in the provisions refrigerator.

It was past 21:00 when he was summoned by a messenger.

He came to the Commander’s room and stood between Second Lieutenant Bellatrix and Second Lieutenant Alnilam.

In front of the Commander’s desk there was one chair.

Arcturus and Vega were seated in a similar chair near one wall, and Major Capella of the 5th Unit sat near the wall on the other side with a stern expression.

“Major Canopus, take a sit.”

Following Base Commander Walker’s words, Canopus saluted and sat on the chair in front of the desk.

"Now. Major Canopus, you assisted in Second Lieutenant Ralph Hardy Mirfak's desertion, and are suspected of inflicting injuries."

Feelings of surprise were shown on Canopus' face.

Walker expected this reaction.

"Concerning Major Sirius' trip, official military documents are being prepared. As expected, Colonel Balance really is great."

In other words, it appears that there is no chance Lina will be blamed for the crime.

The feelings of surprised disappeared from Canopus' face, returning to his poker face.

"I think you too are aware of the higher-up's split opinion regarding Japan's Strategic-Class magician, Shiba Tatsuya."

"I am aware of it."

To eliminate Tatsuya as a threat, or to use this threat and incorporate it into USNA's global strategy? The higher-ups of the USNA army held both of these opinions in equal numbers. The assassination faction roughly matches those who consider Japan as a competitor in the western Pacific Ocean, and the use faction almost overlaps with those who consider the alliance with Japan and Japan's influence as a gateway to expand in the Pacific and obstruct the Great Union and the New Soviet Union.

"But you should be able to understand that the Strategic-Class Magic is excessively powerful and that it is impossible to use."

"....."

Canopus could only respond to Walker's speech with silence.

Walker scowled lightly and immediately returned to his original administrative expression and continued the speech.

"I also think Shiba Tatsuya should be eliminated. Captain Arcturus and Captain Vega also share this opinion."

"Commander, there are serious concerns regarding their health."

Arcturus himself responded to Canopus' indirect complaint.

"Major Canopus. It is correct that this body has been promoted to a parasite, but our loyalty towards our country has not changed. That spirit will always be my core."

On the other side of Arcturus, Capella visibly displayed a grimace.

"Regarding the treatment of Captain Arcturus, it is currently under consideration."

Walker did not listen to Canopus' warning.

At this point, Canopus was convinced that Walker is under the parasite's mental interference. Thought suggestion, and not mind interference that turns one into a puppet. By paralyzing his reasoning, the person is encouraged to embrace their original desires and sense of danger, Walker fell into a daze, and was tricked into being controlled exactly as one wants without realizing he is being manipulated. - Such was Canopus guess.

"Major. It seems you can't approve the assassination of Shiba Tatsuya."

"Even if hostility is inevitable, measures like assassination is something we shouldn't do."

"...Such lip service is unacceptable in this world, I think you know that well?"

"I must deny that this is a case of lip service."

Canopus didn't deny the dirty means themselves. There are things that can't be resolved in accordance following official stances.

To that extent, Canopus knew from experience without being told.

But brakes are necessary. If you pamper yourself by limitlessly applying the excuse "necessary", the army will immediately degenerate into a mere violent group. This was also Canopus' self-admonishment.

"...Major Canopus. Do you want a deal?"

Walker gave up on persuading Canopus and changed the topic.

"A plea bargain?"

"Exactly."

Canopus' interrogation was a lifeline⁶ to avoid an illegal bargain. But with Walker's quick declaration, Canopus' tension was unconsciously relaxed.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Walker set the pace of the deal.

"If it becomes a court-martial, the General Staff Headquarters will intervene. This is inevitable given the special circumstances of our force. If a trial is started with Major's current state of affairs, the courtroom will be a place for arguments between the Shiba Tatsuya elimination and use factions, and it will certainly amplify the antagonism from both sides. It is concerning that this may have a serious negative effect on army operations."

Canopus spoke no differing opinion than that of Walker's conjecture.

The situation is certainly likely to develop. But the possibility that the conflict will lead to army malfunction is extremely low. The higher-ups are not that foolish.

⁶ In the original script, the author uses 牽制球, a baseball move where the pitcher (Walker) throws the ball (deal) to a fielder (Canopus) to tag a base runner (illegal bargain) out <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pickoff>.

Usually, Canopus would have offered a rebuttal. But once the superior officer took hold of the initiative, even if you know they are insane, it was hard to present opposing opinions.

"If you confess to the accidental injury of Second Lieutenant Regulus, Second Lieutenant Mirfak will be deemed as missing in action rather than a deserter. Second Lieutenant Algol and Second Lieutenant Shaula will also get a reduced punishment."

"—Exactly what kind of punishment is this?"

Canopus had already understood any protest would have no effect.

"Imprisonment for one year."

A prison sentence is quite heavy for a plea bargain. But taking into consideration the fact that he is nothing but a nuisance to the parasites, Canopus thought using the imprisonment to physically distance himself from them might be convenient.

"Also, the duration of the punishment will be processed as an infiltration mission. Your military record will not be stained, and we will give consideration for your family's worries as well"

"...I understand. But I have two more conditions."

"Name them, we will try to respond to them as much as possible."

Walker's stance was unexpectedly soft. Is the subconscious resisting the thought suggestion, or is he recognizing Canopus' value as a military asset to try to avoid communication breakdown?

Both were likely stories.

"I want my prison sentence to be carried out in Midway Prison."

"...Is that okay?"

Walker examined Canopus' expression looking for his true intentions. The military prison on Midway Atoll was extremely unpopular and isolated from society – in other words, it was a place for the imprisonment of felons.

"Is that not more convenient for the Commander as well?"

You'll live without worrying about a nuisance such as myself, Canopus spoke with irony.

Walker's face scowled for a moment, but he immediately erased the displeasure from his face.

"I understand. We'll take care of the arrangements. And what is the other condition?"

"Please give Second Lieutenant Algol and Second Lieutenant Shaula identical measures."

"Will they protect Midway's military prison as well?"

"They're being given sentences as well, aren't they?"

Canopus was completely unfazed by Walker's tasteless remark.

"—The deal is settled. Major Capella will escort you to Midway."

Erasing his facial expression, Walker announced.

Seating close to the wall, Captain Arcturus and Captain Vega displayed satisfied smiles. On the other side, Major Capella showed his displeasure from start to end.

The imprisonment of Canopus, Algol and Shaula was officially decided the following day.

Many people in the Pentagon expressed suspicion at the strangely quickly process.

But people who contested the decision, including Colonel Balance, did not exist.

Chapter 2

The morning of Sunday, June 23rd, 2097.

'Angie Sirius', Head Commander of the 'Stars', the magician force under direct supervision of the General Staff Headquarters, whose real name was Angelina Kudou Shields, was inside a small-sized VTOL.

Angelina, more commonly referred to as Lina, was accused of betrayal and dishonor by parasitized troops, and suffered an assassination attempt in the base headquarters. Having escaped to Japan with the help of General Staff Headquarters' Captain Balance's secret connections with the Yotsuba Family, she stayed in a house owned by the Kuroba, a branch family of the Yotsuba, until the day before yesterday, and stayed at Tatsuya's and Miyuki's apartment last night.

And now she is moving to a new hiding place. Approximately 90km above the sea south of the Boso Peninsula, approximately 50km east of Miyake Island, 'Miyaki Island' floated on the sea. The small island was referred to as '21st century's new island' because it was formed due to the activity of an underwater volcano in the first year of the 21st century. Though it is called small, its area has now grown to 8 square kilometers. It is about the same size as Kunitachi in Tokyo.

This island was Lina's new hiding place.

The whole island of Miyaki Island is Yotsuba Family's private property. More accurately, it is owned by a real estate company controlled by the Yotsuba Family, but this doesn't change reality.

The island's peculiar history reveals how the Yotsuba Family got their hands on this region.

Originally, there was a supply base for the National Defense Navy in Miyaki Island. But it was abandoned after repeated eruptions in the 2050s, and after World War 3, also known as the 20-year world war, ended, it became a secret prison for magicians regardless of whether they were military officers or civilians, the management of which was entrusted to the Yotsuba Family. Nobody but the Yotsuba Family was able to perfectly control magician criminals who hold powerful abilities.

The Yotsuba acquired the island to take over the function of the secret prison.

However, in January of 2093, after an eruption on the eastern side of the island - the side opposite to the prison - the relocation of the prison was considered, and in 2095 the new location was decided. In May of 2097, last month, the new secret prison was completed, and the prisoner relocation was also carried out.

Though the facilities for prisoners need renovation, buildings for supervisors are immediately habitable. Also, since the east side of the island was not used for the prison, the construction of magical experiment facility for project advanced. Although its construction just started in April, this is where the magic nuclear fusion reactor energy plant based on Tatsuya's ESCAPES project was decided to be built.

Tatsuya and Miyuki were also riding together in the small VTOL. Though their primary goal was to guide and guard Lina, Tatsuya also came with the intent of inspecting the planned construction site for the plant.

It was decided at the end of last month that the implementation of the ESCAPES project will be done in Miyaki Island. Tatsuya has visited Miyaki Island several times and understands the topography and climate, but he has never examined it with the point of view of building something there. It was certainly indispensable to check once again if there were natural conditions that could harm his project.

“Tatsuya-sama, Miyuki-sama, Shields-sama, we will be landing soon.”

Hanabishi Hyougo, who was piloting the small VTOL, raised his voice towards Tatsuya’s group. This VTOL has capacity for 6 people excluding the pilot, and there is no division between the pilot’s seat and the passenger seats. Hyougo’s voice directly reached Tatsuya’s group just like in a car.

“It looks pretty spacious. The infrastructure looks surprisingly prepared.”

Lina, who is seeing the island for the first time, expresses her impressions as she observes.

“Well...It has changed a lot.”

Miyuki came here once before, but couldn’t hide her surprise at the complete transformation from the dreary appearance at the time.

“Miyuki, have you been on this island?”

“Yeah, a bit over four years ago.”

When she visited four years ago, there were only prison facilities in the coastal area on the west side, and the island was mostly dark rocks and sandy lava fields.

But in the Miyaki Island that now reached their eyes, there was an airfield with a short runway in the north of the island, a desalination facility right next to it, a geothermal powerplant on the foot of the mountain in its center, and no less than ten large buildings stood in a line on the eastern part.

Tatsuya was also hit with feelings of surprise, but he was surprised for a different reason than Miyuki.

(...Is that an Induction Stone refinery?)

(That way is a large-scale computing center...)

Within the group of buildings, Tatsuya found a building whose installations distinctly resembled FLT’s research laboratory.

And then he suddenly understood.

This island is being built to be Yotsuba Family’s new headquarters.

Tatsuya had not been informed by Maya about that plan.

The plant for the ESCAPES project will be built on Miyaki Island.

But this plan doesn't exclude it as Yotsuba's second headquarters.

While building an open experimental plant here, Maya and the Yotsuba Family are building a closed research right beside it. And it is also likely that from among the researchers gathered for the ESCAPES project, the ones that are particularly great should join the Yotsuba Family. All this for the sake of advancing magic techniques to even higher heights.

The small VTOL landed in the helipad. The runway here is not long enough for large aircraft to take off and land, but even if it isn't a VTOL or STOVL, it is possible for a small 50 passenger jet to perfectly take off or land. The Yotsuba's seriousness can be seen on the development of Miyaki Island.

Just as expected, there are no railroads or monorails. The four of them were riding on a self-driving car - Hyougo was driving - prepared by one of the Yotsuba Family's branch families, the Mashiba Family, who managed the magician prison, and headed towards the west side of the island.

They went around the volcano, that continued its small activity, and arrived at the residences for prison management staff. Along the way, like before, lava fields and beaches full of rocks continued both on the left and right sides.

It seems that the east side of the island, on the opposite side of the prison, was given more development importance. While all the prisoners had left, only about half of the management staff left the island. It was mainly guards who didn't stay, they transferred to the new prison along with the prisoners.

The facility's required management personnel remained in its entirety. The residences were maintained in a state where they could move in immediately.

"Hmm...so it's a condominium rather than a hotel."

Lina's impressions leaked out after taking a look around the room she was guided to. To these impressions, Tatsuya and Miyuki had no objections.

"Food is already prepared in the fridge and stocker, and it doesn't seem like clothes will be urgently needed."

"...Oh well."

Was Lina looking sensitive because she was getting mixed feelings from receiving help on clothes to wear from Tatsuya, who was a male? Similarly, Mirfak, a male subordinate, also told her something like that when she was escaping America. Therefore, her worry seemed needlessly severe.

"This management facility is equipped not just with residences, but also stores that sell household goods, practice rooms and even recreation rooms. How about seeing them too?"

The recommendation was made by Hyougo, who snatched a prison staff member to serve as a guide before anyone noticed it.

Tatsuya glanced at Lina to ask her about her intentions. Today's inspection was to make sure that Miyaki Island's prison's facility can be used as Lina's hiding spot. Lina was under the impression that she had no choice, but that was her misunderstanding. If Lina said 'I don't like it', the Yotsuba Family would prepare the next hiding place. It's just that the degree of security would be strictly inferior than in here.

"Can you show me around?"

Even here, Lina has misunderstood that she had no right to say 'no'. Believing that it was an unavoidable ceremony, she looked towards Hyougo and replied.

"Hey...Is it really okay for me to live here?"

Those were Lina's first words when she came back to her room after a lap around the facility.

"You seem to be pleased with it."

Lina's question was directed at Tatsuya, so he thought it would be strange if he didn't answer. Right away, he returned the words that came to his mind.

"Seems like I'll be punished if I say I'm not pleased with it."

Lina's voice revealed her exhaustion. Not physical exhaustion, mental exhaustion, she was tired of surprises.

The facilities she was shown were by no means extravagant.

However, there was no shortage.

In life, there is nothing that can perfectly predict inconvenience.

Same for this room. Even if she could not get out, it might more pleasant than Stars' lodging house. This was far from the 'uncomfortable life on the run' Lina had imagined.

"Besides, was it fine to show me all those things...?"

Lina's eyes shook in anxiety.

The destination of the guided tour where she was the guest was not just the prison facility. The research facility under construction was also included in the tour.

After going around the residences connected to the facility, Tatsuya, Miyuki and Lina headed to the eastern part of the island using a prison helicopter. Hyougo also piloted it. Rather than lack of trust in the people in the prison, Hyougo seems unwilling to give an outsider the role of Tatsuya's 'chauffeur'. Only two months have passed since Hyougo started to serve Tatsuya, but he found something that was worth giving his loyalty to.

The last place Hyougo, who had already settled into the role of Tatsuya's loyal subject, guided them to was the Induction Stone refinery Tatsuya had his eyes on from inside the aircraft just before landing.

The Induction Stone is the heart of the CAD. Its standard manufacture process is well known. The CAD development techniques are military technology, not protected by patent but also not open to the public. But, since techniques were leaked to allied countries and due to spy battles, nowadays all the significance of keeping it a secret was lost.

Regardless, it is standard technology nonetheless. Although the Induction Stone can be manufactured by techniques that are, as a matter of fact, open to the public, they are unable to purify the Induction Stone efficiently.

The Induction Stone is the part that mutually converts Psion signal and electric signal. But just because they emit Psion signals from electric signals, doesn't mean all Induction Stones convert Psion signals and electric signals in the same way. The performance changes depending on the design, and efficiency further changes due to the process' finishing touches.

An Induction Stone may have high efficiency in conversion from Psion signal into electrical signal, but another Induction Stone refined in another processing line may have high efficiency at converting electric signals into Psion signals. Some stones excel in their ability to convert weak signals, and other stones excel in their ability to faithfully reproduce signals.

For example, Germany's Rosen Magicraft, United Kingdom's McGregor Wand, America's Maximilian device, in this order, obtained high appraisal in their Induction Stone's general abilities, but in terms of ability to reproduce the signal accurately, Japan's FLT is the world leading company – the performance of Induction Stones manufactured by army and national research institutions is unknown.

The design of the Induction Stone is an important intellectual asset for both corporations and countries. Common knowledge in the magic industry dictated that it is impossible to show an Induction Stone refinery to an outsider. Lina's words 'all those things' reflected this 'common sense'.

"If you can understand it, won't you think that getting too close is reckless?"

"...I wouldn't make an imitation from the start; my conscience wouldn't allow me to."

To Tatsuya's answer, Lina exposed her dissatisfaction. But her tone lacked strength.

She doesn't know at this point how long she'll remain hidden on this island.

If she needs to hide for an extended period of time, the tension and caution will surely fade away. If she didn't understand the importance of that area, she may end up walking in carelessly and needlessly troubling the guards.

Lina could not deny the possibility.

"That's right."

Regarding Lina's point as unimportant, Tatsuya turned towards Hyougo.

Given the signal, Hyougo handed Tatsuya the stylish envelope he had been carrying on his hand.

"Lina, this is the key to your room."

"Th-Thank you..."

Lina opened the unsealed envelope and checked what was inside.

It was a golden smart card.

"With that card, you are free to use any of the facilities on the island, including food and shops. Though it is possible to reissue if you lose it, that requires a slightly troublesome identity check."

"Understood. I will be careful."

Knowing its importance, Lina grabbed the card with both hands.

"If anything happens, call us from the fixed terminal in the room. It's fine if you don't address it to me. It is also connected to Miyuki, Ayako, and the Yotsuba Family."

"Okay."

"Anything else you want to ask?"

"Nothing right now. I'll call you if there's something I don't understand."

"Please do."

Tatsuya turned back towards Miyuki.

Miyuki, who was diagonally behind Tatsuya, came forth with a half step.

"Well then, Lina. Get some rest. We will come to see you again."

"Yeah. Really, thank you for everything."

Lina waved her tiny hand, looking a little embarrassed.

Miyuki smiled, and waved her hand lightly.



"Tatsuya-sama, there is something else I would like you to see."



Said Hyougo, who was following Tatsuya as he headed towards the parking lot.

Today they didn't have plans other than the inspection of the island. Tatsuya replied with 'alright' and asked Hyougo to guide him.

The place where Hyougo took Tatsuya and Miyuki was a garage beside the runway. There was only one short car painted in light blue parked.

"It's an unusual design. Doesn't look like a mid-engine layout..."

As Tatsuya said, the central part of the car's body was the engine, but the engine was not installed there. In the case of hydrogen or ethanol engines there is a mid-engine layout, but in the case of an electric car, current designs arranged motors for the front and back wheels separately, or included a motor inside each wheel. And this self-driving vehicle clearly had the electric motor drive characteristics.

"This car is an 'Air Car'."

"...You mean a Flying-Type Magic vehicle?"

Tatsuya opened his eyes slightly. He was not hiding his surprise.

"It is indeed. Development itself started 2 years ago, at the same time as the bike with flight capabilities 'Wingless', and it finally reached its completion this past month after receiving some ideas from Tatsuya-sama."

Certainly, in April of this year Tatsuya devised a new Flying-Type Magic scheme for high mass vehicles. However, he was so busy with various things that he handed in a rough plan as it was to the Head House and tucked it away in the corners of his consciousness.

He did not expect it to bear fruit. Tatsuya was hit with unexpected feelings.

"This body has already been registered for use on public roads, so it can be used every day."

"Is it also able to drive from and to this island?"

"Of course, I will come immediately if you call."

Though Hyougo replied with a meek expression, Tatsuya didn't think he was being disrespectful from the start.

"Onii-sama, why don't you try it out?"

Standing to his side, Miyuki recommended a test drive.

"No, let's stop for today."

Tatsuya shook his head, showing little hesitation on his face. However, he didn't have zero interest in this 'Air Car'.

"Let's test it tomorrow."

"Certainly. I will report this to the mechanic."

Tatsuya disliked leaving Miyuki alone during a test drive. He decided to test the dual use land and air vehicle called 'Air Car' when Miyuki was at school.



Around the time Tatsuya visited Miyaki Island.

Despite being Sunday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense were hit by a quite a bit of disturbance.

Japan received a confidential request from USNA through diplomatic routes.

A request for cooperation in the search for Major Angie Sirius, who cut communications.

The Japanese government protested against USNA's lack of prior notice regarding the entrance of a high rank officer in the country. But if offered the rebuttal that the visit to Japan was not for military purposes, even if it is nothing but a transparent lie, they could no longer object.

The Japanese government promised USNA to search and protect Angie Sirius.

"While America's demands are shameless, at the same time they seem quite natural. But why is the 101st Brigade being requested to deal with this?"

"Lieutenant Colonel Kazama, I too am tired of this. Can you stop pretending you don't understand?"

"I apologize."

Accepting Saeki's rebuke, Kazama admirably tried to smooth things over.

However, just by moving his facial muscles, a sense of irony shined through his eyes.

As she said herself, mental fatigue spread on her face – in other words, with a tired expression, Saeki glared at Kazama.

But there were no further apologies from Kazama.

Saeki was the one who was running out of patience.

"I know that Major Sirius is being protected by the Yotsuba Family."

"Did you hear Yotsuba's report?"

"That was a warning rather than a report."

"Angie Sirius is under our protection. Keep the National Defense Forces' hands out...so they said."

"It seems that's the case."

Saeki nodded with a bitter expression.

“Is Special Officer Ooguro involved, is that what Your Excellency is thinking?”

“Yes, Lieutenant Colonel. Same as you.”

Both Saeki and Kazama had a rough idea about what happened in the winter of last year regarding the interaction between Tatsuya, as ‘Special Officer Ooguro’, and Lina, as ‘Angie Sirius’.

USNA’s state-recognized Strategic-Class Magician ‘Angie Sirius’. The only reason why the Yotsuba Family would protect her is due to her relationship with Tatsuya. That was Kazama’s and Saeki’s reasoning. – Though their reasoning was incorrect, but it may be inevitable that they think so, since they do not know about the secret agreement between the Yotsuba Family and Colonel Balance.

“Are you going to request Special Officer Ooguro...No, Tatsuya to hand over Major Sirius?”

“Eventually she will be delivered to the USNA.”

Saeki’s answer was, formally, not an answer to Kazama’s question. However, Saeki’s intentions were fully transmitted.

Eventually. In other words, she won’t be delivered immediately.

They are planning to use Lina as a bargaining chip.

‘Sirius’ is a state-recognized Strategic-Class Magician. One of USNA’s trump cards.

It’s impossible that the US armed forces have Sirius as their only trump card, but a trump card that crosses over to the enemy’s side becomes a threat.

If their intent is to retrieve her – or dispose of her – there is the potential to draw out some small concessions.

“...Why did Sirius end up deserting?”

Strategic-Class Magicians are individuals who may become a threat to the country. It’s expected that they were being carefully controlled at least to the degree that they don’t possess spirit of rebellion.

Kazama’s question was quite natural.

“Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain detailed information.”

National Defense Forces have also released spies in America. They may be allies, but they are still targets of intelligence assessments. People who think that alliances are eternal/absolute are not qualified to be involved in military or political affairs.

But the counterintelligence side has that same awareness. As Japan is cautious of American spies, it is possible that America is even more cautious of Japan’s spy activity. Information regarding the state-recognized Strategic-Class Magician’s desertion must not be easy to get hold of.

“Isn’t it dangerous to interfere without knowing the circumstances?”

“That is why it’s best to ask the person herself.”

It’s best to secure Sirius’ personage and ask her questions directly. Saeki seems to think so.

Kazama felt his superior’s idea was vague and dangerous, but he could not explain his foundations.

“Then I will ask Tatsuya if I can meet with Sirius.”

“Why do you need to ask?”

Kazama was unable to understand what Saeki had just said.

Saeki gave an order without caring about Kazama’s confusion.

“Lieutenant Colonel Kazama. Give Special Officer Ooguro the order to hand over Major Angie Sirius.”

“How should we deal with Tatsuya’s refusal?”

“Tough measures are undesirable. Please just tell them that there is no room for misunderstanding, it is the will of the National Defense Forces that Sirius cannot be kept in the country.”

That is to say that even if governments or foreign forces try to take Sirius by force, the 101st Brigade will not lend Tatsuya help.

“Understood.”

Kazama didn’t believe Tatsuya expected to rely on them from the start.

He also understood the theory that foreign officers whose government did not admit defection cannot expect to be sheltered as genuine soldiers.

Kazama just didn’t think this was the correct answer.



Considerably late into the afternoon, Tatsuya and Miyuki arrived at Tokyo from Miyaki Island, stopped at their home for just a short while, and right away visited Minami’s hospital room.

On the way, passing by many people who seemed to be magicians, dispatched by the Juumonji Family on the outside of the hospital and the Yotsuba Family on the inside, Tatsuya pretended to not know any of them. It should be more effective to worry about guarding Minami first, but it seems they are giving priority to Minoru’s capture so as not to attract attention. Tatsuya did not intend to ruin the plan by being stingy.

“I want you to keep close watch on the front of the hospital room.”

Miyuki, though, felt dissatisfied to the point where she dropped such complaints.

Incidentally, when Tatsuya knocked on the room’s door, Miyuki’s dissatisfaction was completely withdrawn.

“Minami, do you mind if I enter?”

“Yes, feel free.” “Do not come in.” “Is Miyuki-senpai there too!?”

Tatsuya and Miyuki exchanged glances.

The vocal trio delivered their replies, and they all were familiar voices.

Tatsuya opened the door in accordance with Minami’s consent.

Looking back from the side of the bed, identical faces had contrasting expressions.

Emphasizing her displeasure with a frown, Saegusa Kasumi.

Expressing her delight with a radiant smile, Saegusa Izumi.

The Saegusa twin sisters, their juniors at First High.

“Did Izumi-chan and Kasumi-chan come to pay Minami a visit?”

“Yes. Our classmate is hospitalized but even so I thought it was unpleasant to have nobody but guards.”

It was decided at the Master Clans Conference that Saegusa’s role was to intercept and capture Kudou Minoru. Neither Kasumi nor Izumi were appointed as Minami’s guards.

“I see, thank you.”

But Miyuki responded to Izumi with a smile.

It is not necessary to point it out in front of Minami. In addition to the roles assigned to the Saegusa Family, these two are visiting Minami as classmates. Thinking this, feelings of gratitude naturally gushed out from inside Miyuki’s ‘thank you’.

“Ah! I am unworthy of such honorable words...”

Izumi anxiously pressed her chest down and let her voice be overcome with emotion. It looked like pain rather than happiness. It was a dramatic act, but she was dead serious.

Tatsuya and Miyuki did not make fun of Izumi’s exaggerated gestures. They just looked at her charmingly. On the bed, Minami subtly turned her eyes away. It was only her older twin sister Kasumi who coldly stared at Izumi.

Tatsuya approached Minami, and Kasumi moved away by the same distance.

Miyuki followed Tatsuya, and Izumi gave her spot to Miyuki.

As a result, Tatsuya's group and Kasumi's group changed places.

"How are you, Minami?"

Stopping at the edge of the bed, Tatsuya asked. A stool was placed at the side of the bed, but there was only one so neither him nor Miyuki sat down.

"I'm recovering little by little."

She did not say it clearly because she couldn't be frank to Kasumi and Izumi about her medical condition.

Minami's body is recovering its strength, as is obvious because she already doesn't need the assistance of the support exoskeleton – a mounted power assistance tool for medical use. But her sensory disorder can't be understood by just looking from the outside.

"That's good..."

Upon hearing about the condition improvement from Minami's mouth, Miyuki put her right hand on her chest and breathed in relief.

"Really."

Tatsuya also loosened his mouth a little.

"It may not be necessary for me to tell you again, but don't try to cure it sooner."

"Yes."

He couldn't know her true feelings, but at least on the surface Minami didn't look impatient.

"What does the doctor say?"

"Seems like I'll be able to leave the hospital in about two weeks."

To Miyuki's question, Minami replied with a calm tone.

"Does that also include rehabilitation?"

"I haven't heard that far."

After 2 weeks, so she will be hospitalized for about a month total. Hearing Miyuki's questions and Minami's answers, Tatsuya thought about if he should take Pixie to help with Minami's rehabilitation.

"Is that so? Ah, but if you need rehab at home, you don't have to worry?"

There is no need to be impatient, he quickly added a few words to temporize Miyuki.

"We will help you as much as we can."

"I'm sorry!"

Minami was now flustered.

Maybe this wasn't the time for this, but just by hearing that Minami can be talked to like usual, Tatsuya felt her recovery here.

"I don't want to decline, but..."

"But..."

Miyuki seemed a bit sad, increasing Minami's embarrassment.

Then, an unexpected request came from Izumi.

"Miyuki-senpai. I would like to help with the rehabilitation after she is discharged, if you don't mind."

"Izumi-chan?"

"Yes. But only if I won't be a bother."

Doubting Izumi's true intentions would be unjust. Tatsuya kept the straight man act to himself.

Izumi is sympathizing with Minami as her classmate, she shouldn't be saying such things because of her desire to enter Miyuki's home.

"Izumi...by no means are you thinking of using Sakurai-san as an excuse to get in the President's house...right?"

However, Kasumi's unrestrained question was a load off his mind.

"T-That is unthinkable! I did not think about such insolent things!"

Regrettably, agitation emerged in Izumi's face and voice.

Kasumi gazed at Izumi with her eyes half closed.

Izumi did not look away from Kasumi's face, but her eyes moved so that they didn't meet the glance.

"...President. When Izumi intrudes in your house, I too will accompany her."

To Kasumi's remarks, Miyuki expressed a vague smile and answered only with 'thank you, both of you'.

When the two of them left the hospital room, it looked like Izumi was being forcibly taken away by Kasumi.

The three people in Tatsuya's group sent the twin sisters off, who expressed very similar smiles on their faces.

It's shocking, but they didn't hate it. Those smiling faces.

Among her classmates, they were neat and gentle beautiful girls. However, as much of a lovable character as she may be, Tatsuya's group recognized that Izumi was a little out of sync.

Tatsuya brought a stool from the corner of the room and sat down.

Miyuki sat on the stool that was already placed on the side of the bed.

“But still, I’m thankful that they came to visit like that...”

Miyuki muttered, speaking to herself.

Tatsuya also completely agreed with that point.

For the Saegusa Family, Minami is no more than a decoy for the sake of capturing Minoru.

This is not something to be criticized. The Saegusa Family, and the Juumonji Family, were handling it as a result of a decision made during the Master Clans Conference. Naturally, the Saegusa have nothing to do with this matter.

Saegusa Kouichi thrust his own head by his own free will, due to his own motives. Regardless, for the Saegusa Family, Minami is a simple decoy. That was correct perception of their point of view.

“Those two, they may not be fit for this.”

Tatsuya did not clearly say what he meant by ‘this’. But not only Miyuki but also Minami were able to understand the words he omitted.

Neither Kasumi nor Izumi were suited for the Ten Master Clans. He is unsuited to speak of their older sister Mayumi who also may not be cut out for it, but she still prioritizes her position and duties. But Kasumi and Izumi give priority to honesty rather than their position and empathy rather than duty.

In a single word, it can be called ‘goodness’.

“I don’t think it’s bad. I’m a bit jealous.”

These words expressed by Miyuki were proof that she and Tatsuya were thinking the same thing.

“By the way, Minami.”

Tatsuya suddenly changed the topic.

“Yes, what is it?”

Minami was not flustered when she was suddenly called by her name.

“Has anything strange happened since then?”

“Do you mean if Minoru-sama got in touch?”

“Not just Minoru.”

“I haven’t seen any suspicious visitors.”

After Minami’s brief reply, she added ‘I don’t see anything while asleep’.

"It isn't likely that Minoru gave up. Maybe he's preparing something? For instance, things such as gathering subordinates..."

Looking at Tatsuya's face, Miyuki felt a little anxious.

"That is a possibility."

It's been a week since the last attack. It is unthinkable that Minoru did nothing in the meantime.

Though there is no clear confirmation, Minoru has inherited Zhou Gongjin's knowledge. This isn't limited to magical knowledge.

Neither the Kudou Family nor any of the 'Nine' Families will betray the Master Clans Conference, so it is difficult to gather allies from there. However, it may be possible to collect minions from inside the spy network that Zhou Gongjin established.

"I may have to learn the parasite sealing technique from Oba-ue."

Miyuki and Minami simultaneously trembled.

Hearing about the parasite sealing technique, Minami thought it would be used on Minoru.

But Miyuki was concerned about something else.

"Onii-sama...do you think Minoru-kun will increase the parasites? Like the vampire from last year's winter?"

"I don't think Minoru will attack people at random. But I think the number of people whose desire for power doesn't end even if they cease to be human is not little. To that extend, it might not be difficult to locate them."

Miyuki did not deny Tatsuya's guess. The reason why neither Miyuki nor Minami voiced any doubts wasn't because they were Tatsuya's words, but because the girls also had knowledge of such human weaknesses.

"Onii-sama, umm, I was just thinking...shouldn't we warn Erika and the guys too?"

"...You're right. I was thoughtless."

Tatsuya bowed his head with a vacant expression.

The three of them, Erika, Leo, and Mikihiko, all met Minoru in last year's fall.

Minoru can hide the parasites' presence. Mikihiko might be able to recognize Minoru's true colors, but there is a high possibility for Erika and Leo to be deceived.

To not assume the case where those three are used, it could certainly be said to be thoughtless.

"No, I also didn't notice until just now...Should I tell them?"

"No, I'll tell them. Tomorrow morning I have plans to test the Air Car, so wait in 'Einebrise' after school."

“...Are you sure?”

Miyuki asked back to push her concern over whether there was a problem if the Master heard their conversation.

“There is no problem. The risk of being eavesdropped is lower than talking inside the school, and maybe we’ll be able to loan Master’s power.”

“Master’s...?”

Einebrise’s Master’s father was a capable intelligence salesman, and Tatsuya doesn’t clearly know if the Master himself also meddles in intelligence trade.

But Tatsuya was convinced that Master was honest. The scent Tatsuya picked up from Master was not the scent of the underworld, but Miyuki didn’t know this.

“No, I understand.”

Miyuki did not ask Tatsuya about Master’s identity. If it is something you must know, Tatsuya will tell you. Tatsuya did not explain, therefore it is unnecessary to know right now, such were her thoughts.

“Erika and the guys will wait for you are Einebrise...umm, Onii-sama? Is it okay if I bring Honoka, Shizuku and Mizuki too?”

“I don’t want to increase the number of people involved, but...not notifying them is also risky. I understand. Please tell everyone.”

“Of course!”

Tatsuya and Miyuki nodded together. Then, the two of them turned their faces towards Minami.

“...What is it?”

Tatsuya and Miyuki kept their mouths closed and turned their eyes towards themselves and Minami, feeling anxious rather than irritated, asked the question.

“It may not be obvious at this point in time but...”

It was Miyuki who replied to Minami’s question.

“Minami-chan, what do you think of Minoru-kun?”

“What...?”

Minami’s face was stained with embarrassment.

Her thoughts were temporarily paralyzed after the sudden question.

“Minoru-kun seems to kind of like Minami-chan, but...”

“Like...”

Her ability to think isn't working normally, so Minami was unable to do anything but repeat things that were already said.

"Minami-chan, do you like Minoru-kun?"

"Me, like!?"

Minami's voice sounded out of tune. Seems like the agitation reached such extremes that it called her consciousness back.

"Me like Minoru-sama, I've never thought about that!"

"That is, you just haven't thought about it?"

Using her words as they were, Tatsuya rectified Minami's misconception.

"Do you like or do you dislike, or do you have no interest, or is it simply that there is nothing to be aware of?"

"By no means are we asking just out of curiosity."

"....."

Minami was unable to understand what Tatsuya and Miyuki wanted her to say.

She didn't even understand if asking what they wanted her to say was fine.

"You don't dislike him, but if you like Minoru-kun..."

"Minami, if you don't make up your mind, you won't be prepared."

"Prepared...prepared to fight Minoru-sama?"

Minami herself was not conscious, but at that time she looked miserable.

"The fight is ours."

In Tatsuya's denial too, his tone was quite strong.

"I would like to end this without killing Minoru if possible. But I am not the only one engaging Minoru."

Minami nodded slightly in silence.

Minami was not told that, not counting the Yotsuba Family, the Juumonji and the Saegusa families are on the watch for Minoru. However, Minami presumed that at least the Saegusa Family was participating in the strategy for the capture of Minoru.

She had heard Izumi use the word 'guard', and she was not raised in an environment where it can be thought that the twin's visit was simply as classmates.

"Besides, Minoru is tough. Sweet ideas like capturing without killing may not be applicable."

"I think it can't be helped."

"You can understand in your head. I don't doubt it. But, what about your heart?"

"....."

Minami could not reply to Tatsuya's question.

"This is what I meant by prepared. Minami, Minoru abandoned his humanity for the sake of helping you. But this is something he did on his own accord. He didn't have your wishes in mind."

"....."

"However, it won't be easy to convince him. You know Minoru's feelings."

"...Yes."

Minami hid her face and look downward, admitting Tatsuya's words.

"Minami-chan, it's normal for people to hesitate. There is no need to feel guilty."

Miyuki grasped Minami's hands.

"...Yes."

Minami raised her head, and turned towards Miyuki with a weak smile.

"But, if Minami-chan has no special feelings for Minoru-kun, I want you to be prepared."

"Prepared to not intrude even if he is to be killed in front of you."

Tatsuya took over the crucial word.

Tatsuya did not let Miyuki say the word 'kill'.

"In case I...say that I adore Minoru-sama..."

"We will consider other ways to end this without killing Minoru."

Tatsuya cut her words, showing little hesitation.

"In that case, there is an increased probability of victims."

Minami's complexion changed.

"I apologize! I said something silly!"

"Minami-chan, calm down."

As Minami staggered her waist over the bed, Miyuki supported her from her side.

Perhaps she should have sat on the bed to apologize. It seems she had not recovered enough to endure sudden movements.

"I don't think your comment was silly. I also don't immediately understand feelings I was not aware of before."

"No!"

From between Miyuki's arms, Minami looked up at Tatsuya with a strong will in her eyes.

"I do not have special feelings for Minoru-sama."

It was obvious Minami did not think deeply, so she was saying it temporarily.

However, if it were to be pointed out right now, Minami would not admit it.

"Understood."

Therefore, at Minami's response, Tatsuya nodded.

Chapter 3

Monday, the 24th of June.

As scheduled the day before, Tatsuya was visiting Miyaki Island today too.

The main objective was to test the Air Car, but there was nothing worth mentioning about the test itself. That's because it showed its expected performance in all categories. – Also, in this case, the 'Air' in Air Car does not refer to 'atmosphere', the 'Air' refers to 'sky', so it is not naming fraud even if it doesn't rise with compressed air. The rules are similar to 'airplane' (originally, the meaning of airplane was flying board that moves horizontally in the sky).⁷

"I didn't think that diving would be possible."

"Engineers say that airtightness is at a level where there is no problem even if you go into outer space. From a structure standpoint, flight via interference on the effect of the Earth's gravity on the body of the car will cause the flight system to become unable to operate successfully at an altitude of 6000km."

"I don't plan on flying to space with the Air Car."

When Hyougo exposed the excessive specification, Tatsuya could not do without a wry smile.

"The two-door style was also for the sake of increasing airtightness by reducing the number of openings, right?"

The Air Car's doors are not opened laterally, they are arranged to slide backwards. Also, the windowpanes are thick and fixed. These too were in the design to increase airtightness.

"It is exactly as you say. Naturally, since the Air Car was conceptualized to be used on land, low altitude and sea, we would like you to take this into account on actual use."

"As long as there is no need to, I don't intend to go up to the stratosphere or dive under the sea with the Air Car."

"I apologize. While I can say I'm a bit concerned, it is good that you can use the water travel mode when travelling between Honshu and this island"

"It is set to automatically keep the altitude of dozens of centimeters, right?"

"Yes. In that case, Tatsuya-sama possesses a license for small ships for open sea navigation, so we are sure that authorities won't find any problem."

When Tatsuya became 18 years old, along with a license for four-wheeled self-driving cars, he also obtained a license for small sized ships with no water surface restrictions. Needless to say, the license was not intended for flying ships like the Air Car, but in water travel mode the state

⁷ Air Car - エアカー; Air - 空; Atmosphere - 空気; Sky - 空中; Compressed air - 圧搾空気
It's not naming fraud because it uses different characters that can also mean "air".

at navigation time is akin to a hovercraft. It would be possible to assert that Tatsuya can navigate with his license.

“I see.”

If it comes to that, just fly away. Tatsuya, who for the most part was limited in law-abiding spirit, must have considered such things.

“Hey.”

Tatsuya’s and Hyougo’s discussion came to an end when a voice addressed them from the side.

“Lina, what is it?”

The owner of the voice was Lina who came to inspect the Air Car test.

“Can I really be sent back?”

“I don’t really understand what you mean...”

“I mean, can I be sent back to the States after seeing such military secrets?”

“Lina, what are you talking about?”

Tatsuya curiously looked back at Lina, who was frowning.

“This is Yotsuba Family’s private organization, the Air Car is not a ‘military secret’.”

“Don’t twist my words! Even if it’s not a country’s military, it doesn’t change that it is a military organization!”

“That is a misunderstanding. We are not a military organization. We certainly earn remuneration for violent acts, but that is just a side job. If I dare to classify it, the Yotsuba Family is a research organization.”

“A side job that is feared throughout the whole world, what a joke...”

“I will be bothered if I am to blame for your arbitrary fear.”

“An opponent who can destroy one base’s fleet and a naval port with a single blow each, there is no reason to not be afraid!”

“That is my personal power. Not the power of the Yotsuba Family.”

Lina unintentionally opened her eyes wide and stared at Tatsuya.

Lina could not believe in Tatsuya’s nerve to assert it was ‘his personal power’ after tens of thousands were killed in action. That is the same as recognizing that he by himself stole the lives of tens of thousands of people.

Responsibility can be shared. The ‘Scorched Hallowe’en’ was an incident that happened during a military conflict. The decision to use Strategic-Class Magic lies within the army’s chain of

command, so it could be said that the responsibility belongs to the superior officer who made the order.

Even if the fact its use was ordered doesn't change, if it is recognized as power that belongs to one individual, the outcome becomes attributed to that single individual.

Even if there is no responsibility, the outcome remains.

The outcome that tens of thousands of people were killed.

Or, maybe Tatsuya isn't understanding this...?

(No, such a thing is impossible.)

Tatsuya is not the type to avert his eyes from reality. The relationship between Lina and Tatsuya is short, but she understood this much. Tatsuya is conscious that he accepts the fact that he is a mass murderer...

"...If they are not military secrets, then I won't be restrained from leaving the country? If that's the case then good."

Lina discontinued the topic by herself. She too was a Strategic-Class Magician. If she dug deeper into this, she could become discomfited with herself, so she unconsciously stepped on the brakes.

"Apart from that, Tatsuya, I have a request."

"Depending on the content. Start with telling what it is."

The two of them are talking inside the hangar. The Air Car is registered in the system as a four-wheeled self-driving car – the license plate has already been acquired – so maybe it should be called 'garage', but the size and the well-maintained machinery makes it better to call it 'hangar' than 'garage'.

There is a table outside in a corner and four chairs were placed to match it. Tatsuya started to walk towards that table and Lina came after him.

Hyougo pulled a chair and looked at Lina.

Tatsuya sat down on the opposite side. Lina was unable to decline and sat on the chair Hyougo pulled.

Hyougo brought iced tea to Tatsuya and Lina.

Tatsuya informed Hyougo of his gratitude with his eyes and once again turned his face towards Lina.

"So, what do you want?"

Not revealing in her behavior that she was flinching a little from her innermost thoughts, she went right to the point.

"I'm not a prisoner, right?"

"Of course."

"In that case, I want you to return the CAD I left you with when you helped me."

"Why?"

Lina anticipated this question but, when confronted by reality, she needed some energy to return an answer.

"I can't calm down when I am unarmed."

Depending on the mood of the listener, receiving these disturbing words can be a declaration of hostility. In the current situation where she is protected by just one person, these were not words one ought to dare speak.

But Lina could not think of a harmless reason, as she thought she would feel guilty despite not deceiving her true feelings.

Besides, Tatsuya doesn't have the capacity to be evil, he won't have egotistical feelings to that degree, Lina believed so in her heart. – Though if it was pointed out, her face would certainly turn red in denial.

"It shouldn't be an inconvenience."

"It's a matter of feeling!"

Lina's strong attitude came from Tatsuya's laugh. In short, although she does not intend to, Lina behaved like a spoiled child to Tatsuya. It may be said that she had not noticed.

"Feeling, huh. I can understand."

"Then!"

"But I can't respond to that request."

"But why!?"

"We cannot let a USNA army CAD be used in Japanese territory. There is the possibility that some unknown gimmick was included that even you don't know."

"Oof..."

Lina returned a reaction similar to a comedian. But she was very serious with this.

"But if it is an alternate CAD, it's prepared."

Lina got into grips with Tatsuya's brief comment.

"Huh? Prepared? Did you reserve it in advance?"

"I vow to flawlessly protect this facility, but the opponent is USNA. When the time comes, will you need means of self-defense?"

“Tatsuya...you’re a bad person.”

Lina turned towards Tatsuya, holding her eyes half-closed. The so called ‘scornful look’.

“I wasn’t keeping it a secret. You were just impatient, Lina.”

Tatsuya calmly avoided Lina’s ‘scorn’.

“It’s better than being easy-going and having no sense of tension.”

Lina’s rebuttal was also reasonable. If her face wasn’t red, it might have been more persuasive.

“The CAD is in the adjustment facility. Let’s finish making adjustments while we’re at it.”

“...Tatsuya, you make adjustments?”

“There is no need to worry, I’m used to it.”

“Ah...You were called one half of ‘Taurus Silver’, weren’t you, Tatsuya?”

“That’s how it is.”

Tatsuya stood up.

Lina drank half of the iced tea at once and ran after Tatsuya who had already left the table.



Tatsuya and Lina moved from the Air Car hangar to a research facility built next to the CAD factory that included the Induction Stone refining line. Unfortunately, the transport method was not an Air Car, it was an off-road car with a hydrogen engine.

“I think I’ll have Lina use this.”

Before entering the adjustment room, Lina was taken along to a small conference room. Then, Tatsuya showed her thick golden choker and a wide silver bracelet.

“No buttons...Is this perchance FTL’s completely thought-operated CAD?”

“You understood quickly.”

Tatsuya praised Lina with a voice that wasn’t wholly flattering.

“Because FTL’s completely thought-operated CADs were also a topic of discussion in the States...”

CADs that operate with just thoughts without dealing with hand switches were first commercialized by Germany’s Rosen Magicraft, followed by Japan’s Four Leaves Technology immediately after. A third company has yet to enter the stage. Currently only Rosen and FLT are releasing completely thought-operated CADs, and right now the superior market value is held by the latecomers FLT.

“There were Stars members who were testing these, but I haven’t used them. How in the world do they work?”

Lina’s confession was surprising to Tatsuya. He expected her to be a scientist or engineer who developed the tactical magic weapon ‘Brionac’. Tatsuya did not know the name of the scientist (engineer?), but that person’s technical skill was unquestionable just by looking at ‘Brionac’.

With such technical skill it should be possible to implement a completely thought-operated CAD. It is not ‘not impossible’. It can be declared that it is certainly possible and it wouldn’t take much time in a situation where finished products are on the market.

However, Tatsuya did not voice his doubts.

“FLT’s completely thought-operated CADs use technology developed from contactless switches that were already on the market.”

“You mean manipulation of Psion waves?”

“Exactly. This specialized CAD shaped like a choker outputs only one kind of Activation Sequence when Psions are injected. This is an Activation Sequence for a Non-Systematic Type Magic that irradiates a thin refined Psion wave at a pre-defined location.”

“It works just by injecting Psions?”

“Since the output is restricted to one type of Activation Sequence, that is plenty for the switch. The operating device in the form of a choker should be called a semi-automatic model rather than a thought-operated model.”

“So it’s a structure similar to an armed device.”

When Lina shot her observation, Tatsuya continued speaking, nodding with a ‘well, yeah’.

“The bracelet-type is configured to enter standby mode along with the operation device.”

“So, exactly how do I use it?”

“The bracelet’s internal switch is designated as the target for the choker’s Activation Sequence. To output the desired Activation Sequence from the bracelet, you just include the magic’s number as a variable to be used for the Non-Systematic Magic’s Activation Sequence.”

“To sum it up, just think ‘use the magic’s number’ and it invokes the Activation Sequence?”

“Roughly speaking, that is it.”

“Wait, isn’t that amazing? The time to operate a CAD with your hand is like heavy shackles for a melee combat magician.”

CADs are tools that increase magic invocation speed. By establishing a magic scheme using CADs, magicians obtained the ability to match crowds of armed soldiers from the frontlines.

But now, the time spent on operating the CAD is closing up the gap that divides victory and defeat in a competition scenario. Specialized CAD models are covering its weaknesses, but they restrict the kind of magic that can be used.

FLT's completely thought-operated CAD was a tool to solve all of these problems. Unlike Rosen products that include thought-operated mechanisms in specialized CAD models, FLT's products are split into an operation device and a device that essentially takes on the role of the original CAD. Although it has the drawback of needing to carry two devices, it also can be used by generalized models, and not just specialized models, so it fulfills the purpose of 'hand-free operation' and 'don't narrow the range of tactics'.

"I'm glad you like it. Operating devices can be paired up with up to four CADs, but for now one generalized model will be fine."

"That is plenty."

Perhaps the idea that it was possible to manipulate one specialized model and one generalized model on both sides with just one operation device was passed to Lina's mind, but she didn't say anything.

It is too convenient to be able to use both generalized and specialized models just by thinking.

As Tatsuya nodded, Lina could not predict what kind of face she would make in that situation.

Tatsuya headed towards the adjustment room while holding the CAD that was split into two parts.

Lina was in the preparation room next to the adjustment room. In this facility there is also general adjustment equipment that takes user data with a headset and a panel for both hands. But for the new blank slate CAD Tatsuya thought that he should do precise measurements with the bed-type equipment. Lina is now preparing for that, that is, she is changing her clothes.

"Tatsuya, umm...thanks for waiting."

Lina came into the adjustment room, with half hidden thighs, wearing a thin long white shirt without any buttons. Is it easy to understand if we say it is a long t-shirt about 15 centimeters above the knee?

She undid her hair, removing all accessories, and put it down her back. She only put on sandals similar to those used in hospitals. Lina held her chest with both arms to hide it. Bashful, embarrassed behavior.

"...Is this fine?"

"What do you mean, fine?"

"...My underwear, it's not fine, is it?"

The skin around Lina's eyes became red and she faced the other side. She was feeling embarrassed of her own question.

Of course, even with such innocent appearance, Tatsuya's attitude does not change.

"Lina, have you not used this type of measurement device?"

"Precise measurements no less than once a month were mandatory."

This means that in the Stars base, a similar machine exists. No less than once a month, for Tatsuya this was too little. However, unlike Miyuki who still has plenty of time until her magic growth period ends, there should be few minors among the Stars' personnel. Not counting the people on their twenties, for the people on their thirties or forties it becomes much less necessary to have such short intervals between updated measurement results. Tatsuya changed his mind.

"Would you prefer if I prepared a bathing suit?"

"Not especially, it's not that a bikini would be better..."

"I don't mind either way."

Lina fidgeted while undecided. If you think about it, generally, you should feel less embarrassed when wearing a long t-shirt than a bathing suit with many separate types of exposure.

You don't need to hesitate this much...Thinking this, Tatsuya struggled to arrive at a conjecture.

Perhaps Lina is not wearing anything under her shirt...?

Tatsuya did not tell her 'take off your underwear' when he told her to change clothes. Nobody in this facility would say such a thing.

But if Lina knows that it is normal to be in her underwear when using bed type measurement machines...Given the long t-shirt type inspection outfit, it seems likely that she was convinced herself that "I cannot wear anything under this".

"...Please do it as it is."

But right now it is not possible to tell Lina, who has answered with a face filled with embarrassment, that 'it's fine for you to wear underwear'. Informing her of this would be awkward for both of them. Lina would become too embarrassed. Maybe it's possible that the adjustment would no longer occur.

"Well then, lie down there."

Tatsuya was more conscious than normal of his businesslike tone.



While working, his suspicion that 'she's not wearing underwear' deepened further. Over the thin cloth, Tatsuya's eyes caught bumps that could become proof of that, but he avoided staring at those parts.

Therefore, Lina didn't realize that 'he realized'. Without causing meaningless trouble, the adjustment ended peacefully.

In Lina's neck, a choker type device was promptly worn. No, maybe it should be expressed as 'placed', because its form is that of a circular torus like a retainer. The golden glitter is the same as her hair, it suits Lina spectacularly. At first glance, it looks like an extravagant collar, but obviously you can't remove it by yourself. Lina also noticed 'it looks like a collar', but didn't seem to care.

"I'll come tomorrow too, so tell me if there is any inconvenience."

"Understood."

Lina raised her right hand and responded to Tatsuya. The silver bracelet is on her other wrist.

"Tatsuya-sama, the tracer should not turn off."

"I understand."

Nodding with a bitter smile at a cautious Hyougo, Tatsuya departed in an Air Car.

The car body, floating with the tires several dozens of centimeters from the ground, set out towards the sea as it was, maintaining the relative altitude.



When Tatsuya passed through the doors of 'Einebrise', the coffee shop located on the street on the way to First High School, Miyuki's and their friends were all gathered.

"Ah, Tatsuya-kun, welcome."

"Tatsuya-san, we were waiting for you."

Erika and Honoka welcomed Tatsuya almost at the same time.

Tatsuya raised his hand lightly in response, and sat between Miyuki and Honoka.

There were no other customers in the shop. Before Tatsuya could ask, Miyuki explained "I made a reservation today."

"Tatsuya-san, this is on the house."

Master put a small glass pot on the counter. Inside it was reliably made cold-brew coffee. Honoka and Shizuku quickly stood up, Honoka carried the pot and Shizuku carried the tray with cups to the table.

While Tatsuya was thanking both of them, Master said 'call me if you need anything' and returned to the back of the store.

From the time Tatsuya came in, the inside of the shop had interception prevention magic. It was Mikihiko's Sound Barrier.

They are not exaggerating.

Because Tatsuya himself specifically brought them here, all of them presumed that the subject is of extreme importance.

"Using the Master is troubling, so let's go into the main topic at once."

Before Honoka could pour coffee into the cup, Tatsuya started the discussion.

Their eyes and ears were already turned towards Tatsuya.

"Kudou Minoru became a parasite."

Tatsuya suddenly entered the main point.

"Eh?" "No way." "Are you serious!?"

Acquainted with Minoru, Mikihiko, Erika and Leo raised their voices one after the other.

"...By 'Kudou Minoru', you mean Kudou Minoru-kun who was Second High's representative at the thesis competition?"

"Exactly."

Tatsuya nodded without hesitation at Mizuki's reserved question.

"How did this happen?"

Erika pointed her sharp eyes towards Tatsuya.

There was no doubt Tatsuya did something on his own. Trying to stop her agitation, she just looked into his eyes unintentionally.

"How, huh. Even I don't know everything. What I do know is that Minoru threw away his humanity out of his own volition, and that Minoru became a parasite to achieve some goal."

"Can you tell us what you 'do know'?"

Leo was quickly regaining his composure. But the strength in his eyes was not inferior to Erika.

I will not tolerate secrets. – His eyes were saying that.

Even if Leo glares at him, Tatsuya's manner of speech did not change. From the beginning, he was planning on explaining the background of Minoru's parasitization, within the range of his knowledge.

"Minoru's goal is related to the reason Minami was hospitalized."

“...Was it not an ordinary injury?”

“The reason Minami was hospitalized was because she received massive damage to her Magic Calculation Area. There is no hope for complete recovery.”

To the facts Tatsuya spoke honestly, not just Leo, but everyone excluding Miyuki became speechless.

“There is no immediate concern about her life. But if high power magic is triggered, it’s possible that the symptoms may decisively deteriorate.”

“...How did such a thing!?”

Leo was losing words to roar. Minami was a member of the mountaineering club for which Leo served as the head. Among them, next to Tatsuya and Miyuki, there is a sense of family.

“I don’t plan to explain that. Now, there is something else I want to talk about.”

“...Fine. In that case, tell us.”

Leo clenched his teeth, visibly not consenting to Tatsuya’s words. But in this scene too he displayed self-restraint.

“Minoru became a parasite for the sake of testing the process of curing Minami.”

“Wait a minute, Tatsuya.”

Mikihiko’s next words did not come out easily.

“...You mean that Minoru-kun, for the sake of curing Minami, let himself be possessed by parasites? Using himself as a lab rat?”

“The person himself said so.”

“Stupid...That is insane...”

Mikihiko fell into a daze.

“Minoru is serious.”

Tatsuya mercilessly stated the facts.

“So the point is, Minoru is going to kidnap Minami?”

It was Erika who anticipated what Tatsuya was going to say.

“Minoru came to kidnap Sakurai? And Tatsuya drove him back? Is that right?”

“Yes. I was able to drive him away once.”

Leo strikes Tatsuya with successive questions.

“Tatsuya, you...can you lose?”

“I won’t be hurt. Though he’s not an easy opponent.”

To Mikihiko's question, Tatsuya asserted 'I won't lose'.

"That is, Tatsuya-kun himself won't be hurt, but you may not be able to protect Minami?"

"Exactly."

Tatsuya nods to Erika's line,

"But there is something else I want you all to be careful of."

he continued further.

"Erika, Leo, Mikihiko. I think there is a possibility that Minoru plans to contact you guys in order to take Minami away."

"You mean make us collaborators?"

"Speaking of acquaintances of Minoru, excluding the Saegusa sisters, Kasumi and Izumi, it's just you guys."

"...Certainly, if I had not heard this just now, I may have lent Minoru my power."

The first one to recognize so was Leo.

"If he said it was to cure Minami."

Erika reluctantly agreed.

"Are you sure Minoru-kun became a parasite? It is upsetting, but it's hard to distinguish between humans and parasites."

But Mikihiko voiced his dissatisfaction. Seems that being unable to make the distinction between humans and evil spirits is inexcusable for the pride of an Ancient Magician.

"I didn't know Minoru was a parasite until he revealed so himself."

"...Is that so."

It was not possible for Mikihiko to say that he is far better than Tatsuya in this department.

"Mikihiko, you have superior intuition than me when it comes to parasites. But the Kudou Family has magic that can camouflage the Information Body. Minoru did not lose the 'Nine's magic when he converted to a parasite."

"No...It's different for Shibata-san and her eyes, but I don't have confidence to declare that my intuition is better than yours, Tatsuya. Besides, I understand the need to be vigilant towards Minoru-kun."

"It's fine if you understand that."

"Yeah. By the way..."

Mikihiko's expression was saying 'something suddenly came to mind'.

“What is it?”

Tatsuya did not ignore it.

“Where on earth did the parasite that possessed Minoru come from?”

“Certainly we haven’t been invaded by America again?”

“No, it’s a parasite I sealed last time. The Kudou Family had one of the two that were taken by someone.”

Tatsuya showed hesitation for the first time when he replied to Erika’s question.

“...To be honest, Lina has come to Japan.”

Ending his hesitation, Tatsuya chose to be frank about the facts.

“Lina!?”

“Onii-sama!?”

Honoka and Miyuki both raised their voice in surprise.

Honoka’s surprise was purely regarding Lina coming to Japan.

Miyuki’s surprise on the other hand, was about the fact that Tatsuya revealed to their friends, even though it should be a secret. Her surprise was big enough to say ‘Onii-sama’ in front of everyone.

Luckily, Erika and Shizuku and the rest received such a shock that nobody felt that Miyuki referring to Tatsuya as an older brother rather than a fiancé was out of place.

“About Lina’s return to Japan, it is related to a second parasite outbreak in the USNA.”

The destructive power of the bombs that were successively thrown was way too high for everyone.

“Parasites in America...”

Only Mikihiro was able to barely react. Erika, Mizuki, Leo, Honoka and Shizuku, the five of them lost their words.

“The parasite possessing Minoru is unrelated. But if the USNA’s new parasite outbreak invades Japan, a situation where they fight along Minoru is possible.”

“Tatsuya...Is there any way to disable the parasite? If my power is needed...”

“The magic to seal the parasite is going to be offered by His Excellency Kudou.”

“His Excellency Kudou, isn’t that the ‘Patriarch’?”

“Minoru’s grandfather...?”

Erika and Leo point out the relationship between Kudou Retsu and Minoru, questioning his credibility.

“It is unimaginable that he will hand over useless techniques since it’s his family. But, supposing it fails, Mikihiko. I may have to rely on you.”

Tatsuya denied his friend’s favor, as he thought there was a low chance that Minoru would be immune to the magic of the Kudou Family.

It is certain that the Kudou Family have magic to seal the parasites. Otherwise they couldn’t make weapons like the Parasidolls.

However, Minoru is also a magician from the Kudou Family. Obviously, he surely knows the magic used in the production of the Parasidolls. Now he personally should be devising a way to escape from the magic that would bind him. No, countermeasures may have already been completed. Tatsuya thought so.

“At that time, I want your power without fail.”

Mikihiko strongly agreed with Tatsuya.

Measures against evil spirits are the mission of Ancient Magicians. That belief was included in Mikihiko’s reply.



Tatsuya did not come to Einebrise with the dual use land and air vehicle ‘Air Car’. Once the car that had come from Miyaki Island was placed in the garage of their apartment, he used public transportation until the station closest to First High. Of course, he also returned on an individual train.

In the Cabinet, Tatsuya and Miyuki had few words. From these two’s standpoint, they could not go without being vigilant for wiretaps, but that was not the main reason. Just before they had an important discussion at Einebrise, the direction of which made that tension stronger.

It is rare for them to return home without having a conversation, but even still they felt relaxed as they went home. Miyuki talked about what happened at school, Tatsuya mentioned his impressions on the Air Car to Miyuki, who started to beg to go for a drive, and the usual tone returned.

However, the harmonic atmosphere was destroyed by the phone’s ringing.

Not because of the phone itself, the contents.

“—Summarizing, if Angie Sirius asks for protection, I am required to hand her over to the National Defense Forces?”

"I would like you to not be so belligerent."

In the Visiphone's screen, Kazama moved his hand to pacify Tatsuya.

"I'm just saying that a private organization hiding Major Sirius, a soldier of the USNA, is not approved by the National Defense Forces."

"That is natural. But why is the Lieutenant Colonel telling me something so obvious?"

"Tatsuya, I know you are protecting Major Sirius. We were informed by the Yotsuba Family."

So it's useless to play dumb...That's what Kazama's eyes were saying.

"Then please make the request at the Head House."

But Tatsuya wasn't perturbed. Without confirming nor denying Kazama's words, nor nodding to the request.

At Tatsuya's non-cooperative attitude, Kazama's eyes became cold.

"Special Officer Ooguro."

From the words Kazama issued, the friendly tone had disappeared.

"Even if you rise in status inside the Yotsuba Family, the contract between the Yotsuba Family and the National Defense Forces concerning you is still valid."

Tatsuya silently stared back at Kazama inside the display.

"Except for your role as Shiba Miyuki's guard, you must give priority to the orders of the National Defense Forces."

"Lieutenant Colonel Kazama. I would like to stop the distortion of the contract between the Yotsuba Family and the National Defense Forces."

"What?"

After Tatsuya's voice, his expression disappeared.

"Except when it comes to guarding Miyuki, the Yotsuba Family recognizes the National Defense Forces' right to give priority orders to Shiba Tatsuya. This is the contract between the Yotsuba Family and the National Defense Forces. There is no agreement that I have to obey the National Defense Forces."

"Special Officer. Are you rebelling against the army?"

"That is also incorrect. The purpose of the position of Special Officer given to me is for the National Defense Forces to use me. The oath I made five years ago to come under command of the army in Okinawa was only for that one time."

"...Tatsuya. The National Defense Forces won't approve of a civilian sheltering Major Angie Sirius. I want you to understand this."

“Lieutenant Colonel Kazama. I’m not sheltering Major Sirius or anything like it. If the Yotsuba Family says they are protecting Angie Sirius, please deliver the request to the Head House.”

Both Tatsuya and Kazama avoided a conclusive rupture at the end.

It was the result of mutually recognizing the other party’s utility value.



The building that became Tatsuya’s and Miyuki’s new home was built as Yotsuba Family’s Tokyo headquarters. Inside it there isn’t just residential spaces, there are also various facilities to fulfill its use as headquarters. The magic practice room in the basement was one of them.

There was nobody else in the practice room. There are reasons, like it being late in the evening, but Tatsuya also reserved the room, using the title of ‘Head’s son’ as an excuse – it doesn’t matter whether it is a fact or not.

Tatsuya told Miyuki and Minami that he planned to learn the parasite sealing magic from Maya. But despite intending to do so, he didn’t think he could handle the technique even if he was taught. Even if his position in the Yotsuba Family rose, the fact remains that he can’t handle magic other than ‘Decomposition’ and ‘Regrowth’.

But Tatsuya didn’t abandon his possibilities. He definitely can’t handle normal magic other than ‘Decomposition’ and ‘Regrowth’. His artificial Magic Calculation Area can only imitate low power magic.

But that is about the modern meaning of magic, talking about the magic that modifies phenomena. Traditionally, not just the magic that modifies phenomena but also the techniques that manipulate Psions themselves were considered magic. And if it’s techniques that manipulate Psions, even first-rate magicians can’t beat him. It could be said that he surpasses ‘first-rate’.

The parasite’s real body is a Pushion Information Body. Tatsuya does not have the ability to directly manipulate Pushions.

However, Psions coil around the location of the parasites’ real body, and they know that if they lose the Psion coating, their activity will cease. Moreover, it is said that Psions are particles that take the form of thoughts and intentions and at the same time connect the material body with the immaterial spirit, telling the body of the commands issued by the spirit, and conveying information gathered in the body to the spirit.

In other words, Psions have properties that interfere with the spirit, or Pushion Information Body.

Outer-Systemic Magic that interfere with the spirit are also invoked with Magic Sequences created with Psions. This also is proof that Psions have indirect interactions with Pushions.

Tatsuya was thinking whether he couldn't seal or restrict parasites, a Pushion Information Body, using Non-Systematic Magic.

Just hitting the Psions flow will repel the parasites, though it can do damage, they won't die. This is a known result from using Gram Demolition on parasites that slipped away from their assimilated body.

The Armor-Piercing Psion Bullet devised with the intent of dealing damage to a parasite assimilated by a human also could weaken the parasite, but it was not enough to make it cease activity.

(...I just can't get a mental image.)

Chains, ropes, nets. He's tried various items before, but he can't depict them in his vision well. Somehow, nothing feels different.

(If I could practice using the real thing for a while, would it be different...)

As far as Tatsuya knows, the Yotsuba Family and the Kudou Family have genuine parasites. The Yotsuba Family has an individual that was sealed in First High's practice forest, and the Kudou Family used theirs to nurture Parasidolls.

Although he can't borrow it, there is the possibility they will let him use it for practice if he goes there.

But that too must be after he has some idea on how to manipulate the Psions well. If he goes there without a sure method, he'll have visited for no reason. For the other people it will also be a waste of time.

(...I'll try asking Master.)

Though reluctant to be indebted to Yakumo, he was not in a situation to say so. Tatsuya decided to visit Kyuuchouji.



Early morning on Tuesday, June 25th.

Tatsuya visited Yakumo's temple for the first time in a while.

He didn't get in contact in advance. So Tatsuya had no intention to complain even if Yakumo was absent.

However, an unexpected welcome awaited Tatsuya.

The apartment in Chofu and Kyuuchouji temple weren't separated by that much. Though it was not a distance he couldn't run, Tatsuya used the flying bike 'Wingless' in light of the current situation. What he's wearing isn't a normal biking outfit, it's the Yotsuba-made flight uniform 'Freed Suit'. After getting off his bike, he took off his helmet and carried it in his left hand. He didn't bring the Specialized CAD he always does, but 'Freed Suit' has a fully thought-operated CAD incorporated.

Though he passed through the gate, the fight⁸ – a brawl, rather – with the disciples did not occur. There was no sign of people.

Tatsuya thought no problem could cause this absence, and as if it was a flag⁹, right after he considered this, he was getting attacked.

The presence of 'things' without entity.

Clear hostility was transmitted.

Before seeing through its identity, Tatsuya intercepted the Psion flow.

In a moment, a wild Psion stream increased up to the density of a Gram Demolition and knocked down the Information Body holding a Psion structure of about the same high-density.

(Independent Information Body...a familiar? Or a natural occurrence of 'evil gods'?)

Rarely in this world, an independent Information Body whose structure is made of a large quantity of highly dense Psions can spontaneously generate, Tatsuya had heard so from an ancient practitioner who trained him at the Yotsuba House.

A normal independent Information Body has no power to interfere with phenomena by just preserving information, but if the amount of information and Psions it carries inside go past a certain amount, it will start to interfere with phenomena. Fearing calling them demons, the ancients called them gods, and based on them they devised magic that modifies phenomena using independent Information Bodies, calling it Spirit Magic or Summoning Magic. – The Ancient Magician who worked as Tatsuya's teacher taught him so.

Tatsuya blew away the independent Information Body, but it turned around and attacked once again.

At this moment two things became clear.

This 'spirit' is a 'wind' independent Information Body.

And this 'spirit' is being controlled by human intention.

(Is this Master's doing?)

⁸ Randori – freestyle martial arts <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randori>

⁹ Flags are triggers that leads to future events, more often used in videogame terminology.

But if that is the case, the hostility given to this Information Body is too serious. The offensive ability included in the independent Information Body is at a level that it leads to death if the attack is successful.

Aiming to eliminate the threat in front of him, Tatsuya tried to erase the 'Wind Spirit' with Gram Dispersion.

However, in the next instant, he cancelled the Magic Dissolution – Gram Dispersion without releasing it at the Information Body.

He didn't stop because he concluded Yakumo was the caster.

Tatsuya replaced Gram Dispersion and used Non-Systematic Magic to release compressed Psions.

The compressed shape is a net. Though called so, it wasn't reproduced into small meshes.

Like a thin extended Psion membrane wrapping the target with pressure, perhaps it is better to call it a wrapping cloth than a net. – Of course, huge wrapping cloths with a diameter of 3 meters don't exist.

He stopped the meddling 'Wind Spirit' with a Psion 'net', pushed the package, and put on pressure from the outside. But immediately the 'net' was torn.

The Spirit escaped from its restraints and started to attack Tatsuya by transforming into a wind blade.

Tatsuya dodged it by jumping sideways.

Red blood dripped from Tatsuya's left arm as he rolled and stood up from the sandy ground. A part close to the shoulder was ripped wide open.

His opponent is a transparent wind blade. Even though he tried to avoid it, he couldn't do so perfectly. At any rate, this was obviously not the influence of practice. If what he was wearing wasn't the bulletproof, impact resistant, anti-cutting 'Freed Suit', most of his arm might have been cut off.

But the suit was torn and stained in blood for just one second.

Not just the wounds, the damage to the suit and the drops of blood soaking the ground, all of it disappeared like an illusion. The effects of Tatsuya's 'Regrowth' magic.

If this opponent was a living magician, surprise may have created an opportunity. But the 'Wind Spirit' did not falter and sent a new attack. Was it programmed to 'continue to attack' beforehand, or does the caster know Tatsuya's skills?

The wind blade approaches once again.

Tatsuya pushed out and opened his right hand towards the independent Information Body. A Psion shield was formed in front of him.

Colliding with the high-density Psion shield stopped the forward movement of the 'Wind Spirit'. The blade of high-pressure air maintained by the independent Information Body was decompressed as a blast that moved towards Tatsuya.

Mere wind cannot cut the Freed Suit.

Tatsuya tightly clenched his right hand.

Tatsuya's Psions gathered around the 'Wind Spirit'

The independent Information Body was compressed.

The cloud of Psions that spread enough to swallow a large passenger vehicle was now the size of a ball that fit in his palm.

A sphere of Psions similar to a crystal ball that cannot be seen by the naked eye. The 'Wind Spirit' is trapped inside it.

Tatsuya breathed out, making sure to not let the 'Wind Spirit' break out from the Psion sphere.

He looked and searched around his feet for the helmet he had thrown away when he first dodged.

It happened the moment his attention was lost.

Explosive expansion pressure came from inside the Psion ball he was holding.

Tatsuya threw the Psion sphere, that had become fixed on the palm of his right hand, above him. He dropped his right hand and used his left hand to push up vigorously.

Detonating itself, the 'Wind Spirit' destroyed the Psion sphere.

The shockwaves created by that clashed overhead with the Gram Demolition Tatsuya released from his left hand, spreading all over the grounds of the temple and the Psion ripples drew a countless number of concentric circles.

"Yo, that was unfortunate."

Suddenly, the shadow of a person emerged from the uninhabited grounds. Clapping his hands and talking to him, it was the head monk of this temple, the famous 'Ninjutsu User', Kokonoe Yakumo.



"If you dedicated a bit more attention to the pressure you would have completed the Seal Gem¹⁰."

"Master, good morning."

"Ah, good morning, Tatsuya-kun."

And he is the person Tatsuya had visited to request advice this morning.

"Anyway, Master, what is a Seal Gem?"

Exchanging morning greetings as if nothing had happened, Tatsuya asked to continue the conversation,

"The thing you tried to make just now."

And Yakumo responded with a bitter smile on his face.

"You came to ask about a parasite sealing technique?"

"Did you know about Minoru already?"

"I also know about the new outbreak in America. This time seems more troublesome than before."

"Impressive as always. And because of that...can you teach me the sealing technique?"

"Of course, I won't teach."

From Yakumo's mouth came a kind of response that would make certain people explode in anger and respond 'are you kidding me?'.

"Is that so."

But Tatsuya took it as a natural thing.

Tatsuya calls Yakumo 'Master', but he is not a disciple of 'Ninjutsu User' Kokonoe Yakumo. Tatsuya joins in training only because of Yakumo's good will. There is no right to be taught magic.

"I don't even need to teach? That Seal Gem just now was well made. It doesn't look like it's your first time."

And yet at the same time it wasn't that he never taught him anything.

"Is Seal Gem that thing that trapped the independent Information Body inside and hardened as a sphere of Psions like the Armor-Piercing Psion Bullet?"

"I see, you applied the Armor-Piercing Psion Bullet technique."

"Can that seal parasites?"

¹⁰ 封玉 - 封 is seal, 玉 can be sphere/ball when read as "dama" or gem/precious stone when read as "gyoku". In this case, the "gyoku" reading is explicitly used in the script, hence Seal Gem.

“It quarantined the Wind Sprite Protector from my technique. It should also work well enough for parasites.”

Protector¹¹ is an abbreviation of Protector Child. Its original meaning was divine spirit or fierce god¹² that served Mikkyou¹³ monks and practitioners of Shugendou¹⁴, but more commonly, it is the word used for ‘familiar’ in the Mikkyou system of techniques. So to express what Yakumo said in other words, ‘you succeeded until the imprisonment step of the Wind Spirit that serves Yakumo’.

The condition that it depends on Yakumo’s mood remains, but his suggestions are close to giving instructions for the technique. Considering Tatsuya is not fulfilling the role of disciple, this is abnormally hospitable.

“You said earlier ‘if you dedicated more attention’, what was bad about it?”

“It was fine as it was, if you dedicated 10 hours of attention it would not have been broken by self-destruction.”

“So it’s good if more time is spent?”

“No, no, I don’t mean it like that. Did I say dedicated¹⁵? Time is not required to prepare the Seal Gem.”

Tatsuya did not ask further. The relationship between Tatsuya and Yakumo has reached its 5th year. Tatsuya understood Yakumo’s personality to the point that he knew he wouldn’t give more hints.

“I understand. I will try to dedicate myself.”

“Try to practice with the second son of the Yoshida Family.”

With this extra, this morning’s harvest was enough, rather, it was more than expected.

¹¹ In Buddhism, Dharmapala(護法善神) are gods that protect the dharma. The term used here is 護法, hence “Protector” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmapala>

In Buddhist philosophy, dharma is a term for “phenomena”

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fierce_deities

¹³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikky%C5%8D>

¹⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shugend%C5%8D>

¹⁵ The term translated in this conversation as “dedication” roughly means “figure out” or “devise” but can also mean “dedication to spiritual improvement”. The analogous Chinese word means any skill that requires patience, energy and time to complete.

Chapter 4

"I want to look at Miyuki-senpai's face..."

"What are you talking about? You just left the Student Council room earlier this evening, didn't you?"

"But Kasumi-chan, if I'm not doing anything, don't you think going to have tea with Miyuki-senpai is much more constructive?"

The apartment where Tatsuya and Miyuki and the hospital were Minami is being treated are separated by the distance of, let's say a neighborhood. It is a bit too far to go on foot, but by car it is only 5 minutes. Ever since hearing this from Minami during her visit, Izumi has been repeatedly spilling such complaints.

"I'm not going. That guy is in President's house."

Also, it is already a pattern that Kasumi replies this way.

These two are in a small restaurant near the Chofu-Aoba clinic where Minami is hospitalized. The Saegusa Family has reserved this shop since the role assignment at the Master Clans Conference a few days ago. It was ideal to make it into a base, as this shop's business model is that only customers with prior reservation can enter.

The job given to the Saegusa Family at the Master Clans Meeting was to ambush and capture Kudou Minoru who has converted into a parasite. If capture is difficult, execution is unavoidable.

The Ten Master Clans decided that bringing parasites into human society was a crime for which death is inevitable. Both Kasumi and Izumi don't want to kill Minoru if possible, but they understand that if he is left like that, stealing his life is unavoidable. Tatsuya considered these two to not be suited for the Ten Master Clans, but there is no doubt that this mentality they have is a result of the Ten Master Clans training.

"Anyway, will he really come?"

Their minds were not lingering on how to end it without killing Minoru. Both Izumi and Kasumi already told themselves that there is absolutely nothing they can do about it.

"I think he will come."

"Is that so...Isn't that idiotic even for Minoru?"

"I think his head is better than yours though, Kasumi-chan."

"Sure, Minoru is smarter than me, but your grades aren't much different from mine, Izumi!"

"That means I don't have to help you with general studies homework anymore, right?"

"Ha-hang on! That's unfair! We're not talking about that right now!"

“Even if you say it is unfair...”

“What I’m saying is that Minoru is on the lookout for an ambush!”

Izumi’s sentence reached its conclusion when Kasumi hurriedly covered it with her own words.

Izumi unintentionally smiled and stopped playing with her twin sister.

“So you are expecting that much? Maybe if we’re seen through, he may hold back.”

Kasumi responded with a ‘is that so?’ while she patted her chest when Izumi finished her inconvenient speech.

“But even so I think Minoru-kun will come.”

“Huh? Why?”

“Because he’s been prone to illness since childhood. Minoru-kun was a boy that didn’t get attached to things.”

“...I see. I remember him impatiently saying several times that he wanted to be more selfish.”

Kasumi and Izumi didn’t meet with Minoru often. Their personality was such that, from other children’s perspective, they didn’t get attached to things.

Even so, from their perspective, Minoru was a child that didn’t want anything.

“That Minoru-kun desired Sakurai-san to the point he threw away being human. Intense feelings to that extent...Unfortunately, I can’t understand, but I can only imagine that he will never give up.”

“So even you don’t understand, Izumi...”

“Yeah. As a maiden, it is truly regrettable.”

“Maiden, huh...Well, I guess Izumi is a maiden. But such feelings, being a man or a woman has nothing to do with it. Still, aside from feelings, isn’t the real problem that Sakurai-san is being protected by the Yotsuba, Juumonji and Saegusa Families? Will he plunge into the middle of the enemy alone? Or is love blind?”

“Kasumi-chan, that isn’t what ‘love is blind’ means?”

“Huh, really? Doesn’t it mean that love makes reason and common sense disappear?”

“Although that’s what’s written in Japanese dictionaries, reason disappearing means that you become unable to realize your partner’s faults, and common sense disappearing means that when picking sides, you don’t consider yours and your partner’s family’s social status and point of view.”

“Oh, so that is what it means.”

“Besides, I think Minoru-kun will come regardless of an ambush, but I’m guessing it isn’t because he lost his ability to judge with composure.”

“Well then, what is it?”

“Minoru-kun is most likely...”

Izumi lowered her voice. Not just her voice, her facial expression is saying ‘I can’t say it out loud’.

“...not afraid of the Yotsuba, Juumonji, and our own Saegusa Families. That’s what I think.”

“...I don’t think Minoru is the overconfident type.”

Lured by Izumi, Kasumi also whispered.

“If Minoru-kun has the ability, the self-confidence is not excessive.”

“That’s...Maybe he can bypass if it’s the Saegusa Family, but...”

“The current Minoru-kun can get the parasite’s power. Also, not questioning if it’s true or false, he took in the ghost of an Ancient Magician from the continent.”

“...Is the ghost even real?”

“...Anyway.”

Regarding the matter of the absorption of Zhou Gongjin’s ghost, Izumi didn’t truly believe it. Despite Kasumi’s protest, she didn’t delve into this discussion.

“There is no doubt in my mind that Minoru-kun is getting stronger.”

At the same time, she couldn’t withdraw the need for vigilance towards Minoru.

In the end, Kasumi didn’t know whether she agreed or not with Izumi’s opinion.

“Kasumi-chan, Izumi-chan, he’s here!”

As Mayumi came to call the two of them, their argument came to an end.

“How is Sakurai-san!?”

Mayumi showed her figure from the door that leads up to the interior of the kitchen and Kasumi stood up vigorously and immediately asked about Minami’s welfare. Kasumi, who is a classmate of Minami, seems to have deep feelings of affection towards Minami, in contrast with Izumi who works with her at the Student Council. – Perhaps Kasumi may be just easier to understand.

“She’s safe. We caught him before he sneaked into the hospital.”

“Was it the Juumonji Family?”

Izumi asked so. If she didn’t ask, Kasumi would have asked.

“No, subordinates of the Saegusa Family.”

Kasumi’s eyes shined and her expression reflected a ‘we did it!’. But her eyebrows instantly became gloomy. “They all got knocked out without lasting a minute. The people from the

Juumonji Family were running there now, and are holding him back. I also contacted Otou-sama, but he'll take 10 minutes or more to arrive. Juumonji-kun has also been notified, but we can't hope for him to arrive in less than 5 minutes."

"So until then, we have to keep him there, right?"

"Exactly right."

Kasumi and Izumi were not just leisurely listening to Mayumi talk. While the two of them were leaning their ears and moving their mouth they were putting the CADs on their wrists, protective goggles with an internal communication device and a protection vest – a vest that has not only the function of softening shocks, but is also bulletproof and blade proof – on their body.

"Preparations complete."

"Me too."

"OK. Let's go."

Mayumi, who wore an identical outfit, opened the door, Kasumi and Izumi followed right away.



When Mayumi arrived at the scene, the battle had temporarily stopped.

Four magicians were collapsed on the road. Kasumi and Izumi rushed over to check their pulse and breathing.

"He's alive!"

"Same here, doesn't seem like there are any major injuries."

Mayumi spoke to the two magicians who were breathing shallowly.

"Where did Minoru go?"

Mayumi raised the goggles to her forehead and showed her face to ask two magicians who were standing on their own feet.

"He went towards the alley on my right. We're telling those who are protecting to intercept him."

There is no door leading to the inside of the hospital on the right side. Is he planning to break a window, or is he thinking of sneaking in from the rooftop? Either way, Mayumi thought Minoru wouldn't run away.

"Understood. I'll chase him. You guys, please go back to your posts."

The two who answered Mayumi's question were magicians from the Juumonji Family. Everyone who was collapsed on the road was a subordinate of the Saegusa Family.

“We’ll be counting on you.”

The two from the Juumonji Family bowed to Mayumi and returned to the front of the hospital’s rear entrance. The task they were given is to prevent the invasion of the hospital. They ran here to assist the Saegusa Family magicians, but they were a long way off the entrance, which was their real role.

“You two, with them, please.”

“Onee-chan, you’re going alone!?”

“It’s dangerous!”

Kasumi and Izumi tried to stop their sister, but Mayumi shook her head with a serious look on her face, with no hint of a smile.

“We can’t leave these injured people alone. Even without serious injuries, my consciousness doesn’t allow it. Besides, Minoru-kun may not go towards the back door.”

It’s a common technique to attempt re-invasion from places where vigilance has been lowered after pretending to go towards a different place. Neither of them could deny the possibility their sister pointed out.

“...Understood, Onee-chan.”

“Onee-chan, be careful.”

“Yeah, you two as well.”

Mayumi put the goggles on and went towards the right side of the hospital.



Signs of magic suddenly increased. Mayumi chased them, rushing from the alley along the hospital to the road on the other side.

Lightning flashed in the air.

About 5 meters above the ground. The scenery of a night sky covered in thick clouds was empty – nobody was emitting the lightning attacks within the darkness.

The targets were two male magicians. Subordinate practitioners from the Juumonji Family, who they were introduced to by Katsuto before the start of the operation.

One of them was bleeding from one leg, crouching to hold his wound.

The unhurt magician had his back to his partner, catching lightning strikes with a magical barrier.

If it was a normal Release-Type Magic, it would be over when stopped by a shield.

Setting the starting point of the attack away from the target with Modern Magic to prevent the enemy's event interference power from disturbing the magic invocation. It is no more than that.

But this lightning attack is not a simple stream of electrons. Lightning travelled several meters diagonally, drawing a light snake with an afterimage in the air. Instead of colliding with the magical barrier and breaking it, it shifted its movement and went around to hit from the sides.

Giving shape to the phenomenon. In exchange of spending additional resources to include shape in symbolic organisms, this technique enhanced the operability of phenomena created by magic. This is an Ancient Magic technique that isn't in Modern Magic. This situation, is it for sustained use of lightning strikes that diffuse in an instant?

It certainly is an advanced technique, but isn't it more effective to create lightning strikes repeatedly? Mayumi thought so seeing the lightning snakes moving above the shield, but immediately noticed her own misunderstanding.

The magical barriers built by the Juumonji Family magicians took a hemispherical dome shape. Even by circulating sideways you can't pass through the shield. But the lightning snake that seemed useless added a tail and made a circle around the shield, binding the shield's operator.

Witnessing this, Mayumi finally understood the purpose of this magic. This is a confinement magic.

The lightning snake doesn't just have the effect of electric shocks, it also adds pressure to the shield, not to mention that it constricts the inside of the magicians' barrier. And in the moment the shield is dissolved, a lightning strike will attack the people barricaded inside it.

The lightning snake seems to be wrapping itself around the shield, but it's actually fixed in contact position with the magical barrier. If one were to move while holding the shield, it would be a strength contest with the magic that is affixing the lightning snake.

Thunderbolts were emitted from the sky once again. Not just one. Three attacks, one after the other.

The lightning strikes became lightning snakes and surrounded the shield of the two Juumonji magicians.

Three circles were tying the hemispherical dome magical barrier. Though the first lightning snake disappeared, the second stage of the lightning strikes surrounded the shield and crossed each other at six points.

Mayumi released a Psion Bullet, shooting at the lightning emission point.

Mayumi's Psion Bullet doesn't have power similar to the Gram Demolition Tatsuya uses.

But the technique to shoot accurately at a target point is not inferior to other people. She isn't called 'one of the best long-ranged precision shooting magic users in the world' just for appearances.

The Psion Bullet Mayumi released accurately hit the magic's battery¹⁶ that was installed in the sky. A Psion Information Body that remotely invokes the magic continuously. Mayumi's Psion Bullet destroyed the information structure that acted as a battery.

Mayumi has ordinary magic – the Modern Magic's 4 Systems and 8 Types, except a Non-Systematic Magic that shoots a Psion Bullet and an inborn special ability in the Sensory System. Remote Visual System Sensory Magic 'Multi-Scope'. Though it is possible to use it as magic, Mayumi can use it freely as an inborn special ability – once referred to as 'Supernatural Power'.

This was unprecedented. Magic and Supernatural Powers are essentially the same ability, but one person should not be able to have both Supernatural Powers and Magic. Supernatural Powers distort phenomena with mere thoughts. In exchange, they can only modify phenomena with a specific pattern. Modern Magic, by adjusting the mental faculties used for Supernatural Powers, realized diverse phenomena modification. In exchange for that, various auxiliary measures other than thought are needed for magic execution.

From the point of view that it can only deal with specific patterns, Tatsuya's 'Decomposition' and 'Regrowth' are close to Supernatural Powers. Tatsuya also has traits of Supernatural Power users, as he also can't support other phenomena modification patterns. As seen from this precedent, Supernatural Powers and their specialized modification of phenomena, and magic that can deal with a variety of phenomenon modifications, cannot coexist.

But Mayumi can use both special perception abilities and diverse magic. She can be said to be an irregular magician in a different sense than Tatsuya.

Now, Mayumi was using her unusual ability, 'Multi-Scope', at full power. Using her full power 'Multi-Scope' to obtain visual information, seen from various angles, brings a big load to her mind. The consciousness starts dimming in just a few minutes, so it's rare to use it at full power.

Mayumi looks for Minoru, who is surely hiding nearby, knowing that it is unreasonable.

Even if it is said that magic ignores physical distance, it can't be used to reach far places beyond a person's line of sight with the same amount of power and technique finesse as the lightning strikes just now. He should be hiding in the vicinity.

(Found him!)

Has Mayumi's persistence bore fruit?

Or were her strong thoughts showing it?

His back was reflected in the field of vision of her odd ability, 'Multi-Scope'.

Despite seen from the back, with his face not visible, he has a beautiful and mysterious figure that is not something from this world.

Mayumi shifted her point of view and confirmed that person's face.

¹⁶ Artillery battery, not electric battery.

In the moment he was 'seen' from the front, he suddenly turned his face away, as if he sensed a glance.

But that moment was plenty.

Mayumi ran her fingers on the CAD on her wrist.

The invoked magic can be said to represent who she is, 'Magic Bullet Shooter'.

Batteries was created in the sky, and from there, dry ice bullets were released.

Three batteries concentrated their shots on Minoru.

'Magic Bullet Shooter' has definitely caught Minoru, as could be seen from the remote field of vision.

The figure of the boy Mayumi is looking at disappeared from the ground.

Her 'Multi-Scope' didn't lose sight of his beautiful figure.

He was in the air.

Mayumi made a new battery, and it poured dry ice bullets.

But the figure that dashed through the sky used complicated movements to dodge the majority of the bullets following him.

Minoru landed on the rooftop of the hospital.

Mayumi stopped spending resources on her 'Multi-Scope', leaving only a field of vision from the top, compiled jumping magic, and waited for her magic to capture Minoru.

Leaving behind the allies trapped with the lightning snakes, Mayumi jumped to the rooftop of the hospital.



"Is Onee-chan okay?"

"The opponent is Minoru, but even so I think Onee-sama is taking too long..."

Izumi replied to Kasumi's question with an unconfident tone, but the anxiety could not be read from her expression. This probably means she wasn't worried about her tone of voice.

Currently, the strongest magician of the Saegusa Family is probably Mayumi. Their father Kouichi never participates in his children's ability competitions, so it can't be said for sure, but Mayumi is proven to be the strongest among the siblings. Kasumi and Izumi can't win against Mayumi even together. The girls are no match for her even if they use Multiplicative Cast, their trump card where they combine their ability.

These two were leisurely chatting because they had nothing to do but talking and being on the lookout. The first aid treatment on their (father's) subordinates that Minoru took down was already finished. Nobody had any serious injuries that were accompanied by heavy bleeding from the start. There are no fractures that can be seen from the outside. There was one casualty who may have hit his head when he fell, but unfortunately brain damage is something these two can't control. They cooled down the swollen spot and were waiting for the Saegusa Family's rescue team to arrive, instead of an ambulance. They didn't openly discuss it, but both of them had similar thoughts that if the rescue team didn't come, they would carry them into the hospital right in front of them.

"All things considered, they aren't coming."

"They aren't coming..."

The two of them didn't have much patience left. Kasumi's impatience can be seen in her outward appearance, but honestly speaking Izumi has a personality that makes her easily bored. Izumi may be better described as doing things at her own pace. Anyway, both of them match in impatience.

The two exchanged glances and each sensed the other had the same idea as them.

They signaled each other and turned their heads towards the hospital's back door at the same time.

And then, the moment they tried to ask for help to carry the injured people, their mouths uttered words that were different than those they intended.

"Look out!"

But the warning backfired.

The two magicians guarding the back door turned their eyes towards Kasumi and Izumi.

The moment they lost their attention, magic fired from the darkness.

Violent sparks fell from the sky. 'Spark' is a magic that causes discharge phenomena by forcibly extracting electrons from substances. It's a fundamental Release-Type Magic technique, but it requires high phenomenon interference power. Typical magicians have low density or fixed volume of molecules, so the best they can do is ionize a very limited scope of gas.

However, the 'Spark' emitted just now was entirely covering the two people with plasma. To be accurate, the area covered was from the chest down, the head wasn't directly hit. But they naturally lost control of their body and tumbled down from their knees while convulsing.

"Who is there!"

Kasumi released magic while shouting. An intense flash illuminated the darkness that stretched between street lights.

Kasumi asked who, but she was convinced the enemy was Minoru. If people other than Minoru emerged in the light, Kasumi would have lost the rest of her voice in surprise.

To the magic light took away his resistance with a glaring flash, Minoru didn't put his hands over his eyes, he just narrowed them.

The strong light produced a dark shadow, highlighting the inhuman charm that adorned Minoru's face.

"Minoru, give up!"

Kasumi released 'Freeze Air Bullet'. Magic that compresses the air while cooling it, converting the heat into bullet speed.

This magic fires Dry Meteor, Mayumi's trump card, but with ordinary air instead of carbon dioxide. It doesn't freeze because the freezing point of the mixed gas, whose main component is nitrogen and oxygen, is lower than carbon dioxide, but bullets cooled while being compressed with high pressure manifest different effects than dry ice bullets.

At the same time that Kasumi used magic, Izumi laid out Zone Interference for defense.

The effect of the flash magic ran out and Minoru's figure was submerged in darkness.

The 'Freeze Air Bullet' that Kasumi released collided against a magical barrier and got crushed. The air that was restrained by magic suddenly expanded, making a lump of cold air dozens of degrees below the freezing point, according to the laws of physics.

But the cold air didn't enter the inside of the shield formed by Minoru. Haze was produced, dew was formed outside the shield, water droplets dropped down the transparent barrier. Minoru's magical barrier had the 'hardness' of a solid object.

Magic attacks were sent out by Minoru at the same time as Kasumi's 'Freeze Air Bullet' crumbled.

In the region Izumi where spread out Zone Interference, the influence of phenomenon interference appeared. Zone Interference is not magic that uses the output of a Magic Sequence. It's a defense technique that continuously uses the caster's personal phenomenon interference power. If magic is released from an enemy, that will be transmitted to the caster as a reaction.

Izumi mustered her strength to invalidate Minoru's magic. But that resistance was not enough and it broke through.

Discharges were generated in the sky. Is it smaller than the 'Spark' that the Juumonji Family magicians received because Izumi's Zone Interference lowered the intensity of the phenomenon modification?

But with the enemy magic successfully invoked, that is not a big consolation. Plasma scattered in sparks, hitting Kasumi and Izumi.

The gust of wind that scattered that plasma was due to Kasumi's quick-witted defense of diverting the second attack towards Minoru.

"Izumi, are you okay!?"

Kasumi rushed up to Izumi, who was injured by the Zone Interference strength contest, and held her in her arms.

Izumi gripped Kasumi's hand that was holding her shoulder.

"Kasumi-chan, we can't do this one at a time."

"I understand, Izumi."

Kasumi did not misunderstand what Izumi's words meant.

The current situation is a two-on-one. They are not fighting alone in a sequential order. Even in this state Kasumi and Izumi are cooperating.

What Izumi is saying is that this is not a simple numerical strength problem. Both of them can't fight as two people, they can't win against Minoru unless they unify their power. Izumi said so. And Kasumi nodded.

The two mutually interlocked their fingers. Kasumi's right hand and Izumi's left hand perfectly united by the palm.

The twin sisters faced one another and mutually attracted each other, connecting the other hands.

From Kasumi's left hand to Izumi's right hand, Psions flowed.

From Izumi's left hand to Kasumi's right hand, Psions flowed.

Connected hand and hand, the pair's Psions circulated through their bodies.

Suddenly, Minoru released magic. The power of phenomenon modification is working just above the twins that face each other.

But Minoru's magic finished before it could start. Zone Interference with a strength incomparable to before protected the sister's bodies.

"Let's go."

Izumi whispered.

"Leave it to me!"

Kasumi responded to that.

An Activation Sequence was output from Izumi's thought-operated CAD worn around her left wrist.

There are no agreements on who is the chief and subordinate of the pair's Multiplicative Cast. There are surely numerous roles where Kasumi constructs the Magic Sequence and Izumi grants the phenomenon interference power. But in the opposite case, where Izumi constructs the Magic Sequence and Kasumi grants the phenomenon interference power, Multiplicative Cast works the exact same way.

Light was created within the darkness. It doesn't have the strength to dazzle the eyes, it is a light just to fulfill its role as illumination, shining on Minoru's body.

Under the light of magic, Minoru's face expressed utter confusion. He probably didn't understand the meaning of using such magic power that holds no offensive power.

Of course up until now it has been no more than the preparation stage. A procedure to make aiming the magic easier.



The next magic will be invoked. Though Minoru was not absent-minded, his confusion dulled his decision making, so Izumi acted faster this time.

Gusts of wind coiled above Minoru's head. A large amount of air was compressed in an instant while preserving room temperature.

Izumi unleashed it directly downwards instead of striking Minoru with that cluster of air.

The descending air swiftly cooled due to adiabatic processes and attacked Minoru.

'Cold Storm'. Izumi admires Miyuki, and this new magic came from the desire to make use of cooling magic similar to Miyuki's.

"S-So cold!"

Blowing in the icy fog wind, Kasumi screamed.

"Sorry!"

Izumi's voice was a bit stiff when she apologized. Coldness and agitation are the causes. It seems 'Cold Storm' has only been learned recently, so it hasn't been perfected to the extent that she can defend against the aftermath.

"It's fine. Anyway, did we do it?"

Needless to say about Kasumi, but Izumi too is staring at Minoru's figure covered in frost.

Minoru was standing still while sparkling white magical lights.

There is no movement.

There is also no collapse.

If Minoru lost the strength on his limbs, it's weird that he is not falling. Even if the whole body is rigid, standing still like this is usually impossible.

"Kasumi-chan, one more time!"

Izumi's shout was synchronous with a change in Minoru.

The frost on Minoru's hair, face and clothes disappeared in an instant.

After that frost was gone, he wasn't even one bit wet.

Minoru extended his right arm towards Izumi and Kasumi.

"Go!"

Kasumi responded to Izumi with a hurried voice. However instead of repeating what they just did, Kasumi took the initiative this time.

Strong winds composed of 90% nitrogen blew towards Minoru.

‘Nitrogen Storm’. Magic that causes oxygen deficiency with an air current whose oxygen concentration was extremely lowered.

However, the ‘Nitrogen Storm’ the twins released was blocked by Minoru’s shield and its effect was invalidated by the downward air current that kept coming from the skies.

“——”

Izumi saw Minoru’s lips move. Kasumi didn’t notice, and Izumi couldn’t catch what he said due to the raging winds.

But Izumi somehow believed Minoru had said ‘it’s my turn now’.

Izumi instantly felt the signs of magic activation. At the same time, a gentle breeze blew.

Izumi spread out a physical shield in panic.

But the breeze stopped at the surface of the shield, and began to blow again inside the shield. The wind didn’t pass through the magical barrier. The magic passed through the barrier.

Naturally, that was not insignificant. When Izumi and Kasumi first felt the wind, it was already too late.

Kasumi suddenly collapsed.

Panicking, Izumi stopped hugging Kasumi and resumed her breathing.

Immediately after that, Izumi’s conscious was swallowed by darkness.

Kasumi’s and Izumi’s bodies were caught by an invisible hand before they crashed on the road. They were laid down softly on the road.

It was Minoru’s magics that caught the two and took away their consciousness. The former stopped them with Movement-Type Magic and reduced gravity with Weight-Type Magic. The latter decreased oxygen concentration with Convergence-Type Magic. In principle, it is similar magic to the ‘Nitrogen Storm’ the twins used. Instead of breaking through the two’s magical defenses with pure strength, he used a technique that led them to not recognize that the magic used by the enemy was the same kind of magic they used. This was a technique learned from Zhou Gongjin’s knowledge.

Minoru manipulated the airflow and blew air with raised oxygen concentration into their nostrils. Forcibly sending in oxygen into the lungs.

The two simultaneously restarted breathing and coughed violently.

Minoru used his next magic. The two lost their resistance to magic in this half-awake state, so he used Ancient Magic genjutsu¹⁷ to lead them to sleep. The two's eyelids closed. Comfortable and breathing, proof that they are harmlessly sound asleep, different from just a few moments ago.

Minoru breathed out in relief. Injuring these two was never his intention. Even just turning towards offensive magic was too much for him.

Minoru understands why the Ten Master Clans are targeting him for capture or subjugation. But he didn't plan to be hostile towards the Ten Master Clans.

He just wants to save Minami. To make sure of Minami's intentions, and if she accepts his idea, he will turn her into a parasite. Afterwards, the two of them would live quietly and hidden. If Minami so wished, he would return her to the Yotsuba Family. He thought if it was the Yotsuba Family, they would protect their relatives regardless of what the rest of the Ten Master Clans says.

So even if he gets attacked, he planned to finish this as peacefully as he can. It was a difficult decision to attack Kasumi and Izumi, with risks of after-effects, as they have known each other from a young age. He wanted to make them powerless with the least pain possible, finish the first aid as quickly as possible, and Minoru didn't plan to indulge in it.

While experiencing the persistent foul aftertaste, Minoru headed towards the back door of the hospital.

His goal is to kidnap Minami. He didn't dare to sugar-coat it. Today he was ignoring her intentions, He came to take her away from the hospital. He believed this wasn't the time for persuasion from the start. In Minoru's calculations, with the amount of time that has passed it wouldn't be strange if Tatsuya was already flying in.

Minoru extended his hand to the door of the rear entrance. But right afterwards he was forced to withdraw his hand, jumping back a great distance.

Dry ice bullets shot at his afterimage.

"Minoru-kun, surrender!"

Minoru looked overhead, towards where the voice came from.

"The genjutsu was exposed already, huh..."

Minoru reflexively muttered. From the hospital's rooftop, Mayumi looked down on him.



Mayumi, who jumped up to the rooftop chasing after Minoru, stopped her feet there.

¹⁷ Illusion techniques

Minoru stopped at the opposite edge.

Blocked by thick clouds, neither moon nor stars could be seen. From this height, it can be seen that the clouds in the center of the city are faintly reflecting the light from the illumination on the ground. Minoru's back barely stood out with the faint light.

Minoru had turned his back on Mayumi.

Even when she activated her Psions to attack, he did not turn around.

"Minoru-kun, give up already! It'll be worse if you resist any longer! I will also properly listen to what you have to say!"

Even to Mayumi's appeal, Minoru didn't respond. Not to mention the lack of signs of attack, he also didn't show any hint of defense.

Mayumi wavered. Even her would hesitate to attack an enemy that is showing no resistance.

But she can't overlook this. Minoru converted into a parasite. She didn't confirm it with her own eyes, but Tatsuya wouldn't tell lies like this. Her junior was not the kind of person who tells such evil lies. And the existence of the parasite cannot be neglected.

"Minoru-kun, put your CAD under your feet and raise your hands!"

Mayumi presses herself to make a decision, calling out to Minoru to surrender.

For the first time in the rooftop, Minoru showed a reaction. He turned only his face towards Mayumi. His face, seen from the side, looked suspicious, evil, and because of that, the smile on his face looked unworldly beautiful.

No, rather than saying unworldly, it should be inhuman.

Mayumi didn't doubt the story that Minoru became a parasite.

But at this time she was truly convinced that Minoru changed into something other than a human.

Mayumi composed the Activation Sequence for 'Magic Bullet Shooter', the magic she is best at.

There was no more hesitation in her.

Dry ice bullets were shot from twelve batteries, that were created in positions that surrounded Minoru.

Cold bullets penetrated shoulders, chest, abdomen, back, thighs. – No, they slipped through.

(An illusion? This is 'Parade'!?)

'Parade', the magic of the Kudou Family that disturbs other people's aim by creating illusions in the information dimension. When it was decided that in this operation they would pursue him, Mayumi's father taught her about the existence of this magic.

As she heard beforehand, it feels completely indistinguishable from the real one. At the time Mayumi used 'Magic Bullet Shooter', she could see Minoru's figure from six different directions. But she couldn't feel anything wrong with the visual information obtained from any angle.

(If I can't find the real body, then!)

Mayumi's magic specialty is long-ranged precision shooting. If she can't discern the target's position, she can't make use of her special skill.

But she is 'one of the best long-ranged precision shooting magic users in the world' and at the same time she is the eldest daughter and also, with due respect, the strongest magician in the Saegusa Family who carries the nickname 'Versatile'. 'Mark' attacks aren't the only cards on Mayumi's hand.

('Parade' is magic that diverts the enemy's attack by putting illusions near them...)

Mayumi heard so about the features of 'Parade'.

(Then Minoru-kun's real body must be somewhere on the rooftop!)

Mayumi constructed a new Magic Sequence. 'Dry Blizzard', magic that rains down dry ice bullets.

An air cluster of carbon dioxide was formed three meters above the rooftop, and -80 degrees Celsius stones violently fell.

About two thirds of the rooftop was within its range. However there was no evidence showing that the attack had damaged Minoru.

But still, Mayumi was not disturbed. The Dry Blizzard barrage is just preparation for her favorite.

Mayumi formed a cage that imprisoned gas. Only gas was prevented from entering or exiting.

Inside it, dry ice was sublimated all at once.

The air cluster of minus dozens of degrees Celsius with very high carbon dioxide concentration covered half of the roof.

Mayumi shrank the cage while slowly ejecting any gas other than carbon dioxide, and at the same time she sharpened her senses towards its interior.

If Minoru is inside, he must use some kind of defensive magic. Even if you can falsify your real position, the signs of continued magic use should not be falsified. – So Mayumi thought.

But contrary to her expectations, no matter how much time passed, there was no indication of new magic in the rooftop.

Instead, Mayumi felt signs of a familiar powerful magic being produced above the ground.

The signs of the magic invoked near the back door of the hospital indicate that it's her sisters'.

It was the Psion waves of Kasumi's and Izumi's Multiplicative Cast.

(—I was tricked!)

Mayumi finally became aware of the trick. Minoru's goal has consistently been to invade the hospital from the rear entrance. Minoru's illusion was a dummy to keep her away!

The illusion magic includes features such as perfect virtual image projection, remote battery magic and probably interference in magic detection. It is a Psion wave barrier that cannot be surpassed without the strong waves from Multiplicative Cast.

Mayumi left the gas isolation barrier as it was and ran on the rooftop to the side with the rear entrance.

(Kasumi-chan, Izumi-chan!)

She bit her eager screams to death. Kasumi and Izumi fell senseless. The worst-case scenario appeared to become reality.

But right now, Minoru's capture takes precedence. At the very least, her sisters can't receive medical treatment if Minoru is not driven back.

Minoru aims to extend his hand to the door of the rear entrance.

Mayumi used the large quantity of carbon dioxide she maintained on the rooftop and formed/shot dry ice bullets.

Minoru pulled his hand back and jumped a big distance backwards. Mayumi's attack went through Minoru's afterimage.

"Minoru-kun, surrender!"

Mayumi appealed, and Minoru raised his face.

There was no reply from Minoru, nor did he show in his attitude that he would obey Mayumi's words.

Without hesitation, Mayumi aimed and shot dry ice bullets at Minoru.

(Again!?)

Her bullets overlapped with Minoru's body and hit the ground behind him. 'Parade' once again. Mayumi instantly concluded.

Mayumi compressed the cluster of carbon dioxide under her control without solidifying it. The ten meters squared gas was pushed into a sphere with a one-meter diameter.

She threw that sphere towards Minoru.

The one-meter diameter sphere crashed into the road's surface, spreading out as a hemisphere with a five-meter radius.

It didn't scatter anymore. Her sisters are left outside the range. Mayumi didn't forget that.

The carbon dioxide density is slightly above a level that causes poisoning. If there isn't much difference between human and parasite metabolisms, Minoru should avoid breathing that gas in.

Mayumi produced a gentle gas current inside the hemisphere. It isn't even strong enough to call it a gentle breeze. The direction is also not fixed. It looked random, but the weak air current had a complex regularity.

That stream was interrupted at a certain spot. It's at a height from 170cm to 180cm. Around 50cm wide. Its size was a little bigger than Minoru's body.

Mayumi made 'Magic Bullet Shooter' batteries inside that hemispherical dome and concentrated fire on that spot.

Signs of the hidden Minoru are exposed.

The appearance of a young boy who was standing still emerged from the weak light of the street lamp.

The 'Parade' wore out.

Mayumi increased the power of the shots and the density. Carbon dioxide to produce bullets was abundantly prepared. The fired bullets sublime and return to gas, becoming material for bullets once again.

Suddenly, Minoru brought his hand up.

Mayumi thought it was a sign of surrender.

It couldn't be said that there wasn't an opportunity there.

However, at least the 'Magic Bullet Shooter' did not stop.

So it could be seen that Minoru's counterattack happened regardless of the opportunity Mayumi gave him.

The Minoru's illusion that lured Mayumi vanished when she released 'Dry Blizzard' on that spot.

There were no remnants of the illusion that disappeared in Mayumi's consciousness.

Therefore she didn't notice that a dark shadow was created where the virtual projection was.

Four long legs stretched from the shadow.

The head is formed after the neck, and a thin tail is connected on the other side. It resembles the silhouette of a tiger.

Fangs grew inside the wide-open mouth, and instead of a roar, thunder was released.

Mayumi turns around in panic.

The shadowy beast clad in thunderbolts was already before her eyes.

Mayumi was pushed down by the beast without doing anything.

The shadow stabbed Mayumi with its fangs.

Instead of blood gushing out from Mayumi's body, her body was attacked by electric shocks that stole her consciousness.

Mayumi's body shook and swayed and collapsed on the edge of the rooftop.

"Damn it!"

That scream was sent out from Minoru's mouth.

"Mayumi-chan!"

Mayumi's body falls.

Minoru constructed Gravity Control Magic to catch her.

But before that magic was released, Mayumi's body was enveloped by a burly shadow of a person that came from the sky.

Mayumi falling from the roof was a complete miscalculation on Minoru's part.

In confusion, he tried to release magic to help Mayumi.

But before that, she was rescued by a strong looking man.

Falling from the sky, he caught Mayumi in the air, controlled gravity and inertia and descended on the road without a sound. That person completely killed the momentum and landed silently. But Minoru's ears were visited by auditory hallucinations that shook the ground with a thud.

"Juumonji-san..."

The burly person was Juumonji Family's Juumonji Katsuto.

Katsuto held Mayumi in his arms, and turned his back to Minoru.

He gently laid her body down on the street.



Minoru did not attack Katsuto from behind. – No, he couldn't.

Katsuto's back swallowed his mind as if it were saying 'wait a bit'.

Katsuto stood up and turned around.

Minoru stepped back, leaving behind the illusion of 'Parade' right away.

But the attempt at evasion was meaningless.

Transparent walls were created by Katsuto. Magic barriers given solidity and impenetrability, with length and width of over 1.8 meters, about two tatami mats¹⁸. It approaches Minoru at great speeds.

Minoru hurriedly jumped to the right.

It's a barrier that doesn't have any influence on anything but solid materials and physical power, but since it's magic that gives the space the property of 'transparent barrier that doesn't let solid matter pass', it is incompatible with the illusion that gives this same space a conflicting property definition. The 'wall' Katsuto used demolished Minoru's 'Parade', and Minoru's body appeared and quickly disappeared into the darkness.

Minoru dodged Katsuto's attack by throwing himself down onto the road and immediately started to compile the next magic. 'Ghost Walker', the magic that disguises directions, recently learned from taking Zhou Gongjin's knowledge in.

At the same time he ran to the left. If 'Ghost Walker' was successful, it should look to Katsuto as if he ran the opposite way.

But that escape was brought to a standstill in two steps. In his path, a physical barrier towered over him.

('Ghost Walker' isn't working?)

Minoru thought so for a moment, but he immediately realized his mistake.

Katsuto's magic barrier was a cylinder built with a diameter of four meters and height of two meters.

A wall that surrounds him from all directions. This means the misrecognition of directions from 'Ghost Walker' is meaningless.

From just above, the walls draw closer. As if covering a cylindrical cage, a cylindrical 'ceiling' fell.

Minoru opposed the barrier magic that was crushing the encirclement by using the same physical shield.

¹⁸ Tatami mat size slightly differs by region and time when the house was built, but in general, the standard tatami mat has a width of about 91cm and the length of about 182cm. Two tatami mats make a square with an area of slightly above 1.8 m².

He concentrated all of his energy into a 50cm diameter round shield against the cylindrical wall with a diameter of 4 meters.

Both Minoru's and Katsuto's barriers broke at the same time.

Without delay, Minoru invoked jumping magic and escaped from the inside of the 'cage'.

When he landed, Minoru pressed against the road with one knee. The Juumonji Family carries the nickname 'Iron Wall', and its strongest magician attacked him with barrier magic. Katsuto spread his power widely, and it was possible for Minoru to barely offset it by concentrating his strength in a narrow range. This tug of war was heavily exhausting Minoru.

However, Minoru had no time to take a break or recover his strength.

Katsuto isn't a generous person who would allow him to take a break.

Before he could be chased, Minoru released counterattacking magic.

'Cloudless Thunder'.

Among the Release-Type Magic he excels at, this interpersonal magic is a technique that has a very high offensive ability. Given Minoru's current exhaustion, it was by no means magic he can use lightly. But half-hearted attacks wouldn't affect Katsuto.

A group of air molecules turned into plasma. From there, an electron shower rained down towards Katsuto.

But it didn't reach Katsuto.

Even the group of positive ions that fell like snow shortly afterwards were stopped by the magical barrier.

This was within Minoru's expectations.

It was not bravado, from the start Minoru didn't think he could cause damage to Katsuto with 'Cloudless Thunder'. The goal was to shift the momentum by cutting Katsuto's attacks temporarily.

(How about this!)

Minoru took out a token – a card with a black luster from his pocket, and turned it towards Katsuto.

A four-legged beast whose body was only colored in black leapt out of the token and attacked Katsuto.

It was Zhou Gongjin's offensive magic 'Shadow Beast', adapted from western Ancient Magic called 'Hellhound'. If classified like Modern Magic, it could be said to be a kind of Outer-Systematic Magic that invents the truth of an attack, using as a foothold the optical illusion of sustaining an attack from fangs and nails.

(It's Outer-Systematic Magic that changes fate from the astral side. Physical shields should not defend against it!)

The black chemical body draws closer to Katsuto.

However, the jet black 'Shadow Beast' crashed into the magical barrier without touching Katsuto's body.

(...Does the barrier magic of the Juumonji Family, by limiting the targets to defend, have property preservation features to keep other spatial attributes as they should naturally be?)

Minoru was not shaken by the result, and calmly analyzed Katsuto's magic from the phenomenon he just witnessed.

The Juumonji Family's barrier magic 'Phalanx'. What is troublesome for Minoru is not the defense itself, it's that it combines Zone Interference properties.

Field magic that doesn't allow phenomenon modification in a space except the caster's closed-off barrier definition.

Neither illusions nor chemical bodies are projected into space. If it doesn't exceed Katsuto's Phalanx, it will be erased by the barrier. Minoru took Zhou Gongjin's techniques and assimilating a parasite has increased his speed, but the power remains as it was before. Minoru still had phenomenon interference power superior to most magicians, but regrettably it was not enough to hit past Katsuto's barrier with brute force.

Minoru scattered copies of himself and quickly turned and jumped to the shadows. It wasn't 'Parade', but simple virtual images he created to preserve magic resources. And while Katsuto's eyes were disoriented, he let out magic in quick succession.

– 'Spark' 'Cloudless Thunder' 'Plasma Bullet' 'Hot Wind Blade'

From the magic he is used to from every day usage,

– 'Nitrogen Storm' 'Dry Blizzard'

He attacked with diverse techniques, going as far as using the Saegusa sisters' specialty magic with the intent of striking a surprised Katsuto.

But all of that was stopped by Katsuto's defense.

Then, making a small hole, he hurled offensive Phalanx barriers.

Instead of concentrating in one place dozens of times, he shot towards all of the scattered illusions.

Before long, one of them hit Minoru.

'Offensive Phalanx' is a magic that crushes a body, by destroying the opponent's defenses with repeated strikes on their solid impenetrable barriers. If it's only one barrier, it's not much

different than normal Weight-Type Magic. Minoru's physical shield and Katsuto's barrier counterbalanced each other.

By counterbalancing, his whereabouts were exposed to Katsuto.

The 'offensive Phalanx' advanced.

'Ghost Walker' would not make it in time.

Minoru cancelled his own shield and activated accelerating magic at the same time.

Katsuto's barrier sent Minoru flying.

With the utmost effort, Minoru kept his consciousness from being interrupted by the pain, and amplified his momentum to fly upward.

While bearing deep wounds on his ribs and internal organs, he raised himself more and more with anti-gravity magic.

In the darkness, Minoru's body ascended vigorously.

With his body full of wounds, he flew through the lowest clouds and carried out his escape.



Mayumi and her sisters were brought to the hospital where Minami was hospitalized. When Tatsuya and Miyuki rushed in, Kasumi and Izumi weren't awake yet, but Mayumi had not completely lost her consciousness so she was already up on the bed with the ability to have a conversation.

"Anyway, what matters most is that there were no serious injuries."

"I think this is all Minoru-kun allowed himself to do."

To Tatsuya's words, Mayumi expressed a self-deprecative smile.

"...Minoru-kun's objective is only Minami-chan, he didn't intend on seriously opposing us, most likely."

"Rather than not intending to oppose, isn't it that he didn't want to become your enemy?"

To Miyuki's consolation too, only bitter responses returned.

"Senpai..."

"...I'm sorry. I was childish."

Tatsuya raised his voice to reproach Mayumi, who seems to have finally recognized her own lackluster attitude.

“No...I think it’s natural to be frustrated when you lose.”

To Miyuki’s words, Mayumi’s face revealed a groan and tilted her head.

“...Miyuki-san, have you ever lost?”

“...Yes, umm...I have, but...”

“S-Sorry. I asked something weird.”

“By the way, is Juumonji-senpai still chasing Minoru?”

Tatsuya changed the topic before the atmosphere became strange.

“Yes. But I didn’t hear it directly from him.”

Mayumi responded, also taking advantage of Tatsuya’s incentive.

“The people of the Juumonji Family said so.”

Mayumi let out a small breath. She wasn’t ridiculing herself, not pitying herself, it was a sigh of admiration.

“Juumonji-kun really is amazing...He repelled Minoru-kun with no injuries, I can’t say it enough.”

“Juumonji-senpai’s skills are definitely magnificent...but I think Juumonji-senpai would have a harder fight if he was alone.”

At Miyuki’s words, Mayumi tilted her head with a ‘uh?’.

“Fighting Kasumi-chan and Izumi-chan, and then fighting Saegusa-senpai, Minoru-kun must have been considerably exhausted too. Without your struggles, Juumonji-senpai would have been hurt.”

“Is that right...? No, it is right. I will believe so. Thank you, Miyuki-san.”

Mayumi smiled at Miyuki, and Miyuki responded to that with a small bow.



Afterwards, they talked to both Kasumi and Izumi who woke up, and then returned to their home.

They didn’t visit Minami’s hospital room. They only visited in the evening, and they heard that Minami was already asleep as she was tired from rehab.

“Seems like our senpai and the twins have gone home.”

While looking at the screen of the portable terminal in the living room, Tatsuya told Miyuki of its contents.

“I think it would be better to stay at the hospital for one night...but I guess it’s easier to calm down at their own home?”

“You can’t calm down at a hospital that is led by the Yotsuba Family. Maybe they could, but Head-dono of the Saegusa Family can’t.”

“Onii-sama, you’re mean...But that may be the case.”

Confronted by Miyuki’s quick change in attitude, Tatsuya only smiled sarcastically.

Tatsuya let his smile end, and Miyuki too smiled in relief. Perhaps she thought she was ‘failing’ her own change in attitude¹⁹.

“By the way, Onii-sama. Can Juumonji-senpai capture Minoru-kun?”

It is undeniable that ‘must change topic’ was in Miyuki’s mind. But in spite of that, Miyuki was seriously concerned with the result of Minoru’s pursuit.

“It will be difficult.”

Tatsuya’s answer was concise and pessimistic.

Tatsuya knows the power Minoru holds in his hands – this was not the reason.

“Juumonji Family’s magic is revealed even in their nicknames, ‘Iron Wall’ and ‘Capital’s Final Defensive Wall’, meaning they are adequate for defending a base. They show incomparable power in intercepting and repelling an enemy, but it’s likely that they are not cut out for pursuit and capture jobs.”

“Now that you mention it, I remember that they didn’t even actively participate in the pursuit of parasites during the last ‘Vampire Incident’.”

“Everyone has good and weak points. Juumonji-senpai also thinks his nature fits ambushes rather than chases.”

“Oh, Onii-sama. I think aptitude and nature are not always aligned.”

“...You got me there.”

Tatsuya raised both his hands while smiling, and Miyuki responded with a prideful smile.

“Apart from what Juumonji-senpai thinks.”

The jokey smile vanished from Tatsuya’s face.

Miyuki also returned to meek expression.

“The scope of Minoru’s activities was naturally restricted, as his goal is to invade the hospital. If he is bound by the policy of avoiding destroying the hospital as much as he can, his invasion

¹⁹ Original script has 掌返し, which literally translates to “reverse the palm”. This is an idiom for changing one’s attitude or ways of thinking. In this case, Miyuki scolds Tatsuya for being mean, then immediately changes her mind. Tatsuya then displays his wry smile, reinforcing her former belief that he was being mean.

routes are limited to the front entrance, the night entrance, the staff entrance, the rear entrance and the rooftop. If you are Juumonji-senpai, you're better off waiting for Minoru to jump straight into your palm."

"But Minoru-kun has 'Parade' and 'Ghost Walker'. Both magics cause you to lose sight of what's in front of you. Even knowing it is coming, doesn't it make it hard to capture him?"

"It is not necessary to know exactly where Minoru is. At least not for Juumonji-senpai."

"...I'm sorry, what do you mean?"

"Magic barriers aren't useful just for protecting the inside from the outside. They can also be used to lock up what's inside so it won't go outside."

Miyuki whispered 'ah', hitting her hand on her mouth.

"I don't know in detail to what scale Juumonji-senpai can extend his magical barriers, but it probably doesn't reach 10 or 20 meters. If he predicts Minoru's activity area he can surround that area. If this is done, he can't escape with 'Parade' or 'Ghost Walker'."

"I see, if you know where he's coming from, if you're Juumonji-senpai..."

"You can capture him, regardless of his camouflage magic."

"Still, in situations where you can't identify where he is heading, isn't it difficult to beat 'Parade' and 'Ghost Walker'?"

"I think so. If your reasoning is correct, it should be difficult to capture an escaping Minoru."

Tatsuya finished talking, and revealed a bitter smile as he shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course, we're not talking about whether I can capture him. It would be hard for me to capture him even with Elemental Sight if he uses 'Parade' and 'Ghost Walker'."

"Is that so..."

"Leaving the search to someone else may be the fastest way...Let's hope for the Saegusa Family's and the Kudou Family's investigation network."



"That was a disaster..."

Minoru kept his back to the seat of the Cabinet, spitting out words of regret to himself together with a sigh of relief.

Just ten minutes ago he shook off the Juumonji Family's pursuit unit commanded by Katsuto, and boarded a Cabinet to go towards the Hokuriku region.

With the assistance of the parasite's healing ability, he had already healed the injuries inflicted by Katsuto.

Seating in the trailer of the Cabinet, Minoru changed his face with 'Parade', and he was convinced that he finally 'got away'.

But he still couldn't remove the 'Parade' disguise. Privacy is officially guaranteed inside the Cabinet, but he doesn't know how reliable that is. Maybe they set surveillance cameras for public protection. Also, there is no guarantee that the Ten Master Clans won't peep from that camera.

Even so, he was freed from his tension, even if not completely, and Minoru got some room to look back at his failure this evening.

Minoru didn't intent to underestimate the Ten Master Clans. But as seen by the result, he had no choice but to admit that he did underestimate them. He intended to kidnap Minami alone. He expected that it was possible.

But in practice, he couldn't even invade the hospital. He was doing good until he incapacitated the three Saegusa sisters, but he was forced to give up on Minami's abduction when he was opposed by the head of the Juumonji Family.

Mayumi, Kasumi and Izumi were also not easy to defeat. It may be seen as a victory that the fights concluded in a short time, but the three of them were far tougher than he expected.

Neither Kasumi nor Izumi would have fought as hard if they were alone. Even if they attacked at the same time, one plus one is not a threat to the current Minoru.

But the unification of the two with Multiplicative Cast definitely drove Minoru to a wall.

The outside of his body was frozen by the Izumi-led magic, it was not an act to get his opponents to lower their guard. If the parasite didn't have a healing ability, that would have been checkmate.

The 'Nitrogen Storm' right after too, if you don't know in advance about these two's magic specialties, the counterattack may have not been decided that skillfully.

Mayumi was even stronger than Kasumi and Izumi using Multiplicative Magic. The deciding move, the Ancient Magic from the continent, the attack technique that uses chemical bodies as a medium, was originally not supposed to be used this evening.

It was completely unexpected that Mayumi would break 'Parade'.

And then, Juumonji Katsuto. Minoru didn't know Katsuto well. Though they had met once, all that remained in his memory was nothing but simple greetings.

It was clear now that they crossed swords. No, it should be said crossed a sword with a shield.

Katsuto truly was an 'Iron Wall'. Even looking back at it again, a mental image on how to break through his protection didn't appear at all.

That he had just fought the Saegusa sisters was no excuse.

It was true that he was exhausted from the successive battles.

But that was according to Minoru's predictions, and he decided to attack tonight.

Besides the exhaustion from the fight against the sisters, he doesn't think he could outwit Katsuto. He doesn't think he would lose, but he also wouldn't beat him.

(...He might be an even more formidable opponent than Tatsuya-san for me...)

The intrinsic features of Phalanx completely nullify illusions and chemical bodies.

He has tactics to attack his 'masks' by locking up the 'range' of 'Parade'.

I can't defeat him with just my own strength.

In the seat of the Cabinet, Minoru harshly scolded himself in chagrin.

Chapter 5

The day after Minoru's attack, Tatsuya received a call from Maya.

He boarded the VTOL piloted by Hyougo that welcomed him and then went towards the Head House with the usual subterranean tunnel. They arrived at a time that could be considered morning rather than just before noon.

"We're really early."

Being called by Maya isn't particularly strange. The question is why would she summon him directly instead of using the telephone, and why so early.

"Frankly, important information has been brought to me from the Pentagon collaborators. The source of information being the source of information, I thought to discuss it directly."

The USA may have become the USNA, but the location of the Department of Defense didn't change. As the building's outward appearance didn't change, its nickname remained Pentagon.

"I didn't know we had collaborators in the Pentagon."

Ayako did not tell Tatsuya about Colonel Balance. Ayako properly differentiates her affection towards Tatsuya from the professional morals in handling information.

"Eventually, I will introduce them to you, Tatsuya-san."

Though his social position within the family was recognized, Tatsuya wasn't informed of the whole story of the Yotsuba family yet. There were many things he knew without being told, but it was far from everything.

"So that's what this is about."

"Yes."

With Maya's words, Tatsuya too restored his focus.

"Seems like the Stars' execution team has been dispatched."

"Execution instead of capture? That's a bit surprising."

He thought the Stars would almost certainly send a pursuit unit for Lina. She escaped one week ago. It's rather late.

But assassination was unexpected. Lina – Major Angie Sirius is a state-recognized Strategic-Class magician. The USNA has a substantial amount of regular forces, so the priority is lower than other countries, but it should still be a valuable military asset.

"It was not the Pentagon's decision."

"It was the judgement of the Stars?"

“Seems like they are turning a blind eye.”

“The USNA has some serious internal conflicts, don’t they?”

“Yes. That seems about right.”

Tatsuya doesn’t know what kind of conflict it is. But one force thinks of Lina as a hindrance and the other is reluctant to act due to her war potential as a Strategic-Class magician, so assassination is inevitable if she defects to another country. That was Tatsuya’s guess.

Maya knew USNA’s internal affairs very well, but didn’t explain it here.

“Do you know the specific invasion route?”

“If you knew, could you handle it?”

Tatsuya’s question turned into a question from Maya.

“With orders, I will deal with it.”

There was no hesitation in Tatsuya’s response.

Maya’s smiled broadly, her lips showing she was having fun.

From the facial expressions these two had, no feeling of repulsion towards murder could be seen.

Stars members arriving in Japan to officially carry out a lawless assassination in another sovereign nation. Reversing the situation, they can’t complain if they are killed? Perhaps this was what these two were really thinking.

“Unfortunately, I haven’t been told of any invasion routes. But I know the estimated time of arrival.”

“When is it?”

“Tonight.”

“...In that case, there’s no time to investigate.”

“That is so, isn’t it?”

Tatsuya’s bitter face seemed suspicious. After Maya spoke, she hid her mouth with a hand and dropped a refined laugh.

“...Sorry. But it’s not like I’m just sitting here doing nothing. I dispatched observers to the capital’s airport and air base. Though I haven’t done anything for sea routes, I think it’ll be fine to ignore them this time.”

“Problem is, can’t they just use an airport other than the capital’s?”

Tatsuya instantly pointed out the issue.

“That is so, isn’t it?”

To Maya, such thinking was not bad. Though at the same time she also wasn't impressed. She seems to believe that becoming aware of things to that extent is natural for him.

"Because we can't let this leak outside, if that happens we have no choice but to go with the plan of dealing with it as soon as it is detected."

"Yes."

Tatsuya had no objections to this plan.

"Then, in that case I'll leave it in your care."

Even if he had to restart the discussion, Tatsuya wasn't flustered.

"So it's fine for me to deal with it?"

"Truth be told that way there would be no future problems but...the gentlemen of the government will have a different opinion."

"Understood. I'll capture them as much as possible."

"Yes, please do that."

With that said, Maya stood up from her seat. Seems that with this, she has finished saying all she wanted to say.

Tatsuya also stood up and bowed towards Maya at a 45-degree angle.



After escaping from the combination of the Juumonji and Saegusa led by Katsuto, Minoru got off the Cabinet when he arrived in Toyama and entered an adequate private room in a café. The goal was confirming whether he completely got away from his pursuers.

Instead of having to face other guests and employees, the private room in this café had a full robot service, so there is a risk of being observed over the network attached to the eye camera of the androids – rather, a lot of female androids – that work in place of a human.

But given that Minoru changed his appearance with 'Parade' now, there is no caution towards being seen over the camera. In the first place, if you avoid being observed by cameras you can't walk in public spaces in this country nowadays.

The café private room, other than offering drinks and light meals, also offers network services and limited video software. Minoru didn't use it for anything other than order drinks though.

He considered trying divination to kill some time. According to knowledge acquired from Zhou Gongjin, though he can't hope for a perfect prediction, he can get abstract information that can be used as a reference for his future actions.

He took out a *Pan*²⁰ made of cloth from his waist pouch. It was made by embroidering threads with various colors, green, red, yellow, white and blue onto a black handkerchief-sized cloth. It's a tool for divination for legitimate 'Qi Men Dun Jia', not to be confused with 'Ghost Walker'²¹.

'Good fortune' regarding himself, and the result of location prediction was 'southwest' 'island' 'sky' 'port'.

(Usually when you think of sky and port you get airport? Southwest from here, an island with an airport...No, an island that is an airport?)

Kansai International Airport and Kobe Airport were the candidates that came to Minoru's mind. From instinct rather than divination, Minoru determined Kansai Airport as his destination.

Next, 'time' was predicted. The result, 'today' 'night'.

He still had time, but he didn't know what would happen there. It's better to arrive ahead of time.

The time for confirming the presence of pursuers has long passed. – The pursuers did not follow up.

Minoru left the private room of the café, and went towards the Cabinet station once more.



In this season, the time the sun sets in the Kansai region passes 19:00.

If the sky was clear, an afterglow would still be resisting the darkness. However, the sky covered in thick clouds announces the arrival of the evening to the ground.

A direct flight from Los Angeles, USNA, arrived at Kansai International Airport. In that airplane was one young man and one boy, but most of the passengers were Americans. The Anglo-Saxon appearance didn't stand out at all.

Maya's information and Tatsuya's guess were roughly right. There was one mistake, the execution team didn't come to Japan today, they sent a preparation team.

The young man with dark sunglasses – if you look closely, you can see that the right eye is artificial – is First Lieutenant Jacob Regulus. He was sent from Stars alone.

The boy who was his companion is Raymond Clark. He didn't come to Japan a second time on the instructions of his father Edward. It was decided by 'discussion' among the parasites.

²⁰ Pan is a board used in Qi Men Dun Jia, an ancient Chinese divination method.

<https://chimendunjia.blogspot.com/2014/08/history-and-background-of-qi-men-dun-jia.html>

²¹ Qi Men Dun Jia and Ghost Walker are both read "Kimon Toukou", just with different characters.

Raymond became a parasite while embracing the twisted obsession to bring Tatsuya down. With this strong desire, Raymond seized the initiative on the assassination of Tatsuya among the parasites.

“There’s something like a train station that way.”

Raymond finished the immigration process with a falsified passport and left the arrival lobby, pointing while looking back at his companion Regulus.

“Do you use trains?”

In contrast with Regulus who responded with telepathy,

“Shh!”

Hurriedly, Raymond warned him with his voice not to use his ‘voice’.

“Ah, uuh, I apologize.”

Regulus apologized to Raymond.

Instead of having to worry about bugs, telepathic conversation has the risk of being perceived by magicians and people with odd abilities. If they were to say which one is more troublesome, the latter wins by a vast margin.

Microphones have limited effective range. You can pick up a voice even if you are away from a specific target, even in crowds you can single out just a specific voice with voice filtering. But if you don’t know the target, that is impossible. At best, keywords can be recognized, but not to the extent required to chase a voice.

On the other hand, telepathy has no range limit. The range that can be caught changes depending on individual ability power, but it is the same as other magic, not naturally bound by physical distance.

Besides, the absolute number of people having conversations with telepathy is scarce. If by chance they were heard talking with telepathy, the other person may realize their true identities.

So before coming to Japan, the two discussed and decided not to use telepathy. However, telepathy is the natural mean of communication between fellow parasites. Regulus thoughtlessly used telepathy when he wanted to speak normally. Thus he immediately apologized honestly when it was pointed out.

And, their caution was not needless worry.



"This is Officer Karasawa from the Kobe Coast Guard Headquarters. We have received a telepathic transmission. It seems to be a passenger of the flight that arrived from Los Angeles just now, requesting a check on the country entry data."

One magician policeman who came to assist the airport security sensed Regulus' telepathy and immediately inquired the security center via radio.

"Affirmative...Magician cannot be confirmed in the passenger registry. It's possible the passport was forged. Officer Karasawa, do you know how they look?"

"It's a pair, one is a man in his twenties and the other a boy in his late teens. Both are Caucasian, the man has sunglasses on his grey hair. The boy has blonde hair. It seems it was the grey haired who used telepathy. They appear to be heading towards the Cabinet terminal."

"We will assist. Track and don't lose sight of them. Also, send a photo of those two."

"Roger."



"Raymond. The police are following us."

"Huh?"

Regulus was the first to notice the officer in uniform chasing them.

It is noticeable if a cop in uniform follows them, but in this case it seems the policeman's skill exceeds Raymond's, who is a novice.

"Sorry. I think they perceived the telepathy from before."

That said, Regulus is an elite magician soldier. Furthermore, at the time of the operation, he often can be trusted with the sniping jobs, which require good observation powers. Cops in uniform are easy to distinguish by their appearance, making it difficult to follow without being noticed.

"What do we do, Jack."

"We're not familiar with the territory. Hide and seek puts us at a disadvantage."

"Well then."

"Throw away the luggage. We didn't bring important things anyway."

Even if you're Stars, he didn't underestimate the world enough to think he could pass through the customs house carrying weapons. He is currently unarmed, he was planning to get supplies from Tokyo's embassy.

"Do you have your passport with you?"

“Yeah, I’m good.”

Raymond replied to Regulus’ question with a voice that was filled with unrest.

“Alright, let’s run!”

The two ran off, leaving the suitcase behind.



“Officer Karasawa here. The two people suspected of being magicians who illegally entered the country threw away their suitcase and started running. They changed their course to a manned taxi stand.”

The uniformed cop who was following Raymond and Regulus notified about the runners with his communicator.

“Chase them. Send a photo of the suitcase. We’ll collect it here.”

“Roger.”

The cop operated the information terminal while running and sent a photo of the suitcase to secure evidence.

“Received the data.”

“Requesting permission to use magic for movement.”

“Approved.”

At the same time he heard those words, the policeman flew towards the sky above the men.



“He’s chasing!”

A uniformed cop drew closer from the sky and stomped the ground.

Raymond noticed it quickly and gave Regulus the warning.

“Are you serious!?”

A Japanese policeman, having such flashy behavior in front of so many people! To Regulus, this was a completely unexpected event.

Flashy drama-like chases like this are seldomly seen in the USNA. In many States, there is the general rule for the police to not stand out as much as possible when they use magic, and the

reason is to not threaten the mental state of ordinary people. There are far more opportunities for citizens to witness magic from firefighters than policemen.

Actually, the circumstances in most regions in Japan are the same as in America. The Hanshin region is the exception. Naturally, it doesn't appear likely that this situation can be avoided even with prior knowledge.

Raymond pointed to the policeman, waving his hand in order to ward him off.

Right after, the body of the policeman who was approaching them until then was blown away.

"Raymond!"

"It can't be helped!"

Regulus ceased his reprimands. It truly couldn't be helped. – It had to be done. But with this, it has been exposed that they are disguised immigrants invading the country who can use magic.

There were signs of Magic Activation. Looks like the policeman who was hurled a few moments ago has come back. Other people are assembling to envelop them. Probably police assistance.

Regulus was in a hurry. By no means was he thinking of failing on the first step of the invasion of Japan. The base predicted that airports around the capital would be watched, so Kansai International Airport was chosen. That concern has become truly useless. Though the cause is his own carelessness, to be chased this far for such a minor mistake was not within Regulus' expectations.

Was it reckless to smuggle themselves in without mobilizing local collaborators?...

Such regrets crossed Regulus' mind.

However, getting caught quietly here is out of the question.

"It really is unavoidable. Raymond, force your way through."

Regulus invoked Self-Acceleration Magic and ran through the gaps in the crowd with no hesitation.

Raymond followed immediately. Raymond seemingly made contact with a passerby, but he wasn't concerned about serious injuries right now.

The two struggled to arrive at the manned taxi stand that also served as a tour guide.

"Steal a car."

"Understood!"

Raymond responded lively to Regulus' instructions.

Once prepared for a battle, Regulus is a first-class Star member of the Stars, referred as the strongest magic specialized unit in the world. He is not frightened by policemen. Raymond is an

amateur who is neither a soldier nor a policeman, but because he is an amateur, 'not being afraid' is being very effective in the current situation.

They searched for a manned taxi that looked fast. It would be even better if the driver wasn't the type that thinks of making pointless resistance.

However, both of them stopped their eyes – a large high-class car painted in black, rather than a taxi, attracted their look. It's a vehicle that the leaders of violent associations typically drive in.

"Get in."

Raymond and Regulus exchanged glances. They were spoken to with telepathy just now. It was obviously one of their brethren, that is, a parasite that spoke to them.

Raymond nodded towards Regulus.

Regulus rushed to the black vehicle and opened the rear door.

Raymond opened the passenger-side door.

The two got into the large sedan, which took off right away.

The presence of powerful magic covers the entire self-driving car.

"Is this... 'Parade'?"

Regulus mutters with telepathy.

"Yes, but please refrain from using telepathy."

He talked with his natural voice, and Regulus looked at the boy sitting next to him for the first time.

And he was lost for words.

He even forgot to breathe.

He had never believed in his wildest dreams that such a beautiful boy existed until now.

If it was just mere beauty, Angie Sirius' true face – Lina did not fall behind.

But Lina exudes a calm familiarity due to her personality beyond her gorgeous looks, there is no impression that it is hard to get close to her.

But this boy's good looks don't just look like a model, they are unworldly.

Bewitching, inhuman beauty.

I wonder if fallen angels have similar beauty? Regulus unintentionally thought about such incoherent things.

"There is a possibility that telepathy cannot be camouflaged with 'Parade'."

The boy continued, not caring about Regulus' impolite looks. He is likely used to being looked at.

"Ah, uum, sorry. You saved us. Thank you."

Lightly lowering his head while sitting,

"I am Jacob Rodgers. Call me Jack."

Aware that he had not introduced himself, and feeling flustered gave out his name. Also, 'Rodgers' is Regulus' real name.

"Don't mention it. My name is Kudou Minoru."

"I'm Raymond Clark."

Raymond turned his head and joined the conversation from the passenger seat.

"You said 'Kudou', you mean the 'Kudou' who founded the Ten Master Clans?"

Raymond innocently inquired, based on the knowledge obtained with Hliðskjálf.

"That is right. Clark, the Clarks from the Project Dione staff?"

"Yeah, that's it. Oh, you can call me Raymond."

"Alright. By the way, any places you want me to take you to?"

Regulus showed a slightly grim expression to Minoru's question.

"...The hands of the police are going to be around the hotel we booked."

"That is so. The passport data will have circulated due to the search."

Regulus scowled. Regulus also guessed that they would have been photographed and checked against the forged passports. But when so clearly told from someone else's mouth, the impatience could not be helped.

"If you don't mind, may I prepare a place to stay and new passports? Of course, with American nationality and with country entry records."

Regulus was cautious of Minoru's proposal, rather than thinking of 'being thankful'.

"Although you saved us, why are you going this far?"

When Regulus asked the question, Minoru expressed a smile that enthralled the others and made them tremble.

"Because I am the same as you two."

Regulus also knew. But it didn't seem like the only reason.

"Besides, there is something I want you to help me with."

"Huh, what?"

Raymond does not appear to be alarmed like Regulus.

As a parasite, Raymond seems more natural. Parasites are all pieces of a whole. While having independent consciousnesses as individuals, at the same time the whole shares one purpose. Essentially, it's impossible to betray a comrade, they just can't.

"There is a girl I want to be a comrade."

"A lover?"

Raymond got into it, his eyes shining.

"No, it's just unrequited as of yet. Oh, I don't intend to force her to become a comrade against her will. If she doesn't give me the okay, I'll give up."

"Heh...You're very patient. Worthy of praise. I respect that."

Regulus had a sense of discomfort from Minoru's words.

The idea of giving up on a comrade is the reverse of a parasite's instinct in the first place. It's a mentality more human than theirs.

Moreover, Regulus can't see Minoru's mind. He can't access Minoru's consciousness that should have one shared purpose.

There is no doubt that Minoru is a parasite. That is known without any question.

However, Minoru is something different from them.

This was Regulus' conclusion.



The use of telepathy by an illegal immigrant who escaped after being surrounded by the police was reported to the Futatsugi Family by the local police, and through the Futatsugi Family the information was shared among the Ten Master Clans.

"So it was Kansai?"

A telephone call from Hayama notified Tatsuya in the date of the night, just before the date change.

"Yes. The Kuroba Family has taken charge of the search. Like before, Tatsuya-sama should wait in Tokyo or Miyaki Island to receive madam's orders."

"If the illegal immigrants are from Stars, Lina is their goal. I understand. I will remain on alert."

"We will send you a photo of the illegal immigrants taken by the police. One of them is Raymond Clark."

Tatsuya opened his eyes lightly.

“Raymond Clark?”

“There is no definite proof yet, but it is presumed that Raymond Clark has parasitized, as seen from the Psion wave data observed at the same time.”

“You have become able to distinguish parasites with Psion radars? The results of your research, right?”

“All because of Tatsuya-sama’s assistance in securing a parasite for experiments.”

It was revealed by Maya at the special Master Clans Conference the other day that the Yotsuba Family took a parasite sealed at First High in February of last year. Tatsuya’s remarks were irony based on that, but it didn’t reach Hayama.

Tatsuya also doesn’t particularly intend to give Hayama a sour stomach by mentioning it. The fact that they became able to detect parasites with some device was what was important.

“Can’t we detect Minoru with those results?”

“Kurebayashi is developing a radar tuned for Kudou Minoru. Please wait a little while longer.”

Kurebayashi is the third butler in the Yotsuba Family hierarchy, and also the person in charge of the whole Yotsuba Family technical department and manages the former 4th Laboratory. He was also an excellent magic engineer and was the first teacher who taught magic engineering to Tatsuya.

“Understood. I’ll be waiting.”

“Tatsuya-sama’s words will be transmitted to Kurebayashi. Incidentally, how is Major Sirius doing?”

“She doesn’t seem to be bored yet.”

“So that’s how it is. If there is any need for something, we’ll prepare it instantly.”

“I’ll tell Lina.”

“Much obliged.”

After that, a simple salutation was exchanged and the Visiphone’s terminal screen turned dark.

Tatsuya was in his own room, not the living room. Miyuki wakes up early, so she was already in bed.

Ending the phone call, Tatsuya didn’t turn his thoughts to Miyuki, but Ayako.

One of the parasitized illegal immigrants is most likely a Stars magician. The Kuroba Family are in charge of tracking.

In itself, it is natural to take into consideration the division of roles inside the Yotsuba Family. The likelihood that Fumiya and Ayako will join is not small.

Those two have school work. Unlike Tatsuya, they are not exempt from attending Fourth High. But if it is the Kuroba Family, they'll prioritize their duty instead of high school.

He doesn't worry too much with Fumiya. His 'Direct Pain' is a Mental Interference Type Magic. It should work well against parasites. Rather, it can be said that the compatibility is good.

But Ayako has no means of attack that are effective against parasites.

She can give damage to the parasite's body like normal. But she won't reach its real body.

Even so, if the opponent is Stars she may do something. If the situation becomes unfavorable, she should at least be able to escape.

However, if she is confronted with Minoru—.

(Am I overthinking?)

The Kuroba Family were ordered to search for the illegal immigrant assumed to be from the Stars. Not to find Minoru.

— Tatsuya did not even consider that the Stars' preparation team and Minoru had already joined together.



Minoru took Raymond and Regulus along to the chintown in Kobe. It is a small area called Nankin-machi. Before World War 3, chintowns were successively established all over Japan, but only the ones in Yokohama and Kobe were left as towns when the war concluded.

In Kobe's chintown, as well as Yokohama's, Zhou Gongjin had a hideout. The people who work there, even though Minoru is their new master, obey without question. They are not concerned with their master's appearance. Just holding the 'key' to the treasure warehouse that can only be opened by the master was enough to welcome him as their master. Since Minoru pulled the information about the mechanism of the 'key' from Zhou Gongjin's ghost, he could open the treasury with no problem.

Without deliberately trying to know the contents, when Minoru opened the door of the treasury in anticipation, he was dejected to find it was mere junk, but that is another story.

It was the next day, Thursday the 27th, when Minoru and his comrades had a discussion.

"...In other words, Jack's goal is to find the current location of the deserter Major Sirius, right?"

Regulus nodded to Minoru's question. He didn't reply immediately because he was forcing himself to not use telepathy.

"I will destroy Major Sirius with my own hands if I can. If it turns out to be difficult, I'll wait for the arrival of my comrades to unite our forces."

“How soon will your comrades come to Japan?”

“They are scheduled to arrive at Camp Zama in 4 days, on the evening of the 1st of July. However, severe surveillance is expected from the Japanese authorities because of the operation in February of this year. Even when they arrive, we probably won’t be able to move much. We need to gather some information to fulfill our objective at once.”

The operation in February of this year was an assassination mission commanded by Canopus for the sake of not letting the Japanese authorities get their hands on Gu Jie. After that incident, the National Defense Forces toughened their attitude towards the USNA, who crushed their honor.

“I understand. My subordinates will follow you in your search for Major Sirius’ location.”

“Subordinates, from the Kudou Family? I thought the eldest son, Haruaki-san, would succeed in the Kudou Family, can you even move your troops freely?”

Raymond asked, inserting his mouth from the side.

“You’re very informed, aren’t you, Raymond? Did you search with the Hliðskjálf?”

However, it was Raymond who received a shock.

“You know about Hliðskjálf!?”

Minoru ambiguously smiled. If you’re an ordinary person, this is a ‘deceptive smile’, but when it’s Minoru it becomes a ‘mysterious smile’.

“I also have many information sources.”

“.....”

“The matter of cooperation in the search, I request your assistance.”

Raymond’s face solidified in surprise, and Regulus restored the original discussion.

“Also, would it be fine if we help you? Would it be fine to bring someone to your girlfriend?”

“If possible I’d like to request your assistance, but...”



Minoru bitterly smiled.

In contrast, Regulus' expression looked stuffy. He thought his ability was being doubted.

Even seeing that, Minoru didn't appear impatient.

"She is a member of the Yotsuba Family."

Regulus opened his eyes wide when he was told the honest facts with a casual tone.

"Yotsuba, that Yotsuba?"

"Yeah. The 'Untouchables' Yotsuba Family. Even though I said member, she is a servant and a close associate of the next head of the Yotsuba Family."

Raymond muttered 'close associate of Miyuki...?', but made no further remarks.

"She is currently hospitalized in a hospital in Tokyo, but the Ten Master Clans have secured the surroundings to capture me, who became a parasite."

"You mean not just the Yotsuba Family, but also others of the Ten Master Clans?"

"Yeah."

To Regulus question, Minoru nodded.

"Specifically, the Saegusa Family and the Juumonji Family. But that's only what I figured out."

The evening of the day before yesterday, Minoru was met with nothing but a painful experience at the hands of Katsuto. But he already thought of some plans to pass through the Saegusa Family's and the Juumonji Family's guards.

"The problem is the last barrier of the Yotsuba Family's protection. Shiba Tatsuya-san...You know the name, don't you? It's someone also connected to you."

"Oh, I know him.", replied Regulus.

Raymond was about to say something, but for now he was displaying a listening posture.

"I know the magicians of the Yotsuba Family have skill that separates them from the other families. When Tatsuya-san joins there, I won't be able to reach her."

The other day was a draw. But Tatsuya was not as serious as Minoru himself. Though they didn't surpass one another, they were not serious in the sense of 'killing the other party is inevitable'.

This time, Minoru does not intend to attract Tatsuya. As an opponent, he is different from Katsuto. Against Tatsuya there is a conflict of policies over his existence. Tatsuya is stubborn. If he attracts Tatsuya many times more, he will have to accept he is wrong.

Just because you fight seriously until the end, it doesn't mean it won't be a draw.

In that case it's meaningless. If he falls, he won't be able to save Minami.

Minoru had fallen into such dilemma.

Besides, he wasn't completely aware but there was another thing worrying him.

The last match was even. But during this time, Tatsuya may be thinking of magic to oppose the parasites.

Minoru learned a lot of new magic from taking in Zhou Gongjin's knowledge, but Zhou Gongjin is a ghost. He can't create something new. But Tatsuya has the Yotsuba Family – along with the former 4th Laboratory, and Japan's top-class Ancient Magician, Kokonoe Yakumo.

It is not Tatsuya's power that Minoru is afraid of in the depths of his heart, it's his wisdom and the people around him.

"Then, is it fine if I am Shiba Tatsuya's opponent?"

To Regulus' question, Minoru nodded once again.

"You don't need to defeat him. If you can take Tatsuya-san to some faraway place, I can take her out."

"A diversion?"

"Exactly."

"That is so half-hearted!"

So said Raymond.

"Minoru, isn't Tatsuya an obstacle to you? Then he should die. Otherwise, even if you succeed in taking that girl out, Tatsuya will chase you!"

Minoru raised his eyebrows at Raymond's hysterical tone.

"That doesn't matter. If she gives a nod, the parasite transplant will end within that day. If she disagrees, I intend to return her to the Yotsuba Family at once."

But the tone that explained this to Raymond was calm.

"Weak! Minoru, do you truly love this girl? If you like her enough to carry her away, it's ridiculous to consider such half-baked things like returning her!"

"Hey, Raymond..."

Regulus reproved Raymond. But his voice did not reach Raymond's ears.

"Tatsuya is an obstacle that should disappear from this world!"

"Raymond, calm down!"

Regulus strongly held Raymond's shoulder, forcibly silencing him.

"I apologize, Minoru."

"No, I don't mind."

As those words suggest, Minoru didn't care about Raymond's wave of excitement, at least on the surface.

"I also consider Shiba Tatsuya an opponent to be killed, but for now let's give priority to Minoru's objective."

"It would be really helpful if you do so."

"But...if we can kill him, there is no problem if we do it?"

"Yeah, there is no problem."

There was a small delay in Minoru's response regarding the words added by Regulus, but this could hardly be noticed.



Today, Tatsuya spent the morning in Miyaki Island, and in the afternoon he went to First High.

He spent the school hours in the library, and after school he went not to the Student Council, but to the Public Morals Committee Headquarters.

"Mikihiko, are you here?"

"Tatsuya!? You came today?"

Good timing, Mikihiko was not patrolling, he was working at his desk.

"Since afternoon."

Tatsuya replied to Mikihiko. Next to him, a small silhouette tried to pass him silently.

"Kasumi, is your body fine?"

Tatsuya called out to his junior.

Kasumi reluctantly stopped her feet.

"I'm fine. Sorry for making you worry."

"I see. That's good."

Kasumi lowered her head to Tatsuya with a sour look. Then, she hurriedly left the headquarters.

"...What happened?"

It's natural for Mikihiko to wonder what that scene was about.

"Kasumi's attitude didn't mean anything, but I'd like to ask you a favor related to that."

"Ask me...?"

“Oh. The other day, we talked about Minoru?”

Mikihiko’s complexion changed. Tatsuya’s favor involves sensing parasites, so he became nervous.

“Yeah, I remember.”

“The day before yesterday, Minoru appeared near the hospital where Minami is.”

“Eh!? Then...”

Mikihiko shut his mouth and eyes in surprise.

He quickly closed the Public Morals Committee Headquarters’ doors and finally ‘closed’ the room with a barrier from a charm he took out.

“...Sorry to keep you waiting, Tatsuya. Let’s sit down and talk.”

“Yeah.”

Tatsuya and Mikihiko sat face to face with the long table between them.

“Umm...The day before yesterday, Saegusa-san fought Minoru-kun, didn’t she?”

“Exactly. There were no physical injuries, but she was put to sleep with genjutsu magic. Even before that, there was concern of after-effects from the damage she took from magic that caused oxygen deprivation. Still, it seems that there isn’t any problem, which gives me some peace of mind.”

“Is that so...”

While it was Tatsuya who said peace of mind, he looked indifferent, unlike Mikihiko who was listening to the story while holding his chest in relief.

“And what is your request? If you need help catching Minoru-kun, I will gladly lend you my assistance.”

Mikihiko leaned his body on the table. Like he said Monday, Mikihiko considers it his job as an Ancient Magician to deal with parasites.

“I may ask you to lend a hand with that too eventually. But right now, I wanted you to help with my training.”

“Training?”

With Mikihiko’s incitement, Tatsuya explained the details of his training.

“Since I only have time after school, you’ll have to take a short break from Public Morals Committee work, can I still ask you to do it?”

“What are you talking about?”

Mikihiko revealed a sarcastic laugh.

For Tatsuya, it can be said that a girl was the only important thing.

For society, the most important thing is suppressing the rampant spirits.

And yet Tatsuya has the honest sense of duty to care about the effect on what is only high school extracurricular activities, which Mikihiko found strange.

"I don't know what you're thinking, but Public Morals Committee work is less important than your training. Besides, it's about time I started thinking of who will inherit the Public Morals Committee chairman position. In that sense, this is a good opportunity."

Mikihiko expressed his agreement to Tatsuya's request.



In general, it is believed that supernatural beings are active in dark nights. Particularly vampires have that strong image.

But parasites are not weak in the sun. Because of habits from when they were human, they sleep in the night and wake in the morning unless there's something to do.

Since they are parasites, they became immune to jet lag. Regulus had great interest on what mechanism this is based on. But he is not a scholar, so even if he thinks about it he won't know the truth. He kept his interests as they were and went into his bed.

It was exactly at that time that the door to his room was knocked on. While he was hearing the knocking sound, he knew who it was.

When Regulus opened the door, Raymond stood alone as he had inferred.

"Is it fine if I come in?"

"Feel free."

Honestly speaking, it was a bad time to bother him, but it must be an important matter if he visited so late. Regulus thought so when he opened the door.

"So, what is it?"

"It's about Minoru."

"What about him? I don't think there was anything he did that was particularly suspicious"

"You don't think so?"

Seems that Raymond didn't agree with Regulus' words.

"Minoru is strange."

"What's strange about him?"

Raymond shut his mouth for a little while. It was not hesitation, it was time to rethink how he should say it.

“...Our telepathy, for some reason, can’t communicate across national borders.”

“And?”

“But if we use telepathy, we share the same purpose. Even if our original parasite is different, the rule should still apply.”

Raymond and Regulus became parasites in the micro-black hole experiment held this month.

On the other hand, Minoru changed the host of a parasite who lost its way into this world with the experiment done in November of 2095.

However, even if the details of how they became parasites differ, they are still the same kind of living thing. That is both Minoru’s and their intuition, no, they understand it with their true feelings.

Besides, the origin of the parasite that Minoru assimilated is also USNA, it has its roots in the same experiment facility in Dallas. Even if Raymond pointed out the difference in their origins, strictly speaking, it was not correct.

“Raymond, what do you want to say?”

“Why doesn’t Minoru agree with us?”

Raymond responded to Regulus’ question with a question of his own.

“...The Shiba Tatsuya thing?”

“That’s right. Our purpose should be uniform about eliminating Tatsuya. And yet, why did Minoru disagree with Tatsuya’s death?”

“He didn’t seem to oppose to Shiba Tatsuya’s elimination. But for Minoru there is something else that should be prioritized.”

“That is strange. We decided that burying Tatsuya was our current top priority.”

“Didn’t we have that discussion in the States? Our telepathy can’t cross borders, you said it just now, Raymond.”

Raymond kept silent when stabbed by his contradictory words.

“We are pure intention, strong desires, and we are drawn to unification with humans. Our strong will invites parasites.”

These words from Regulus denote the duality of parasites. The point of view of the parasite before unifying with a human, and the point of view of the human before being eroded by the parasite, coexisting within the original parasitized human.

“The strongest will inside Minoru was the desire to save the woman he loves. If that’s the case, it would be strange not to give it top priority.”

Regulus and Raymond discussed in the morning, and heard why Minoru wanted to make Minami a parasite. – While revealing that much, Minoru had yet to tell them Minami’s name.

“That’s unacceptable! Our top priority target must be Tatsuya!”

“You shouldn’t say that...”

Regulus, like Raymond, is being drawn to erase Tatsuya. However, that is because Regulus intends to ‘neutralize Strategic-Class Magic which has become a threat to his country’.

Raymond’s original feelings were also ‘to bring Tatsuya down’, not ‘to erase Tatsuya’. This was the effect of the intentions of Stars members who recognized that a threat like ‘Material Burst’ should be eliminated.

Like this, the intentions of the parasites were mixed together. It’s certain that the individuals who hold the strongest desires take the initiative of the parasite’s collective consciousness, but the intentions of one individual don’t dominate other individuals. For example, by associating with Minoru, even if he takes the initiative, Regulus’ and Raymond’s intentions won’t be ignored.

“Understood. Then, I will discuss it with Minoru tonight.”

“If you want to do it, then fine.”

They already made sure last night that Minoru communicates with the same ‘line’. Since Regulus, Raymond and Minoru are connected, if Raymond and Minoru ‘talk’, Regulus will be included.

Someone taking the initiative is characteristic of them. Regulus had no reason to stop Raymond.



Minoru suddenly woke up in the middle of the night. It was not caused by physiological desires. He was awakened by a noisy voice he heard in the depths of his heart.

(–Wake up, Minoru/us.)

To this call, Minoru had a wry smile.

(Raymond, huh? What is it at this hour?)

Minoru didn’t recognize ‘Raymond/us’.

(No surprise uh? I thought this is your first time talking within our collective consciousness.)

(First time talking, but it’s not the first time hearing voices.)

(That shouldn’t be the case.)

Sensing confusion from Raymond's telepathy, Minoru couldn't hold back a laugh.

(Didn't telepathy not reach across national borders?)

Minoru didn't intend to mock him. But unlike a conversation using their real voices, along with the fact he didn't use polite language, Raymond mistakenly thought he was being looked down on. – Misunderstanding other's intentions is something that can't naturally happen with parasites that share intention.

(That thinking is wrong. Telepathy can reach across borders. As evidence, becoming one intention also interfered with me. But across borders, the consciousness just can't understand the meaning the words from telepathy have. In human telepathy this phenomenon doesn't happen though. There are many inexplicable restrictions to the abilities we have as parasites.)

(That is strange...)

(Maybe the process of transmitting from the parasite's real form to the consciousness of the original human is failing in translation.)

Raymond was not the only one in silence. Regulus who was in the mixed consciousness was speechless as well.

(That doesn't really matter right now. You've contacted me in the deep consciousness like this. Is there some intention you want to unite?)

(How do you know things like that...isn't Minoru/us the only active comrade in this country!?)

(There is one more. He is completely sealed now, but he was screaming sometimes when used for experiments. I want to go help, but there is a strong barrier so I can't interfere.)

Minoru is talking about the parasite sealed by the Yotsuba Family. The seal from Yotsuba Family's Mental Interference Type Magic doesn't break with the power of the parasitized Minoru. The very opposite, he can't even understand where he's being held captive.

The signs of others becoming speechless are once again transmitted.

It seems that he really despises him, Minoru thought.

(No, Minoru/we weren't making fun of you. We don't want you to misunderstand that.)

Because that thought wasn't concealed, the explanation was transmitted in a hurry. They were Regulus' words, but Raymond's 'voice' was mixed within.

(Understood. And?)

Minoru once again asked what their business was. In fact, though Raymond's thinking was transmitted to Minoru, he tried to make him say it from his own mouth to advance this messy conversation.

(We are a single body, all of us a single living being. Our intentions must be one.)

Minoru did not agree with nor deny it.

That Raymond and Regulus are such a living being, Minoru understood.

But Minoru denied that he became so.

If I don't stay as I am, I can't make her into a parasite. If I can't use it to cure her, becoming a parasite has no meaning for me.

Minoru didn't intend to deny how Raymond and Regulus are. But, when 'we' was said, he wasn't planning on being included.

(We intend to destroy Shiba Tatsuya. Minoru's/our intentions will also be the same!)

Those intentions and thoughts surged in.

Raymond and Regulus are not just the thoughts of two people. They don't seem to be aware, but their minds are connected to their compatriots of the USNA even if they don't communicate. At the Stars Headquarters, all parasitized members are in complete harmony with the thought, as it continues to grow even now and is now trying to swallow Minoru whole.

Minoru is fighting against it. By fighting, various thoughts that should be one barged into Minoru's 'ear'. Dozens, hundreds of whispers grazed his consciousness.

Among them, the most predominant was the intention to eliminate Tatsuya.

The members of the Stars are behind Raymond's and Regulus' backs, and they have just been informed of the threat of the Strategic-Class Magician Shiba Tatsuya. It may be natural that it will be so.

Minoru didn't use magic techniques to confront the surge of thoughts swallowing him, instead he fought back by facing it and embracing his strongest 'desire'.

He doesn't want Minami. In Minoru there is no desire to make her his. He just abandoned his humanity for his desire to save that girl from the same situation he was in. Because it was for someone other than himself, he could win against the encroaching temptation.

Individuality acquires form. Impulses and desires in the core of the spirit, how to make use of the law, what to forbid and what to allow, the connections within society, each person's associations, it takes its form with resistance.

As such, the frame confining the self is thrown away, and the self exists as a person with its own desires different from other living beings. – If greed was the core, he would certainly not be able to withstand the temptation. Because it was 'for the sake of someone other than myself', and not 'for my own sake', Minoru could preserve his 'self'.

It was a long battle.

It was an instant battle.

In the spiritual world, time has no length. Time is not a continuous line, it is made of points. The only information is 'long time' and 'instant time'.

At the end of that instantaneous eternal battle – the one standing was Minoru.

(Raymond, will you cooperate with me? First, we bring her along. After that, Tatsuya-san.)

(I/We follow Minoru's intention.)

Until the end, Minoru was himself.

But whether he changed or not, something was different.

Even humans change when they are exposed to the same things dozens, hundreds of times. Even if denied at first, empathy will slowly grow.

Even Minoru was not indifferent to such human weaknesses. Even if he isn't a human being, he is still concerned about himself, and has similar strong points and weak points as he originally did.

Continuously being exposed to whispers to eliminate Tatsuya dozens, hundreds of times,

(Let's deal with Tatsuya-san later.)

Minoru's consciousness was also led into changing without him realizing.

Chapter 6

Even though there was a smuggling incident at Kansai International Airport, Japan was generally peaceful.

The fierce battle that unfolded between Minoru and Raymond occurred in the spiritual dimension, so the general public doesn't know about it.

The aggression by the anti-magic ideologists is in a lull.

Even if there are no strict demands for the delivery of Major Sirius, the Great Asian Union won't mess with the Nansei Islands. Particularly in the current calm diplomatic situation, both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Defense Forces had an ominous feeling.

Regarding the Great Asian Union, the reasons were revealed on Friday, 28th of June.

Along with the news that shook the world.

"We have a special news report."

Tatsuya and Miyuki, who were at the table just before going to school in the morning, turned to the tense voice of the newscaster.

Tatsuya held the chopsticks and Miyuki put hers down with good manners and turned her face towards the television.

"Earlier today, the Great Asian Union and the New Soviet Union broke into war."

Miyuki opened her eyes wide. If she still had her chopsticks on her hand, she might have dropped them on the table.

As expected of Tatsuya, he set the chopsticks down normally and prepared to listen to the news.

"Late at night from yesterday to today, the Great Asian Union broke through the border to the west of Lake Khanka. Then they went south and started advancing towards Ussuriysk. In response, the New Soviet Union immediately mobilized the Far Eastern Forces stationed in Vladivostok and the two armies confronted each other 30km north of Ussuriysk. The intense battle still continues."

Miyuki switched her eyes to Tatsuya with an awkward movement.

"Onii-sama, this is serious..."

Tatsuya looked away from the television and linked his eyes with Miyuki's.

"This is a military conflict in an area close to Japan. It is likely that effects on our country are unavoidable."

Tatsuya's voice was also revealing a tension different from normal.

In the television studio, a commentator appeared before the camera.

"The goal of the Great Asian Union should be to take the southern part of Primorsky Krai. For the Great Asian Union who brought the Goryeo Autonomous Region under their control, this area, particularly Vladivostok, has the geostrategic meaning of a knife being thrust at their throat. It wouldn't be a mistake to assume the Great Asian Union has been waiting for an opportunity to remove this threat since then."

A map was projected on the television. Seeing that, the words of agreement 'I see' came from the newscaster's mouth.

"However, if Vladivostok is the goal, why specifically taking a route going south from Lake Khasan? It seems that invasion from the Goryeo Autonomous Region would be closer."

"The Great Asian Union's navy has suffered great losses in the battle against our country during the Yokohama Incident and has yet to recover from the damage. If they were to attack Vladivostok from the south they would have to cooperate with the navy, so I think they had to abandon the attack route from the Goryeo Autonomous Region."

"That's probably right."

Tatsuya agreed with the commentator's explanation.

"Why did the Great Asian Union decide on an invasion strategy now?"

"I think large-scale preparations started more than a year ago. The Japan-Asia peace treaty signed on November of 2095 was quite favorable towards Japan. The central government of the Great Asian Union needed external military results to recover their dignity. But I think the decisive blow was a rumor going around military officials for a few days."

"A rumor?"

The newscaster tried to steer the conversation towards the rumor and the commentator, though reluctant to, revealed its contents.

"There is a rumor that the New Soviet Union's state-recognized Strategic-Class Magician Dr. Bezobrazoff has died or fallen unconscious."

"I didn't know that."

Regardless of whether the timing of Tatsuya's interjection was funny or not, Miyuki's serious face let out a quiet laugh.

"Taking into account the quality of the military force of both countries, the New Soviet Union is winning, but in sheer numbers the Great Asian Union is superior. Also, the New Soviet Union's military force is widely spread in East Asia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, and the Siberian Army, deployed north of the East Asian military force, is the main force. If the New Soviet Union's Strategic-Class Magician is inactive, it is likely the Great Asian Union predicted that it is enough to increase their chances of winning."

“How reliable is the information that Dr. Bezobrazzoff is unable to help in the war?”

“I think I can’t say it’s baseless. Just one week ago the signs of magic, assumed to be New Soviet Union’s Strategic-Class Magic, were observed over the skies of Hachioji in Tokyo, but news from Dr. Bezobrazzoff stopped a short while ago.”

“There were also talks about New Soviet Union’s large-scale magic attacking the Izu Peninsula earlier this month.”

“That is so. These surprise attacks were in all likelihood executed according to military decisions. I think it’s likely that Dr. Bezobrazzoff was investigated over that.”

“Dr. Bezobrazzoff appealed for world peace with Project Dione, but he’s related to the attack on Izu Peninsula...”

“How is the Great Asian Union’s expected to move from now on?”

The assistant who hadn’t spoken until then inserted his words in a bit of a rush. Maybe they were instructed by the director to ‘not touch the subject of Project Dione too much’.

“Let’s see.”

The commentator followed the assistant’s topic change as well.

“The Great Asian Union should want to conclude the war before the Siberian forces join. In other words, I think they want a decisive battle that lasts a short time.”

“Then, New Soviet Union’s side want to bring it to a war of attrition until the reinforcements are prepared?”

The newscaster came back to the conversation here. He wasn’t bring up the Bezobrazzoff topic again.

“That’s what I think.”

“Will the Great Asian Union side use Strategic-Class Magic?”

“The introduction a few days ago, well, made the existence of Second Lieutenant Liú Lì Lěi obvious.”

After that the discussion continued but if they didn’t leave the house soon they would be late for school.

Even if they are late, they were only worried about Miyuki. Tatsuya escorts Miyuki to school and afterwards becomes free to do what he wants.

“Onii-sama, what will you do today?”

Miyuki asked Tatsuya the question inside the Cabinet.

“Unless there is a call from Lieutenant Colonel Kazama, I will go to FLT.”

“You’re not going to Lina’s place?”

“I could do that.”

It surely has something to do with the military conflict between the Great Asian Union and the New Soviet Union. Miyuki thought so, but didn’t ask for more details.



Tatsuya’s predictions came true.

“Special Officer Ooguro. I think it is regrettable that the current situation that damages our relationship with you continues. But as you know, an emergency has occurred. Could you come to the base right away?”

“Roger.”

Tatsuya, who was returning to his apartment home, immediately agreed with Kazama’s request that seemed a bit selfish.

Even if he quarreled with the National Defense Forces, nothing good would come of it. Besides, Tatsuya was uninterested in prolonging the situation.

“I apologize.”

With or without knowing Tatsuya’s feelings, Kazama bowed his head lightly.



Minoru also saw the news of the military conflict that happened in the Far East at the same time as Tatsuya. Though just last night Minoru won a violent battle, he wasn’t indulging in laziness. – Both Raymond and Regulus have yet to wake up. Due to the nature of parasites, it obviously not jet lag.

“I probably shouldn’t think about these things, but...”

This may lead to some opportunities. Minoru thought so.

(If this military conflict drags on, the Ten Master Clans will also have to focus their attention on the Sea of Japan. Even if it ends in a short time, if the victorious faction keeps their momentum and goes south to the Sea of Japan, the Ten Master Clans will have to deal with it, and I won’t have to care about it...)

If the commentator on the television is correct, this war was triggered by the large damage dealt by Tatsuya’s counterattack to Bezobrazzoff.

(Tatsuya-san will feel this is ironic, but it may be karma.)

Minami was injured due to Bezobrazzoff's attack, and if the influence of Bezobrazzoff's fall circulates, Tatsuya will lose ways to protect Minami.

Just as Minoru thought, this surely is ironic karma for Tatsuya.



Tatsuya cancelled his plans to visit Miyaki Island and work at FLT and headed to the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion Headquarters base in Lake Kasumigaura.

Of course, this matter has been reported to Maya. Though it would be fine to go talk to them directly, Maya is looking forward to repairing the connection with the National Defense Forces. It seems that it is hard to abandon the mobilization power of the National Defense Forces who can deploy a large number of military personnel.

"Special Officer, you came."

Kazama welcomed Tatsuya, who responded with a salute.

It was his adjutant Fujibayashi whose expression shifted. Lieutenant Colonel Kazama returned the salute to Tatsuya with a natural expression.

"Today isn't about the other thing. We wanted to hear about Bezobrazzoff."

When the villa in Izu was attacked, Tatsuya told Kazama that Bezobrazzoff was not the opponent he killed. However, the outcome of being targeted afterwards was not reported to the army. Since Tatsuya reported to the Head House, there is no need for Tatsuya to say anything unless the Yotsuba Family provides information to the National Defense Forces, which seems wasn't the case.

"I didn't directly attack Bezobrazzoff. However, since I decomposed a large CAD while it was running, it's likely he received some kind of damage."

"A train-model CAD, I was informed a few days ago."

"Exactly."

"Destroying the connection to that CAD while it is running will cause great mental damage through Magic Calculation Area. When you destroyed the CAD, was Bezobrazzoff connected?"

"Since then we haven't been attacked by Tuman Bomba, so it seems that is very likely."

"Hmm..."

Kazama pondered, chewing the information he was given.

"...How likely do you think it is that Bezobrazzoff died?"

"Not even 1%."

“So zero?”

“It doesn’t matter if I say it in other words.”

After replying, Tatsuya added the words that didn’t need to be said, ‘the likelihood of accidental death unrelated to this matter is not zero’.

“So he’ll return soon. Do you think Bezobrazzoff will make it in time for the current Great Asian Union invasion?”

“If the New Soviet Union executives don’t consider it a problem to crush Bezobrazzoff, he could be deployed right now. However, if they want a satisfactory victory, it’s unreasonable to do so immediately.”

“Specifically how long do you think it’ll take?”

“If past examples are anything to go by, the time needed to recover from the damage of forced CAD disconnection is from 10 to 20 days.”

Today is Friday.

He was attacked by Tuman Bomba at First High on the Thursday of the week before.

“In short, as little as two days or as long as two weeks.”

“That is the case.”

“Understood.”

While Kazama nodded, Tatsuya talked to him this time.

“Lieutenant Colonel. There is something I want to talk about.”

“Say it.”

“You may already know this, but this country is once again exposed to the parasite menace.”

“I know about the Kudou Family matter.”

“There was a new parasite outbreak in the USNA.”

“What...?”

It appears that the National Defense Forces were not told about it yet. Or maybe information has not reached Kazama yet?

Either way, Tatsuya didn’t feel reluctant to give this information.

“Last week, a revolt by parasitized members occurred at the Stars Headquarters base. Currently, Stars Headquarters is actually occupied by parasites.”

“...Did you get this information from Major Sirius?”

“No. We were told the facts by a relative of His Excellency Kudou, Miss Angelina Kudou Shields.”

Tatsuya once again insisted that he was not hiding 'Major Sirius'.

"— I see."

Kazama also didn't intend to bring up this discussion again.

"And it seems at least two parasites have infiltrated Japan."

"What!?"

Kazama's expression didn't just look surprised, it was mixed with impatience.

"The police guarding Kansai International Airport detected illegal immigrants using telepathy. Because the passengers arrived in Japan in a direct flight from Los Angeles, it appears that it is highly likely that a Stars member parasitized another person, if we think in terms of time."

"Let's ask Her Excellency Saeki."

"I think you better do so."

The police of the Hanshin police should not keep the information on their own hands. Without reporting to the center, it would be unlikely that the information would reach the Ten Master Clans.

It is doubtful that the police gives the army information. It might not be good for the police to demonstrate their territoriality by borrowing the power of the National Defense Forces. But even so, the probability that Saeki procured detailed information from private routes is not low.

"Also, what did you mean by another person?"

"One of the two is Raymond Clark."

"...Is that a fact?"

"I confirmed the photo the police took. There is almost no room for mistake."

"Special Officer."

Fujibayashi, who was up until then taking notes diagonally behind Kazama, inserted her words "unintentionally".

"Raymond Clark, from that Edward Clark?"

"Yes. The son of Edward Clark, who proposed Project Dione."

Tatsuya cut his words momentarily, then suddenly added something else.

"And one of the 'Seven Sages', who made use of the information gathering system 'Hliðskjálf', a backdoor in the Echelon III, and also the person responsible for the disclosure of Taurus Silver's identity."

"...Wait, Special Officer. That's too much information for my head."

"From here forth is the real issue."

Fujibayashi's complaint 'I need a short break' was ruthlessly refused by Tatsuya.

"Go for it."

"Then, as Shiba Tatsuya of the Yotsuba family, I request the cooperation of the National Defense Forces' Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion."

Kazama's eyes emitted a strong light, correcting Fujibayashi's posture which had become out of shape.

"I think it's very likely that the smuggled parasite will collude with the parasitized Kudou Minoru."

Upon hearing Minoru's full name, blood rushed to Fujibayashi's face. However, Fujibayashi should already know about the parasitized Minoru through the Kudou Family. Tatsuya didn't feel the need to care about Fujibayashi's emotions at this time.

"Also, as Stars performs illegal activity in Japan, I think they won't send in just one person."

Tatsuya excluded Raymond from the group here.

He doesn't mean that Raymond is unimportant. Since he was parasitized, he predicted that his body has gained new powers that can't be ignored.

But with the Stars, he guessed that the number of people can't be counted.

"Certainly, they should have reinforcements. Before long, too."

"You're probably right."

Tatsuya's guess was logical, so Kazama had no counterarguments.

"Kudou Minoru's goal is our family's servant, Sakurai Minami."

At this point, Tatsuya switched the focus of the discussion from Stars to Minoru.

"If Kudou Minoru and Stars join forces, there is a possibility that it'll be too much to protect Sakurai Minami, even with the power of the Yotsuba Family."

"You mean you want us to borrow soldiers as guards?"

"No. If Stars tries to invade using shared bases like Yokosuka or Zama, could you prevent them?"

The Yotsuba Family is monitoring the private airport and air force base in the capital area. But the National Defense Forces' base can only be monitored from outside. Though they can sneak inside, it would take way too much time and effort in the current situation.

Instead of that, it would be more reasonable and take less time and effort for the National Defense Forces to observe the base of the National Defense Forces. Preventing the invasion of troops whose goal is illegal activity should be the job of the National Defense Forces in the first place. – Even if it is the troops of an ally.

"– Understood. Let's talk with the Naval General Staff through Her Excellency Brigade Chief."

Kazama didn't give Tatsuya any alternate conditions, as he also understood that this was the job of the National Defense Forces.

"By the way Special Officer. What do you think of the current conflict?"

"You mean who I think will win or lose?"

"Yes."

"The New Soviet Union will win."

Tatsuya replied immediately without any thought.

"Please tell me on what grounds."

"The invasion of the Great Asian Union is based on unreliable information about the absence of Bezobrazzoff. Since this precondition is incorrect, the moment that Bezobrazzoff joins the war, the morale of the Great Asian Union's troops will fall."

Specifically, the moment 'Tuman Bomba' is used.

Even without these words, they were transmitted to Kazama.

"Hmm...You don't think there is a possibility that it'll settled before Bezobrazzoff returns?"

"There is no conclusive difference in the military forces of the New Soviet Union army deployed in the Far East and the Great Asian Union army. Even if the Great Asian Union releases 'Thunderclap Tower', it'll be difficult to win in a short time."

'Thunderclap Tower' is a large-scale offensive magic used by the Great Asian Union's state-recognized Strategy-Class Magicians. This magic was devised by Liú Yúndé – who was killed in action by the destruction of the southern tip of the Korean peninsula by Tatsuya's 'Material Burst' – and his granddaughter Liú Lì Lěi was said to have inherited 'Thunderclap Tower' and became the new state-recognized Strategic-Class Magician.

"If the New Soviet Union wins and plans to invade Japan, –"

Kazama said, looking straight into Tatsuya's eyes.

"Can the National Defense Forces rely on your power?"

"There is no problem if you rely on me."

Even now Tatsuya didn't hesitate in his answer.

The compensation for borrowing the power of Toudou Aoba was to be a deterrent for the military of other countries. Tatsuya planned to take the necessary measures even if Kazama – the 101 Brigade didn't request it.

But being honest was unneeded. It was a good plan to make Kazama believe that he was 'borrowing' him.



It was the day after the start of the invasion of the New Soviet Union by the Great Asian Union.

In the Far East, in the New Soviet Union's Primorsky Krai, the opposing sides were alternating between attack and defense.

Throughout the world, the attention was on this conflict, but among them, Japan could be said to be adjacent to the battlefield, and as such observed the changes in the situation with great interest and precaution.

The rule prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons from World War 3 times is still active today.

The International Magic Association only intervenes when 'dirty nuclear weapons' are about to be used, but depending on the circumstances, biological weapons and chemical weapons that pollute the environment, large bombs that leave behind harmful residues and thermobaric explosives of the kind that spread toxic substances in the atmosphere are also 'self-regulated'. Because of this, modern war is fought with traditional bullets, bombs that injure or kill with shrapnel, and expensive 'environment-friendly' high-powered bombs. A 'rich' army may include weapons that use electromagnetic waves or high energy lasers.

In other words, old kinds of weapons are still mainstream and there is a tendency for war to drag on if decent troops clash. In this case, 'decent' means 'with reliable military logistics'.

To defeat the enemy in a short period of time, it is necessary to have weapons they don't have.

The chances of victory of the Great Asian Union lie with 'Thunderclap Tower'. It's Strategic-Class Magic. The Great Asian Union started this battle expecting that the New Soviet Union's Strategic-Class Magician can't be dispatched.

However, it won't be settled in a few days. The Great Asian Union used Strategy-Class Magician Liú Lì Lěi from the start, and she is dominating the battle in the battlefield she joined. But 'Thunderclap Tower' is not a magic that can cover all of the battlefield. Even if such magic existed, it would be difficult to use it in land war where the enemy is drawing closer.

Strategic-Class Magic is not as useful as the world thinks it is.

Today is Saturday. Different from when this was a period of time that mixed leisure time and creativity, only some Junior High Schools and High Schools for technical training in art enjoyed two days off school weekly.

Naturally, Magic High Schools have lessons. Tatsuya also escorted Miyuki until school this morning. Minami is in the hospital and at present there are no estimates for when her replacement will be sent from the Yotsuba Family. Tatsuya already isn't her 'Guardian', but he accompanies Miyuki to school as if he was her bodyguard.

However, Tatsuya didn't feel the need to be near Miyuki inside First High. If it's just protecting Miyuki, he doesn't need to be within a short physical distance. The other day, while being on the lookout for Bezobrazzoff's attack, he could counterattack successfully from the sidelines. Escorting her every morning is just something he, with his competent disposition, likes to do.

Once they wore uniforms and he escorted Miyuki inside the school building, Tatsuya went back to his home immediately, changed into some rougher clothes and went straight to Miyuki Island by Air Car. The primary objective was for magic research, but he was also anxious of taking his eyes off Lina.

Sure enough, Lina was already bored.

"...Tatsuya. What are you doing?"

"Making magic."

Even though it was no use – to both Tatsuya and Lina – she was intruding on Tatsuya's space while he studied.

"That's just a computer!?"

"Is that such a surprising thing? Isn't your engineer who made 'Brionac' able to do something similar?"

'Brionac' is a magic weapon that makes use of FAE theory as a technique, enabling the use of the Strategic-Class Magic 'Heavy Metal Burst' in local battles and interpersonal fights.

FAE theory – Free After Execution theory, also called the theory of controlling phenomenon after its creation in Japanese, is the theory that 'since phenomena that occurred as a result of magical modifications is phenomena that should not exist in this world naturally, the very short time right after the modification is loosely bound by the laws of physics, thus subsequent modifications become easier'.

Tatsuya's 'Baryon Lance' also uses this theory, but 'Baryon Lance' was made using 'Brionac' as a reference. The developer of 'Brionac' was someone Tatsuya strongly felt he wanted to meet someday with a white flag raised on his mind.

"Sure, I had Abby do things like remodeling magic only on my desk."

The engineer who developed Brionac is called 'Abby', huh? – Tatsuya secretly wrote down that name on his mental notebook.

"But when you make new magic, don't you experiment it often during the process?"

That engineer seems to be developing new magic even now. – Tatsuya added a PS to the mental notebook.

"This magic is not being made from scratch."

Tatsuya answered Lina's doubts without revealing his interest in this engineer 'Abby'.

“The other day I had the opportunity to see ‘Tuman Bomba’, so I thought about whether I could apply it in another magic we can use. ‘Tuman Bomba’ is way too complex to use easily.”

What Tatsuya meant is ‘it requires large-scale equipment so it can’t be used easily’, Lina interpreted it as ‘its magical power requirements are too high to be used easily’.

That is also not incorrect.

“...Eh!? Wait a moment. By any chance, is the magic you’re making Strategic-Class Magic?”

In one beat – one beat off, it could be said – Lina revealed a disharmonic voice.

“The classification is so.”

As Tatsuya had gotten used to it, he didn’t reveal any laughter.

“I’m shocked.”

While Lina pronounced ‘sho-cked’²², she showed an unnatural shrug.

“Great Bomb...No, it was ‘Material Burst’. You have such absurd magic and despite this you’re trying to get new Strategic-Class Magic? Do you plan on becoming a demon king?”

“Lina, I didn’t know you were a gamer?”

“E-Even if you don’t play games, everyone knows what a ‘demon king’ is!”

As Lina went in an expected direction, Tatsuya was coming down on a small stomach pain. The number of people giving him the demon king treatment was increasing and Tatsuya was getting a little sick of it.

“I don’t intend to use this magic myself.”

“Eh, is that so?”

“It is as you say, Lina. Carrying one Strategic-Class Magic is enough. These things are useless for everyday use because its usage is extremely limited, and yet, just because I have it, the ties of obligation follow me like a mountain.”

“I know.”

Lina strongly agreed, ignoring the context.

“Once this is completed, some other magician will use it.”

Tatsuya concealed a wry smile with a seemingly natural expression and continued.

“I happen to know a person who could use it. If that person introduces himself as a new ‘apostle’, these depressing obligations may more or less decrease.”

“I see.”

²² She tried to say 呆れた, which reads “akireta”(あきれた) but pronounced “akkireta”(あっきれた) instead.

Lina's mind was only on 'obligations', so she didn't pay attention to the main part.

The birth of a new state-recognized Strategic-Class Magician in Japan, the words that will bring about a big change in the military balance of the world.



Tatsuya only stayed in Miyaki Island during the morning.

The new magic was not completed. Tatsuya didn't evaluate his ability high enough to think he could make new magic in one or two days.

Besides, there is magic that he needs more urgently than the new Strategic-Class Magic.

"Mikihiko, I'm relying on you today as well."

"It will be good training for me too."

Saturday afternoon, after school in the practice forest.

Tatsuya, with Mikihiko as his training partner, was working hard on completing the 'Seal Gem' as per Yakumo's suggestion.

Magic expels parasites from the body, compresses them and confines them with Psions.

The confining 'Seal Gem' physically seals by using methods such as absorbing it like a curse of some kind and then storing it, or mentally incinerating/disassembling it, but even more processing is required. But the moment it is locked up, Tatsuya's role ends. Another specialist can take over things.

The contents of the training are simple when expressed in words.

Mikihiko calls a spirit and makes it run wildly by pouring power into it.

And Tatsuya binds it with Non-Systematic Magic, compressing it with Psions and converting it into a stable frozen state.

Not just fully covering the Information Body with the Psion shell, but also mixing Psions and hardening it together.

Maybe it resembles the solidification of radioactive liquids by mixing it into glass?

They had to prepare a separate container (a seal object) to preserve the hardened objects and finally the special processing is needed to make it harmless. But for now, parasites will stop flying away somewhere or invading other people.

"That feels pretty good now, doesn't it?"

They started on Thursday and it is far from perfect. However, it was certain that little by little he was getting the knack for it.

“You think so?”

Even if Mikihiko praises him, Tatsuya won't feel much of a reaction. But when compared to before he visited Yakumo, the image of the complete form is way stronger now, so the progress is evident.

“Yeah. You can be confident, Tatsuya.”

“...Yeah. There is no meaning in doubting myself. Mikihiko, I ask you once again.”

“As many times as you want.”

Without reluctance in his face, Mikihiko nodded.

While thanking his friend for his assistance, Tatsuya refined the Psions in his body and released a 'Seal Gem'.

Chapter 7

It was Sunday morning when Fujibayashi got in touch with Tatsuya.

“Special Officer. There was an announcement from the American army that a transport plane departing from Hawaii will arrive at Camp Zama tomorrow evening. It was an official announcement due to the shared use agreement.”

“Well, they can’t publicize their violent conduct, right?”

“You can say that this is as expected.”

As Fujibayashi said, it was as they expected, Stars was sending in reinforcements using the agreement. But since the legal systems are being used in such a bold manner, one can read between the lines that the parasites are extending their influence within the USNA army. Fujibayashi’s expression is not doing so well because of her anxiety.

“Well then, as per the previous arrangement, please be on the lookout.”

“Special Officer. No...Tatsuya-kun. Do you really plan on getting in alone?”

“I’ll get in alone, but my abilities aren’t mine alone. Since the parasite countermeasures are not complete yet.”

“You mean the people of the Yotsuba Family? Or your school friends...?”

“The people of the Family are focused on Minoru.”

Tatsuya didn’t answer it clearly, but in short, he was relying on a friend from First High. It was not his original intention but the ‘Seal Gem’ is still incomplete so capable people who can seal the parasite are needed.

However, no controlling attitude came from Fujibayashi’s mouth.

Tatsuya didn’t intend so, but when she was told ‘to capture Minoru’, she can’t say anything.

“When are you doing it?”

“The sooner the better, so tomorrow evening right after they arrive.”

“I see...Tatsuya-kun, be careful. We’ll be joining Major Yanagi in the surveillance, so please tell us when it’s time.”

“Understood. I will be depending on you when it’s time.”

With that said, Tatsuya lightly bowed.

But, on the opposite side of the camera, Fujibayashi understood.

Tatsuya will never depend on them.

“Yes. But I’m hoping it won’t be necessary.”

She didn’t intend to leave it up to fate. She plans to use her wit as a battalion adjutant to ensure the success of the dispatched forces.

But still, Fujibayashi didn’t go without saying so.

After finishing the phone call with Fujibayashi, Tatsuya turned around.

Even without looking, he knew that behind him Miyuki was refraining from showing concern in her expression.

“Onii-sama...What should I do tomorrow?”

Half a year ago, Miyuki wouldn’t have asked ‘what should I do?’, she would have asserted ‘I’m going too’. But now she understands she would be Tatsuya’s weakness. Though she was aware of it for a long time, she was finally able to convince herself.

“Please look after Minami.”

Tatsuya made his decision. Miyuki must not go to fight Stars with him.

Tatsuya doesn’t think Miyuki’s abilities are inferior to Stars. He believes that she doesn’t fall behind the best of the Stars.

However, he doesn’t want her to do dangerous things. That is Tatsuya’s real motive.

If you attack, getting counterattacked is unavoidable.

Getting involved is inevitable.

In this case, it’s unreasonable to tell Miyuki to not interfere with the situation where Minoru kidnaps Minami. He resigned himself to this.

Still, there is no need for Miyuki to be concerned with the extermination of the parasitized Stars.

“We can’t grasp Minoru’s movements. I want you to keep your eyes on her while my hands are busy with another fight.”

“...Of course.”

Tatsuya’s words were not lies.

But they were not his true feelings either.

Miyuki also understands that Tatsuya thinks she shouldn’t expose herself to danger.

“Onii-sama, I will do as you said.”

Understanding that, Miyuki promised to obey Tatsuya’s instructions.



Minoru left Regulus and Raymond in the hideout in Kobe and went alone to Nara.

A network established by Zhou Gongjin also remains in Nara. In fall of last year, none other than Minoru himself cooperated with Tatsuya to expose a part of it, but Zhou Gongjin's hand also reached 'ordinary people' unrelated to magic.

Minoru was now in a private house owned by such 'ordinary people unrelated to magic'.

"It was a terrifying opponent..."

Involuntarily, a soliloquy ran out of Minoru's mouth.

More than the people before him thought, Zhou Gongjin was a troublesome opponent. But now, thanks to him, Minoru could move comfortably.

Well, up until now he could act safely. From here on, he must jump into the pocket of the Kudou Family who is waiting for him.

His destination is the 'Ninth Magical Development Research Institute'. The former Ninth Research Institute, the core of the 'Nine' magicians.

Minoru was planning to take the sealed Parasidolls from there.

The alliance of the Saegusa Family and the Juumonji Family, especially the fight with Katsuto, made Minoru realize the limits of one person alone. He saved Regulus and Raymond solely with the ulterior motive to borrow their hands, but two people was not enough. Besides, they have their job. Also, he needed something that works as his henchmen.

He can't count on Kansai Ancient Magicians who were friends with Zhou Gongjin. They have opposed the Ninth Research Institute for a long time. And this body is of a direct descendent of the Kudou Family, a magician from the 'Nines'. Unlike the hideouts, it doesn't seem likely that Zhou Gongjin's friends will support him even if he has his knowledge.

So Minoru thought to take along Parasidolls as his subordinates.

The development of the Parasidolls was suspended, but their production had already been completed. Practical use is only frozen due to ethical reasons. Above all else, the core of the Parasidolls, as can be seen from its name, is a parasite. Minoru thought if it's him, he should be able to use it better than a human magician.

The Parasidolls damaged in the operation test were already repaired, and were left sealed at the former Ninth Research Institute. If he could creep in and restart the Parasidolls, it shouldn't be difficult to escape with their bodies' fighting power.

However, the former Ninth Research Institute is under the jurisdiction of the Kudou Family. The Kudou Family being out of the Ten Master Clans doesn't change that.

Even if they don't expect Minoru to aim for the Parasidolls, the former Ninth Research Institute will be heavily guarded by the Kudou Family.

Perhaps his grandfather, Kudou Retsu, may be waiting.

If you don't enter the tiger's den, you won't get its cub.²³

The former Ninth Research Institute is undoubtedly a 'tiger's den', Minoru thought.



The head of the Yotsuba Family, Yotsuba Maya, entrusted the investigation of the illegal immigrants detected in Kansai to a branch family of the Yotsuba, the Kuroba Family.

The head of the Kuroba Family, Kuroba Mitsugi, has excellent twin children.

The older sister, Kuroba Ayako. The younger brother, Kuroba Fumiya.

The two of them are second year students at the Magic University Affiliated Fourth High School, and they commute to school on weekdays.

When Tatsuya heard the Kuroba Family were entrusted with the search, he thought 'if it is the Kuroba family, they may give priority to their duty rather than school'.

But Tatsuya's guess cannot be said to be correct at this point.

Mitsugi didn't dispatch his children to the Hanshin region until school holidays started.

Sunday, the 30th of June.

The twin sister and brother Ayako and Fumiya came to Kansai International Airport.

"There aren't any leads left."

"Just hearing about the features of the illegal immigrants that couldn't be understood from the photos and the situation at the time they lost sight is great."

Fumiya rebuked his older sister Ayako, who didn't have a bit of gratitude towards the policemen who spared their precious time, with an indirect rebuttal.

²³ An equivalent English expression would be "nothing ventured, nothing gained".

Just now, they shared lunch with Officer Karasawa, who first found Regulus and Raymond, and thoroughly heard about the situation at the time of discovery on their seats.

Incidentally, when they were invited to eat, Officer Karasawa was working.

“At any rate, Nee-san, I didn’t think you were acquainted with Officer-san who was related to this.”

“Karasawa-san being the first discoverer was sheer coincidence.”

Officer Karasawa could skip out on work because Ayako was a close (?) acquaintance of his.

Three years ago, during the summer holiday of their second year of middle school, Ayako spent about a month in Kobe, separated from Fumiya. She was participating in a manners school with accommodation targeted to girls of around the same age.

Of course work was involved, it was an undercover operation.

The purpose was to expose the conspiracy of a stateless criminal organization that brainwashed children of the society’s rich and powerful to become their spies, a mission which Ayako fulfilled safely, and it seems she met Officer Karasawa, who was still a student at Second High School at that time, several times.

Still, the meal was paid out of the Kuroba Family’s pocket. They released the policeman and were now having post-meal tea time.

“But in the end, it didn’t give us any clue?”

“I wouldn’t say there was no clue.”

Ayako expressed an ‘oh?’ face, requesting an explanation from Fumiya with her eyes.

“Two illegal immigrants suddenly disappeared into the manned taxi stand. There were no humans with the same appearance as the people being pursued. At that time, two people ran away in a car, not a taxi, and were recorded with the surveillance cameras, but their appearance was different from what Officer Karasawa saw. Even the car that ran off, the cameras outside the airport didn’t catch any car with the same features.”

Fumiya stopped talking and stared back at Ayako’s eyes.

“Isn’t this similar to when that magic was used?”

“...Kudou Family’s ‘Parade’, huh.”

“Yeah. And speaking of people from the Kudou Family likely to cooperate with parasites...”

“The parasite who challenged the Yotsuba Family the other day, Kudou Minoru. Nobody other than him.”

Taking over Fumiya’s words, Ayako added her agreement.

“The illegal immigrants presumed to be from Stars are being hidden by Kudou Minoru.”

To Fumiya's conclusion, Ayako indicated her opinion was the same with a nod.

Fumiya and Ayako separately reported to the Head House and their father about their hypothesis that the members of the Stars who had smuggled themselves into the country were being hidden by Kudou Minoru.

As a result, their father told them to interrupt their search and come back, and the Head House ordered the two of them to stop by the former Ninth Research Institute to report the information, as per Maya's instructions.

Needless to say, priority was given to Maya's instructions.

"Even so, why the former Ninth Research Institute and not the Kudou Family?"

In the car heading towards the research institute, Fumiya revealed unconscious feelings of doubt. This car isn't a taxi, it's something the Kuroba Family uses for operations. Ayako and Fumiya left the Kuroba house for convenience when going to school and live in an apartment in Hamamatsu. Today they didn't go to Kansai by riding the train from there, they had a car come meet them from the Kuroba house. It took extra time to depart, but the former Ninth Research Institute was in an inconvenient location well out of town, so it could be said it was the correct decision based on the current situation.

"Head-sama may think we should report to His Excellency instead of Makoto-sama."

Fumiya's words were close to a soliloquy but Ayako who was sitting next to him returned an honest response.

Also, 'Makoto-sama' refers to the head of the Kudou Family, Kudou Makoto, while 'His Excellency' refers to the former head of the Kudou Family, Kudou Retsu.

Kudou Retsu, who is respected as the eldest of Japan's magical world and not just of the Ten Master Clans, is often referred to by 'Patriarch', but Tatsuya dislikes this nickname and calls him 'His Excellency Kudou' instead. He calls him this following the fact Retsu was a former Major General of the National Defense Forces.

Fumiya and Ayako used to call him 'Patriarch' too, but they once heard Tatsuya call him 'His Excellency' and the two of them also switched to the 'His Excellency' faction.

"Ah, so that's why they sent you on this errand, Nee-san."

Ayako and Kudou Retsu are acquainted from the previous parasite incident. Is it more accurate to say there was some kind of collusion? Rather than going to an unacquainted Head House, talking to Retsu may be more comfortable.

"Me, not us, right?"

Ayako said, not denying Fumiya's guess.

Whether it was because they used a car instead of a train or because of the late meal, when Fumiya and Ayako arrived at the former Ninth Research Institute it was already dark. It is currently the period of the year when the sun stays out the longest, but the sky before the end of the rainy season is dark and cloudy and doesn't let the light of the sunset pass.

The former Ninth Research Institute – the formal name is now 'Ninth Magical Development Research Institute', so abbreviating it as 'Ninth Research Institute' would be fine, but magic officials stubbornly call it 'former Ninth Research Institute'. As was expected, Kudou Retsu was there and immediately responded to Ayako's meeting request.

Ayako and Fumiya made their way through the reception. Within the simple greetings, Kudou Retsu told them why he came to the former Ninth Research Institute despite being Sunday.

"It's uncomfortable at home due to family members slandering Minoru..."

Within Retsu's great number of grandchildren, Minoru is the one he dotes on the most. Minoru was blessed with magic talent, but he thinks it is a pity that Minoru is unable to demonstrate his real abilities because he is prone to illness.

Perhaps his other grandchildren might have been aware of this.

Still, the truth is neither his father nor his wives had reasons to neglect Minoru.

Seen objectively, it can't be said Minoru was given enough affection from his parents and siblings. Perhaps within the Kudou family, only Retsu directed his familial love to Minoru.

"It's already late. How about we have some dinner?"

After finishing the conversation, Retsu made the offer to Fumiya and Ayako. He may have been lonely when confronted with two people the same age as Minoru. Not finding selfishness in Retsu's words, Fumiya and Ayako couldn't bear to turn down the offer.

"Let me prepare dinner for you."

"...Thank you. We'll take you up on your offer."

In the end, Ayako bowed her head to Retsu's invitation, representing the wishes of the two.



"The sun will set soon..."

Minoru who was lurking under the shade of a tree in woodland facing the former Ninth Research Institute, muttered in his mind.

The vicinity has become completely dark, but if the skies were clear it would be time for the sun to set now.

If there were no clouds, it would dusk now.

Of course, twilight.

The time of great calamity²⁴.

The time when people meet demons by chance. The time when the powers of demons get stronger and disaster befalls people.

Minoru sent a signal with his thoughts to the war assets he procured for this operation.

They are not Ancient Magicians from Kyoto or Nara. He is only accompanied by refugees from the continent who Zhou Gongjin sent here, who he temporarily bound with a technique. Without their own purpose, in other words, lacking willpower, they are not fit to be Tatsuya's and Katsuto's opponents, but they are able to buy time until he wakes the sealed Parasidolls up. Minoru thought so, and used the puppet technique he acquired from Zhou Gongjin's knowledge.

A traditional magician plunged into the gate in front of the research institute by himself.

And just like that, he self-destructed with magic flames.

Even if it's called self-destruction, his body didn't explode as one would expect, so he didn't die immediately.

But he drew out magical power above his own limits to use magic at zero distance.

Instead of bearing wounds that lead to death if neglected, he exhibited power that tore the gate in one blow.



The three people around the table, Retsu, Fumiya and Ayako, had just finished eating their soup.

Everyone simultaneously turned their faces towards the front of the research institute. Only Fumiya stood up, but neither Retsu nor Ayako could be blamed.

"Why didn't the proximity alarm go off?"

Retsu's mumbling meant 'why didn't the alarm that announces that suspicious people are approaching go off?'.

"...A barrier?"

He reached an answer by himself without listening to other people's opinions.

²⁴ 逢魔が時 (twilight, can be translated literally as "time for meeting evil spirits") and 大禍時 (time of great calamity) are both read the same way – Oumagatoki. In Japanese superstition, it is believed that people encounter yokai during this time of the day. <http://yokai.com/oumagatoki/>

A barrier that hides the magic waves skillfully enough for Retsu, who was called 'the world's most skilled', to not perceive it.

A disturbance field that makes it harder to discover Psion waves, instead of blocking them, was covering the entire front of the research institute and half of the premises. Retsu became aware of it only at this point.

"This is a concealment barrier that is a specialty of traditional magicians from the southwest of the continent."

When Retsu said 'continent' here, he didn't mean either the Eurasian Continent or the Asian Continent, but a region that roughly overlaps with territory of the Great Asian Union. 'Southwest of the continent' refers to the Sichuan-Yunnan area.

"Your Excellency! Doesn't it look like Minoru-kun has come?"

When he heard about the continental barrier, Fumiya associated it with Minoru.

"If it's Minoru, he's probably aiming for the Parasidolls."

"Parasidolls, are those the humanoid weapons that were tested at the Steeplechase venue last year?"

"You know about them?"

"Yes. We were slightly involved."

To Retsu's retort, Fumiya nodded.

"I see. You are correct, those were the Parasidolls."

After answering Ayako's initial question, Retsu added to himself 'so it was not just Shiba Tatsuya who was moving at that time'.

"The Parasidolls are sealed in the storehouse on the north side. I'm sorry, but I can't help you. I will go there instantly when I confirm the situation inside the research institute."

"Understood!"

There is essentially no reason for the two members of the Kuroba Family to obey Retsu.

However, Kudou Minoru is an enemy as far as the Yotsuba Family is concerned.

If he is raiding the research institute looking for Parasidolls, the goal must be to increase his fighting power, using these humanoid weapons as his subordinates.

It is a natural obligation of a Yotsuba Branch Family to prevent the Yotsuba Family's enemies from increasing their capabilities.

"Nee-san, let's go!"

"Yes."

Ayako also did not object to Fumiya's decision.



The former Ninth Research Institute's guards were by no means an easy opponent for Minoru, whose power has grown.

But—,

(This is not on the level of Mayumi-san and her sisters or Juumonji-san.)

In a short time, Minoru finally arrived at the storehouse where the sealed Parasidolls are stored.

The locks have not been replaced since the other day when he sneaked in to become a parasite. Even if they were electronic locks, Minoru thought it was careless.

(—No, wait.)

Just to make sure, Minoru fortified his defenses with 'Parade' and 'Ghost Walker', and released 'Golden Electron Silkworms' from a small distance away, without making contact.

'Golden Electron Silkworms' invaded the electronic lock.

Right after, a violent electrical discharge happened in the electronic lock's console.

"...That was risky."

Looks like the voltage of the electric current just now reached lethal levels. Even if it's Minoru, touching it carelessly would have incapacitated him for a short while.

(The moment magic is released, you will become defenseless against that magic...Twisting this principle into a trap, huh?)

This probably was a trap set by his grandfather, Kudou Retsu.

As expected from the former 'world's most skilled'.

But Minoru thought to release 'Golden Electron Silkworms' from a distance to make an electrical current in the air. He was concerned about getting electrocuted if the electric path was left as it was. But he was successful in having 'Golden Electron Silkworms' pass through at the same time as the line was closed, so no injury was incurred in Minoru.

He emitted 'Golden Electron Silkworms' once more.

The console's electronic circuits were already burned.

The electronic lock was operated not by signals sent in with the electronic lock's console, but by signals sent with its replacement 'Golden Electron Silkworms', and it showed Minoru the way in.

At the same time he went through the door, Minoru's virtual image was attacked.

Unlike the other day, guards were deployed inside the storehouse.

It wasn't just one or two people either. There were signs of no less than five people baring their fangs at Minoru.

(I didn't sense them until now, impressive skill! But, it's not enough.)

Aware of when he was a person from the Kudou Family, Minoru spared the magicians who attacked him.

A minute had not yet passed when the battle ended.

In the end, six magicians were lying unconscious in the storehouse.



Fumiya and Ayako didn't go directly to the storehouse they were told about.

They went towards the parking lot. They went to the Kuroba Family car they had ridden here with.

Fumiya had left behind his CAD dedicated to the use of 'Direct Pain' there.

"Young Master!?"

"Kudou Minoru-kun is attacking! Contact the Head House and Tou-san and wait for orders! Secure an escape route!"

"Understood."

This young man who is dressed in a Kuroba black suit serves as Fumiya's aide, whose name, Kurokawa Shiroha, makes you want to say 'black or white, make up your mind!'²⁵, switched to his communication device in accordance with Fumiya's instructions without making pointless conversation.

Fumiya took out a black knuckleduster from the accessory case in the rear seat.

He gripped it lightly, and power went into the dedicated CAD shaped like a knuckleduster.

"Nee-san, if you please."

"I know."

Ayako looked to the north side of the Research Institute's premises.

"There it is."

²⁵ Kurokawa Shiroha: Kuro means black, Shiro means white. The line in Japanese reads "kuro da ka shiro da ka hakkiri shiro" and could be translated literally as "black or white, make it clear".

From a gap between the buildings, the storehouse in question could be seen.

“I’ll launch you onto the roof, just in case.”

“Got it. Nee-san, it’s fine if you don’t come.”

“I’ll keep watch.”

Ayako kicked away Fumiya’s worries with a smile and invoked ‘Mock Teleportation’.

Fumiya’s body disappeared.

The next moment, about 80 meters away, he appeared on the roof.



Minoru sensed the use of powerful magic towards the storehouse just then.

(‘Mock Teleportation’, huh.)

It’s not magic for personal combat, but it sends a fighter there.

As such, there are signs of people on the roof.

But Minoru didn’t care about it, and concentrated his power on the magic in process.

“—Done!”

Involuntarily, he spoke to himself with all his might.

Right after that, a hole was open in the ceiling of the storehouse.

Composite materials that can endure tactical nuclear weapons were destroyed by just dozens of seconds of magic.

The magic used was ‘Oxidation Decay’. This magic, which Minoru is also good at, removes the inter-molecular binding and forcibly ejects the electrons from solids. Although inferior to the ‘Oxidation Decay’ Minoru uses, this magician’s ‘Oxidation Decay’ was also quite high-level.

“Kuroba Fumiya?”

Minoru recognized the short figure that jumped down from that hole.

Last year’s Nine Schools Competition. A young magician in the same year as him who was the Fourth High’s central figure in the Newcomer’s Monolith Code.

Kuroba Fumiya did not respond to Minoru’s voice and stretched his hand in front of him.

(A Knuckleduster?)

His fist had a black knuckleduster, but Minoru is 10 meters away. Minoru did not understand what Fumiya wanted to do.

That is, until a moment ago.

All of a sudden, Minoru was struck with intense pain.

(He punched my abdomen?)

However, he didn't need to check as it was obvious Fumiya's fist didn't reach him. It doesn't feel like he was shot with air bullets or 'pressure' either.

(Kuh—!?)

Minoru switched the control of the body from the brain and nervous system to be directly controlled by the mind, removing his sensitivity to pain.

(The pain is not going away!?)

But his abdomen is still in intense 'pain'.

(This is bad!)

From the sense of crisis of being exposed to an attack he can't identify, Minoru rapid-fired 'Plasma Bullet', and ionized air bullets went towards Fumiya.

With the same fast aerial movements that he showed in the Nine Schools Competition, Fumiya dodged all of Minoru's plasma bullets, and once he landed he pushed out his right hand once again.

"Arrgh!"

Cries of pain escape from Minoru's mouth. He held his right eye with his right hand.

The pain in his right eye was as intense as if his eye was being crushed, but touching his eye with the palm of his right hand told him there was no damage dealt to the eyes.

Minoru fell to his knees.

(I lost?)

Feelings of defeat crossed his mind.

(Is there nothing I can do in this situation?)

Frustrated that he would not fulfill his 'desires', he released self-destruction magic.



Fumiya's 'Direct Pain' magic causes direct pain to the mind, so it was also effective against parasites.

While unexpected that one hit was not enough to defeat him, with two blows Minoru fell to his knees. Even if a calm outsider were to look at this situation, they would surely think Fumiya's victory is one step away.

However, when he was about to release a third blow to the eyes, Fumiya was hit by an intense sense of danger.

It was not just intuition. His magic sense perceived Minoru's magic is about to cover the inside of the storehouse.

(No way, 'NOx Out'!?)

Fumiya screamed in his mind.

'NOx Out' is a magic that outputs NOx, which is short for nitrogen oxide. More specifically, it is an Absorption-Type Magic that forces the chemical combination of the oxygen and nitrogen in the air. The generated compounds are magically assembled to produce primarily nitric monoxide, avoiding the highly toxic nitrogen dioxide. But nitric monoxide is still toxic. You will lose your consciousness if you inhale it for few minutes. Because of this characteristic, it was named 'NOx Out', with the double meaning 'Knockout'.

The effect of this inter-personal magic is not just loss of consciousness due to nitric oxide. By consuming large amounts of oxygen in the air it also creates oxygen deficiency. In closed spaces, it is a very high-risk magic.

Minoru set the range to the entire warehouse and released the magic. Normally, there is no safe zone surrounding the caster assigned, so, naturally, they should make one.

(He's willing to commit suicide!?)

Fumiya swore in his mind, but in reality he understood. This is 'tactical brute forcing' that relies on the parasite's vitality and healing abilities.

Fumiya went back to the entrance and pushed the button that opens the door. Fortunately for him, the trap Kudou Retsu had set up only affected the console on the outside and the door's system itself was not damaged.

The motor worked with problems and the door opened smoothly.

When Fumiya rushed out of the storeroom, he distanced himself from it by about 20 meters, just in case.



His central nervous system was afflicted by the nitric oxide and he was exposed to oxygen deprivation, thus Minoru's body ceased its activity.

But his mind was a parasite, and it recognized the outside world, it had not lost the ability to influence the outside world.

(You guys, go!)

Minoru ordered the 16 Parasidolls to start fighting.

Minoru had completely removed their seal just a short time before. They were originally frozen for repairs, but they were in a state where they could work at any time. The Parasidolls quickly rose from their coffin-like case and ran off towards the open door.

After that, he restored the nitrogen oxide in the storeroom back to oxygen and nitrogen.

When the air became breathable, the healing ability automatically activated.

He knew now that he had fallen with his face to the ground.

He raised his body by pressing both hands against the floor.

"If I was human, I would have lost..."

Minoru murmured with a bitter, weak voice.



To advance a distance of about 50 meters, Ayako took no less than a minute.

The enemies are attacking one after the other.

The opponents all seem to be Ancient Magicians, 'traditional magicians' that came from the continent.

Ayako's abilities are not oriented for direct combat. Moreover, they are suited for wide areas, so battles like this were situations she is extremely weak in.

Nevertheless, without fleeing and erasing her appearance – those are Ayako's strongest points – she left seven traditional magicians crawling on the ground.

The successive attacks by the enemies come to an end, and Ayako breathed in relief. The traditional magicians were by no means weak judging by their abilities. Ayako thought she was poor at direct combat, but she defeated them without as much as a scratch.

She had assistance from the way the opponents fight. On her side there's one person, on theirs there's seven. Yet, instead of seven attacking at the same time, the next person came as soon as the other was defeated, and this way there was absolutely no coordination.

In addition, the attacking patterns of each traditional magician were monotonous. Ancient Magic is good at deceiving the opponent's five senses, surprising the opponent with unexpected attacks that are impossible to fight against, and ending the battle with a decisive blow from destroying the enemy mentally. If they confront from the front, they are no match for Modern Magic, which excels at speed.

That should have been known to the enemy traditional magicians. But as they attacked Ayako, they were very straightforward by only attacking with visualized fireballs, lightning attacks that radiated in their hands temporarily, and winds that were given trajectories that were easy to understand by how they waved their hands.

"Have they been taken over?"

The magic that steals the opponents will and makes them a slave for battle also exists in the Yotsuba Family. The traditional magician's movements were similar to the puppets made with that kind of magic.

Kudou Minoru also has hypnotic suggestion type abilities. Ayako appended this to her mental notes and started walking again in order to lend a hand to Fumiya in the battle.

But within three steps, Fumiya rushed out of the storeroom.

Before raising her voice to ask what happened, a female model robot ran off from the inside of the storehouse and chased after Fumiya

Ayako understood its true identity.

It's not a simple battle female android.

It's a Parasidoll. A humanoid weapon that uses magic from the evil spirit it carries.

A group of Parasidolls attacked Fumiya.

Some of them changed direction towards Ayako.



The opponent Fumiya should defeat is not the Parasidolls. That group is being manipulated by Kudou Minoru.

Parasidolls are autonomous weapons. They can continue fighting with their own decisions without being given orders. But if he defeats Minoru who currently has the authority to give orders, the research institute's staff can inscribe new orders.

In that sense, fighting Minoru should be priority. Exhausting energy and physical strength against the Parasidolls is foolish.

But even if Fumiya tried to avoid the fight, the Parasidolls would not allow it.

Fumiya jumped straight up. By escaping in the sky, he believed he would shake off the Parasidolls.

But two Parasidolls ran after him from the ground, at a speed superior to his.

Those figures were going in a straight line, like humanoid cannonballs.

Fumiya noticed the signs of magic and made a big jump sideways. But the humanoid machine carrying the evil spirit didn't let Fumiya escape, by tracing his movements.

Each Parasidoll specializes in specific magic. Rather than a magician, it is closer to a Supernatural Power User. The mobility of the individual specializing in Movement-Type Magic surpassed Fumiya's own.

Was this desperation?

Fumiya released 'Direct Pain' to the approaching Parasidoll.

However, it produced no change in the Parasidoll's behavior.

"A miss!?"

Fumiya was becoming agitated.

At that moment, the two Parasidolls caught up with Fumiya.

One of the Parasidolls swung her left hand. Right after, a thin steel string extended from inside her wrist.

Fumiya instinctively formed a physical shield.

The steel string was indistinguishable from the darkness, and it coiled around Fumiya from the top the shield.

The other Parasidoll carried a short, bifurcated spear. Between the tips of the straight blades that faced one another was a thin gap.

A flashing light appeared between the two blades.

The Parasidoll aimed the short spear at Fumiya, scattering sparks from the electric discharge.

Fumiya charged towards the steel string Parasidoll.

By shortening the distance, the steel string became loose.

The steel string that was entangled counterclockwise was brushed away by Fumiya with a clockwise air current.

Fumiya leaned his body to dodge the short spear approaching from behind.

In the next moment, the Parasidoll who sent out the steel string embraced Fumiya. Fumiya, who had just dodged the spear couldn't do anything to avoid this.

The Parasidoll fell to the ground, still holding Fumiya in her arms.

Fumiya used 'Direct Pain' against the Parasidoll clinging to him.

But—,

As before, there is no effect.

(Does this have no effect against these guys!?)

Fumiya finally realized.

'Direct Pain' is a magic that directly attacks the mind by making the body feel pain.

From the start, the humanoid machines have no sense of pain, thus no pain can be dealt to the spiritual Information Body with 'Direct Pain'.

Fumiya hit the ground along with the clinging Parasidoll. Inertia control was insufficient, as it only reduced damage enough to barely avoid bone fractures.

"Fumiya!?"

Ayako's frantic scream kept Fumiya's consciousness from flying away.

Fumiya reflexively turned his eyes to Ayako.

Ayako was completely surrounded by three Parasidolls.

Her 'Mock Teleportation' doesn't allow to slip through obstacles. She can't escape with that.

In spite of herself being in danger, she anxiously called out Fumiya's name.

"Out of my way!"

Fumiya was becoming agitated.

His mouth let out a shout.

Blowing off the Parasidoll clinging to him with an explosive Acceleration-Type Magic, Fumiya started running as he rose up.

"I said out of my way!"

He hit the face of a Parasidoll who was trying to stab him with a knife with his knuckleduster. This CAD's main body is the gripped part and the part wrapped on his fist can be used as a weapon normally.

Fumiya did not pursue the staggering Parasidoll. A slashing repulsive force field was shot from the sides, which he avoided with quick movements and stopped with compressed air bullets.

Fumiya suddenly invoked Self-Acceleration Magic.

In an instant, he appeared behind one of the Parasidolls encircling his older sister.

At the same time he attacked with his right fist, Weight-Type Magic was invoked.

The repulsive force produced at that point destroyed the power supply unit inside the Parasidoll.

With the power supply cut off, the motor sustaining the machine's body halted.

The Parasidoll violently shook and swayed, and then fell down.

With one corner of the circle destroyed, Fumiya hit the other two with a wind blast, making them walk back, and grabbed Ayako's hand.

"Nee-san, we're withdrawing for now!"

Turning around, Ayako noticed that the obstacles are gone.

She invoked 'Mock Teleportation' and both their bodies vanished from there.

The moment just before they moved, Fumiya felt like he heard Minoru scream.



Minoru recovered from his paralysis with the help of the parasite's healing ability and turned his attention to the outside of the storehouse.

The battle is ongoing. That is to say the Parasidolls haven't been annihilated. It seems the Parasidolls' fighting abilities are a match for that magician just now, Kuroba Fumiya.

His objective today was to take the Parasidolls away, as they are valuable assets. Winning the battle here is unnecessary. Take advantage of the other person's surprise as they concentrate on the fight with the Parasidolls and escape from the research institute with 'Ghost Walker'. That was Minoru's plan.

Minoru went towards the storehouse's exit

But he was suddenly assaulted with a feeling of intoxication.

Was this the effect of 'NOx Out' from a little while ago? Minoru suspected so.

But he quickly realized it wasn't so. This is certainly a symptom from the nitric oxide synthesized from 'NOx Out'. However, this magic just now was invoked by someone other than Minoru.

An extremely small 'NOx Out' that limited its effect to the area around Minoru's head. Moreover, he only sensed this complex magic when it was completed. Minoru only knows one person who has such finesse.

Minoru created a downward air current to blow away the nitrogen oxide and oxygen deprivation formed around him.

And he searched for signs of the caster who should be inside the storehouse.

"Ojii-sama!"

That person was standing just two meters away from Minoru.

He had got closer until then without being detected. Because of that fact, Minoru was shivering from humiliation.

“You didn’t perceive the magic until now...Disappointing. Really disappointing.”

Kudou Retsu’s behavior was as if he wasn’t in front of an enemy.

“I suppose this means I didn’t value you properly.”

Remorse. And deep sorrow.

“I couldn’t recognize your true value. I didn’t really understand what you wanted.”

It was like he was repenting.

“You were precious to me.”

“You were pitiable to me.”

“At least, I thought I had to protect you.”

“But...”

Retsu cut his words and turned his face up like he was looking at the sky.

It looked like he was trying to endure the falling tears.

“Looks like I was wrong.”

Wrong, this word also came out of Minoru’s mouth.

– It’s not Ojii-sama’s fault.

– Ojii-sama, there was nothing wrong.

But in the end, Minoru could not convey this to his grandfather.

He has not become a person qualified to talk with his grandfather. Such thoughts abruptly rose up inside Minoru and sealed his lips shut.

“You must have been a person who wished to earn some kind of recompense in life, instead of living a long life in a bed. To you, my love must have been nothing but restraints.”

“.....”

“But Minoru.”

Retsu’s tone changed.

“I still can’t approve the current you.”

He understands and accepts his regrets. His repentance was decided.

“I can’t even recognize you, you aren’t even human anymore. I can’t overlook the existence of an evil spirit who seeks to harm the world of people.”

“Ojii-sama, I—!”

I have no intention of harming human society. He began saying so, but Minoru realized he had lost the qualifications to say it.

“The Ten Master Clans decided to capture you without killing you. But if you are imprisoned, a life as an experimental animal is awaiting you. That is too much for me to bear.”

Minoru’s heart received a mighty shock.

Minoru knew what Retsu was going to say.

“This is minimal mercy. Minoru, you will go to the netherworld by this grandfather’s hands.”

Lethal magic was released by Retsu.

Minoru’s human mind tried to accept it.

But his parasite mind refused to be destroyed.

Minoru suddenly regained his consciousness. No, maybe it’s more adequate to say that he regained his sense of reality.

It felt as if he was watching a dream as he stood up.

Outside the storehouse, the battle is still ongoing.

The time spent losing himself was not that long.

He looked around his body.

Here and there his clothes were torn and burned, but his wounds were mostly healed. The healing abilities of the parasite were still restoring his body.

He raised his eyes.

He moved them so they looked straight ahead.

In the dark storehouse floor, a shadow was collapsed.

Who is this? He twisted his head in that moment.

And in the next moment, he got his answer.

“Ojii-sama!?”

Minoru shouted and ran up to him.

He put his hand on Retsu’s body, which had fallen with its face to the ground.

However, as he rocked his shoulder, Minoru removed his hand.

He understood.

His grandfather was dead.

He killed him himself.

“Uwaaaaaa!”

Screams escaped from Minoru’s mouth.

Discord surfaces in Minoru’s heart.

With the sounds of his own heart cracking, one part of Minoru recognized that he didn’t care at all.

Minoru attacked the former Ninth Research Institute and left with 15 Parasidolls.

He left behind an injured researcher, a broken Parasidoll, a captured traditional magician and –,

The remains of Kudou Retsu.



“His Excellency Kudou died...”

Tatsuya got the news late at night in the same day, with a phone call by Fumiya.

“Yes...All this because I was worthless...”

“That’s not right Fumiya.”

Fumiya undoubtedly needed Tatsuya’s consolation.

Tatsuya’s words were what he desired.

Naturally, Tatsuya didn’t intend to offer words of consolation.

“You did well. Besides Minoru, you also dealt with a group of Parasidolls. Your withdrawal was inevitable.”

“...Is that so?”

“Yes.”

“...Thank you, Tatsuya-niisan.”

“Don’t worry too much about what happened to his Excellency. What happened between his Excellency and Minoru was, essentially, an internal problem of the Kudou Family. There is no need for the Yotsuba Family to feel responsible for what happened inside the Ninth Research Institute.”

“Yes...”

Afterwards, Tatsuya comforted Ayako who appeared on the terminal screen and then hanged up the phone.

As he received the phone call in his own room, Miyuki doesn’t yet know that Retsu has died.

It is already late today. It’s fine to tell her tomorrow morning.

Tatsuya postponed sharing it since he wanted to sort the information in his head.

Minoru seized 15 Parasidolls.

The fighting abilities of the Parasidolls is something Tatsuya knows well. Parasidolls that use their telepathy-like ability to share a single intention become tougher existences if they are in groups.

Even more, they have a parasite leader who has the same thought-sharing ability – Minoru.

He could predict it was not going to be an easy opponent without thinking too deeply.

Chapter 8

That Monday there was an impression that First High School was dyed with the news of Kudou Retsu's death. Most likely it was the same in other Magic High Schools as well. Kudou Retsu, honored as the 'Patriarch', was a symbolic existence in Japan's magical world.

Tatsuya went to school before noon, and even at the lunch table with his friends the topic was solely about Kudou Retsu.

"I didn't know he was ill..."

After Mizuki's muttering,

"Tatsuya-san, did you know?"

Honoka brings up the topic to Tatsuya.

"No, I didn't know. I only saw him on the Visiphone nowadays, but he didn't look particularly in bad shape."

Retsu's cause of death was announced as 'death from illness'. Thinking about it, it seems natural. There is no way they could announce that his grandson became an inhuman evil spirit and that he was killed by that grandson.

"I see..."

"Tatsuya-kun, Miyuki, will you attend the funeral?"

To Erika's question, not only Miyuki but also Tatsuya opened their eyes wide.

"I haven't got such conversations yet...Why me?"

"After all, Miyuki, you're a member of the Ten Master Clans as well, and a successor to boot? I don't think it's strange to be invited to the funeral"

"Ah, she will be. Especially since she is Tatsuya's fiancée."

Leo nodded in agreement to Erika's point.

"If I'm invited, I will attend. I have a connection with his Excellency Kudou since he helped me in the Nine Schools Competition the year before last."

When Tatsuya cracked down on the tournament management committee member who was setting 'Golden Electron Silkworms' on Miyuki's CAD, he received a request from Retsu. That's what he's talking about.

Actually, in the following, that is, last year's Nine Schools Competition, Retsu created a lot of trouble, but it is something that shouldn't be said and it is unnecessary to bring it up now.

"Ah, that matter..."

Shizuku instantly recalled ‘the matter of the year before last’s Nine Schools Competition’.

Miyuki, of course, as well as Honoka should remember it too, but only Shizuku verbalized it so.

It is probably best to avoid talking about the Nine Schools Competition. This year’s Nine Schools Competition was cancelled and Tatsuya couldn’t say he was unrelated to that.

“This year’s Nine Schools Competition may have been cancelled anyway. In a way, it would serve as mourning to the Patriarch.”

However, there are girls unrelated to such concerns here. – No, maybe Erika may have shown concern in another way.

“Wouldn’t it be the opposite? His Excellency loved the Nine Schools Competition.”

Tatsuya thought about it and answered Erika’s words like that.

There is still time left in the lunch break, but everyone in Tatsuya’s group stood up from their seats. When they left the cafeteria in one group,

“Miyuki, can I have a minute? Tatsuya-kun as well.”

Erika called out to Tatsuya and Miyuki.

“What?”

“Just a minute.”

Erika dodged Miyuki’s question.

It was quickly understood that it was something difficult to talk about in front of everyone.

“You can use the Public Morals Committee Headquarters. There shouldn’t be anyone there right now.”

Mikihiko inserted his words from the side.

He showed signs of knowing a little about what Erika is doing.

“Understood. Miyuki.”

“Yes, Onii-sama. Erika, is that okay?”

Miyuki nodded to Tatsuya and asked Erika.

“It’s fine.”

Naturally, Erika didn’t object.

As Mikihiko said, there was nobody in the Public Morals Committee Headquarters.

The unlocked the door with Miyuki's Student Count President ID card, and Erika, Miyuki, and Tatsuya went inside in that order.

Miyuki set up a soundproof field with the entire room as a target.

The three sat ahead of the chief's table. The table being clean is probably due to Mikihiko's personality. It was completely different from when Tatsuya joined the committee.

"We don't have much time left, so I'll keep it brief."

Erika started,

"I heard from Miki about tonight."

Miyuki turned around and looked at Tatsuya's face, who was sitting next to her. Tatsuya didn't really look surprised and responded with just a 'I see'.

"Miyuki, what will you do?"

Tatsuya did not tell Mikihiko how Miyuki will spend the evening. As such, Erika also didn't know.

"I'm going to accompany Minami-chan until Onii-sama makes his return."

"Caution against Minoru?"

"Yes."

"Me too."

Erika placed one breath then. Not for dramatic purposes, but to get over her hesitation.

"Is it fine if I go?"

She knew she was asking too much from them.

"You mean, visit Minami-chan?"

"Uh huh."

"Tonight?"

"Yes."

After nodding, Erika continued talking rapidly.

"Leo will be by Miki's side. He will be defenseless while using the technique."

Tatsuya didn't hear this detail from neither Mikihiko nor Leo. Perhaps they were both planning to discuss it after school.

"Do you understand what you're going to do?"

"Of course."

It could be said that Erika's eagerness was speaking here, so Tatsuya naturally treated Erika as Leo's replacement.

"If you really understand, then I'll gladly borrow your abilities."

Erika, who expected Tatsuya's opposition, felt surprised and relieved.

Erika turned her eyes from Tatsuya to Miyuki.

"And you, the same?"

"Erika. I am not used to fighting like Onii-sama. If something happens I can't protect you, are you still okay with it?"

"I have no intention of being protected. More like the opposite."

"...Onii-sama, what shall we do?"

Miyuki entrusted the decision to Tatsuya.

"If Erika doesn't have a problem with it, I guess."

Tatsuya looked at Erika.

"Looks like you're ready."

"Of course."

Erika responded to Tatsuya's provocations with a fearless smile.

Though Tatsuya was just bluffing. Tatsuya thinks Minoru won't move so soon after yesterday.

If there was any risk, it would be with Mikihiko and Leo.



That night had a starry sky, which is unusual nowadays.

The moon had not yet come out. Today's moonrise was close to midnight.

Tatsuya was in a parking lot of a big park separated from Camp Zama by two roads. The side opposite to the base. Of course, he can't see Camp Zama from this location.

"Leo, are you really fine?"

He didn't doubt it, but Leo really came together with Mikihiko.

"You didn't ask Mikihiko, why are you so concerned about me?"

Leo was unsatisfied by Tatsuya's question.

"I didn't really want to drag Mikihiko into this either."

"But you need my power, right?"

Mikihiko asked, and Tatsuya reluctantly admitted with a 'yeah'.

In contrast, Mikihiko delightfully said so.

"If there's no problem with Mikihiko, I'm fine too. Since only Mikihiko is at risk, I won't be a 'target'."

Certainly, Mikihiko is in danger of receiving counter-magic due to the use of long-distance magic, a kind of technique that could even be called a ritual. But if the magic is tracked and counterattack units attack, Leo too will become involved in the battle.

"It can't be helped."

Tatsuya also knew that it was useless to discuss things here. He had verified Leo's intentions after school.

Besides, if it was to protect Mikihiko in the middle of putting his consciousness in the base, Tatsuya was sure it would be helpful. – As far as Tatsuya is concerned, Leo can be trusted more than the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion right now.

"Mikihiko, I'm relying on you. Leo, do your best for Mikihiko."

"Yeah, leave it to me."

"Okay, I will."

Tatsuya mounted the bike. The two-wheeled electric 'Wingless' furnished with short distance flight capabilities that was developed by the Yotsuba Family. He is not wearing the combat uniform 'Mobile Suit', he has Yotsuba Family's flight uniform 'Freed Suit'. Tonight's operation is officially unrelated to the 101st Brigade. Reinforcements will be sent from the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion, but only when it's really time for them to take action, until then they are to stay hidden.

"See you later."

Tatsuya closed his helmet's visor and took off on the bike.

The USNA army's transport plane was just arriving. It slowly moved on the runway. Just to be sure, Fujibayashi had checked the arrival and departure records just before, and today no American army planes landed except this one. Even looking up to the past week this was the only one.

(The timing is nearly perfect.)

The parasites are surely on that plane. Like Minoru, they didn't hide the characteristic Psion wave pattern. Or maybe they can't?

(Four parasites altogether. Surprisingly few. Only one is projecting high magical power...?)

Tatsuya, who was observing with 'Elemental Sight' while driving along the road horizontal to the base back and forth, activated the flight function of 'Wingless' to settle things before the parasites disembark the transport plane.



In the transport aircraft that landed on Camp Zama was Commander of the Stars' 3rd Unit, Alexander Arcturus.

(Have we been seen...?)

Inside the taxiing plane, Arcturus talked to himself. He didn't produce words. It was a monologue within his mind.

He felt a glance right after landing. But, that glance had no direction.

For remote viewing, the force of the flow can be sensed with the glance's direction.

If he is observed with a familiar, that familiar will be the source of the glance.

There is also the strangely named 'Multi-Scope', which makes it possible to observe without blind spots from various angles, but that is similar to setting up countless relay cameras in the air. It is the same as being observed by several familiars at the same time, so it is not directionless.

But, in the glance Arcturus is vaguely feeling right now, the component 'from where' could not be found at all. Not from any direction.

He is just being observed.

As if a god or a demon was staring at him...

That 'glance' was likely the reason he had become distracted.

"What is that!?"

"A bike!?"

Arcturus was unaware of the approaching strange flying object until a fellow passenger raised his voice.

A small silhouette was reflected on the outboard monitor.

While the alert system was automatically processing night vision and zooming in, that 'object' was drawing closer to the plane before their eyes.

A single silhouette of a person sitting on the soaring bike.

That silhouette firmly stepped on the bike's steps, stretched his knees, and pointed something like a pistol towards the plane.

Suddenly, a hole is opened in the plane.

The rider jumped from the bike.

The bike jumped over the transport aircraft and the rider dove into the plane with the hole in the wall.

Abruptly, the alarm rang inside the plane.



Tatsuya flew towards the transport plane with his bike and drew out the pistol-shaped Specialized CAD from the holster on his suit.



The Silver Horn Custom 'Trident'.

He invoked 'Decomposition' using his favorite CAD.

He opened a hole on the surface of the plane's wall just big enough for Tatsuya to fly in.

Tatsuya switched 'Wingless' to autopilot and jumped into the hole he had opened.

He landed on the floor on the plane with a lightly lowered back. Right afterwards, the hole on the plane's wall vanished.

It was repaired with 'Regrowth'.

Of course, he locked himself in the room so the parasites could not get out.

The American soldiers inside the plane are cowering without moving, hopeless in this situation.

The same for the parasites.

Tatsuya rushed to the parasite closest to his position.

Both CADs were returned to their holsters.

A short, thin, needle-like knife was held in his right hand. Small patterns were engraved in the short blade.

Tatsuya aimed at the parasite, who broke free of its fright-induced paralysis.

Tatsuya pushed out his left fist, not the knife.

Just before impact, he opened the fist he was holding tight.

At zero distance, he hit the parasite with 'Armor-Piercing Psion Bullet'.

The parasite screamed and convulsed.

Tatsuya then stabbed the knife on his right hand directly below the left clavicle.



"It came...!"

Mikihiko muttered in the park two roads away from the base.

The sealing tool he had prepared sensed the reaction that was cast into the parasite's body.

A thin dagger like the needle Tatsuya was holding. That ritual implement made the blade a charm.

On Mikihiko's left hand he was holding a folding fan which was a charm that paired with the dagger.

Mikihiko pulled out the reacting charm with his right hand and invoked the sealing technique.



The convulsing parasite suddenly stopped moving, like a marionette whose strings were cut.

The parasite tumbled to the floor with the knife still tabbed below its clavicle.

The Psions in the body were disturbed by 'Armor-Piercing Psion Bullet', and the sealing technique was used while the link between spirit and body was wavering. The newborn parasite had no way to oppose.

Even if the knife is taken out, the sealing technique carved to the bone and burned in the flesh can't be removed.

If there was no caster with more magic skill than Mikihiko, the parasite will sleep in a state of suspended animation.

Did their colleague's scream undo the soldiers paralysis?

The American soldiers who were squatting stood up all at once.

They pointed their guns, with no hint of hesitation on their faces.

Tatsuya decomposed more than twenty assault rifles and submachine guns at the same time.

Suddenly losing their gun, a vacuum was once again born in the heart of the American soldiers.

With that opportunity, Tatsuya 'processed' a second parasite.

Convulsions and exhaustion repeat once again. The sight of sealing.

Then, the only owner of magic abilities Tatsuya was on the lookout for started moving.



Arcturus was unable to understand what was happening in front of him.

The hole made on the plane suddenly disappeared like it was just a dream or an illusion.

But the intruder who jumped through that hole did not disappear.

Instead of disappearing, they sealed the Stardust member, who had just become his comrade, so fast it could be called instantly.

The Stardust have experimental bodies and are just waiting for their deaths.

By becoming a parasite, they would have escaped their inescapable deaths.

That is, lose the parasite and they are as good as dead.

Friendly soldiers who came with him pointed their gun at the intruder.

They are not parasites. But from their perspective, the intruder has killed their brothers – the ordinary soldiers didn't understand their sealed condition – thus he is a terrorist.

The number of guns pointing at him is no less than twenty. He can't escape the small cabin. Even if that riding suit has bulletproof features, there is no way he would be safe when shot by dozens of bullets at point-blank range.

But at that moment, powerful magic ran through the cabin.

The ability wasn't just strong. The magic was powerful as well as accurate, efficient and artistic.

More than twenty assault rifles and submachine guns scattered into parts. The magazines were also rolling on the floor spitting out their bullets. From the muzzles, not a single shot was fired.

Arcturus was once again letting a comrade die, more due to fascination with the magic than the unexpected development.

A second comrade was sealed.

Arcturus took out his tomahawk and slashed at the intruder.

Its job was mid-range combat with 'Dancing Blades'. Arcturus' Spirit Magic is by nature for searching enemies, remote controlling weapons and anti-Mental Interference Type Magic, not for direct attacks. Fights in such confined spaces were his weak points as a magician.

But he is not a delicate 'wizard' who can only use magic.

He was invincible at hand-to-hand combat using his Tomahawk until he enlisted in the Stars.

He rushed in, seized the opportunity and swunged the tomahawk down.

He didn't think he would kill him in one blow, but he thought he couldn't avoid it with that timing either.

However, not only did the intruder dodge it, he vanished from Arcturus' line of sight.

Arcturus turned around.

Perhaps he was trying to protect himself.

What Arcturus saw was the scene right after the needle-like dagger was stabbed below the left clavicle of a third comrade who held a large knife on his right hand, as he had violent spasms.

– As things stand, the last comrade will be sealed.

– The sealing magic is not being used by the intruder in front of me.

– Even if I beat this guy, the seal won't be stopped.

These thoughts ran across Arcturus' mind in an instant.

Arcturus threw his tomahawk.

The tomahawk broke through the plane's wall, and rose to the sky.



Tatsuya turned his head towards the signs of strong magic.

The third person's seal was completed without him doing anything else. It was natural for him to be cautious of the magic the last parasite launched.

The magic released by the fourth person was not attacking Tatsuya.

Incredibly, the fourth parasite threw his tomahawk and it went through the plane's wall, disappearing in the night sky.

Tatsuya was worried about what the fourth person was trying to do. However, there was no time to track the fourth person's thrown tomahawk with 'Elemental Sight'.

Drawing out a combat knife, the fourth person attacked.

The opponent is Stars' 3rd Unit Commander, Alexander Arcturus.

Turning his attention while unleashing 'Elemental Sight', this information was reflected in Tatsuya's 'eyes'.

Like Lina and Minoru, he doesn't have the ability to camouflage the Information Body.

Tatsuya attacked Arcturus' knife with a knifehand strike.

In addition to the CADs in its holsters, the 'Freed Suit' has a completely thought-operated CAD.

The point-blank range 'Decomposition' converted Arcturus' knife to sand.

Another soldier came from the back. Not a parasite, not a magician, a regular soldier.

Tatsuya turned around, intersected that soldier and threw him towards Arcturus.

Arcturus caught the soldier.

Tatsuya put a penetrating shockwave on his fist and released it towards the soldier's back. Even martial arts masters can do the same thing, but Tatsuya's technique is an imitation that is used together with magic.

However, the power is the same even if it is an imitation.

The large 185cm Arcturus staggers backwards.

Tatsuya grabbed the soldier's nape with his right hand and threw him away, then pushed out his left hand to Arcturus, who is still suffering from the backlash.

In his hand was 'Armor-Piercing Psion Bullet'.

Arcturus' body starts convulsing.

With his right hand, Tatsuya drew a fourth dagger and thrust it below Arcturus' collarbone.

However, Arcturus' left hand blocked it.

'Armor-Piercing Psion Bullet' was definitely working. Regardless, Arcturus didn't lose his fighting strength.

Contrarily, he began to collect plasma in his right hand.

An Ancient Magic lightning strike.

Done this way he should receive the electric shock himself, but perhaps he is relying on the parasite's durability.

Before the lightning attack could be fired from Arcturus' right hand,

Tatsuya's left hand once again hits Arcturus' solar plexus.

Arcturus' body made a great jump.

From his right hand, the sparks of the electrical discharge disappeared.

Tatsuya raised Arcturus' left hand with his right hand and stabbed the knife before the guards came back.

The operation of the sealing technique was confirmed.

Without confirming the result with his eyes, Tatsuya escaped from the transport aircraft by opening a hole in its floor.



"Something is coming!"

Mikihiko raised his tense voice.

Leo mobilized his own five senses before he asked 'what?'.

His ears caught the sound cutting the wind.

A flying object getting closer at high speed.

Though it's high speed, it's not as fast as a bullet or a missile. Still, it exceeds 200km/h.

Faster than a ball hit by a baseball bat. Is it slightly faster than a high-speed tennis serve?

Leo adapted to the object's speed from experience and judged it.

Leo's eyes understood its true nature before Mikihiko could.

It's a rotating Tomahawk.

He also kept the hidden soldiers who were suddenly appearing in the corner of his eyes.

Leo did not wait for them.

It was an instinctive action to stand up in front of the tomahawk with Mikihiko to his back.

It was not his survival instincts.

It was his fighting instincts.

"Siegfried!"

Leo roared.

He pushed out both hands along with the roar.

With that hand, the tomahawk – Alexander Arcturus' 'Dancing Blades' was caught!

Leo grabbed the weapon strengthened by the Ancient Magician's thoughts with his body hardened by 'Siegfried'.

Leo's body invulnerability magic overcame the trump card of Arcturus, who serves as the Commander for the Stars' 3rd Unit.

After confirming by the resistance in his hands that the tomahawk had completely stopped, Leo fell with his back to the ground.

He still didn't let go of the tomahawk he was holding with the top of the handle and part of the blade.

Mikihiko was not looking at Leo who had become his shield.

He was concentrating on sealing the parasite.

That is surely because he was convinced that Leo would protect him.

Thus, Arcturus and three other parasites who tried to invade from Camp Zama were sealed.



An American army aircraft carrier stopped at the Yokosuka Naval Base.

The evening entry was to practice arrivals and departures at night, and the Japanese side was notified in advance.

But, there are things they did not notify.

Cutting edge two-seat fighter VTOLs arrived with the aircraft carrier.

The Japanese army didn't know that it was aircraft launched from a very large submarine with a flight deck.

The Japanese army didn't know that the three two-seater fighters carried female officers who were neither RIO²⁶ nor WSO²⁷ in the back seat.

The names of those girls who transferred to the aircraft carrier from the large submarine were, Charlotte Vega.

Zoe Spica.

Leila Deneb.

After Lina left the USNA, female officers of the parasitized Stars infiltrated Yokosuka Naval Base in the evening of Monday, July 1st, 2097.

²⁶ Radar Intercept Officer

²⁷ Weapon Systems Officer

Afterword

How was the 26th Volume, "Invasion Chapter"? Did you enjoy it?

This time, the protagonist Tatsuya had more of a supporting role. In the end, the protagonists' battle is shown, but even here Mikihiko has the highlight scene, shared with Leo.

Minoru showed splendid participation in this volume. Successive battles, great enemies stood in his way, feelings of frustration due to fleeing from a fight, a confrontation with a blood relative and its tragic conclusion...All elements of a protagonist. Originally, Tatsuya was a supporting character that watched over the protagonists rather than being the protagonist, a character who is a leader and acts as a wall that the protagonist must surpass, and it seems that this tendency is increasing more and more.

Though, like a protagonist, Tatsuya is diligent in his training. Grasping victory at the end with great effort, acquired with the collaboration of his friends. Isn't it truly heroic?...You don't think so? (lol)

Well, I also didn't settle on grabbing victory in a true sense. The conclusion of the great effort, friendship, victory formula will develop from now on, so please look forward to it.

Let's stir up some strange complaints.

In the 26th Volume, new characters appeared.

Officer Karasawa.

He won't play an active part in the story from now on.

...No, I know that I would like to put a straight man, but Officer Karasawa was a character from an Ayako spinoff that was discarded. This time, as soon as I noticed I needed a named extra, I pulled him out of the recycling box.

The idea of the magic department spinoff was already started by Fumiya's & an original character's "Shiba Tatsuya Assassination Plan", but Ayako's & Karasawa's pseudo-mystery was conceived at the same time. Frankly speaking, while thinking about this and that for the creation of "Shiba Tatsuya Assassination Plan", I thought things like "if Fumiya appears in a spinoff, Ayako should too". It is not correct to say "discarded", given that there was no intention of publicating it in the first place.

The first episode of “Shiba Tatsuya Assassination Plan” will be open to the public on the official site at the same time as this volume releases. The plan is for the serialization to last 11 episodes. The site address is as follows, so please take a look when you have time. Dengeki Bunko will also release soon.

<https://tsutomusato.jp/>

Now, next is the 27th volume, which should be published later this year if I don’t fall into a slump. The subtitle is “Sudden Change”. As the name says, there will be quick developments.

The end of the series is also in sight. For your continued support until the end, thank you very much.

Thank you very much for buying and reading this time too.

さとう つとむ
(佐島 勤)

