

# 魔法科高校の 劣等生 25

The irregular  
at magic high school

エスケープ編(下)

佐島 勤

Tsutomu Sato

illustration 石田可奈  
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桜井水波

さくわいみずなみ

昨年、魔法科高校に入学した二年生。達也、深雪の従兄弟という立場をとる、深雪のガーディアン候補。

### 司波深雪

しぶくみゆき

達也の妹。第一高校3年A組所属。生徒会会长を務める優等生。冷却魔法が得意。兄を溺愛する「重度のプラコン」。

「お前、何になつた?」

司波達也

しぶたつや

司波兄妹の兄。第一高校3年E組所属。妹である深雪を「ガーディアン」として守るべき存在だと認識していること以外、全てに達観している。

「——これなら、  
分かりますか?」

達也は

その笑い方を忘れて、いかつた。  
それは京都で見た、  
周公瑾の笑みによく似ていた。

### 九島光宣

くしまみつあき

かつて世界最強の魔法師だった『老師』九島烈の孫。魔法の才能に秀でているものの、病弱である。藤林響子の異父兄。



## **Introduction**

Early Sunday morning, June 9th, 2097. Exact time: 5:06.

The east of the central part of the Izu Peninsula was attacked by large-scale magic.

The magical attack, presumably carried out by the Strategic Class Magic "Tuman Bomba" of Igor Andreivitch Bezobrazzoff, a state recognized Strategic class Magician from the New Soviet Union, partially or completely destroyed 27 private villas. Fortunately, there were no casualties, but 11 people were seriously injured.

The explosive attack of this magnitude had so few casualties, because it was in a sparsely populated area, and there were few guests in the villas during the off-season. All the wounded were from people working in the villas as managers.

However, the undeniable fact was that Japan's territory was subjected to an unreasonable attack, threatening the life and property of its civilians.

On the same day, the Japanese government appealed to the international community, expressing its vehement protest against the assailant, whose identity had not been established yet, and asked to extradite the offender without calling out the country to which the magic originated.

Despite the fact that the attack was quite sudden, and was also held early at dawn, the Self-Defence forces were able to notice it from a small distance in the surrounding areas.

However, the fact that the video shown was so convincing, proving that it was an unreasonable proactive attack, was suspicious since the Japanese army seemed to have previously predicted the sudden attack and used it to obtain material for diplomatic negotiations, seemingly leaving the civilians to die.

Some courageous journalists directly asked the representatives of the Self-Defense Forces about these suspicions, but the Self-Defense Forces, naturally, categorically refuted them as "groundless, false accusations".

## *Chapter 1*

Seeing Minami lying on the floor, Miyuki froze in place and cried. But this panic was rather brief.

No, she was still panicking. But her body came out of its stupor.

"Minami-chan!"

She rushed to Minami, who was lying on the ground, and knelt beside her. Pixie was already present and was checking Minami's pulse by putting her fingers on Minami's wrist. Miyuki sat down on the opposite side and put her hand close to the front of Minami's face.

Her panic-stricken appearance weakened a little when she discovered that she was breathing. However, Miyuki turned pale when she touched her neck.

"She's cold... Her pulse is very weak... Onii-sama!"

Miyuki raised her eyes to Tatsuya, looking at him with a hopeful glance.

Minami's appearance reminded Miyuki of Honami's last minutes, and how Tatsuya was unable to help her.

"Pixie, what is Minami's condition!?"

Tatsuya also did not conceal his impatience. He turned to Pixie with a rather rude tone.

("No injuries, but her temperature, pressure and pulse are all at dangerous levels, Master. With her condition, there is a possibility that she could die from exhaustion.")

As if sensing Tatsuya's impatience, Pixie responded with active telepathy, and not with a mechanical voice. Tatsuya forbade Pixie to use telepathy without permission, but now he wasn't going to rebuke her for it. This was not the time to bring up such problems.

Tatsuya stretched his left hand to Minami. In this hand, he held no CAD.

In his right hand, he still held the CAD "Trident" in the form of a large pistol, which he used to intercept the attack. He had no time to get his left handed CAD for "Regrowth" or to get the cartridge for "Regrowth".

Tatsuya activated "Regrowth" with his own powers.

Regrowth is the magic of returning the Eidos to its original state. It tracks the history of the Eidos and its changes and then overwrites the current Eidos with a copy of the Eidos from the selected state (in most cases, this state is free of damage or wear).

Phenomena are accompanied by information. Events whose information is overwritten are changed according to this information.

Overwrite the information and change the phenomenon. This is modern "Magic".

The Information of the "Eidos" about the phenomenon has a restorative force, and the prescribed false Eidos is overwritten by the original Eidos over time. Therefore, the changes caused by magic are unstable.



However, the "Eidos from the past" is undoubtedly an information body that describes the actual phenomenon itself. If there are no contradictions in the information, the Eidos will not be corrected. However, the adjustments that are inherent to the flow of time remain.

Objects that have been rewritten by the information of their own past using the Eidos are now fixed to the present state with the time that has elapsed without being affected externally from that point on. The time is traced back to what it was previously, and the world is overwritten using that point in the past solely for that event.

"Regrowth" used by Tatsuya does not modify the "effect" in causality, as it does in usual magic, but instead it changes the "effect", by modifying its "cause".

This magic, going against the flow of time and redefining the definition of healing, was directed at Minami.

—He read the information about the body of Minami, rewinding back the changed history.

He couldn't find the cause of her exhaustion.

—He read the history of changes to the Psion information body accompanying the physical body and mind.

The cause of exhaustion still could not be found.

Tatsuya went even deeper into the information about the girl named Sakurai Minami.

—He read the history of changes in the structure of the Psion information body that binds the physical body to the mind.

This was difficult for the former Tatsuya. Five years ago, he couldn't do this for Honami.

Although he has grown a lot since that summer, he might not have been able to do this six months or even a month ago. Access was possible because it was nothing more than a Psion Information Body. Although he could read the general information, it was difficult for him to read the full details of the structure.

But the current Tatsuya could do it.

Free from Pledge, Tatsuya's true power returned. Apart from the fact that he was now free to use Material Burst, there were also other changes.

The corresponding area of his Eidos used for "Regrowth", has also returned to its initial state, thus meaning it has also expanded. Now he could track and copy the Information Body known as the "Imaginary body", The Psion Information Body directly associated with the mind, which he could not reach with his power before.

He saw that the imaginary body was torn in many places.

It was in a state covered with holes, representing a lack of information in these particular places.

The Psion Information Body seemed to have holes because its regenerative ability weakened. But this was not the cause of Minami's weakness, but the result.

Even if he restored the damaged Psion Information Body, if he did not return the initial regenerative ability, it cannot be called a fundamental cure.

However, if you leave the damage to the Information Body associated with the mind, damage to the physical body that accompanies the Information Body will occur, and the state of the body would only worsen.

The Imaginary Body transmits the commands of the mind to the physical body. The damaged Imaginary Body transmits the damaged information to the physical body.

The physical body receives the erroneous order to be damaged from the mind.

As a result, the physical body can only work with the efficiency inherited from this damaged state, despite the fact that it is not physically damaged.

But it was necessary to do at least replenish this as a temporary measure, so it would not end with irreparable deterioration.

Tatsuya's Regrowth returned the Psion Information Body and mind to its original state.

He rewrote both the structure of the Psion Information Body accompanying the physical body and the structure of the Psion Information Body that binds the physical body to before the attack was received.

The recorded information of the past became the information for the present after the adjustment was automatically made taking into account the time that has elapsed since then.

("Her temperature has returned to 35 degrees Celsius. Blood pressure and heart rate have also come out of the danger zone.")

Pixie, using telepathy, reported the improved status.

However, there were no signs that Minami was going to regain consciousness.

"Pixie, bring a futon and lay Minami on it."

("Yes, sir.")

"Miyuki, preheat the area around Minami to the temperature correlating with her current body temperature."

"Yes!"

The home automated robot, controlled by Pixie, came into motion. The magic of Miyuki began to act on the floor and air.

Not confirming the result of these actions, Tatsuya ran to the phone. no, he didn't call 119\*.

Instead he called the main house of the Yotsuba.

[Common number for all emergency services in Japan.]

"Tatsuya, do you need something?"

Despite the early morning, Hayama appeared on the screen without any traces of his clothes being messy. Tatsuya was still in his pajamas. But Tatsuya didn't have time to worry about this, and Hayama didn't reproach him for it.

"I apologize for my appearance."

Starting with such an introduction, he immediately moved to the main topic.

"The villa was attacked by Long Range Magic. Presumably, Tuman Bomba was used."

Hayama eyebrows raised sharply. That was the only sign of his surprise.

"Was there any damage?"

Hayama asked, without any signs of tension in his voice.

"I have no scratches on me or any on Miyuki. However, Minami came out with symptoms that resemble the overheating of the Magic Calculation Area. I did what I could to help, but she needs special treatment."

When Hayama heard the phrase "overheating of the Magic Calculation Area", his face changed slightly. Although the concern on his face could only be seen for a very short period of time, it was sufficient enough to understand that as a senior employee of the Yotsuba family, he could not ignore the "overheating of the Magic Calculation Area", which was allegedly the cause of death of the first head of the family, Yotsuba Genzou.

"...I got it. I'll take care of the hospitalization. I'll send Hyougo, please wait a bit."

"I'm counting on you."

After he fulfilled his goal, Tatsuya interrupted the connection.

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Around the villa, where Tatsuya lived, a barrier with a radius of about 1 kilometer was built.

It was a field using the Mental Interference Magic of the Tsukuba family, a side branch of the Yotsuba family.

Because of this magic, people will stay away from this place, since they are unconsciously forced to avoid it. And it concerned all people who have no resistance against Mental Interference Magic, whether they are magicians or not. And also this magic served as a "human radar", telling the user about the people that infiltrated the covered area.

However, around midnight, one specific vehicle was parked inside the area covered by the barrier. It was equipped with adjustable suspension, painted in camouflage colors. Although at first glance it was possible to determine that the vehicle belonged to the Self-Defense Forces, the users of the barrier of the Tsukuba family did not notice its existence. In addition, although they drove along public roads, there were no reports on the civilian systems.

An armored vehicle that could withstand the explosive waves of Tuman Bomba, it was almost pressed completely to the ground due to the fact that the adjustable suspension was lowered to its fullest. There were 4 soldiers inside the armored vehicle.

"...Psion sensors did not find any new responses. Apparently, the long range magic attacks are over." One of the soldiers told the commander sitting in the front passenger seat.

"Understood."

Sitting in the front passenger seat, Lieutenant Colonel Kazama, who is the commander of the 101 Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion, responded to the words of his subordinate, without turning his head.

This was not impoliteness on the part of Kazama. Although some would think it could be explained as their status as Commander and officer, he did not turn because he was busy.

Kazama has been sitting motionlessly for several hours with half opened eyes, a straight back, and his fingers clasped in a specific gesture.

This was not just when the armored vehicle stood still, but he was constantly doing it. His upper body was kept perpendicular to the gravity of the Earth and any movement of the vehicle was only transmitted to the wind.

The barrier of the Tsukuba family did not spot the armored vehicle thanks to the technique of Kazama.

Magic that prevents detection, "Cloak of invisibility" of the Tengu.  
To not be able to see although you could see.  
To not be able to hear although you could hear.

This magic does not block or interfere with the light and sound waves, but interferes in the consciousness of people and makes them believe that "nothing is there".

This magic was used to oppose the discerning barrier of the Tsukuba family, not letting the operator of Magic notice their entry in the barrier. The armored vehicle remained unnoticed only because the technique of the Tengu, Kazama, surpassed the barrier of the Tsukuba family.

Kazama did not move and was in full concentration because of his confrontation with the barrier of the Tsukuba family, so he had no time for anything else. Even for Kazama, who had the famous nickname "Dai Tengu", it was difficult to resist a caster of the Yotsuba family.

"Retreat."

"You got it. Observation complete, preparing for retreat."

Following the short order of Kazama, the officer sitting in the driver's seat turned back and handed out instructions.

Each member of the squad took out their media from the surveillance devices issued to them. The two junior officers moved the devices to standby mode and one after the other reported that "preparation for retreat was completed".

"I'm lifting the body of the vehicle."

Simultaneously with the voice of the officer sitting on the driver's seat, the suspension lifted the armored vehicle from the ground. The armored vehicle, literally lying on the surface of the earth, switched to the off-road driving mode.

"Ready to depart."

"Hmm? Hold on."

Kazama did not give his permission to the officer to depart. Keeping his hands the same way, he opened his eyes which were half closed. Immediately after that the external microphone around the armored vehicle caught the approaching sound of a motor.

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Around the villa, where Tatsuya lived, a barrier to keep people away was deployed. For this purpose, in a nearby small house, shifts were held between members of the Tsukuba family, a side branch of the Yotsuba family. As a result of their rotation, it turned out that the person who was in this house today, was Yuuka, who has inherited the right to become the next head of the Tsukuba family.

However, the Tsukuba family did not realize the importance of the mission assigned to them, so they forced their crown daughter to be on duty at night. Awakened by the feeling of a wave of powerful magic, Yuuka flew into the room supporting the magic barrier in a sleepy form with a dress flung over her pajamas.

"Damage report!"

From the worn-out appearance of the next head of the family, the face of the young male operator was stretched. As the degree of exposure of Yuuka was zero, the young man's confusion could be related to a kind of "love that comes once every hundred years".

"It looks like part of the grounds are ruined." Still, he firmly answered her question.

They could have this relatively quiet conversation, because the bedroom and the barrier support room were located in the basement. The present part of the "Observation house" (not for the observation of the villa, but for the observation of the people approaching the villa) was located in the basement, and the above-ground part was used as a disguise.

"The reason?"

Yuuka awakened from the Magic shock waves. Although she could guess what it was and not inquire, still being half asleep, she thought she could make a mistake and decided to just ask.

"It was an attack of extremely powerful long-range magic. Presumably, an explosion was caused in the sky, and a focused shock wave was formed."

"A focused shock wave was caused by magic?"

"No, it seems that the explosion was controlled directly to achieve this result."

"Hmm..."

Frankly speaking, Yuuka did not understand this mechanism very well. However, she had a hunch about the magic that could combine both this level of power and control.

"Was it Tuman Bomba?"

"Possibly." The operator came to the same opinion.

"What about Tatsuya-sama and Miyuki-san?"

"The villa has no damage. I think they're all right."

Hearing this, Yuuka raised her eyebrows with doubt. She did not doubt that Tatsuya and Miyuki were uninjured. The doubt was due to the report that the villa itself was not damaged.

"...Wasn't the focus point of the shock wave Tatsuya-sama's villa?"

"It seems that the shock wave was stopped by a powerful magic shield."

"...Chiho-san, what do you think?" Yuuka asked her newly appointed guardian.

"Minami-san has fulfilled her duty." Yuuka's new Guardian, Okazaki Chiho answered without hesitation.

She also was one of the modified people of the Sakurai series. It could be said that it was another branch of the second generation of the series, derived from other fertilized eggs, different from Sakurai Honami and Sakurai Minami. She was 8 years older than Minami, and at first glance she didn't look like a magician. Rather, she resembled an "ordinary servant of a small firm."

The magic which Chiho specialized in also followed the adjustment policy of the Sakurai series. Object and heat-resistant protective barriers. The basis of this specialization was protection against solids and heat, that is, mainly protection from physical objects and energy.

If the shock wave was dispersed, it could be attributed to Tatsuya's decomposition magic, if it was weakened, it would be Miyuki's deceleration magic, but if it was stopped by a magic shield, it was Minami who specialized in the same Magic as her. —It was logical that Chiho came to such a conclusion.

"Would you be able to do that, too?"

Yuuka's question was offhand, but Chiho didn't care.

"Maybe I could. But..."

"But what?"

Chiho could not decide on her answer, but this hesitation only lasted for a short time.

"But I'm not sure I can continue to do my duty after that. If you intercept that level of power, overheating of the Magic Calculation Area can appear."

The color on Yuuka's face changed. Among the whole Yotsuba clan, she was a kind of doctor, or, you can say, a specialist in damage to the Magic Calculation Area caused by overload. Even when it came to a guardian of another person, she could not ignore it when there is a suspicion that serious damage to the Magic Calculation Area could have occurred.

"I'll be ready in five minutes. You may accompany me."

"Can I help?"

Chiho looked at Yuuka's condition and came to the conclusion that it would be difficult to change clothes in just 5 minutes, however...

"Fine." Yuuka did not refuse the help and returned to the bedroom.

Chiho, unlike her mistress, was already dressed in a strict suit with a jacket and trousers and immediately went to the garage, so as not to lose time.

Although the ground garage was almost completely destroyed by the explosive wave, its simple design helped because the car was not completely buried under the debris.

Entering the car, it looked like a commercial SUV, but in fact it was an armored vehicle with military level surveillance, so Yuuka remembered that it was necessary to check the state of the barrier.

"Huh!?"

"Did something happen?"

Having heard the unwittingly surprised voice of Yuuka, Chiho, who had already started the engine and was ready to start moving, interrupted her actions and asked.

"Intruders...?"

"Did they get inside the barrier?"

The unflappable tone of Chiho forced Yuuka to discard her surprise.

"Yes, but they are extremely skilled. I'm worried about Minami-san too, but they should be given priority."

Chiho did not protest to Yuuka's decision.

"I'll send a signal for an emergency mobilization of all our people."

Instead, she implicitly expressed her view that it would not prevent the presence of all the members of their group.

"Yes, thank you. But we'll go ahead."

Yuuka understood Chiho's intention, but did not follow this advice.

"Okay."

Chiho didn't go against Yuuka's orders. She sent the SUV in the direction Yuuka specified. Chiho was sure that, whomever broke into the deterrence zone, she would be able to hold with her barrier Magic until her allies arrived.

If you took the villa as the center, the intruders were at a ninety degree angle from them.

"It's an armored vehicle from the army." Chiho made this conclusion, seeing its shape and masking colors. Yuuka did not know as much about cars as Chiho, but even for her it was obvious that this particular vehicle belongs to the army.

"Let's talk to them. Stop over there."

Following the guidance of Yuuka, Chiho stopped the SUV so as to block the path of the armored vehicle.

"I think it's better to wait for reinforcements."

"...Right."

This time Yuuka followed Chiho's advice and remained in the car.

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Looking at the relatively small SUV that stopped near the front of the armored vehicle, the officer in the driver's seat turned his eyes towards Kazama as a gesture to ask for further instructions.

Kazama stopped holding his hands in the special gesture and clicked the lever to unlock the door.

"Commander?"

"Everybody wait in the car. Any actions that may be mistaken by the other party as hostile intentions are prohibited."

Giving instructions to his subordinates, Kazama left the vehicle. Right after that he turned towards the SUV. The other side also had to understand that he wanted to explain the current situation as clearly as possible.

Kazama waited for a reaction from the SUV, without taking any action, but no reaction ensued. So Kazama quickly noticed something. The place where they were at now was relatively open. This area was chosen to record the attack on Tatsuya's villa, but the sparse woods could still block several lines of sight.

And in these "blind spots", people gathered. Only 11 people. Kazama's intuition told him that they were all high level magicians.

Both the doors of the driver and passenger's seat of the SUV finally opened simultaneously. Kazama came to the conclusion that these were all of their reinforcements.

"My name is Tsukuba Yuuka. The eldest daughter of the Tsukuba family, subordinate to the main house of the Yotsuba family." A young woman, who came out of the passenger's seat, spoke with a layman voice. Between them was about 5 meters, but even in these weather conditions with the wind, there was no problem to hear what she was saying.

"...and you are, as I see, Lieutenant Colonel Kazama from the 101 Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion of the National Self-Defense Forces?"

Kazama was not surprised that she was able to identify him. No wonder she knew him if her identity matched the name she gave.

"Right. I'm the Lieutenant Colonel of the National Self-Defense Forces, Kazama." He answered, still standing on the side of the armored vehicle. He considered that the other side does not want to approach the distance for a handshake.

However, contrary to his expectations, Yuuka went to meet him.

Kazama quickly followed her example. Of course, to show a friendly attitude to the other side. But that wasn't the only reason. He was also concerned that it might seem cowardly if he makes a young woman who looks around 20 years old approach the armored vehicle in which his subordinates were sitting.

The woman who came out of the driver's seat followed Yuuka. Looks like she's a bodyguard. Kazama guessed that she didn't stand in front of her because she used strong defensive magic.

(So she is a guardian? Must be quite skillful.)

Kazama has heard a little about the guardians of the Yotsuba family from Tatsuya. The fact that the woman who looks like a bodyguard was standing behind her was a "guardian" could be understood by the accompanying atmosphere.

"Lieutenant Colonel Kazama. You may not know, but this is area is the private property of the Yotsuba family."

While the attention of Kazama was directed at the guardian, Chiho, Yuuka managed to get closer to the normal distance for a conversation.

"More precisely, it belongs to a real estate company, which is controlled by the Yotsuba family, but that does not matter. What are the Self-Defense Forces doing on private territory? And with such a thing." said Yuuka, pointing her eyes at the armored vehicle.

She was wondering how Kazama would answer to such an unexpected question. As it was expected that they would not be discovered, no excuses were prepared.

Kazama was very unfortunate that Yuuka's shift had to be today and yesterday. Other operators would not have been able to notice his cloak of invisibility.

In fact, their invasion was discovered by Yuuka herself. She wasn't going to brag about it before Kazama, but he knew he'd underestimated them. He imprinted these reproaching thoughts in his memory.

"I beg you to forgive me, but I cannot answer as it is connected to the military."

After all, without inventing any excuses, Kazama laid out the "Joker" card, which is usually applied to a civilian.

"Is the military secret that you mention connected to the fact that civilians would be the target of another country's attack?"

However, Yuuka was not one of those people who was frightened by the phrase "military secret".

"In this armored vehicle... Is there any equipment for gathering information?" Yuuka asked, turning to Chiho who was standing behind her.

"Yes. It looks like a model for exploration."

Although the answer of Chiho was not completely affirmative, the tone of her voice spoke of her confidence.

"Don't misunderstand. We do not intend to oppose the Yotsuba family."

Not showing a drop of hesitation, Kazama responded to Yuuka's words, using not the phrase "civilians", but instead "the Yotsuba Family".

"Do you mean that the Yotsuba family are not civilians?"

Yuuka immediately jumped after the hint left by Kazama. However, this question was also what Kazama wanted to hear.

"Regardless of the formalities, you can't be considered completely non-combatant, can you?"

"...Formalities do not matter for civil servants?" This objection came after a short delay in time. This was proof that Yuuka could not deny Kazama's argument.

"Can you persuade me to abide by these formalities?" Kazama asked with a discreet smile.

Yuuka had nothing to say.

"Instead, I would like to know if the army was expecting an attack by Tuman Bomba?" This question came not from Yuuka.

Kazama hurriedly turned towards the voice that came from the shadows of the grove. Undisguised agitation appeared on his face.

"Tatsuya..."

"Tatsuya-san..."

Kazama and Yuuka muttered his name at the same time.

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"Onii-sama, what is it?"

Miyuki, sitting beside Minami's bed, noticed the tension created by Tatsuya's aggravation and directed her gaze toward him.

At the moment, Minami's condition has stabilized. Although she did not regain consciousness, thanks to Tatsuya's Regrowth, she was no longer in a state of struggle for her life.

Tatsuya already changed his pajamas to casual clothes to meet the helicopter that would take Minami to the hospital. When he returned to the canteen, where she was laid on a futon, he was no longer in a state of intense impatience. Instead it was tension from the sudden alertness to the presence of an enemy.

Miyuki couldn't understand what Tatsuya noticed.

"Lieutenant Colonel Kazama."

"Lieutenant Colonel Kazama!? And you did not notice him..."

"I didn't notice him."

When Miyuki bashfully lowered her eyes, Tatsuya hurried to tell her that he felt the same.

"It looks like he was discovered by Yuuka-san's magic."

"Yuuka-san is here too?"

It seems that Miyuki was not quite convinced that Tatsuya was not able to notice him, but apparently this question was more interesting to her.

"The operators of the Tsukuba family are using magic here, to stop people from approaching. This was done on the orders of Aunt."

"Aunt-sama...?"

Not knowing how to understand Maya's order, as if troubled about Tatsuya, Miyuki changed the embarrassment on her face to perplexity.

"I'm going to go meet the Lieutenant Colonel. Miyuki, I trust Minami to you."

However, there was no point in speculating on the real motives of Maya. There was no point in making assumptions. It was useless even if these guesses were the truth. Before Miyuki could fall into a labyrinth of reflection, she returned to her consciousness and reminded herself that there are more important things to do now. Tatsuya, as he said, left the villa to meet Kazama.

When Tatsuya reached the target, the dialogue between Kazama and Yuuka was in full swing.

He asked the supporting magicians of the Tsukuba family to remain silent, then he merged with the landscape, and began to listen to the dispute between Kazama and Yuuka.

Kazama would have noticed Tatsuya if his attention was not on Yuuka.

Yuuka would have also noticed Tatsuya if her attention was not on Kazama.

They were aware of each other as a 'user of Mental Interference Magic, with which one should be vigilant', so their attention on others was weakened. For Yuuka it was not critical, but for Kazama, the owner of the alias "Dai Tengu", it must have been a serious omission. Tatsuya did not know this, but fatigue was undoubtedly in play here, having accumulated after the concealment from the barrier of the Tsukuba family.

"Is the military secret that you mention connected to the fact that civilians would be the target of another country's attack?"

This question from Yuuka caused confusion in the thoughts of Tatsuya. The armored vehicle, on which Kazama arrived, was equipped not for battle, but to gather information. Besides, it was quite expensive equipment. If you think about it, you can guess that they came here today because they expected to be able to collect valuable data.

As Yuuka said, it means that the Self-Defense Forces assumed in advance that there would be a sudden attack from Tuman Bomba...?

Tatsuya could not dismiss such suspicion.

"Can you persuade me to abide by these formalities?"

Yuuka had nothing to say to Kazama. There was no extra time from the beginning. Tatsuya decided that it was no longer necessary to merely remain an observer.

"Instead, I would like to know if the army was expecting an attack by Tuman Bomba?"

"Tatsuya..."

"Tatsuya-san..."

Kazama and Yuuka with astonished faces answered Tatsuya, who went out of his stealth mode and came out of the shade of trees.

"Lieutenant Colonel Kazama, answer me."

Tatsuya did not salute to Kazama. And also missed the usual greetings.

Tatsuya didn't want his spicy tongue to dull from these friendly greetings.

"...As I told Tsukuba-san, I cannot answer."

"In other words, the answer is yes?"

"No comment."

Tatsuya met his gaze with Kazama and sighed a little.

"Lieutenant Colonel Kazama. I feel obligated to you. So I don't want you to say something like that."

"..."

"If you had warned us in advance, we would not have allowed this sudden attack by the New Soviet Union."

"... Are you sure that the sudden attack by long-range magic was carried out by the New Soviet Union?" Of course, Kazama showed interest in this. But there was one more important thing in the topic Tatsuya raised. "If you give justification to your words, then I will answer your question."

Justification that a sudden attack was carried out by the New Soviet Union. Even considering the concern that the promise may not be fulfilled, these words were enough to make Kazama change his mind. "The magic used for the sudden attack was activated from a railroad in the suburbs of Vladivostok."

"From a railroad?"

"This was the result of reading the information of the caster, which activated the magic, presumed to be Tuman Bomba."

"Did you discover Igor?" Yuuka unwittingly wedged into the conversation.

"The casters is dead, but it was not Igor, it was two women."

"Women!" A surprised Yuuka exclaimed.

"Two... Were they non State recognized Strategic Class Magicians?" Kazama, as expected, quickly understood the truth.

"I do think that Igor did participate in this, but I specifically targeted those two women. And they were undoubtedly in the Far east of the New Soviet Union."

"If it was on a railroad, then was it a military train that came on the new Trans-Siberian highway?"

For the Self-Defense Forces, this information was important.

There were rumors that to activate Tuman Bomba, they had to use a large CAD, occupying a wagon train. However, this theory had no evidence.

Moreover, at a time when magic resembling Tuman Bomba was used in the Soya strait, no such movement of trains was recorded. For this reason, the Self-Defense Forces were thinking about whether the information about the private train was wrong, and whether another magic, not Tuman Bomba, was used at that time.

But according to Tatsuya, it turned out that this private train is actually involved in the use of Tuman Bomba.

Although Tatsuya said, "The Magic is supposedly Tuman Bomba", by power and range of action, this magic was definitely Tuman Bomba. If this is not the case, it means that the New Soviet Union possessed another magic with high power and outbound range of action, besides Tuman Bomba.

Tuman Bomba or not, it was clear that this magic represented a threat to Japan and was launched using a private train. The resources used by the Army for observation were limited. These resources could be effectively distributed if the objectives of the monitoring were better clarified.

However, Kazama did not have time to plunge into a feeling of satisfaction.

"Lieutenant Colonel, it's your turn now."

Tatsuya did not stand before Kazama, as a member of the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion and as subordinate Kazama. It was a 'bargain' between them.

"Did the Self-Defense Forces know that a surprise attack would occur at this place this morning?"

"We didn't know completely. The exact date and time we could not predict."

"In other words, did you expect this place to be attacked? Why?"

Kazama couldn't answer immediately. This question concerned the ability of the army to gather information. Although Tatsuya was part of the Self-Defense forces, he was not completely committed, so Kazama pondered on the question whether Tatsuya had the right to know for some time.

"The Self-Defense forces... No, Her Excellency Saeki received information on the movement of Igor. And from that you made the assumption that I would be the target of a sudden attack?"

Without waiting for the answer from Kazama, Tatsuya gave his guess, which was the truth.

Kazama said nothing. Seeing that he could not give an answer, Tatsuya realized that his guess was correct.

If they were warned of a possible sudden attack, it would not have come to such a situation that Minami had to crumble from depletion. He wouldn't even let Miyuki and Minami come to this villa. If Tatsuya was alone, there would be no damage, even if he was directly impacted by that attack.

"We have a wounded person, so I'm going back to the villa."

Tatsuya pacified his discontent. Even if he reacts with discontent towards Kazama, it would be meaningless.

"Then, Lieutenant Colonel, and Yuuka-san, goodbye."

"Wait, Tatsuya-san. The wounded person you mentioned... Is it Minami-san?"

The outgoing Tatsuya turned around, hearing the voice of Yuuka.

"Yes. Yuuka-san seems to understand Minami's current condition."

"Minami has no injuries that could be called 'injuries.' However, the Magic Calculation Area, the unconscious area of the mind, was 'wounded'." Tatsuya used the word "wounded" in this sense, and Yuuka understood this.

"She needs to be sent to the hospital urgently! Should I ask my family for help?"

Yuuka anxiously offered to help with transportation. Despite the fact that she said so, she could not suppress her anxiety.

"The main house has already organized a helicopter. It should arrive soon..."

*So I have to go back.* Tatsuya hinted with these words of his.

"Is that so? Then... Take care."

"Thank you very much."

Slightly bowing to Yuuka, Tatsuya turned around again and left.

Yuuka glanced at his retreating figure and was filled with anxiety.

Kazama to the end did not say a word of concern about the mentioned "wounded".

## *Chapter 2*

The hospital Minami was placed in was located near the building in Chofu.

Of course, this wasn't a coincidence. The building in Chofu, where Miyuki moved to, was built as the headquarters of the Yotsuba family in Tokyo. Measures concerning sick and wounded had been considered from the beginning.

Tatsuya returned together with Miyuki to the new house which was a multi-storied building.

Miyuki wanted to go along with Minami, but the doctor politely refused. Miyuki did not become stubborn when she was told that her magical power, which could unwittingly be released, could interfere with her treatment.

"Is everything going to be okay for Minami-chan..." An unconcealed murmur came from Miyuki, who was sitting next to Tatsuya, with a voice filled with anxiety. Apparently, she didn't even think about hiding these feelings.

"I think her life is no longer in danger."

When Miyuki heard this from Tatsuya, which were words coinciding with her expectations, her facial expression became a little less disturbing.

"...Right. Tatsuya-sama used 'Regrowth'. Nothing bad should happen."

Tatsuya looked at Miyuki's eyes, that were filled with indecision. He did not want to escalate her alarm, but he also did not want to be insincere to her. Deceiving her with empty words of consolation was not his goal.

"...What I did were only temporary measures, like first aid. I couldn't cure her completely."

He first laid out the bare facts, but he added an additional explanation before Miyuki's anxiety began to grow.

"But we managed to avoid her state weakening to a deadly level. In addition, Minami is the second generation. Her resistance to magic must be stronger than that of the first generation, Honami-san."

"Yes, that's right!"

Miyuki raised her gaze. In search of hope and support, her look met the look of Tatsuya.

"With the change of generations, magic is strengthened in the genes... The same can be said about us, modified people, right?"

Tatsuya was disgusted to hear how Miyuki called herself a "modified person".

"The second generation of ordinary, modified people are more stable than the first. There are some exceptions, but there is no doubt that this is the trend."

Usually, modified people lack vital stability. There have been many cases of sudden deaths without any reason, as well as deaths from sudden weakness.

And at the moment there is no established theory about the reason for it. However, there were many hypotheses. One of the most convincing hypotheses, and that to which Tatsuya inclined, is the "Limiter Failure Theory", which asserts that "People with modified bodies use magic with a removed Limiter".

According to this hypothesis, the spirit of these people initially did not have the ability to use magic. The Magic Calculation Area is not a unique feature of magicians, it is present in the spirit of every ordinary person. But since the use of magic strains the limits of the human mind, usually the limiter blocks magic activity by 100%. In other words, it is completely shut down.

But in rare cases, there are magicians whose mind has a strong durability against magic, and such people have slightly weaker limiters. In such cases, their limiter is not set to 100%, but to 99%, or sometimes 88%.

Even if it is just 1-2%, the difference between total zero and the amount that allows the use of actual magic is very significant.

Even with 1%, the person gets the opportunity to use magic, which he normally would be unable to do.

Using the muscles as an analogy, the use of the Magic Calculation Area can also increase its power. Bones and tendons increase in physical strength to support the growth of the body, similarly the spirit increases in durability against the excessive use of magic. This is what the theorists of the "Limiter Failure Theory" believe. They believe that the limiter's release of the Magic Calculation Area and the enhancement of magic grow in parallel.

Using this, it is possible to understand that ordinary magicians by using magic gradually increase their natural durability to use magic, and thus gradually remove the limiter further. But magicians with modified bodies have artificially created conditions for the use of magic, and the limiter does not work under these conditions, as well as the claims under the "Limiter Failure Theory".

The Magic Calculation Area which should grow alongside the spirit's magic durability doesn't develop at the same rate because they are not both "turned on" at the same time. The spirit will continue to be damaged whenever the magical load exceeds its durability, which spreads to the physical body and effects it in a negative way.

Speaking of which, it is believed that the magical endurance of the spirit is an inherited trait. Neo-Lamarckism, which claims that the acquired skills of the physical body are inherited, also claim that in the field of mental adaptation of magic, this is observed as a phenomenon that "Magic genes adapt" over time.

If this way of thinking, which can be called "Lamarckism of Reason", is true, then the "second generation" is born with the same magical endurance of "The first generation". Therefore, the "Third generation" will inherit even more resilience, because of the reinforced "second generation".

However, all these are conjectures. There is no guarantee that they are true.

However, "second generation" Minami was said to have a much higher resistance than that of the "first generation" Honami. When Miyuki thought about this, her feelings calmed down a little.

These feelings of tragedy and guilt disappeared from her expression. Her strong sense of guilt was due to Minami sacrificing herself for her.

Seeing this, Tatsuya smiled at Miyuki, who hid her anxiety in the depths of her mind.

The fact that Miyuki also has a modified body was an unpleasant thing for Tatsuya. If he could, he would prefer not to believe it, but there was no reason to deny it. He had no sense of discrimination or detachment for someone with the most advanced modified body. But it was unpleasant to him that someone forced their hands on Miyuki's body, even though it was before her birth. It can be said that Tatsuya unconsciously felt the desire to be a kind of sole owner.

But if you remove such emotions and accept the fact that Miyuki has a modified body, then he will not be able to ignore such serious fears.

For example, the concern about whether or not Maya was able to overcome the instability of a first generation.

If you adapt the words of Maya to the previously mentioned hypothesis, then Miyuki's limiter works fine despite her modified body. Or is her magical endurance so high that the limiter is not needed at all?

Tatsuya didn't have a way to check this. Even now, completely freed from his seal, he could not reach the realm of the spirit.

So the only thing he could do was believe.

If what Maya told Tatsuya was a lie, then Miyuki had the disadvantages of a modified person. And if Miyuki was awaiting the same fate of modified people in the form of a sudden death...

Tatsuya simply could not imagine such a future.

Tatsuya wasn't sure that he would be able to live without her.

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At 2 p.m. Japanese time, the Japanese government protested to the international community about the sudden attack by an unknown country.

However, the USNA learned about the fact that the Japanese peninsula Izu was attacked with Long Range magic in almost real time.

The USNA's spy satellite recorded the response of a powerful magic in the far region of the New Soviet Union at the same time that the Izu attack was made. There were no such people in the government or in the USNA's Army who could not relate these two events. But there were those who were happy and those who were unhappy.

Lina was also informed about it, but only a few hours later.

The headquarters of STARS in New Mexico, still Saturday, June 8th. In the evening, at a meeting after completing training, STARS officers discussed this shocking news.

The report said that one of the regions of Japan, which was not a distant island or a sea surface, close to the capital area was attacked by Strategic Class Magic of the New Soviet Union early in the morning.

"The target of this attack is the newly discovered Japanese Strategic Class Magician, Tatsuya Shiba."

In the coaching room, the assistant to the non-magician base Commander Walker explained the details of the message.

"What is Tatsuya Shiba's condition?"

This question was not asked by Lina. She was in shock at the moment and was not able to ask the connected questions. The one who asked the assistant to the base Commander was Canopus.

The assistant looked at Commander Walker. Having confirmed that Walker nodded, he replied: "The details are unknown, but it seems that he was not hurt at all."

The reaction among the magicians present varied.

Lina didn't even try to hide her relief.

Canopus strongly squeezed his lips, as if fearing that Tatsuya would retaliate.

Arcturus was depressed, apparently due to the fact that the assassination mission will not be canceled.

On Vega's face, who received the same task, on the contrary, a daring smile surfaced.

Colonel Walker spoke at this point.

"A directive was received from the general staff that our country occupies a non-intervention position in this matter. It looks like we won't be allowed to show ourselves this time, but you should still be prepared."

The voices of confirmation were heard from all of them. Although Lina was the only one who could not agree with it, they all still understood their situation.

"Then, you're dismissed."



Thirteen of the best magicians of the USNA saluted at the same time after Walker's order. When they, led by Lina, began to go out one after the other, a voice came from the back, stopping only one person.

"Captain Arcturus, I'll ask you to stay."

According to the rules, the operations assigned to STARS are passed through Lina, but there were exceptions, when orders aren't passed by her, and they were not very rare. Lina herself was not very disturbed by this.

Lina and the 11 Captains of the different units, as well as the assistant went, leaving only Walker and Arcturus in the coaching room.

This room was equipped with a serious listening protection system. Which, of course, was being used at the moment.

"Captain, activate a Soundproofing field." Walker told Arcturus before they continued.

"Understood."

With doubt on his face, Arcturus, following the order, blocked both internal and external sounds.

"Installation of a Sound insulation field is complete."

Not having Magic himself, Walker could not verify whether Arcturus told the truth or not. However, he nodded quietly and immediately moved on to the main issue.

"Captain. It was decided to carry out the experiment, which we talked about earlier." Arcturus's seemed stressed from this.

"Is this about the Micro Black Hole experiment?"

He unconsciously lowered his voice, though he had just used magic to stop any sound from escaping.

"Yes. The venue will be the same as last time: the National Particle Acceleration Institute in Dallas."

"The time will be next week, June 15th at 11 o'clock. You are the best user of Lunar magic among STARS.

Although I think you can handle it if there are any parasites, but if you need to, we may send the 11th Unit to help you."

In the army of the USNA, Mental Interference Magic was called Lunar magic. Arcturus was a powerful Mental Interference Magic user. But Arcturus, like those specializing in this kind of magic, had little real combat experience.

He inherited the blood of his Native American ancestors. His grandmother was one of the only remaining thoroughbred shamans of the Native American tribes. His predisposition to Mental Interference Magic is considered to be inherited from this grandmother.

Because of this pedigree, he was usually barred from missions against magicians of Ancient Magic specializing in Mental Magic (they can also be called "Sorcerers" or "Shamans").

"Sorcerer" is the USNA's term for magicians specializing in Ancient Magic and that belonged to the Native Americans and they would call black magicians that use Ancient magic "Shamans". To be more precise, white and Asian people used these names, so Arcturus showed his sympathy towards people of the same race because of the prejudice he has faced.

In the 11th Unit, there were three magicians specializing in lunar magic, and without any racial prejudices. They were often in command on operations against Ancient Magic users, because they specialized in Mental Interference Magic, and were able to withstand attacks that attacked the mind.

"No, I'll be enough."

Arcturus also understood that he lacked real combat experience. But he also had high conceit. In addition, he believed that the presence of STARS in this matter should be kept to a minimum.

"Is that it? I got it."

The desire to engage as few people as possible also coincided with Walker's opinion. In this conversation it was decided that only Arcturus' 3rd Unit will be sent to the experiment.

"The 6th Unit will be on duty outside the lab. If you find suspicious people, tell them immediately."

This meant that not only the 3rd Unit would be involved in the operation. Three members of the 6th Star class, who received the code names of the Orion constellations: Mintaka, Alnitak and Alnilam, who are also called "Orion team". And this was not a coincidence, because the 6th Unit is a team of "hunters", Magicians specializing in persecution.

"You got it. But Captain Rigel..."

"Don't worry. The experiment will be conducted in secrecy."

For a moment, relief could be seen on the face of Arcturus when he heard Walker.

The goal of the Micro Black Hole experiment is to expose a Japanese agent. To be sure of their capture, the cooperation of other groups is desirable. But Arcturus, mistaken about the dangerous event, did not want people from other groups to learn about the experiment.

Walker had to agree with him. Although their motives were not used to harm the other, the result was that the information was hidden from the public.

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The Japanese government announced a magical attack on the area where villas were built on the Izu peninsula, and heavily criticized the person that fired the attack, without specifying who it was. At the same time, they stressed that this was nothing more than a hindrance to their magical military power.

At the same time, they indirectly criticized the anti-magic movement, pointing out that the expulsion of magicians would not only be a humanitarian problem, but would also reduce the defence against magical attacks of other countries, which would jeopardize the lives of the citizens of the country.

However, they withheld that the target of the attack was also a magician.

The fact that the target was Tatsuya and that Minami became injured was strictly forbidden from being spread around. However, full concealment of the facts was impossible.

Those who knew where Tatsuya was, easily tied him and this magical attack together.

And there were also those who had guessed the truth, because they possessed sharp magical perception skills.

Immediately after the government's announcement of a sudden attack, 1st Lieutenant Fujibayashi received a personal phone call. A personal phone call during service was possible because the call came from a virtual hotline with the Kudou family, established for emergency with the permission of the headquarters.

"Kyouko-oneesan? It's Minoru."

"Minoru-kun?"

The virtual hotline only passed his voice. The other side's display said "Kudou Family" and it was impossible to know who it was until you heard their voice. It could be her grandfather or her uncle, or even her aunt. But the fact that it was Minoru, was quite unexpected for Fujibayashi.

"I'm sorry for interrupting you and your work."

"That's all right. I'm not busy right now."

This wasn't a lie. Prior to this, she had been preparing documents for the government's announcement, drawing on the data obtained from Kazama at the Izu peninsula. Now that the press conference was over all involved people had no work to do.

"So, do you have any urgent business?" Fujibayashi asked, hiding her worry. This private line was rarely used. and Minoru used it for the first time. He wasn't being egotistical... Or at least he did not show such behavior before to Fujibayashi, Minoru usually could not afford to call her while she was working. This was natural, therefore, Fujibayashi feared that there might be an emergency.

"It is not urgent, but there is something that I would like to know at any cost... This is about the government's announcement that was just made."

"I'm listening."

Fujibayashi was willing to listen to what was going to be discussed, but answered with the usual intonation of her voice.

"The target of that long range magic was Tatsuya-san, wasn't it?"

"How do you know this...?"

This was an unexpected response. Albeit from Minoru, but she had concealed this information on the orders of the government.

This was how strongly astonished she was. Tatsuya's close friends from First High could know his whereabouts, so it is not surprising that they could relate this attack in the morning to him.

However, even within First High, there were very few people who knew that Tatsuya was at the villa on the Izu peninsula. Maybe he heard Tatsuya's location from Saijou Leonhart or Yoshida Mikihiko, whom he met last fall...?

But this assumption of Fujibayashi turned out to be wrong.

"I felt strong magic waves collide with each other in the East. But at the same time, I felt that one of them was Tatsuya-san's..."

Fujibayashi did not know how to respond to the words of Minoru. If what Minoru said was true, then it could mean he had a passive sensory ability that exceeds Tatsuya's Elemental Sight.

Tatsuya's Elemental Sight can "see" everything of whatever he looks at. However, his Elemental Sight requires "intention" — the direction of the will. If you do not try to "see" something, if you do not direct your will to something, then you will not "see" it.

He could passively "catch" hostility directed at Miyuki, but this made his target in comparison much smaller. However, this time he could not feel it until the attack had actually begun.

Conversely, if Minoru really felt the shock waves coming from Tuman Bomba, it means that he randomly perceived the activation of magic from a distance of almost 400 kilometres. Of course, Tuman Bomba is quite a powerful magic, but it was quite obvious that Minoru's passive sensitivity surpassed Tatsuya. At least it seemed like this to Fujibayashi.

(Minoru mastered Elemental Sight...?)

"...Minoru-kun. Since when do you have such a powerful perception skill...?"

Fujibayashi's question was not answered.

"Tell me, are Tatsuya-san and those with him alright!? How are Miyuki-san and Sakurai-san!?"

Minoru did not hear Fujibayashi's question. His attention was directed to the condition of Tatsuya and his entourage.

...No. In fact, Minoru was not worried about Tatsuya or Miyuki...

"Tatsuya-kun and Miyuki-san are fine. But Sakurai-san..."

Although her intuition discouraged her, Fujibayashi could not lie to him.

"What happened to Sakurai-san?"

But when she heard the desperate voice of Minoru, Fujibayashi couldn't keep silent.

"...She's in the hospital. Dr. Yamanaka of the Battalion suggested that her Magic Calculation Area could be damaged due to excessive use of magic."

"Suggested? But did the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion provide any treatment? You were there right!?"

"Minoru-kun, what has happened to you...?"

He could not answer her last question. The Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion's being there was only known by Saeki, Kazama, the involved members of the squad and a few other people from the Battalion. As well as Tatsuya, Miyuki and the Yotsuba family.

Even the government did not receive a report on the specific people involved in the operation.

Minoru should not have known that the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion was involved in the collection of information about the sudden attack.

However, Minoru's question was not a random guess. He confidently declared that the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion participated.

The Minoru who Fujibayashi knew could not do this. Her "cousin" has been considered an outstanding magician, and Fujibayashi believed that if it was not for his health, he would certainly be on the list of the strongest in the world. But he was not supposed to have this ability similar to clairvoyance.

It was as if in Minoru possessed an evil spirit with forbidden knowledge...

Her superstitions seemed like a fantasy.

...If at that moment, she had not counted her intuition as fantasy... The future could have been quite different.

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Minoru was not particularly angry when he heard about the situation in the morning from Fujibayashi. Although he was disappointed, he already had a preconceived opinion of the military that they belong to everything insensitive, so he just decided that this was only natural.

But instead, Minoru suffered from unbearable anxiety over Minami.

The damage that the spirit receives from excessive use of magic meant that it was overheating the Magic Calculation Zone. This was the only disease that magicians had, and so far, no treatment has been found.

Genetically modified magicians are particularly affected by this disease. According to the knowledge obtained from Zhou Gongjin, the unstable health of Minoru was also caused by a problem in the Magic Calculation Area.

In the case of Minoru, the limiter that constrains the Magical force at a level that the physical body can withstand is malfunctioning. Any ordinary magician can also break their Limiter if it exceeds the permitted working level of the Magic Calculation Area, for example, by excessively using magic during a battle. In Zhou Gongjin's knowledge, there was no way to restore it.

(Maybe if I can't get it cured, the Yotuba family can...)

This was not speculation, but a strong desire. He had nothing to do but to calm his anxiety, which he could not restrain.

(...I'm not going to lose her. Maybe if I go meet her, I can check on her condition.)

He could not believe that Tatsuya would allow his family member to die so easily. Even if he did not do it himself, she certainly received the necessary treatment.

(I have to go and see her with my own eyes...)

This was Minoru's course of thought. He should go to school tomorrow. He had to make it there a certain amount of days, when his physical condition was stable, but when he didn't come, he could replace the missed time by passing a test or writing a report.

Minoru decided he was going to skip school for a little bit.

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Her awakening was unpleasant. Her body was heavy. Fatigue was felt in the whole body, as if the rest did not completely get rid of her fatigue.

Opening her eyes, she saw a soft creamy colored ceiling. After looking to the side, she saw the walls were the same color. As well as clean white bedding.

An injection needle was inserted into her left hand.

(This is... A hospital?)

After realizing this, her memory came back to her.

(...That's right! Miyuki!?)

Minami tried to climb up, but realized that her body had weakened to such an extent that she could not do so.

(Wow...)

She tried to force her body to move, but her fruitless attempts ended only with a sigh of awareness that nothing was working.

At that moment, Minami lied back down on her bed and heard a knock on the door.

"... Enter."

She was surprised at how weak her voice was.

"I'm sorry for the intrusion."

"Miyuki!?"

Her consciousness was still slightly clouded, but she could not help but understand who the voice belonged to.

Minami weakly tried to rise again. The result was the same. Just a little bit of a head lift. But she quickly returned to her pillow.

A painful groan again came out of Minami's mouth.

"Minami-chan!"

The sound of the fast approaching steps was heard. In Minami's field of vision, she saw the face of Miyuki, and was filled with emotions and excitement.

"...Beautiful..."

Even with such an expression on her face, the beauty of Miyuki was unearthly. The consciousness of Minami was filled with such irrelevant thoughts.

"Minami, don't overdo it."

"Tatsuya-sama..."

The consciousness of Minami, which was in the clouds, returned to reality when she heard Tatsuya's voice.

"...Are you two okay?"

The first words of the awakened Minami were not for her own welfare.

"Yes, we're fine. Thanks to you."

"...It's an honor for me."

Tears came out of Minami's eyes because of her emotions. She felt relieved that she was able to protect her mistress, and how deeply she was impressed by her awareness.

"No, you need to rest."

"Stop trying to move Minami."

"If you want to talk about something, you can talk while lying down." When Tatsuya said this, Minami stopped her useless attempts to rise.

"Tatsuya, Miyuki, I'm very sorry."

Miyuki did not know how to answer this unexpected apology.

"...Why are you apologizing? The fact that we are left intact, is thanks to you, it's not a lie or an exaggeration. It's true."

Even Tatsuya could not answer immediately.

"But my strength was exhausted as a result. As a guardian, I need to fulfill my duty, which means I need to defended my master to the end... I couldn't fulfill this duty."

Her voice was very weak. Her body was also weak enough that she could not rise.

But the light that filled Minami's eyes when she spoke were her real feelings, not just a complaint that her spirit was weakened.

"Minami, I'm not going to argue with you, because both your body and mind are exhausted. But I want you to hear two things."

"...Okay."

Upon hearing Minami's answer, Tatsuya sat down on a chair next to her bed.

This reduced the height difference between their eyes, which should ease the impression Minami got from being stared at from above.

"Minami, I consider your sense of duty to be commendable. However, it is also an indisputable fact that your magic was able to protect us from the shock wave caused by Tuman Bomba. You can't deny such an achievement."

"...Yes."

Minami agreed only with words and did not nod. But she was not convinced to the depths of her soul.

"That was the first point. And now the second."

Tatsuya spoke with a serious voice. Not only to Minami, but also to the nearby standing Miyuki, who simultaneously struggled to breathe.

"I believe that I can trust you, Minami, but not only with the protection of Miyuki."

Minami lay and gazed silently at Tatsuya. This look suggested something like, "What are you going to do with me?". In response, she wanted to get to know the meaning of her existence.

"There are very few people I can rely on. Leo, Erika, Mizuki, Mikihiko, Honoka, Shizuku. Even though I trust my classmates from First High, I don't want to drag them into our situation. Now the Yotsuba family is my ally, but if I interfere with them, they will not hesitate to get rid of me. Fumiya and Ayako, I also trust, but they have their own work.

Perhaps I cannot rely on them in an emergency situation. Also I cannot deny that in the near future, I can become an enemy to my master and to Lieutenant Colonel Kazama."

"And where does that put me?", Minami asked with a glance.

"Minami. You're one of the few I truly trust. So I want you to be near Miyuki not as a guardian, but as a friend."

"Not a guardian, but... a friend?"

"I hope so. It's not coercion. But if possible, I'd like you to be near Miyuki. And to stay there as long as possible, and not die quickly as a guardian. At least until you find a partner for the rest of your life."

Minami's pale face slightly blushed. Tatsuya's mention of her possible marriage was too sudden for her. These last words caught Minami by surprise.

"...Minami-chan. I'll be happy if you're around. So I don't want you not to think of yourself as useless." said Miyuki, sitting near Tatsuya and slightly leaning over to face Minami.

Minami's eyes were shedding tears again. At that moment, she realized that Tatsuya and Miyuki really cherished her.

"So, please, recover, slowly. Restoring your health is the most important thing now."

"...I got it. I'll get better as soon as possible. And when that happens, will I be able to serve Miyuki-sama again?"

"Yes, it's a request from me."

Behind Tatsuya, the entrance door to the hospital room opened. Not looking back, Tatsuya guessed that it was a doctor and a nurse.

"Tomorrow, we will come again." Tatsuya said and he got up from his chair.

"Minami-chan, until tomorrow."

"Yes. Tatsuya-sama, Miyuki-sama, thank you very much for visiting."

Miyuki, embarking after Tatsuya, exchange farewells with Minami. After that Tatsuya and Miyuki gave way to the doctor and left the hospital room.

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Tatsuya returned to the multi-storied house in Chofu together with Miyuki. Tatsuya "settled in" in the living room and did not give any signs that he was going to leave any time soon.

"Tatsuya-sama... Are you sleeping here tonight?" Miyuki asked, putting a cup of coffee before Tatsuya.

Before Minami started living with them, Tatsuya's coffee was only served by Miyuki. However, even after Minami came, preparing drinks for Tatsuya remained the responsibility of Miyuki, but sometimes, when she lost her vigilance, this work fell to Minami.

In those days, Miyuki considered such incidents as annoying, but now she could not resist the sad loneliness of having no more anxiety, that at any moment her work could be done by the maid. Perhaps Miyuki was not completely selfish.

"I think I'm leaving the villa in Izu. If circumstances allow it, I will pick up the necessary things from there tomorrow."

"So you're coming back here?"

Miyuki slightly expanded her eyes. These eyes were shining with joy. If Minami had not gone to the hospital, Miyuki would have shown her joy much more openly.

"I'll come... Yes, right. I'll return."

Despite the fact that Tatsuya stayed in this multi-storied house overnight, he did not live here. So he was puzzled whether it was possible to call it "return". However, Tatsuya's place is near Miyuki.

...If Miyuki calls this place her home and lives here, it is the right expression for him to return. This was the course of Tatsuya's thoughts while he was answering Miyuki.

"I understand. I'll prepare your room."

"Do not make any special preparations. Miyuki, you need to get some rest too."

Tatsuya thought that when it comes to Minami, Miyuki was shocked more than he himself. To overcome this anxiety, you need to move forward, and not to stand still.

However, it is important to give rest to your body.

Although she said that she would prepare the room, the home automation will cope with the preparation for a bed. Tatsuya decided that Miyuki should take a break too.

Miyuki looked like she was not happy with it, but she still obeyed Tatsuya's words.

Miyuki sat on the couch opposite to Tatsuya. Sometimes her eyes wandered around in an attempt to calm down, and in the end, her gaze was met with the eyes of Tatsuya.

"What's wrong? Is there something you want to ask?"

When Tatsuya ordered Miyuki to tell him what was wrong, she finally spoke.

"Tatsuya-sama... What are you going to do about Minami-chan?"

"What do you mean with 'What are you going to do'? I'm not going to force her to do anything against her will."

"I-I beg your pardon. That's not what I meant!"

When the frowning Tatsuya questioned her, Miyuki in a panic waved her hands.

"Is it...? Maybe you wanted to ask, what duties I wanted to give Minami?"

"Yes... No, that too, of course, but..."

It seemed that Miyuki decided to say something difficult. And Tatsuya finally realized what Miyuki wanted to ask.

"...Minami will no longer be able to do everything she wants."

Tatsuya could not force himself to express it in clear words. Probably because the current situation was unknown to him.

"This means... That Minami's responsibilities will no longer include the work of a guardian?"

"Right."

As soon as Tatsuya said this, his hesitation was gone.

"She won't be able to use magic until the damage to her Magic Calculation Area is cured. Besides, we don't know if we can cure it at all. For us magicians, the Magic Calculation Area is like a black box. There are still too many unrevealed mysteries in terms of both its structure and nature."

"Really... Although the Head of the Ichijou family seems to have recovered, it does not necessarily mean that Minami-chan will recover as well..."

"Another Head of a family of the Ten Master Clans, the previous head of the Juumonji family lost his ability to use magic because he frequently, intentionally overloaded his Magic Calculation Area. He cannot say anything optimistic about his treatment."

Both Tatsuya and Miyuki's faces were concerned and gloomy.

"...In addition, even if it is restored now, it will not necessarily be the same again."

"Only if she continues to use magic?"

"Right. In addition, next time it could be that first aid is not provided on time."

Miyuki's face became even sadder.

"That means... That Minami-chan could no longer work as a magician?"

"No, she can continue to work as a regular magician."

"But you mean that... She won't be able to withstand an intense battle?"

"That's right, Miyuki. First of all, the duty of a guardian, who is not allowed to retreat, will be impossible. It would be better to avoid participating in battles."

"Will Minami-chan agree to this?"

"Life is not just about battles. I believe that Minami will want to go on a path that leads to a peaceful life."

Miyuki's gloomy face brightened up a little. However, there was no relief on her face.

"And Onii-sama... No nothing. Sorry."

You want to try to persuade Minami to live a peaceful life, but what about you, Tatsuya? Does Tatsuya not have the right to live in peace? Trying to ask this, Miyuki stopped, and did not finish her sentence. Miyuki realized that this is a meaningless question in reality. Realizing this, she gave up on the idea halfway.

Even if Tatsuya wanted a quiet life, his surrounding environment would not allow it. Even if Tatsuya himself is not going to use his Strategic Class Magic, its presence alone does not allow him to have any enemies or friends. And this is not an assumption, but a fair and obvious fact.

"Okay."

Tatsuya, of course, understood this. Perhaps he understood it even more than Miyuki. Realizing what she wanted to ask, Tatsuya could only answer with that.

## *Chapter 3*

Monday, June 10th.

Everyday life ruthlessly continued, regardless of such extraordinary events as yesterday's attack that was used from across the sea.

Although Miyuki could not stop worrying about Minami, she, as usual, went to First High.

"Is Tatsuya not busy with all kinds of things...?" Minami apologetically asked Tatsuya. She was laying in the hospital bed in a bent state. She has not yet been able to move her body, so her upper half was clad in a supportive exoskeleton (A trusted medical device to aid her strength).

"I am exempted from classes. So you don't have to worry about me."

"But..."

"Wouldn't it be better if you lied down and rested a little?"

No matter how much she said it, Minami's "Don't worry" was not convincing. To stop any other useless questions, Tatsuya forcibly changed the subject. Apart from the goal of sending the conversation in a different direction, he was also bothered by the exoskeleton.

No. The doctor advised that if you use this support, and not just lie down, you can quickly return to everyday life.

But it's not a very comfortable thing to look at.

Tatsuya was familiar with this kind of strength aid because of his mobile suit. This system had a high rate of feedback, so he knew that it did not complicate movement. Of course, there could be differences in performance with the latest military equipment, but at least no stiffness could be felt in your movements.

Since the weight of the exoskeleton is maintained by contact with the surface of the floor or earth, the person wearing it should not feel this weight.

However, it is tightly attached to the body, so a certain sense of pressure could not be avoided. So it is not absolutely convenient.

Tatsuya speculated so, but...

"It's all right. My skin's sensitivity is not completely back, so for the most part I do not feel that I am wearing it."

...He unwittingly rounded his eyes after hearing the unexpected response from Minami.

"Are you paralyzed...?" with a quiet voice Tatsuya asked, quickly recovering from his surprise. But this tone of voice was chosen unconsciously.

"To call this being paralyzed is an exaggeration... It just feels a bit intrusive."

With the serious voice of Tatsuya, Minami did not know what to say as if she was under psychological pressure. But she clearly didn't mind the anxiety about the anomalies in her own body.

"What did the doctor say?"

"I was told that neither the brain nor the nervous system is damaged, so it is a temporary anomaly due to exhaustion."

"If that is it, that's good."

Although he said that, a disturbed look could still be seen on his face.

"Tatsuya-sama... Can I ask one question?"

Looking back at it, Minami was not able to understand why she asked this question.

"Ask away."

However, at that moment she, for some reason, could not keep her doubts to herself.

"Why is Tatsuya-sama so worried about me?"

First, Tatsuya slightly frowned his eyebrows, not understanding the meaning behind the question. But his face quickly changed to an "Understanding" look, and a reproaching bitter smile also came with it.

"Yes, it must seem strange that I, who lacks emotions, could care about strangers."

"N-no, that's not what I meant!"

Minami hurriedly tried to correct Tatsuya's mistake.

"It's okay. You got it right."

Even though he said so, Minami realized what kind of impression he was hiding behind this statement. Minami felt ashamed of her impoliteness. So much so that apologizing won't help her any more.

"What is wrong with your assumption, is that you thought I was a stranger to you."

Minami unwittingly burst out a bewildered "Huh...?". Such a reaction could also be considered to be rude. However, Tatsuya did not take it as rude.

"Minami, how much do you know about me?" Tatsuya followed with a question of his own.

But Minami could not answer this question. Tatsuya understood that. So he gave the correct answer to this question.

"Except for any cases related to Miyuki, I cannot have real emotions. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I cannot have strong emotions."

This was known to Minami. That's why she didn't say anything. It was too important a secret that strangers could not know.

"But Miyuki thinks of you as a sister. Minami, you're family for Miyuki. And I also understand that the girl named Sakurai Minami is deeply associated with Miyuki-san. I'm worried about you, because Miyuki worries about you from the bottom of her heart. Maybe it'll sound rude to you, but through Miyuki, I'm really worried about you."

"...I am very grateful, this is an honour for me."

Miyuki thinks of her as a sister. For this Minami was "grateful."

Tatsuya worries about her through his affection for Miyuki. This was an honor for Minami. Minami understood that, as Tatsuya-sama said, any emotions accompanying his attachment to Miyuki were real.

"I didn't know the meaning behind it, but..."

It seems that Tatsuya was not able to understand what kind of mental processes could have led to such words by Minami.

"...I beg your pardon."

"Don't pay attention to it."

Minami could not explain her thoughts. She preferred to withdraw her answer rather than to respond against her will.

"...In the evening, I will come again with Miyuki. So, forget about your duty and just focus on healing."

Tatsuya did not particularly care about getting an answer.

"Yes. I'll follow your advice."

Minami bowed to Tatsuya with a barely noticeable faint movement of her head.

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Frankly speaking, Miyuki wanted to miss school today.

She was not sure how she would be able to concentrate on her studies with what Minami was going through. Instead, she wanted to be near Minami.

However, she could not help her treatment, even if she was there. On the contrary, she was not allowed to be there. She was told that by staying near her for a long period of time, she could unconsciously emit Psion waves that could awaken Minami's Magic Calculation Area, which would prevent her treatment.

She did not intend to emit Psion waves on accident. This could have happened up to before the day that the Pledge, which halved her power, was broken. But her present self had the ability to control her magic, so she would not recklessly exert any pressure on other magicians.

However, she could not disagree that in comparison with Tatsuya's ability to completely control his Psions, her control was still weak.

Miyuki realized that her Psion count did not reach the level of Tatsuya's, but she still had a much higher amount than the average magicians, so she could not deny the possibility of negatively impacting Minami's health.

For this reason, Miyuki abandoned the side of Minami and, as usual, went to school.

As soon as she entered the classroom, Honoka and Shizuku came to her with anxious faces.

"Miyuki, are you all right?"

"What are you talking about?"

She didn't pretend to not understand. Because just the sudden question "Are you okay?", was not clear enough for her to respond with anything but with the question "What is it about?". If it was a question about something else, it could be a mistake to reveal information that should be kept secret.

In this particular case, however, such vigilance was futile.

"The place mentioned in yesterday's statement of the government, this is the villa where Tatsuya-sama stays at!? Miyuki, you said you were going there last night!"

It turns out that both Honoka and Shizuku realized that the target of the Magic was Tatsuya.

"Yes... Tatsuya and I are fine, but Minami-chan had to go to the hospital." Miyuki said and sat down in her seat.

"Huh!?"

"...Is she hurt?"

Honoka froze in shock, and Shizuku asked, sitting at her seat, with her back turned around. Shizuku's seat was right in front of Miyuki's.

"It's not a wound, but... Something like that."

Miyuki gave a vague answer to the question of Shizuku. The overheating of the Magic Calculation Area is only found in magicians, but it still does not apply as a normal illness or injury. Although the body and mind are different things, there is no difference between them in the notion of "something similar to a wound", so her words could not be called a lie.

"I see... How bad is it?"

Shizuku did not interrogate her about Minami's condition. She just asked if it was a serious injury or a light one.

"It is not yet known how long she will be in the hospital..."

The face of Miyuki looked worried.

"Understood... I'm worried about her."

Worry was also on the faces of Honoka and Shizuku.

"Can we go and see her?"

"It's not an infectious disease, so I guess it won't be a problem. I'll have to ask her doctor."

Miyuki did not immediately respond to the request of Shizuku. Miyuki was glad that they wanted to visit Minami, but, given the circumstances, she could not give consent herself.

"Okay."

"Please tell me when you get her doctor's permission."

"Of course." With a slight smile Miyuki nodded to Honoka, who was crouching at the edge of her desk.

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"Who's there?" Minami asked, having heard a knock on the door of the room dedicated to her. It's about 11 o'clock now, so Tatsuya should be in Izu and Miyuki at school.

This hospital was under the control of the Yotsuba family, but it was not exclusively used for the Yotsuba family. As a clinic, it could also take on regular patients. However, Minami has heard that in the block where her room is located, people are only allowed to pass after a strict check.

Minami believed that the likelihood of any suspicious people appearing to be very low. So she thought that someone associated with the Yotsuba came to see how she was, but she was wrong.

"It's Kudou Minoru."

The answer that came from behind the door was completely unexpected to Minami.

"Mi-Minoru!!"

The only thing Minami could do was give this little sensible phrase to maintain the dialogue, but in her mind she was shouting "What!".

But this exclamation was not because of meaningful questions such as "How does Minoru know that I was in the hospital" or "How did Minoru learn about this hospital", but because her consciousness was clouded from embarrassment.

However, she was only confused for a moment. Her upbringing, corresponding to a girl of her age, reminded her of her position right now.

In the morning, before Tatsuya came, she managed to clean herself up. However, from that moment on she has been lying down in a half-asleep state, and her hair was certainly a mess. In addition, she could not meet Minoru in such a grubby posture...

"Please wait a bit!"

Minami's reaction was fast, but her right hand moved slowly. With this hand, she pressed the big button on the wired control bed.

The bed bent, lifting the upper half of Minami's body.

Supported by the auxiliary exoskeleton, Minami slightly pushed her back away from the bed. This was done so there was a small gap between the bed and Minami's back. Using this gap, she disconnected the right and left half of her exoskeleton.

The auxiliary exoskeleton was worn only on Minami's upper half of the body, supporting it.

Using the exoskeleton she could help the movements of her hands. Minami took a mirror and comb and hurriedly removed the mess that was her hair, while looking in the mirror.

In fact, she also wanted to do her make-up, but in the hospital room, there was a limit to what she could do to change her look.

"...Sorry for making you wait. Please come in."

The AI in the room analyzed Minami's voice and opened the door.  
"Sorry for the intrusion..."

Answering with an indecisive voice, Minoru entered the chamber.  
At that moment the room was filled with a sacred light.

It was as if the room was filled with a pure white light that came down from the skies.

...Of course, this spectacle only unfolded in the imagination of Minami.

"Sakurai-san, um... How are you feeling?" Minoru asked with a shy smile, not noticing the strange look directed at him by Minami. Or maybe, at the moment, he didn't care about such trifling matters.

With the help of Minoru, the usual conversation began, and Minami was able to escape from the world of fantasies back to reality.

When her mind returned to the realization of what was happening, the previously foggy questions finally began to surface.

(...How does Minoru know I was in the hospital?)

(...How did Minoru determine that I was being treated here?)

But she did not ask Minoru about this.

"Yes. I don't feel any discomfort, like pain or suffering. The doctor said that even though the body's strength has not returned, I will soon get better."

Minami responded humbly to his question.

"That's good."

Minoru smiled widely. Minami's pale cheeks reddened.

If the smile of Minoru had lasted a little longer, Minami would've lost consciousness for a reason different than fatigue.

Minoru looked at Minami with serious eyes.

Minami did not even realize that her consciousness was gradually fading away. Even such trivial questions as "Why are you not at school" flew out of her head the moment when she heard his voice outside the door.

"...Sakurai-san. Besides that, is there anything wrong with you?"

"Other than what?"

He had asked her just like a doctor. Minami felt this suspicion from his words.

"For example, is your sight blurry or can you hear everything well?"

"..."

She really only had the symptom of a weakened touch. But is it possible to talk about this to Minoru? That's not a simple concern, is it? ...For this reason, Minami was hesitant to respond.

"There is no need to answer someone like me. Of course if you think that. But this is an important matter. Sakurai-san, I want you to answer me honestly!"



However, she was not able to hesitate with the serious gaze of Minoru upon her.

"...My sense of touch is a bit..."

"Your touch has weakened!?"

The face of Minoru approached the face of Minami. Minami, who was unable to withstand it, looked away. At that moment, she had the strong feeling that "I can't keep looking at his face", and not that "I can't stand the shame". Needless to say, the fact that she could turn her face away from hostility, did not mean she could also do this with her speech.

"Yes, it has... Now, Minoru. As I said earlier, please call me Minami."

Due to the unexpected request, Minoru's attention slightly deviated from Minami's condition. Because of this, Minoru noticed the dubious position that he now occupied, and quickly withdrew himself.

Realizing that this is what Minami wanted, he moved to an appropriate distance.

"Uh, but..."

Minoru was an incomparably handsome young guy, but his experience in dealing with the opposite sex was zero. His mysterious beauty forced girls to retreat, and not approach him.

Although the cause for this was not because he is an "unpopular man", but for Minoru, being one of the "popular guys", it was still a bit difficult to "call a pretty girl by her name". When it was such a beautiful girl as Miyuki, this feeling of resistance was denied by himself, but for a high school student... No, for Minoru, Minami was a "pretty cute girl", and he felt a bit embarrassed.

"Otherwise I will have no choice but to call you 'Kudou-sama'..."

Minami and Minoru exchanged looks, which made her face become even redder.

Given the status of Minami and Minoru, she, from the very beginning, had to say Kudou.

But Minami began to call Minoru "Minoru-sama", when he had agreed to call Tatsuya and Miyuki by their name, because it was difficult to distinguish between them, since both of them are called "Shiba-san". Therefore "Kudou-sama" was the right option to use when Tatsuya and Miyuki weren't present.

Having seen the expression on Minami's face, Minoru forgot about his embarrassment. And after hearing her words, he answered reflexively. It seemed that Minoru also wanted her to continue to calling him by his name.

"Yes, Minoru."

"..."

"..."

But their feeling of embarrassment had not disappeared. And this time it was not just Minoru. The feelings of shame of one of them enhanced that feeling of the other, and the chamber was filled with an atmosphere of real youth.

"...Uh... Did the doctor say anything about your sense of touch?"

"Oh, yes, he did... I was told that since neither the brain nor the nervous system is damaged, it is a temporary anomaly..."

Minoru's face became gloomy when he heard the answer of Minami. When Minami saw a change in Minoru's face, her anxiety began to grow. Although she behaved as if nothing had happened, she was actually frightened by the anomalies in her body.

The Yotsuba family told her about the instability of modified magicians. She knew that someday this fate would overtake her.

...It's possible that "someday" has already come.

It was a lie if you said that Minami was not thinking about this.

If it was just the natural deterioration of the body, it wouldn't really bother her. However, it was obvious that this is not the usual anomaly of the five senses. Minami knew this was caused by overloading the Magic Calculation Area. And she knew that the sudden death of modified people was also related to the excessive use of magic.

She gave all her strength to protect Miyuki. And she didn't regret it. At that moment, she was not pretending, but she was really ready to give up her life, and even now she does not regret it.

But she was too afraid to think about death. So she tried not to think about it. She lied to herself and pretended to be cold-blooded about it.

However, now that Minami saw the serious face of Minoru, that alarm started to ring again.

"Minami-san, uh, can I touch your hand...?"

"...Yes please?"

If this was some other time, Minami would not have responded so quietly. The anxiety spread in her mind and weakened her embarrassment.

Using the help of the exoskeleton, Minami stretched her right hand to Minoru. The other side looked embarrassed. Despite the fact that it was his request, his white cheeks blushed slightly. Minoru carefully put his right palm under the stretched right palm of Minami. And he put his left hand on the back of her hand.

As expected, Minami was immediately flushed because of these actions.

Minoru slowly moved his left hand. His cheeks were still red, but his eyes were serious.

These intense eyes of Minoru were chained to Minami.

Minoru frowned his eyebrows several times, as if feeling that something that both the doctor and Minami did not know.

After about a minute, Minoru let go of Minami's hand, took a deep breath and exhaled. Perhaps he was so concentrated that he forgot to breathe.

Minami quietly gasped at the same time, but this reaction was a show of tension, not relief. Minoru did not notice this action of Minami.

"...Minami-san. This may sound cruel, but Minami-san's wound hasn't healed yet. The Magic Calculation Area is still damaged. Even if the physical condition is restored, it is still unknown if you can lose consciousness again."

"... So that's how it is."

"I know it's hard to believe."

But Minami believed in the words of Minoru. On the contrary, she believed in herself. Minami thought this, when she realized that she knew the truth all along.

"However, I would like you to believe in me."

Minami mentally, and not out loud, made a surprised "Uh?" sound. What does he want her to believe...? These words from Minoru were unexpected to Minami.

But her doubts were immediately answered.

"I will definitely find a way to treat you. That's why I don't want you to give up."

The question that now surfaced in Minami's head was "why?". This morning, Minami asked the same question to Tatsuya. But she could not decide whether or not she wanted to ask Minoru this question as well.

"...Okay. I will rely on you, Minoru."

The answer she gave was unexpected, both for Minoru and for her.

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When Tatsuya, who was preparing to move away from the villa in Izu, was interrupted during lunch, it was already 1 PM. He did not have to do things like packing and loading, but he could not entrust the transfer of important research data to other people.

The kitchen and all the kitchen utensils were originally part of the villa, so Pixie, as usual, prepared lunch. Not only the kitchen utensils, but most of the equipment and clothing in this villa was organized by the main house of the Yotsuba, so there wasn't much luggage involved in the transfer to the multi-storied house in Chofu. Lunch was a bit late because he first decided to completely finish all his business.

At the table in the dining room, it was just Tatsuya. Other workers went to the truck to eat there with the lunches they brought with them in boxes. Tatsuya could understand their feelings, because they tried to avoid sitting with an "important person", so he did not force them to join his table.

"Tatsuya, I'm sorry to interrupt your meal."

When Tatsuya had already finished doing all the dishes and rested with an afternoon coffee, Hanabishi Hyougo entered. Today he was not in his usual three-piece suit, but in his working trousers and jacket, similar to the uniform of a courier to a company. Because of his young age, this appearance suited him well. But in the current situation, the phrase "suited well" meant "not feeling uncomfortable", and not "fashionable looks".

Therefore, when he, as usual, politely bowed, his appearance did not arouse a sense of irrelevance.

"No, I've already finished eating. What's wrong?"

"I received a report from a person responsible for the Chofu Aoba Medical Clinic."

[Here, Aoba is not written like the name of Toudou Aoba, but knowing the author, this is clearly not a coincidence.]

The Chofu Aoba Medical Centre, the name of the hospital, is where Minami resided. Tatsuya felt anxious for a moment that the condition of Minami had worsened, but he quickly gave up on this thought. If that were so, the tone of Hyougo's voice would be more intense. In this respect, Hyougo definitely was a man who could be anxious.

"I'm listening."

"At about 11 o'clock, someone visited Sakurai in her room."

For Hyougo, Minami was one of the maids serving the Yotsuba family. As a butler, he had a higher status. So it was normal for him to call her that.

"Have you visited her? But I thought the amount of people allowed to visit were limited?" Tatsuya asked these questions.

"The hospital staff understands that. However, they could not just mindlessly throw this person out. They had filed a request to the main house, and from there on, he was given permission."

"Who was it?"

According to the words that he could not be thrown out, it was clear that it was not an ordinary visitor. Besides, he says that the man was given permission from the main house. Tatsuya had no idea who this visitor could be.

"The third son of the Kudou family, Kudou Minoru-sama."

Minoru was the youngest child of his five brothers and sisters. By seniority, he was the fifth to be born: First his sister, second his brother, afterwards his sister, then his other brother, and finally, he himself.

"Minoru...?"

The first thing that surfaced in Tatsuya's head was the natural question, why did Minoru come on a weekday.

He didn't need to think very hard to understand how Minoru knew that Minami was in the hospital.

Fujibayashi told him... Tatsuya quickly came to this conclusion. In fact, this information had to remain within the army, but Fujibayashi to some extent was sympathetic towards Minoru. If Minoru had begged, something could have definitely been leaked. Moreover, for the Self-Defense Forces, this information does not need to be kept strictly confidential.

But having learned even this, Tatsuya could not understand the reason why he came to visit, skipping school today, as if in a hurry. Minoru spent less than three days with Minami in total. In fact, it looked like they had good compatibility, but he didn't notice that they really became friends.

In Kyoto, Minami cared for Minoru when he was sick, so the likelihood that he might have certain feelings, is not equal to zero. But even with that in mind, his vigor in this matter is too high.

Tatsuya did not know Minoru's character well enough to say that it is not like the usual Minoru.

However, Tatsuya felt that the passionate desire to leave his bed in Tokyo and skip school, is not very consistent with the image he has of Minoru.

"By the way, is Minoru still at the hospital?"

If he is still in the Chofu Aoba Medical Centre, Tatsuya wanted to ask him directly what his intentions were.

"No, he's already gone. Looks like he spent about 20 minutes in the hospital room."

However, in fact, this did not go as Tatsuya thought.

Tatsuya thought that Minoru had spent too little time there. Still, Tatsuya could not decide if 20 minutes was too much or too little compared to the average time for visiting a patient. However, if you consider this passionate desire to visit a patient in the hospital, even skipping school, it could be concluded that he simply overdid himself.

It wasn't just a visit, right? Did he have any other purpose?

There was too little data to infer the true intentions of Minoru.

"I'm fine with Minoru. Anything else?"

"Nothing else."

With Tatsuya's gesture, he deferentially dismissed the bowing Hyougo.

When they were alone, Tatsuya turned to Pixie, sitting in a corner of the dining room motionless, like a decoration.

"Pixie, get my information terminal."

"Yes."

Not answering telepathically, but through the built-in mechanical speaker, Pixie quickly brought his terminal.

Last autumn, Tatsuya exchanged contact information with Minoru. After the case having to do with Zhou Gongjin, they never contacted each other, but if Minoru did not change his ID, he could be contacted.

However, Tatsuya's expectations were not justified. Since from the speaker came the sound of someone being called, means that the ID was not invalid.

The link identifier (ID) attached to a particular information terminal cannot be re-used, so if you change the ID, the old ID becomes invalid. In other words, instead of the sound of a call, an invalid ID message will be issued.

In case the terminal is turned off, the corresponding message will be voiced. In other words, either Minoru cannot take the phone now, or pretends that he is not around.

"...But pretending to not be there is not like him."

In the absence of data, there was only speculation. Tatsuya decided to temporarily postpone his suspicions for Minoru's actions.

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When Tatsuya called Minoru, he was already driving to Nara with a long-distance train, a so-called "trailer".

But this wasn't the reason why he didn't answer the phone.

A trailer is a subspecies of a road train carrying individual cabins.

Passengers can enter the cabins of the trailers and are not forced to sit with bent legs and hands in a cramped space.

Minoru did this.

A private cabin is like a closed room. If you call while you're in there, you're not going to annoy anyone.

Then why didn't Minoru answer his phone? Because Minoru just didn't notice the sound of the ringtone.

At this point, Minoru was having a mental conversation in his head.

It was not a technique of thinking in the form of having a conversation with himself. He was not able to hear any sound, when concentrating on the conversation he was having with his "knowledge", which once was the former ghost of Zhou Gongjin.

Minoru asked about a treatment method for Minami. The answer his "knowledge" gave, was cruel.

("It will be difficult to restore her Magic Calculation Area.")

(That is, it cannot be cured? Why? After all, the Head of the Ichijou family successfully recovered, didn't he?)

Despite the fact that the cause of Ichijou Gouki's disease was supposed to be hidden, among the Ten Master Clans, they all understood that it was the overheating of the Magic Calculation Area.

There was an announcement from the Ichijou family that the recovery was successful, and the Kudou family concluded that this information was true.

("The damage received by Ichijou Gouki did not seem to be that serious.")

(You mean that the damage inflicted to Minami-san is more serious!?)

("I believe that she will be physically restored. The doctor didn't lie about that.")

(Physically?)

("If she rests for some time, the weakening of her physical body and the partial failure of her sense of touch should return to its original state in a relatively short time.")

Minoru became a little calmer when he heard this. However, his anxiety quickly returned.

(However, the cause of the injury to the physical body is the damage done in the Magic Calculation Area? If you don't deal with this cause, then it can happen again?)

("The probability that it will repeat naturally is rather small. Unlike 'me', she does not have to constantly support the excessive activity of Psions at a level that a physical body cannot withstand.")

The harsh answer given by his "knowledge" only started to get on Minoru's nerves. Usually a high activity of Psions is an indicator of an outstanding magician. But in the case of Minoru, these were shackles, binding him to his bed.

Minoru kept his wrath of despair in his mind. Now the priority should be a way to cure Minami.

It was not the time to discuss his own disadvantages, which nothing can be done about.

(Does that mean that the illness of the physical body will continue to happen if Psion activity increases?)

When you use magic, Psion activity occurs inside a magician. The stronger the magic, the more intense this activity. If the increased Psion activity will harm the physical body, it means that Minami could faint from the use of High level magic. Advanced magic would become practically useless to her now.

("That's true. Compared to 'me', its conditions are clearly visible, so it will not interfere with her daily life. However, as well as 'me', her activity as a magician will be limited.")

Minoru unwittingly squeezed his teeth. He could not lead magicians in their current struggles. It was the one thing that constantly tormented Minoru. So this was absolutely unbearable.

(But what about Minami? Will she have to accept the misery of not being able to use magic? ...Will she be able to live normally without using magic?)

("Unfortunately, I cannot give a definite answer. She inherited the body of a modified person. Perhaps even both her parents came from modified descent. Even if she does not try to use magic herself, there may be a situation that her Magic Calculation Area will go out of control and exceed the permissible limits of her body.")

(Just like 'mine'?)

("If this is the case, her situation is more serious than 'mine'. 'My' spirit is not strong enough, but it has a high regenerative ability. Therefore, even with frequent illnesses, it ends up not being fatal. However, in her case, the damage to her spirit can lead to the total exhaustion of her life.")

(...But she was saved this time.)

("Someone had restored her spirit on the spot.")

Minoru's intuition told him that it was Tatsuya.

Minoru did not know about all the magical abilities that Tatsuya possessed.

But he watched the Monolith Code Rookie Division on TV 2 years ago.

In that match, Tatsuya couldn't dismiss Ichijou Masaki's attack, strong enough to inflict deadly trauma, but he miraculously recovered and caused an unexpected turn during the battle.

Based on that situation, Tatsuya must have an advanced self-healing ability. He can probably use it on other people.

(Then what will happen if she 'faints' when that 'someone' is not there to help her...?)

("She won't be saved. This is the fate that people with modified bodies follow. I assume that in the case of 'Minami-san' this could also happen the next time.")

(So the method to cure her is the same as mine...?)

("Merging with a parasite. This seems to be the most effective.")

Minoru completed the dialogue with his "knowledge".

To save Minami, he must infect her with a "parasite". Minoru thought that this was unthinkable. But he was in the same situation. Thinking about it, Minoru began to think that there was something attractive about that.

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As Tatsuya promised, in the evening he and Miyuki came to visit Minami. During their conversation, Minami told them about Minoru's visit.

"So Minoru said that he'd find a way to treat you?"

"Yes, Tatsuya-sama."

As he thought, it was not just a simple visit. Hearing the response of Minami, Tatsuya nodded slightly.

Although Tatsuya doubted the intentions of Minoru, hearing about them holding hands and him stroking the back of her hand, in the end he became convinced that the real intention of Minoru was to cure Minami.

"Onii-sama, does Minoru-kun have such knowledge?"

Miyuki, who listened to Minami's story with him, asked an interesting question. The treatment of the Magic Calculation Area is a complex issue that the Yotsuba family has been exploring for many years and has not yet achieved its goal.

"I can't say that he doesn't have it. As was seen at last year's Thesis Competition, Minoru's understanding of "Reason" far surpasses the level of a student. In addition, the magic of the former ninth laboratory, which has elements of Ancient Magic, also uses spells related to the system of Mental Interference Magic. It is probable that Minoru could find the key to the treatment of the Magic Calculation Area in the studies of the former Ninth laboratory.

"However, Yotsuba researchers have not ceased to study the Magic Calculation Area since the former fourth laboratory. But despite this, the method of treatment has not yet been found. In addition, Minoru-kun has an imbalance between his Magic Calculation Area and his physical body. If he had such knowledge, wouldn't he start with treating himself?"

"He could learn more about it because he has a similar problem."

Tatsuya shook his head and rejected Miyuki's objection.

"There is no point in discussing the abilities of Minoru here and now. He said he'd find a way to treat Minami. Let us perceive the good intentions of Minoru precisely as good intentions."

"...Right. Sorry for such useless doubts."

Tatsuya nodded to Miyuki and looked at Minami again.

"Local doctors are also making a lot of efforts to treat Minami. The main house seems to be sending their research here, and I'm not going to sit around either. Be calm and wait for good news." Tatsuya said to calm Minami down.

"Well. Uhm, Tatsuya..."

However, Minami responded with an alarming voice as if it "caused the opposite effect".

"What is it?"

He did not, of course, show any signs of anxiety on his part. With a calm face and a calm voice, he asked Minami to continue.

"Could you please ask Minoru yourself so that he doesn't try to do the impossible?"

*Really?* Tatsuya mentally muttered. It seems that the anxiety that Minami showed was not about the success of her treatment, but about the same Minoru that they were discussing.

"Did you feel that there was something wrong with Minoru?"

"Yes... He seemed very tense. He looked... As if he was not just worried about me, but as if he was hiding some other, more serious suffering..."

"Did Minoru give off such bad feelings?"

"No. He didn't look overworked or weakened."

"...I'm worried, Onii-sama."

Miyuki looked disturbed at Tatsuya, as if she had been infected by Minami's anxiety

"Minoru is a smart guy. I think he won't do anything reckless..."

Although Tatsuya said so, he himself was not entirely sure of this.

He did not know Minoru's character. He could have said that if it was the Minoru he had met last Fall, he wouldn't do anything stupid. However, the behavior of the current Minoru did not correspond to the image he had of Minoru from that time. Therefore Tatsuya felt such uncertainty.

## Chapter 4

First High and its nearest station were connected by a straight road. Although it does branch out, it can still be said that, the main road is the only one.

Most of the students go to and from school on this road. The only exceptions are students who live within walking distance of the school.

Tuesday, June 11th, morning. On the mentioned pedestrian route the noise from conversations of pupils had risen. Because the well-known President of the School Council, Shiba Miyuki, was walking quite closely with one male pupil.

And this person was as famous as the President of the School Council. And in terms of fame in society, he was far more famous.

The name of this person is Shiba Tatsuya.

He has returned after a long absence.

"Tatsuya-san!"

From the gate to the courtyard of First High's main building was a straight road. Right after Tatsuya stepped on this road, he was called out by a voice that was in front of him.

There was a figure in the opposite direction among the students going to school, and she was not alone.

"Tatsuya-san, are you coming back to school?"

The people who knew the circumstances had faces as if they were saying, "There is nothing to be done about it..." and the ignorant people looked at them with curiosity. Honoka, not paying attention to any of them, ran to Tatsuya.

"Yes. From now on, please take care of me again."

With a crooked smile on his face Tatsuya answered Honoka, trying not to cause concern.

Tatsuya quietly approached Honoka and looked at her back.

Shizuku, standing behind Honoka, said hello with a confused face.

And behind her back, Erika, Leo, Mikihiko and Mizuki stood with joyful faces. Erika, noticing the glance of Tatsuya, slightly waved her hand.

Tatsuya continued to go towards the school building with Miyuki to his left, and Honoka attached to his right.

The entrance for the Magic Engineering course was in the second hallway from the main walkway.

This was due to the fact that the classrooms for classes A to D and E to H had separate entrances, and the structure of the school building could not be changed any more.

Separating from Miyuki, Honoka, Shizuku and Mikihiko, Tatsuya went to his classroom together with Erika, Leo and Mizuki.

It's been a long time since he was in classroom 3E. Although Erika and Leo were in class F, they also went to class E.

"We finally left the main group."

Going to his place at the window, Tatsuya gave his impressions, which were not sarcastic, and quite heartless feelings. Erika and the others did not say anything, but only had stretched smiles.

Mizuki sat down at her seat, located on the side of Tatsuya, and turned to face him.

"Given your Stellar Furnace project, is it okay for you to be here now?"

"Well, of course I'm going to be busy. Therefore, it will be difficult to come to school every day."

Mizuki's face was a little sad when she heard Tatsuya's answer. However, she quickly hid it behind a smile.

"Got it. But I'm glad you'll at least come sometimes."

After the words of Mizuki, Erika through the window in the corridor nodded.

"Even if you are only an 'escort' for Miyuki, and you leave immediately after you came, it will still be somewhat normal. In fact, if Tatsuya-kun isn't here at all, then there is some sense of dissatisfaction."

"'Escort' for Miyuki?"

Tatsuya could not resist to curve his lips into a smile, hearing the words of Erika, completely ignoring the meaning of school attendance.

But what Erika said was unexpectedly true.

"By the way Tatsuya, how bad is it for Sakurai?" Leo worried about Minami because she was a kohai from his club.

"The doctor says that her complications should not remain. But it's going to take a little time."

"Okay..."

Leo was worried about Minami's condition, and Tatsuya was also concerned about her.

Of course, the very desire for a full recovery was not a lie. But at the same time, Tatsuya was thinking about the question of what to do with the protection of Miyuki.

Yesterday she went to and from school alone. It is quite rare to meet a person who can harm Miyuki, whether it be a magician or a non-magician. Besides, Tatsuya can protect Miyuki even when he's not around.

However, there are also problems that can be avoided only by having an assistant close by. Even for the Yotsuba family it will be difficult to send people to the school grounds. No, it may be possible to send a person to the school staff, but it is impossible to quickly prepare a pupil who will always be there. To only be an escort during the trips to and from school, was what Tatsuya was thinking before Erika mentioned it.

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Tatsuya had returned to First High, not because the excitement of Project Dione had calmed down. On the contrary, because of Tatsuya's countermeasures that he had started last week, the hype flared up again. The fact that the journalists were no longer crowded around First High was a consequence of the shooting incident.

Since Taurus Silver's identity has already been disclosed, they did not have to risk their lives to gather information.

Now it seemed that the excitement, which began in the vicinity of Tatsuya, has spread to a global scale. Among the four largest states, the New Soviet Union took the side of Project Dione, and the Indo-Persian Union, though an official statement from the Government had not yet been made, but it clearly demonstrated the position of supporting Tatsuya's Project ESCAPES.

The Great Asian Alliance has not yet disclosed its position.

Among other countries: in Europe, they mainly support Project Dione; Countries from West Asia to South-East Asia support Project ESCAPES; Brazil and Australia, like the Great Asian Alliance, have not disclosed their attitude.

The fact that both "camps" do not publicly show a hostile attitude makes the situation quite confusing. The thing is that both projects, Dione and ESCAPES, coincide in terms of peaceful use of magic. And both projects do not bear the principled position that the enemy should be expelled from Earth. Judging by the published materials, the implementation of Project Dione will not make it impossible to move along with Project ESCAPES, and vice versa. There is just one problem: the same magician will not be able to participate in two projects at the same time.

With the recognition that these two projects can coexist, the unfolded war of propaganda between Tatsuya and Clark moved forward with it leaning to the side of Tatsuya. It was not Tatsuya's superiority of intellect over Clark, but it was related to the advantage of "Acting Second\*". This war was not a competition with a judge. Whether delays or fraud are involved, in the end, victory is the most important thing.

[Explanation from the explanatory dictionary for the word used: "Wait and see the enemy's move, before making your move (for example, in Rock-Paper-Scissors, seeing what the opponent will show before you show your answer)"]

With his debate, Edward Clark hoped to bypass this using political influence.



At the time when First High had already finished its first lesson, the commander of the 101 Brigade of the Self-Defense Forces, Lieutenant General Saeki Hiromi visited the office building of the Ministry of Defence. This was also the joint headquarters of the Japanese Navy, but the purpose of today's visit was the Public sector.

Saeki was back at the base before noon. Going into her office, she called Kazama.

"...Tatsuya, that is, Shiba Tatsuya-san..."

"No need to correct yourself, Lieutenant Colonel."

Interrupting someone else's speech was not like the normal Saeki. She didn't even try to hide her bad mood.

Kazama was not puzzled, but rather amused, and he was forced to make great efforts to restrain himself from smiling.

"...I beg your pardon. So you were told to persuade Tatsuya to take part in Project Dione?"

"The Head of the Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no authority to give me orders."

In the conference hall of the Ministry of Defence, Saeki met with the Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs of North America. As Saeki said, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no authority to give orders to the Self-Defense forces. Everything that was said in the conference room was in the form of a request. But the words spoken in the presence of the Secretary of the Ministry of Defense, in fact, were coercion, or, in other words, an order.

The military do not like to violate their command system. And officers have an even stronger feeling towards this sentiment, and Saeki was no exception. Her bad mood was largely explained by this.

"Was this request voiced to Your Excellency, because Tatsuya is Special Officer Ooguro Ryuuya?"

"It looks like it."

Kazama sighed, not hiding this from Saeki, who had made a dissatisfied face.

"It seems that the bureaucrats do not seem to know, why Tatsuya was assigned the title of 'Special Officer'."

"The status of Special Officer Ooguro is in a certain sense outlawed. It's no surprise that office clerks don't know about him."

As Saeki said, in the current Self-Defense Forces there was no such title as "Special Officer". To begin with, if you look from a historical point of view, then calling Tatsuya a "Special Officer" would be wrong.

It would be more appropriate for him to be called a "militia who has been treated as an officer assigned to the regular army under normal conditions, not temporarily." Since there was no corresponding term for this concept, he was simply called a "Special Officer" for convenience.

Therefore, those who did not know the real situation, based on the original meaning of the concept of an "officer with special duties", Tatsuya would be perceived as an ordinary soldier.

"I think that they should know because they are office workers under jurisdiction of the official legal system."

Legal problems were solved by the Self-Defense Forces themselves, but this problem was "illegal". The existing system requires the consent of the bureaucrats, so it would be impossible to justify the negligence of the Ministry of Defense officials by saying that they did not know.

"You're right about that, Lieutenant Colonel, but now we have other problems."

"I beg your pardon. The problem is whether we can persuade Tatsuya and whether or not we should be persuaded. Isn't it?"

To deviate from the topic of apologizing, Kazama listed two problems.

"Right."

Saeki nodded to him.

"First of all, does the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs understand that Tatsuya is the operator of the 'Material Burst'?"

"Based on the feelings of today's conversation, they did not seem to know."

"Understood. If that is the case, I can understand why they gave such an absurd order."

Tatsuya was the greatest magical military force Japan possessed. No, not only in magic, he is the greatest of all possible forces. The Joker, alone changing the entire World balance, the fifth ace, creating the strongest hand\*.

[Poker terminology. "Hand" is a combination of 5 cards received in hands.]

Although the use of such a problem person as a "Joker" may be prohibited by rules, but in this world its use is not prohibited. And nobody in his right mind wants to part with him. If they knew that Tatsuya is the strongest magician of the strategic class, they would not even think about asking him to join Project Dione.

"Instead, how about registering Tatsuya as the 14th 'Apostle'?"

Saeki's face showed her surprise. But the silent pause didn't last long.

"...That's not a bad idea."

"Your Excellency?"

This time Kazama was the one to be surprised. Because he was just joking.

"If things worsen even more, we may have to consider this option. If it becomes obvious that he is a Strategic Class Magician, officials will stop saying that he should be transferred to USNA."

"That is so, but..."

"Well, it depends on how the situation will develop. We will deal with the problems as they appear."

Having said that, Saeki made a tired face.

"And if you were to ask him now, Lieutenant Colonel Kazama, do you think you could persuade Shiba-kun?"

"That's impossible."

He would not be able to convince Tatsuya to go to America, even if he were to ask. Therefore Kazama immediately replied that any attempts of persuasion are useless.

"Besides, I can't say that Tatsuya has a good relationship with us right now. And my own mistake, when we were caught while getting video footage the other day, only added more suspicion."

"It was a mistake by my calculations too. In any case, if we try to convince him, then we cannot succeed, and would on the contrary only worsen our relationship with him."

"That's what I think."

Saeki had no objection to the judgement of Kazama.

"Then, do you think, will we be able to gain the favour of Shiba-kun, by rejecting the demand of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?"

"Hmm... Who knows..."

On the other hand, Kazama did not agree with her idea.

"Whatever we do, Tatsuya won't take part in Project Dione. I don't think he's going to be particularly grateful. Wouldn't it be a better choice to do nothing at all?"

"That is true..."

Saeki looked down at her hands and pondered. Kazama stood motionlessly in front of her table and waited for her to say something.

"I'll follow your advice."

"You mean you're not going to do anything?"

"Yes. The demand of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not voiced in the proper manner, but done rather unofficially. There will be no problems if I were to neglect it."

Kazama decided that Saeki said so, but she probably planned to ignore the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the very beginning. It was normal to ask his opinion whether it was possible to benefit from this case, about deserving the gratitude of Tatsuya. At least that's what Kazama understood.

"Lieutenant Colonel, thank you for your help, you are dismissed."

"Understood. Beg your pardon."

Kazama went out of the commander's office.

At first Kazama thought that it was necessary to tell Tatsuya, but quickly gave up on this idea.

The intentions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Self-Defense Forces for Tatsuya are irrelevant. This cannot be used as material to restore their relationship.

Instead it was necessary to ask Tatsuya's opinion about his registration as the fourteenth "Apostle", as the conversation about it could become a reality at any moment.

Tatsuya has already received undesirable fame from being Taurus Silver. At this rate keeping himself a secret will be impossible. But for Kazama, it was obvious that if you ask Tatsuya if he wants to become an officially State recognized Strategic Class Magicians, the answer will be definitely be "no". Such an idea can worsen his mood if a mistake were to be made.

...Kazama seriously worried that his relationship with Tatsuya became so alienated that he had to think of such things.

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And not only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was swept between Tatsuya and Edward Clark.

The Ministry of Industry suffered from pressure from the office of the leader of the ruling party, a part-minister. Once, the Ministry of Industry was called the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, but although the name had changed, foreign trade was still under their jurisdiction. The USNA was one of their most important trading partners in this era, so the bureaucrats from the Ministry of Industry wanted to make the differences in trade as little as possible. For them, the quarrel of a single civilian with the USNA was not a joke, and they seriously wanted Tatsuya to go to America as soon as possible.

However, this morning a request was made by the Office of the Minister who inquired about the legislative measures necessary to implement the "Magic Stellar Furnace Energy Plant Project". In other words, it meant that they would have to consider another way so that he could not participate in the USNA's Project Dione.

Since neither Project Dione nor the project of the plant with a Stellar Furnace reactor were governmental municipal enterprises, Japan itself did not have to care about whether they should join them or not. Even in the New Soviet Union, which showed itself to be the most collaborative, the statement of cooperation wasn't made by the government, but by the academy. At this stage, if the government does nothing, the USNA will not be able to accuse them of anything.

On the other hand, the project of the plant is an internal affair of Japan, so it can be said that the role of the Ministry of Industry is to consider its legal aspects. But the request from the Office of the Minister was exerting pressure, because it demanded them to "support the project", not paying any attention to the circumstances.

Wondering about why this happened, the Ministry of Industry conducted an investigation. The Office of the Ministers sent inquiries to many groups of companies, which are a great source of funds for the ruling party.

There were a lot of businessmen who opposed the project, which is likely to worsen their relations with the USNA. Therefore, the real concern of the Ministry of Industry was that the project announced by a simple schoolboy could so quickly divide the business world into two camps.

"Since when has he had such connections?"

"How has he persuaded these old men that lead such companies?" The employees of the Ministry were puzzled about such questions.

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Tatsuya did not leave the classroom until the morning half of the lessons were over. In the third year of training, the number of specialized subjects related to magic increased. But it does not mean that the number of subjects of the general course disappeared. Tatsuya concentrated on general course lectures that he had missed during his absence, studying them at triple speed.

Unfortunately, the accumulated quantity could not be completed in half a day, but he did not think he could catch up by even working for a whole day. When the lunch break came, he got up to go for a bite.

"Tatsuya-san, are you going to eat at—"

"Shiba-kun."

The voice of Mizuki who was sitting him was blocked by a boyish voice. It was the voice of Tomitsuka.

"“Mizuki, go to the cafeteria first, I'll catch up.” Tatsuya answered to Mizuki, then turning to Tomitsuka.

“Tomitsuka, do you need something?”

“...I'd like to talk to you about something.” Tomitsuka replied with a little hesitation, making a persistent face.

“Is this conversation going to take a long time?”

In contrast to Tomitsuka, Tatsuya did not seem to be very enthusiastic about this.

“Possibly.”

“Can we do this after school?”

But he still showed that he was ready to listen.

“I would like to do it immediately.”

“But this is going to be a long conversation?”

“That is so... But...”

Tomitsuka couldn't decide what he wanted to say.

“Why are you acting so high and mighty? Can't you just talk to him?”

At that moment, a hysterical voice intervened in the conversation.

“Hirakawa-san...?”

Hirakawa Chiaki gave Tatsuya a burning look. But she did not embarrass Tatsuya, but Tomitsuka.

“To say such a thing...! When did Tatsuya-san say he wouldn't listen!?”

Mizuki who remained there although she was told to go to the dining room, retorted the words of Chiaki.

It could have escalated into a quarrel between schoolgirls in an empty classroom, so Tatsuya stopped it in advance with the phrase “Mizuki, stop”.

“Mizuki. I'm sorry, but I'm wasting my time talking to Tomitsuka this lunch break. Please tell the others.”

“... I got it.”

Mizuki, trying to hide her dissatisfied face, bowed to Tatsuya and withdrew from the class.

"Tomitsuka, where are we going to talk?"

"Uh, let's go to the roof."

Tatsuya slightly raised his eyebrows, because other students could still hear them on the roof.

"Alright."

But if Tomitsuka was fine with it, then Tatsuya was not going to complain.

"Hirakawa-san, thank you."

Tomitsuka quietly said this to Chiaki, who sat down, while clenching her fist. After that, he quickly chased after Tatsuya.

Contrary to Tatsuya's expectations, the roof was deserted. In Tokyo, the rainy season began last week, and today the sky was also covered by clouds, so looking at it, it could rain at any moment. Therefore, the absence of students wishing to dine on the roof was quite natural.

There were benches on the roof, but neither Tatsuya nor Tomitsuka sat down. They stood up straight, facing each other.

"So, what did you want to talk to me about?" Tatsuya began the conversation.

"...The other day, my mother had a seizure."

"That is the chairman of the Magic Association, Tomitsuka Hisui, I heard about it from Miyuki. I hope she recovers quickly."

Indignation appeared on the face of Tomitsuka after hearing what Tatsuya said about the matter.

"However, this is the problem for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chairman of the Magic Association. Complaining to me is not quite right."

Tatsuya noticed the expression on Tomitsuka's face, but was not going to treat him condescendingly.

"The way you are talking about it is wrong isn't it?" Tomitsuka angrily spoke in response to the insensible words of Tatsuya.

"Fighting a girl younger than yourself, is that not 'Wrong' too?"

Tomitsuka wavered because of Tatsuya's remark.

For the first time since coming here, Tomitsuka noticed that Tatsuya's eyes were filled with cold anger.

"So, Tomitsuka. Are you saying that I have to be sacrificed to spare the chairman of the Magic Association from worries?"

"What do you mean sacrifice!"

"Don't you want to drive me to the USNA?"

"Drive to...?"

With a bitter voice, Tatsuya exceeded the expectations of Tomitsuka.

"I... I think that the project will really help magicians..."

"Tomitsuka. Don't you understand the real purpose behind Project Dione?"

This time the voice of Tatsuya was slightly annoyed.

Not realizing why Tatsuya asked, Tomitsuka was confused, forgetting his anger for the cold-blooded behaviour of Tatsuya.

"The real purpose...?"

"The real purpose of Project Dione is to expel magicians from Earth and tie them to the asteroid belt and the orbits of Jupiter and Venus."

"...What?"

"Magicians will be placed on the satellite orbits around Venus and Jupiter, and for the most part this concerns the magicians of the USNA, the New Soviet Union and Britain. If I also participated in Project Dione, it would be at least 10 years before I could return from Jupiter's orbit. It's like a lifelong sentence."

The sarcastic hint from Tatsuya that he is not "expelled to the island", but "expelled to space\*", was not understood by Tomitsuka.

[The Japanese expression means "expelled to space" literally spells "expelled to land". The author in the second case has changed "island" to "space".]

"If it is like that... Shiba-kun, are you exaggerating...?"

"I am not going to force you to accept the truth of what I have said. Read the published materials again. Let's continue this conversation after that." Tatsuya said this and then turned his back to Tomitsuka. There was no voice coming from his back, that asked him to stop.

Even if Tomitsuka thought Project Dione would be successful, if he approached Tatsuya again, Tatsuya was not going to agree with his beliefs.

(I won't take part in Project Dione.)

(I will not go into space, leaving Miyuki on the ground.)

(I'm not going anywhere, leaving Miyuki behind.)

No one can change these principles. Tatsuya was just stalling for some extra time. But his desire for Tomitsuka to learn about the hidden malice behind Project Dione was not a lie on his part.

Tomitsuka, overwhelmed by looking at Tatsuya's retreating figure, kept standing there, until Tatsuya was out of his sight.

"...What does this mean?" Muttered Tomitsuka, when he came to himself after feeling the sensation of falling rain drops.

"It's true goal? Sentenced to space? Huh, that's just a conspiracy theory." He mocked Tatsuya aloud. But no matter how much he denied it, the words of Tatsuya settled deep in his mind.

The rain had gotten more intense.

Tomitsuka wasn't annoyed that he got wet because of the rain, or maybe he did not notice it. He continued to stand still on the roof.

"I haven't heard anything like it. Nobody said anything like that."

None of his entourage really talked about this. The TV program, which he watched, also did not arouse such an opinion. There was nothing like that.

No matter how much information is readily available, there is a limit to how much information one person can obtain by themselves.

"A true goal you say? You're exaggerating. Being expelled to space is not something public opinion will allow."

Nevertheless, even the so-called "own thinking" of a person is not created just by themselves. It was formed under the influence of the information received from Tatsuya.

Tatsuya and Tomitsuka have had different experiences, pieces of information and accumulated reflections. They were not superior to each other, they just had completely different natures. For Tomitsuka it was very difficult to perceive the conclusions that were voiced by Tatsuya. Probably because Tomitsuka was more normal. Most people are likely to have shared this disagreement with him.

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After an unsuccessful attack on the Izu Plateau, Edward Clark tried many times to call Igor, but he was unable to reach him.

"You never managed to contact Dr. Igor?"

"Yes, Sir William."

Clark was now on the phone with McCloud in Britain. In Los Angeles, where Clark was, it was midnight, in London, where McCloud was, it was early morning. They did not know where Igor was. He could be in Moscow, or in the Far East, so he did not know the correct time to call him.

"Unfortunately, Dr. Igor seems to refuse to contact us."

"There is nothing to be done... The doctor belongs to the east, they are hostile to us. We live with him on the same planet, but in different worlds. He decided to do everything his own way and, from the very beginning, he was unable to be controlled."

"If that's so, does it mean that Igor is plotting another attack?"

Clark's address changed from 'Dr. Igor' to simply 'Igor'.

"I think so. He will strive to get rid of the magic that converts mass into energy."

"If only he had waited a little..."

Clark unwittingly ruffled his hair.

"Sir William... Is there a chance that he could succeed?"

"I think there is hope. But it's about 50-50. Last time it seemed that we had cornered him, but we don't know Shiba Tatsuya's real abilities."

"Do you want to say that everything depends on the magic power of Shiba Tatsuya? ...Really, you're right."

McCloud's guess sounded quite unreliable, but Clark could do nothing but agree.

"Dr. Clark. Even with your 'Hliðskjálf', you do not know the real abilities of Shiba Tatsuya?"

"...Unfortunately, that seems to be the case. It seems that the nickname 'Untouchables' is not just for show."

"Untouchables" was the nickname given to the Yotsuba family. Before Tatsuya even came up, for reasons unrelated to him, Clark had already targeted the Yotsuba family as an enemy that should disappear at all costs. In truth, the Hliðskjálf terminal was handed over to Maya so that Clark could collect information about the Yotsuba family.

However, the Head of the Yotsuba family did not do what Clark expected. From just the history of the terminal used by Yotsuba Maya, it was difficult for Clark to grasp any details about the real abilities of both Shiba Tatsuya and the magicians that belong to the side branches of the family.

"Got it..."

McCloud released a sigh of disappointment. He did not intend to insult him with these words, but Clark's pride was seriously affected.

"Thus, we can only pray that next attack of Dr. Igor is going to be successful... Dr. Clark, I apologize for the conversation at this late time."

"No, I called you. Sorry for it to be so early in the morning."

"It's a normal time for me to wake up. Then, Doctor, Good night."

"Yes, Sir William. And you have a good day."

The connection with McCloud was interrupted.  
At the end, McCloud said the usual "Good night".

But Clark wasn't going to go to sleep just yet.

## **Chapter 5**

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday there were no special movements either within the country or abroad. There seemed to be a break in the confrontation between Tatsuya and Edward Clark. But at the same time, Raymond's conspiracy was progressing behind their backs.

Saturday, June 15, a suburb of the United States of North America, Dallas, Texas.

The National Particle Accelerator Laboratory was located here, equipped with a long linear particle accelerator with a total length of about 30 kilometers.

From the very morning, this accelerator was preparing to conduct a secret experiment.

The essence of the experiment was to create and evaporate micro black holes, based on the Extra-Dimensional Theory. Last time the same experiment was conducted in December, 2095 but the goal at the time was to get clues about the magic that converts mass into energy.

But this time the goal was not to observe the energy generated by the evaporation of micro black holes. Even the successful creation of a micro black hole was not required. Today's secret experiment was to draw out the presumed agent that would enter the laboratory.

However, for scientists, the long-awaited permission to redo the experiment was a valuable opportunity. They were burning with enthusiasm, because they did not want to waste this opportunity.

To deal with the agent, neither the Intelligence Staff nor the Counter-terrorism Unit were involved. It was the Magician Unit STARS under the command of the General Staff Office.

If there really is an agent, they were considered to have high magic skill. This is also the reason STARS is involved, other units aren't involved, since the strategy was strongly proposed by STARS in the first place.

"Jacob, is there any unusual activity?"

"Nothing unusual, Commander. There is no one that looks like a secret agent at the moment."

The Commander of the Third Squad of the STARS, Captain Alexander Arcturus, was present in the security room, from where it was possible to observe all the premises of the laboratory. The individual he is communicating with is First-Class, First-Lieutenant Jacob Regulus of the Third Squad\*.

[previously referred to as "Regulus".]

Regulus was in the accelerator control room, and watched the neighborhood to detect the agent when he showed suspicious activity.

"Understood. Keep watching."

"Yes, sir."

"Commander."

When Arcturus broke off the walkie-talkie, a member of the Constellation Class spoke to him. The STARS are divided into classes in descending order: class of the first magnitude, class of the second magnitude, class of constellations, class of planets and class of satellites. This hierarchy was separate from the army's ranks, and it often happened that a junior officer from the constellation class was under the command of a senior officer from the class of planets.

"What is it?" Arcturus briefly asked his subordinate and continued.

"Is there any evidence that Japan was involved in this case of First Lieutenant Fomalhaut? I can't believe the Japanese agent could still be active since that time."

Such doubts increased because of the delay that arose at this stage of the operation because there were no signs of an agent appearing.

The members of the Constellation class have been guarding the National Particle Accelerator Laboratory for some time now. They have been there in the days before the actual experiment. To be specific, they've been there since last Sunday. And now it is almost time to start the experiment, and they have not seen any hint of the enemy, so, of course, they will become skeptical about it.

Last year, the Japanese army, using parasites, managed to create weapons in the form of autonomous humanoids.

To avoid the morale of his subordinates from dropping, Arcturus

To avoid the morale of his subordinates from dropping, Arcturus decided to reveal some information to them with a relatively low level of secrecy. Is it a stand-alone weapon that uses parasites?

"After this, one can only think that all this was prepared in advance. Though the basis for the claim isn't sound, it is probable that the Japanese army was involved in the case surrounding First Lieutenant Fomalhaut."

However there is a misunderstanding behind his reasoning. Initially, these autonomous weapons, using Parasite Doll puppets were a modified concept of the use of a Shikigami\* technique.

[The magic of manipulating objects under which they behave as if they "came to life".]

But shikigami and artificial spirits could only move the physical body, and did not demonstrate any magical abilities. In addition, they could not seize control of the physical body controlled using the electronic brain. For this reason, their actual use was not realized until they got a parasite of their own.

In other words, if you want to correctly use a parasite as a weapon when its one step away from completion, at first a parasite doll is required for development.

Not only this, but all the "justifications" provided by Regulus that he had transferred to Arcturus and Base Commander Walker, were supplemented by "circumstances" that were distorted with superficial facts. And they firmly believed that "The Japanese agent will definitely participate" in the repeated experiment with the Micro Black Holes.

"I'm here... Excuse me!"

This member of the constellation class also had no doubt in these distorted justifications.

Meanwhile, no suspicious person had yet to enter the laboratory. No, to be more precise, they were not "not detected", but they simply were not considered "suspicious".

And it was quite natural. Because this suspicious person had a badge issued by the National Research Agency.

Raymond Clark, who, using his father's connections, received a pass not as a mere guest, but as a temporary worker, watched the majestic view of the particle accelerator from the roof of the office building of the laboratory.

Raymond was the one who invented the non-existent Japanese agent's involvement to make today's experiment happen. To create a military force for the confrontation against Tatsuya, he decided to once again create parasites. For this he used Regulus' thirst for revenge.

Regulus, who disagreed with the fact that his friend Fomalhaut was ruthlessly executed, was a perfect way to set all of this up by using his anger. And by just using some "hints", Regulus acted exactly as expected by Raymond.

Regulus and Arcturus, as magicians, are far superior to him, but they are taking part in this farce, and thus in the script that he wrote. Magicians belonging to the elite group "STARS", whom he would never be able to reach, played the comedic part on the stage he created. Raymond came to see this show from the front row.

However, a serious element was definitely present to the comedy, which will not make him laugh. Raymond came to make sure it was going to happen.

He was not satisfied with the broadcast that was provided by Hliðskjálf, he wanted to see everything directly. To satisfy his curiosity and the feeling that he had achieved something.

All the real lab staff were busy experimenting, because they thought they would not be given another chance for this. There was no one who would rebuke Raymond for only standing on the roof, leaning over the handrails.

11:00. The planned time for the experiment.

In the experiment itself, the STARS did not participate. Regulus, located in the accelerator control room, could not intervene either.

From the very beginning, Regulus was not going to interfere. He was not interested, whether the experiment would end with success or failure.

His mind was busy thinking about who could have lured Fomalhaut into this trap.

And he was not just thinking of the agent who pushed the experiment that caused the parasites to appear. By grasping the agent, you will be able to find out which organization he works and destroy it. He sincerely believed this.

While Regulus was watching to see if someone who was behaving suspiciously was in charge of the experiment, the scientist gave the command to launch the particle accelerator.

The linear particle accelerator began its work, absorbing a huge amount of electricity.

A proton beam is injected into both ends of the accelerator and is accelerated until they collide with one another.

The experiment ended in an instant. They could repeat the procedure until the required data was received, but only the first test run was performed, and the second run was not.

No, there were no problems with the accelerator. Just that the experiment went successful after the first attempt.

Immediately after hearing a voice indicating the start of the experiment, Regulus, who was sitting in the accelerator control room, got his field of vision filled with darkness.

For a moment he thought that the electricity went out. But this suspicion lasted only a moment. The next moment Regulus felt a strong pain and an oppressive feeling.

"Something" was invading "him". Something tried to penetrate itself into him. But not physically. He intuitively realized that it was not an invasion of the physical body. However, this pain was completely different from Mental Interference attacks that he had in training.

If Regulus was an experienced woman, he would surely compare this to the pain of defloration. But he was a man. He could not imagine what he could compare this excruciating pain to.

Trying to avoid not only pain, but also other bad feelings, as something from the outside was trying to get inside of him, Regulus with all his power tried to repel this "something". Regulus does not have any aptitude for Mental-Interference Magic, and he did not know how to control his body when his mind was being used to manipulate his limbs. Instead, he tried to use a special type of Psion control, that opposed Mental Interference Magic, Non-Systematic magic, and afterwards used Release-Type magic to shoot an electrical shock into himself.

However, neither the spell against Mental-Interference Magic nor the Non-Systematic magic had any effect on the invader. And the electricity that was meant for suicide was never even released

The invasion continued.

It felt as if the invading "something" had no will of its own. This "something" is trying to merge with him.

Suddenly, "intrusion" became "assimilation". The pain was gone. The oppressive feeling weakened.

"...Is this a parasite!?"

Suddenly, fear erupted in him. Regulus screamed with all his strength. However it was like the last light of a fading candle.

Suddenly it became quiet. Fear and anger about the fictional agent plunged into the bottom of his consciousness, and his mind became tranquil.

("...My name is Jacob Regulus.")

("...I/we are called 'parasites' by the people of this world.")

So Regulus became a "parasite".

Arcturus, in the security room, immediately after the experiment, clearly felt something trying to penetrate his mind.

"A spirit...?"

He did not feel pain and oppression like Regulus because he was a user of magical spirits. Arcturus was a specialist in Movement-Type Magic and could also perfectly summon spirits using Ancient magic.

This Ancient Magic used the spirits inside him so that he could use their power. Perhaps modern people have the impression that this magic allows you to become a demon to use their power.

Arcturus has long been accustomed to this feeling, when something lives inside of him, penetrating him from the outside. He was not confused when the "something" tried to invade him against his will. Because he had the means to deal with what was invading his mind.

The miscalculation of Arcturus was that the invader, the parasite, did not possess its own "Ego".

This "something" possessed another spiritual entity besides itself. But it had no desires itself. So he could not distinguish it from himself.

Without any intention, it simply sought to get inside. As if water were seeping through a dry cloth, it bit into his heart.

Arcturus' heart became overcome with fear when he realized that the spells known to him had no effect on the invader. He tried to summon a spirit and expel the "something". However, the spirit did not answer Arcturus' call. The place "Inside" Arcturus was already occupied by this invader.

Something from the outside once again got inside him.

He and the "something" from the outside merged.

Suddenly, "intrusion" became "assimilation".

Arcturus felt as if he had been filled by something. It was a sense of true alignment that could not be achieved by just summoning spirits.

(...So this is the true fusion of man and spirit...)

It was his last thought as the pure Arcturus.

("...My name is Alexander Arcturus.")

("...I/we are called 'parasites' by the people of this world.")

So Arcturus became a "parasite".

"It hurts, it hurts, it hurts."

On the roof of the lab office building, Raymond writhed in pain.

"It hurts so much."

He persistently complained about the pain aloud.

It was an acute pain, as if something from the outside invaded his mind.

For Raymond, who had never been trained to resist Mental-Interference Magic, it was an unbearable pain. He noticed only the pain, not the oppressive feelings from the pressure of this "something".

However, Raymond's strong ego resolutely rejected the intruding essence in his mind from the outside.

Intense pain was the result of intense resistance. And he couldn't stop it because he didn't even know he was resisting.

"It hurts so so much..."

This incessant pain destroyed his mind.

Raymond was fortunate that his ego had loosened its resistance.

The resistance of the ego decreased, so the speed of the invasion increased.

Raymond lost his strength and he could no longer writhe in pain and scream the word "hurt", he just lay still on the floor of the roof.

Raymond looked like a corpse, he had no more desires.

The invasion was fast.

The assimilation went quickly.

"Something" penetrated Raymond and because he stopped resisting, his desires were pulled on from within.

This "Something" took the shape of Raymond's intentions.

Without any abilities, Raymond could not be the main protagonist. But in fact he really wanted to be the main character.

Raymond wanted to play an active role in something romantic, like a heroic saga.

To conquer space with magic. He thought that this was pretty romantic. And Shiba Tatsuya, who denies Raymond's saga, was a hindrance to him.

It was impossible for him alone to force Shiba Tatsuya to surrender. For him, even the power of "Sirius", the strongest magician of the STARS, does not pose a threat. So he was looking for the power of parasites.

If the magicians from STARS assimilated with the parasites, they can force Shiba Tatsuya to surrender.

...That's what Raymond thought.

For this purpose he prepared this "scene". To defeat Shiba Tatsuya with the power of parasites...

("...That's Raymond's/our wish.")

("...Raymond/We wish to defeat Shiba Tatsuya.")

("...My name is Raymond Clark.")

("...I/we are called 'parasites' by the people of this world.")

("...Raymond/We will make Shiba Tatsuya surrender.")

So inside Raymond, this distorted desire became an oath.

The parasites were once again summoned to this world.

Not only these three assimilated with the parasites. Team Orion that consists of three people, who were patrolling the building outside, were also captured by the parasites.

After completing the experiment, 5 people, besides Raymond, returned to the STARS base in New Mexico, and none of the people around them noticed anything.

Raymond returned to his home in California with a carefree face.

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Sunday, June 16th.

Kudou Minoru again came to the warehouse where the Parasite Dolls were stored

It was still an early time, the streets were dark and quiet. No one in his family knew he was here. His father, brothers and servants must think that Minoru is sleeping in his room.

No one rebuked him at home for the other day when he went to Tokyo to visit Minami, skipping school. Only his grandfather Kudou Retsu was concerned and asked Minoru about the circumstances, but after hearing the explanation, he could only briefly answer with a short "Understood".

Except for his grandfather, he was not interesting to anyone, neither to his father, nor to his brothers. This is what Minoru thought when he saw their reactions.

As he thought, even less attention was paid to him the next day. Perhaps they mistakenly decided that despair had awoken in Minoru. Or, thinking that he could die at any moment, decided to let him do what he wanted.

Minoru was grateful for this erroneous judgment. Now he regretted the time he spent on unnecessary communication with his family and the maid.

He wanted to cure Minami. Minoru's line of thinking was completely overwhelmed by this idea.

Minoru did not understand why he is trying so hard. No, maybe he actually knew, but he tried not to realize it. Perhaps it was a kind of obsession, as if he were motivated by frivolous feelings, such as love at first sight, or rather love in 3 days.

Unlike the last time, he opened the door with magic and entered the warehouse. This magic was the result of the practical use of "Electron Golden Silkworm", which he discovered in the knowledge of Zhou Gongjin. This magic was used by Chen Xiangshan to infiltrate the Kanto branch of the Magic Association. However, this version of the magic was more advanced than the one Chen used, so this one did not turn on the alarm.

Cool dry air enveloped Minoru's body. Like last time, there was no atmosphere of mystery.

"After all, nothing else remains..." Minoru unwittingly said this to himself.

There was no answer to that from the inside. Because these words were not facts but just words used to strengthen his determination.

Minoru went to the "coffin" located in the depths of the warehouse.

The corpse of an Eastern man was kept in a frozen state.

It was part of the group of parasites sealed by Tatsuya and Mikihiko in the artificial forest of First High in the winter of last year.

It wasn't some coma or lethargy, it was a real dead corpse. To keep the parasite inside, various symbols and drawings were carved on the corpse's skin.

This corpse provided the parasites in the parasite dolls.

By weakening the seal so that the parasite could be partially free, they sought to ensure that the parasite trapped in the corpse would send a copy and create a new identity.

This copy is then locked in another doll or corpse, and the original corpse is sealed again.

This way, the former ninth laboratory, now known as the Ninth Laboratory for the development of magic, produced parasite dolls.

Even now that the production of parasites is frozen, the subordinate families of the Kudou continued to update this carved spell every 12 hours.

The update time is 6 AM and PM respectively. The current time is 4:00. It was a time when the effectiveness of the spell began to weaken.

Minoru pressed the switch on the wall of the coffin. The lid of the coffin was automatically opened.

The corpse was dressed in white clothes. For Minoru it was like an invitation. He didn't want to see a disgusting naked male body there, which was also dead.

Minoru put the right palm on the chest of the frozen corpse, which was rock solid. A heartbeat, of course, was not felt.

Through his palm, Minoru sent Psions to the frozen corpse. Pushion waves could be felt after a few seconds. The inactive parasite in the corpse woke up.

Minoru swallowed deeply and his breathing became ragged. He clenched his teeth and lips, and held his breath.

Having overcome his hesitation, Minoru abolished the spell used for the seal, that was placed on the corpse.

The next moment, "slime" made out of light came out of the body.

This was the only way to describe this spectacle seen by Minoru. A glowing, muddy light formed an intangible shapeless creature. In terms of size, it is better to call it "mucus" rather than "slime".

The "Slime" tried to attack Minoru. Minoru didn't try to avoid it. On the contrary, he moved his hands to the side, as if showing that he was inviting this slime, this parasite, into his body.

On the summer sweater worn by Minoru, symbols and geometric figures appeared in the center of his chest.

The sweater is imbued with magical properties, that was made by Minoru himself.

The parasite flew into the sweater, as if it were sucked in.

A voice of agony burst out of Minoru's mouth.

Because of the feeling of being invaded, Minoru made a twisted face and he sat down on the floor of the warehouse.

He sat down, crossed his legs, throwing his left foot on his right thigh. The so-called Lotus position.

Keeping this posture while baring the pain, Minoru activated cooling magic.

He lowered his body temperature just enough to create a death-like state.

The target of this magic was himself.

Having brought his body to a state close to death, Minoru directed his consciousness inside himself.

His near death condition was needed to suppress the potential rejection of the parasite. Continuing to stay conscious, he tried not to miss this initiative.

At the same time as the parasite invaded him, ravaging his mind, Minoru was trying to rule over the parasite.

He wasn't going to give the parasite a single drop of his desires. He was going to get the power of the parasite by only using his will.

(I won't lose a creature that doesn't even have an ego!)

Being extra careful to not destroy the parasite, he used a spell enslaving the parasite inside himself.

(I will no lose to this feeling.)

(If I'm overcome even a little bit, there is no point in continuing to be the same person!)

Minoru mentally shouted to himself, battling the parasite.

(If I can't even save myself, how do I expect her to stay the same!)

He decided to become a "parasite" to prevent Minami from dying.

He wanted to get rid of his own weak body. But Minoru didn't want to renounce his humanity for this. He did not succumb to the temptation that the knowledge of Zhou Gongjin had warned him about.

He wanted to make sure he could keep his mind, his ego, from becoming a "parasite".

If he could ascertain that the human mind can defeat the parasite, even though it has given the body to the parasite, he will be able to use this method to treat Minami.

It was a kind of self-sacrifice where he used his own body for an experiment.

Or, it was a ritual for gaining the power of demons, by sacrificing his body.

This decision may have helped him to accept the fact that he had already said goodbye to his old life.

However, Minoru expected to win. No, his will led him to an absolute success.

He couldn't find another way. He knew there was no other way, because he possessed the knowledge of Zhou Gongjin. And once there are no other ways, there was nothing left but to succeed in this spell. Failure was unacceptable.

This strong desire was the greatest weapon in the hands of Minoru.

If it was necessary to simply kill this spiritual form, the decisive factor could be certain magical techniques. For example Miyuki's "Cocytus" is able to destroy the fusion between a body and a parasite.

But if you want the parasite to comply, this method will not work

The enemy was not the same as ghosts like that of Zhou Gongjin, which are the remains of reason, that have lost their lives.

It was a living being that has no material form, but possesses the instincts to search for prey and to reproduce.

In order to tame it as a part of yourself, you need to strengthen your heart so that you're not overcome.

This blind determination drove Minoru to this point.

However, his strong will brought him victory at a competition that was reckless.

(...Obey me, become a part of me!)

Assimilation with the parasite ended simultaneously with the mental screaming of Minoru.

("...I am Kudou Minoru.")

("...I hear a voice associated with me.")

("...It whispers 'become one with us'.")

("...But.")

(...I'm me.)

(...Not 'us'.)

Even after merging with a parasite, Minoru remained "Kudou Minoru". He canceled the cooling magic previously applied to his physical body and fell on his back. The frostbite was instantly healed.

This regeneration ability was a bonus from becoming a "parasite".

He somehow realized that an organ had formed behind his forehead, which had not been there before.

But at the moment it had no influence on the consciousness of Minoru. Minoru started to laugh. He laughed cheerfully, lying on the floor of the warehouse.



## *Chapter 6*

Sunday, June 16, evening.

When Miyuki, who came to visit Minami, was about to leave, another visitor arrived at Minami's room.

"Yes, who's there?"

Miyuki replied to the knock on the door, and, after letting go of Minami's hand, got up from a chair and headed towards the door.

"It's Kudou Minoru."

"Minoru-kun?"

Miyuki stopped halfway and looked back at Minami. She nodded with an embarrassed face. Miyuki's lips unwittingly lifted in a smile.

"Yes, I'll open it now."

Miyuki opened the door to the room.

Miyuki and Minoru were facing each other and were separated by about an arm's length.

Was it lucky or unlucky that no one was here to witness this spectacle? A girl with heavenly beauty and a guy clad in an inhuman-like beauty. Some artist might have sold his soul to the devil to be able to capture this moment on canvas.

Some poet might have committed suicide because they were unable to find the words to describe this spectacle.

"Minoru-kun, welcome. You came to visit Minami-chan?"

"Yes. Uhm, can I come in?"

But for these two, this was just an episode of their ordinary everyday life.

"Here you go."

Miyuki did not lead Minoru in, but she stepped aside, making way for him.

Minoru held a floral bouquet composed of pale pink roses, gerbera of the same color and orange carnations. Miyuki thought that it would be better for him to hand it over directly to Minami.

As expected, when Minoru passed her the flowers, his cheeks reddened, and he slightly diverted his eyes from Minami. Minami, who received the flowers, completely reddened and bashfully lowered her eyes.

Miyuki would have liked to watch this scene a little longer, but changed her mind, deciding that it would have been too much.

"Minoru-kun, thank you. Minami-chan, where should I put them?"

Minoru and Minami simultaneously shuddered all over their bodies.

Miyuki struggled to keep herself from laughing.

"Ah, uh, then, over there..."

Miyuki took the bouquet from Minami and put it on her bedside table, where she pointed.

"Uh, is Tatsuya-san here...?"

Minoru suddenly changed the subject, as if he could no longer endure this awkward atmosphere.

"Oh Minoru-kun, did you want to discuss something with Tatsuya?"

Miyuki asked immediately. Did she do this because she felt sorry for Minoru, or because Tatsuya was mentioned?

Probably both.

"He went to visit the doctor some time ago, so I think he should be back shortly. You got something urgent?"

"No, it's not urgent, I just wanted to discuss something."

"Discuss with me?" There was a voice coming from the hallway, on the other side of the door that was left open.

"Tatsuya-sama! Have you finished talking to the doctor?"

"Yes. I heard everything I needed to hear."

Answering Miyuki's question, Tatsuya entered the room and closed the door. ...Miyuki had not closed the door, not because she had forgotten to do so, but because she thought that it would be weird to have a locked room with a guy and two girls in it.

"So, Minoru."

Tatsuya spoke, but he interrupted himself and he frowned his eyebrows when his gaze met the gaze of Minoru. It seems to have been an unconscious act, and he quickly returned to his usual face, and continued to talk:

"What did you want to talk to me about?"

Because Minoru was asked a suggestive question, he didn't speak immediately. No, he just couldn't talk right away.

"...About the condition of Minami-san." After some time, he said this with great difficulty.

"Understood. Let's go some place else."

"Please wait!"

Tatsuya was right to be suspicious of Minoru's behavior, but it was Minami who objected to this decision.

"Tatsuya-sama, Minoru-sama. If it's about my condition, let me hear about it too."

"But..."

Minoru wanted to object to the request of Minami.

"Please! I really want to know!"

"...All right, Minami-san."

But in the end, he abided to her wish.

"Then, should I go out?"

"No."

Miyuki stood up and turned to Tatsuya, but this answer was given by Minoru and Minami at the same time.

Minoru and Minami exchanged views, urging each other to continue.

"...I think it'll be good if Miyuki-san hears it, too."

In the end Minoru continued, and Minami nodded silently.

During this dialogue, Tatsuya grabbed some chairs for both himself and Minoru from the corner of the room.

"First, let's sit down."

With a thankful expression on his face, Minoru sat down on the chair provided by Tatsuya.

Miyuki returned to her seat at the side of the bed, on which she sat before the arrival of Minoru. Tatsuya sat down beside her, and Minoru on the chair at the other end of the bed.

Minoru who was facing Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami opened his mouth with a hesitant look.

"...I don't know what the doctor has told you, but Minami-san's 'injury' cannot be completely cured."

It seems that Minoru spoke openly and did not try to conceal anything, because he had no time to spare.

It was Miyuki who seemed to be the most shocked by his words. She covered her mouth with her hands, opened her eyes wide and was frozen in this state.

Minami, at least, did not look shocked when she heard Minoru's words. And Tatsuya...

"...Tatsuya-san knew this, didn't he?"

He was looking back at Minoru with calm eyes.

"No, it's not that I don't understand, but I disagree with the opinion that a full recovery is impossible. Apparently, what Minoru thinks is a 'full recovery' and my definition of a 'full recovery' seem to differ. Is Minoru saying that Minami's Magic Calculation Area will never be restored completely?"

"Tatsuya-san's way of thinking is that as long as the symptoms don't worsen then she can fully recover, right?"

"That's not true either. But arguing about the small differences in our definitions will not fix anything. What is the real problem you want to solve, Minoru?"

"...The physical body of a modified person lacks vital stability."

"The problem of sudden death?"

"Yes, that's right. Despite the absence of any medical anomalies, one day death may suddenly come, like a sudden wind blowing out the weak flame of a candle."

Tatsuya noticed that Minoru's expression became sombre.

"...This is the fate that Minami-san has to carry... And so do I."

"..."

"How do you know Minami has a modified body?"

Miyuki murmured.

Minami kept staring at Minoru.

"Damage to the Magic Calculation Area increases the risk of sudden death. Minoru, is that what you mean?"

"Yes. Tatsuya-san, you know about this too, right?"

"I've been investigating the sudden death of modified people for a long time. Ever since I let a person who was like family to me die from this."

"Is that so..."

Minoru could not decide whether to say some words of condolences, but gave up on this idea, because he realized that without knowing the circumstances, he would not be able to express the true feelings in his heart.

"The overheating of the Magic Calculation Area shook and damaged the Information Body accompanying the physical body. The damage to the Information Body has been shown to also express itself physically.

Usually the activity of the Magic Calculation Area limits itself so that it would not harm itself, however for modified people this 'Limiter' malfunctions. ... This is my hypothesis, but I think it is the appropriate way to describe it."

"I also think that this theory is correct. And I also think that the overheating of the Magical Calculation Area is always accompanied by damage to this 'Limiter'."

"Do you mean that the damage to the limiter causes the overheating?"

"Whether the overheating is caused by this 'Limiter' damage or the overheating damages the 'Limiter', I do not know."

Contrary to his words, Minoru's face didn't show a lack of confidence but instead showed a reliable expression.

"However, what the cause is and what the consequences are does not matter at the moment." Minoru said this without taking his eyes off Tatsuya.

"The limiter is damaged. That's what's important right now. For now this is the problem at hand and thus the heart of the matter. Isn't that so?"

"Sure, it is."

Tatsuya fully confirms Minoru's assertion.

"Minoru, are you worried that Minami's Magic Calculation Area will suddenly start acting abnormally, which could then cause serious damage?"

"Right."

Minoru nodded towards Tatsuya.

"Minami-san's current condition increases the likelihood that the tragedy that accompanies modified people will become a reality. That's my opinion."

"But didn't you tell me there was no way to restore the Magic Calculation Area? Or is there something other than the limiter?"

Minoru did not answer.

"...Minoru. Do you have another solution?"

Tatsuya continued to ask. Minoru averted his eyes to escape from the sight of Tatsuya.

"...Yes."

Even with that short answer couldn't meet Tatsuya's gaze.

"And!? What is it!?"

"..."

"Minoru."

Tatsuya got up from his chair and stepped sideways. Not away from the bed, but closer to it.

He stood up to have Miyuki and Minami closer to him.

"What have you become?"

Minoru raised his previously omitted look. He looked at Tatsuya, and the edges of his lips rose.

Tatsuya remembered that smile. It was very similar to the grin of Zhou Gongjin, which he saw in Kyoto.

"...You can see that?"

Miyuki stood up abruptly. She remembered this strange ghostly aura, these floating Psion waves emanating from the body of Minoru.

"A parasite!? No way..."

Minami stared at the back of Tatsuya, forgetting to blink. In fact, her gaze was glued to Minoru, but Tatsuya's body closed that line of sight.

"Please, don't worry."

Minoru rose and smiled at Tatsuya and Miyuki. This smile no longer contained any semblance to Zhou Gongjin.

"I am a man from the Kudou family who created the Parasite Dolls. In the Kudou family, I am the second strongest magician after Grandpa. I know the ways to manage the parasites."

"I disagree."

Tatsuya denied Minoru's words. Not realizing the meaning behind this, Minoru questioned Tatsuya with his gaze.

"You're not the 'number two'. You're the number one among the Kudou family. And the best among the magicians with 'Nine' in their surname."

Without a smile, with a serious face and a serious voice Tatsuya answered.

"...That makes me happy." Minoru, on the contrary, smiled sincerely.  
"To be recognized by Tatsuya-san."

Even if it was a smile that could draw out the soul of their opponent, Tatsuya did not budge.

"Please, don't be so cautious."

If there was someone who lacked tension, it was Minoru. He had a bewildered face, and his eyes were running round.

"Even after becoming a 'parasite', I am still me. My 'me' was not distorted. I don't want to attack people or anything. And I am also not tormented by any other desires that I have not had before."

"However, Kudou Minoru was a man. And the current you is the parasite."

"That is... so, but..."

Minoru showed a slightly suffering expression on his face.

"Despite that, I am still me. Even now, I am Kudou Minoru. With the right knowledge and strength, you can merge with parasites and not lose yourself. I was able to prove this myself."

Filled with strong confidence, and determination on his face, Minoru turned to Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami.

"You don't have to be afraid to become a 'parasite'."

"Minoru. You..." Tatsuya whispered in a quiet, yet clearly distinguishable voice. "...Do you want to make Minami a parasite?"

Miyuki quickly got her CAD out of her purse, and held it in her hands.

"...The parasite body has a high resistance to Psion waves."

Hesitation could be seen in Minoru's answer. Perhaps this really was proof that Minoru had not changed.

"Merging with a parasite, you won't have to worry that the physical body will get hurt, even if the Magic Calculation Zone goes out of control. No, a 'parasite' is closer to magic than magicians, and does not have to worry that the Magic Calculation Area will go out of control at all."

"In that case, you should first ask Minami about it."

Tatsuya stood motionlessly between Minoru and Minami. Their lines of sight were still being blocked

"However, I will have to selfishly impose myself here as her master."

To be more precise, her 'master' was Miyuki, but in this situation there was no need for such details. What was needed now was his reason for speaking up.

"I refuse. I will not allow Minami to become a parasite."

"Tatsuya-san!?"

Minoru was really astonished. It seems that he was fully convinced that Tatsuya would not object to his idea.

"But if you keep her in this state, Minami-san could suddenly die at any moment!"

"If it is caused by overloading the Magic Calculation Area, there is a way around it, even if she doesn't become a parasite."

"But the restoration of the Magic Calculation Area is impossible! If it was possible to restore her limiter, I wouldn't have even made the offer!"

"When you cannot fix the 'limiter', you can seal the Magic Calculation Area from the outside, and it won't be able to go out of control."

Minoru opened his eyes widely. After shaking, and having taken two steps back, his composure finally returned.

"Tatsuya-san, are you saying that... you want to take magic away from Minami-san!?"

Minoru couldn't believe it. Taking magic from a magician. It's like stealing a magician's sense of existence.

For Minoru, whose life was based on being an excellent magician, even to suggest this was unforgivable.

"Because I want Minami to live."

"You're going to make her stop being a magician!"

"A person can still walk the path of life even if they are not a magician. Minami could live more peacefully as an ordinary girl."

"That is your wish, not her's, Tatsuya-san! You have no right to take away the magic of Minami-san!"

"True. Indeed, my desire is to take magic away from Minami. However, Minoru, your desire will rob Minami of her 'Humanity'. Do you understand that?"

"Then let Minami-san choose! It's her life! If Minami-san refuses to become a parasite, I will retreat. Minami-san!"

Tatsuya continued to block Minami from Minoru's sight. But regardless, Minoru still shouted to Minami.

"I don't want you to die! But I don't want your magic to be taken away either! Please, become like me!"

There was severe turmoil on Minami's face. She wasn't going to become a 'parasite'. Such a decision could not be made quickly. So in this situation she decided to rely on Tatsuya, regardless of whether she would lose her magic or not.

But Minoru's words shook Minami's heart strongly.

"Like I said, Minoru."

As soon as she had overcome her hesitation, Tatsuya answered with a voice as cold as steel to the words of Minoru.

"She refuses."



"Tatsuya-san, please, step back! Let me talk to Minami-san!"

Minoru fell into a rage, releasing Magic in the direction of Tatsuya.

It was simple Movement-Type magic. His task was to move Tatsuya, who was blocking him from talking to Minami, aside. However, no acceleration or deceleration occurred.

In an instant, this high speed aggressive magic made everything clear.

The reaction of Tatsuya was reflexive but accurate. He disassembled the magic sequence with "Gram Dispersion".

"Minoru, what were you trying to do?"

"Shut up and step aside!"

Minoru was well-founded as an outstanding magician. He cannot lose when it comes to magic skill, that is something that he is confident in and strongly feels in his heart.

When his magic was neutralized, Minoru fell into insanity. He was furious.

He never lost, except when he was unable to fight because of his absence. This reaction was a consequence of his lack of experience in losing.

For Minoru, who had to give up on everything because of his damaged body, the thought "If only I was healthy" was part of his deep conviction.

...While he is healthy, he will not lose in magic.

And in one fell swoop this thought was turned upside down.

Even if an inexperienced boy who is 17 years old loses to me this year, there was plenty of room for sympathy.

However, Minoru was not "normal". At this point he wasn't even a man. Tatsuya was attacked with even stronger and faster magic than before.

Tatsuya also invalidated this magic with "Gram Dispersion" again, but unlike the first time, Tatsuya saw this as an enemy attack.

Tatsuya's consciousness switched to that of a magician without mercy.

Tatsuya who disassembled the magic, instantly shortened the distance in this interval.

He pushed his right palm towards Minoru's stomach.

It wasn't a blow. It would be better to call the force of this movement as "gentle".

The next moment, magic was released from the hand of Tatsuya. He released "acceleration" magic at a distance close to nothing.

This magic had an impact not only on the area the palm touched, but also on Minoru's entire body, pushing it back. It would be more accurate to say that his body flew back. And Tatsuya's hand did not receive any recoil.

Minoru, who was about to hit the door, silently stopped right in front of it and sank down to the floor without making a sound.

Minoru executed acceleration magic on himself using the acceleration magic that Tatsuya invoked as a stepping stone, after flying from the door, he neutralized the inertia, eliminating the impact, and minimized the distance between Tatsuya and him.

"Miyuki, Maximum Zone Interference now!"

"Yes!"

Tatsuya issued these instruction before Minoru's legs touched the floor.

Miyuki's Zone Interference covered the hospital room at the same time Minoru touched the floor.

Looking at the direction where Minami was, Minoru unlocked the door and abruptly opened it.

When using Zone Interference, Miyuki designated the area of effect to be the "space inside the hospital room".

As soon as Tatsuya tried to close the distance between him and his opponent, Minoru went out into the hallway, outside the range of the interference magic.

The window panes that were dead-bolted broke and blew outside.

Minoru's and Tatsuya's eyes met for a moment, then Minoru jumped out of the window that had lost its glass.

Tatsuya definitely understood what Minoru was trying to say.

"Miyuki, stay and defend Minami."

"Onii-sama!"

"I'm accepting Minoru's challenge."

Minoru did not escape with just the intent to flee from Miyuki's Zone Interference.

(A battle in a hospital room would cause unnecessary destruction.)

(Minami could have been injured.)

Minoru did not want this, so he invited Tatsuya outside.

If Tatsuya stayed here, Minoru would definitely withdraw. But Minoru was obsessed with Minami. Tatsuya could easily understand this during today's short conversation.

He doesn't know if Minoru is going to come back to take Minami.

The main priority of Tatsuya was the protection of Miyuki.

Besides, he's a guy, and Minami is a girl. He couldn't be near her 24 hours a day.

The best choice was to go and catch Minoru right here and now.

Going after Minoru, Tatsuya jumped onto the hospital yard through the broken window.

This hospital room was on the fourth floor.

Although it isn't impossible to jump down using his own physical strength, it is preferable to not show any exploitable gap immediately after landing in front of Minoru. He was a tough opponent even when he still was a man.

Tatsuya invoked a technique for inertia control from the magic library in his memory.

In other words, he activated the magic using Flash Cast.

He neutralized his inertia right at the moment of landing.

Together with the use of inertia control with his Artificial Magic Calculation Area, he also invoked the magic "Gram Dispersion", Decomposition magic from his original Magic Calculation Area. The Release-Type magic "Spark" cast by Minoru was invalidated.

"As I expected, 'Gram Dispersion'. When I saw it a while ago, I thought it was just a misunderstanding. But to be able to bring such highly difficult magic that is said to only succeed in the laboratory into an actual battle... As one would expect from a direct descendant of the Yotuba, right?"

Minoru spoke in a suppressed tone. It seems like he had calmed down from their earlier exchange.

"You unilaterally used force for the sake of your obsession. Minoru, this is the behavior of a parasite."

Upon receiving this unexpected remark, the calm expression Minoru had again became agitated.

"You would not have acted this way back when you were a human being and you would not have shown such self-righteousness."

"This isn't self-righteousness! I am not wrong!"

Minoru strikes Tatsuya using the Release-Type system magic "Jintai Hakka".

This magic disables the magical defense of a human body and forcibly extracts electrons from molecules, constituting the cell and releasing it out of the body. It is named "Jintai Hakka" because the discharge occurring on the skin exhibits an appearance like the spontaneous ignition of human body part. But in reality, it is a terrible magic that collapses cells at the molecular level by depriving them of electrons which are used for intermolecular bonding.

Tatsuya decomposed the magic sequence for "Jintai Hakka" directed at himself that was on the verge of being activated.

Even with Tatsuya's decomposition magic speed, he was only able to stop it at the last moment.

Minoru's original Activation Speed was already excellent, and after merging with the parasite it became even faster.

Tatsuya intended to physiologically shake Minoru up with his words, but this ended up being counterproductive.

The accuracy of his magic did not become compromised because of his emotional disturbance. Rather than him being agitated, there was an impression that his speed became even faster.

It was no longer possible to go easy on him.

Tatsuya did not want to enter into a serious confrontation with Minoru. Because Minoru didn't have any hostile intentions when he came to the hospital room.

Tatsuya was fully aware of his lack of communication skills. However, if he can neutralize Minoru, he will not regret this decision.

Tatsuya released "Decomposition" at Minoru.

He is not using a CAD. By using a CAD, he would not be able to keep up with Minoru's speed. If the pledge seal had not been completely lifted, he wouldn't have been able to stand up against Minoru's speed.

Minoru, who should have received Tatsuya's Decomposition magic, vanished without leaving a trace.

Minoru's real form appeared to the right. Sensory Systematic-type magic "Parade".

Tatsuya's decomposition was aimed at a phantom created by "Parade".

Tatsuya released more magic.

At the place where the original once stood, a phantom appeared. It had overwritten the real body as to make it look like Minoru was there the entire time.

Tatsuya disassembled "Ghost Walker", a directional bearing deceiving magic.

(Minoru did not only fuse together with a parasite.)

The former Ninth Laboratory had the theme of incorporating Ancient magic techniques into modern magic.

The possibility that the Ancient magic of the continent "Ghost Walker" was studied at the former Ninth Laboratory is not zero.

However, this "Ghost Walker" was not something that he had learned just by seeing the sequence type.

Magic has its own individuality. Even if the same magic is used to produce the same effect, subtle differences will appear in the process that will be unique to different operators. The more complete the magic is, the more difficult it is to see the difference, it can be seen depending on the relative power relationship between the viewer and object.

Tatsuya's "Eyes" clearly saw the individuality of Zhou Gongjin from this "Ghost Walker" when it was used by Minoru.

(When did you capture the ghost of Zhou Gongjin?!)

While Tatsuya was mentally talking to himself, magical discharge signs occurred in the air.

Release-Type Systematic Magic "Cloudless Thunder \*".

[Literal translation: Thunder in a cloudless blue sky.]

The air is converted into plasma, and the electrons extracted from the plasma are directed towards the target and explode. The negatively charged attack, is an attack of two stages that exposes the target to a violent stream of positive ions which were left behind.

Minoru's "Cloudless Thunder" was released while Tatsuya disassembled "Parade" and "Ghost Walker". Tatsuya then moved to disassemble "Cloudless Thunder", but it was much faster than expected.

Tatsuya selected the magic formula for "Douden Himaku" from his library.

Release-Type Systematic magic "Douden Himaku" is a defensive magic that reduces the electrical resistance to nearly zero on the surface of clothes and shoes. It is a defensive magic that makes the electric current of lightning strike the earth.

Using the magic sequence from his Artificial Magic Calculation Area. Tatsuya tried to activate the "Douden Himaku" with Flash Cast.

At the same time, however, Tatsuya was hit by a magic sequence to increase electric conductance. The magic itself has no magical power, but it conflicts with the "Douden Himaku" that "reduces electric resistance to approximately zero."

The electronic shower of "Cloudless Thunder" struck Tatsuya who failed to invoke magic to defend himself.

Tatsuya dealt with the pain as he rolled across the courtyard of the hospital.

This courtyard is made with natural turf. Below it the ground is made out of earth.

The charge which Tatsuya was hit with grounded into the earth, and the charged ions were sucked into the ground.

Tatsuya supported himself with one knee on the ground.

Minoru stood there looking very surprised by this.

Even if one can endure the pain, the muscles struck by the electron shower should not be able to move freely.

That's what Minoru thought.

This was Minoru's carelessness. However, it cannot be denied that he was bound by common sense.

Using this gap Tatsuya used "Mist Dispersion" and it finally hit Minoru's body.

Blood spurted from Minoru's right ankle.

After losing the strength in both his legs, and not just in the right, he collapsed, falling on his back.

To completely block his movement, Tatsuya also targeted his left leg, as well as the right and left shoulders. However, the thing that had fallen down was something without any substance.

Signs of magic invocation began to emerge right behind Tatsuya.

Without wasting any time by turning around, Tatsuya destroyed "Cloudless Thunder" with "Gram Dispersion". At the same time his "eyes" weren't just focused on the magic sequence for "Cloudless Thunder".

Tatsuya searched for the real Minoru in all directions with a 360 degree view around him.

Tatsuya was able to destroy the "Hot Wind Blade" that came at him from the right and was low to the ground, a variation of air bullets where blades are produced by insulating and compressing air into these shapes and aiming them at a target.

Tatsuya's "Decomposition" rapidly expands the decompressed hot-wind blades. Since it was low to the ground, it caused a cloud of sand and dust, he wasn't blinded but he had to narrow his eyes because the wind was very strong.

With his eyelids half closed, Tatsuya kicked the ground.

Not to the right, nor to the left.

Slight impatience was shown on Tatsuya's face when he turned to his left.

Was he impatient because he found him?

These signs of disturbance told Tatsuya the precise position of Minoru. Lightning magic that was creeping up at his feet, was extinguished just before realization.

A decelerating cage that restrains the body was decomposed immediately after activation.

The bombardment of air bullets and hot air blades using air compression vanished because they were dispersed.

Minoru's magic that attacked one after another, now had a lethal power.

All of it was neutralized, and Tatsuya found Minoru at the same time.

Tatsuya sticks out his right hand. The index finger of this hand was stretches forward, and the rest of the fingers are clenched into a fist, it's a form called "Ichinokande".

This finger penetrated the clothes and skin of Minoru, and made a deep hole in his left arm's shoulder joint. This was not the result of his finger being reinforced with martial arts training. It was the result of the fact that Tatsuya activated "Mist Dispersion" from the tip of his finger.

When aiming with the naked eye or using magical eyesight, the spell will be redirected by the secret technique of the Kudou family "Parade". Therefore he approached Minoru and released "decomposition" at an extremely close distance. Now you can deal damage to the enemy, even if all 5 senses are against it.



Minoru screamed.

Minoru tried to use the parasite's ability to steal vitality, but Tatsuya removed his finger before he could.

Next, Tatsuya's left index finger was aimed at Minoru's right arm joint. Minoru could not react in time and a hole was also thrust into his right shoulder.

Tatsuya retracted his left hand from Minoru's body.

However, Tatsuya received an unexpected counter-attack here.

Minoru's left hand, which was supposed be non-functional, seized him.

A sudden feeling of exhaustion assaulted Tatsuya.

Something was being sucked out of his left wrist.

It wasn't his Psions. It was something like his life energy.

It is the parasite's ability to absorb life energy.

It was only being absorbed for an instant. Tatsuya immediately twisted his arms reflexively to release himself from Minoru's restraint after being caught by his left wrist.

At the same time, Tatsuya swung down his right hand like a sword, cutting off Minoru's left hand from the spot near his wrist.

Minoru caught his left hand using his right hand and jumped backward. Although Minoru didn't seem to have put too much effort into it, he jumped back five meters.

Minoru stuck out the open wound where the left hand used to be.

This time it was Tatsuya's turn to open his eyes in surprise.

Minoru's left hand was connected in the blink of an eye.

Minoru looked at Tatsuya with a smile on his face.

Whether he looked like this or he had turned himself into a demon, Minoru's face has no signs of an evil distortion.

"Is this the first time you've seen the parasite's healing and regeneration ability?"

Tatsuya remembered that there was one previous incident. A parasite infiltrated First High as an employee of Maximilian Device, unaware that she was one of Lina's companions.

Lina called her "Mia", she had her heart pierced by Erika's blade, but the parasite instantly healed the wound.

After looking closely, it wasn't only his wrist but also his right foot, left shoulder, and the hole in the right shoulder were also healed. It is clear that Minoru has the same ability as that parasite called "Mia".

"...Is that so? There seem to be individual differences in the ability of parasites, too."

Meanwhile, Minoru confirms the fact that not all parasites have a high healing ability, after seeing Tatsuya's subtle facial expression.

"The ability of parasites, are both different in terms of type and level. Minoru, even if you are able to overcame the vulnerability of your physical body by absorbing a parasite, Minami will not necessarily be cured in the same way."

Minoru gasps.

Tatsuya did not miss this opportunity and held out his right hand that was clenched.

Upon the guidance of Yakumo, the anti-parasite Non-Systematic Magic "Armour Piercing Psion Bullet", also known as Far Strike.

That magic's original function is to dash through the air.

Originally Psion bullets were not limited in terms of speed.

Psion bullets that do not have mass and do not have physical conditions and are not bound by the speed of light.

However, "Armour Piercing Psion bullet" is not just a Psion bullet.

It is not just a bullet made solely out of Psions.

The "Armour Piercing Psion bullet" is a bullet that flies through the Information Dimension.

Originally, there is no concept of movement in the Information Dimension.

To solve the problem of "movement" in the Information Dimension, the positional change of the information itself is not used and time is not factored in. It doesn't even take a moment, because it just rewrites the place "where the information applies".

"Armour Piercing Psion Bullet" introduces the concept of movement in the Information Dimension. This solid mass of Psions which is an information element is given the definition to "Continuously and exclusively move in the Information Dimension".

That's the "Armour Piercing Psion Bullet".

As a result, its movement speed is determined by the operator, that is, the limit to recognize the movement in the Dimension is restricted by Tatsuya. He is releasing the "Armour Piercing Psion bullet" like he is shooting something.

Even so, although the speed of the movement is much greater than 100 kilometers per hour, it still is not nearly as fast as regular bullets. It is also inferior to the speed of arrows. There will be a difference between individuals.

Minoru jumped reflexively after seeing the "Armour Piercing Psion bullet".

But it was not a jump.

He fought against "Armour Piercing Psion Bullet" with Flying-Type Magic.

The "Armour Piercing Psion Bullet" disappeared through the illusion of "Parade" that "he" was still left on "ground" in the Information Dimension.

The flying magic used by Minoru was not the modern magic technique developed by Tatsuya. It is a flying magic sequence from the Taoist Technique-type Ancient Magic system in which he takes a ride on a "cloud".

A magic that creates the chemical body of "clouds", gives it a function as a foothold.

Tatsuya decomposed the clouds that Minoru was riding with his magic. But Minoru did not fall down.

This time he was floating by neutralizing the gravity with Modern Weight-Type Magic. Flying Magic was called one of the "Three Great Puzzles of Weight Systematic Magic" because it was difficult to realize free aerial mobility, but it is not difficult if it is just floating.

Minoru stretched his hands out with his palms facing the ground. Plasma bullets were shot out one after another from his palm.

Compressing air to the size of a golf ball, and ionizing it. It is a simple magic to shoot towards the ground.

Tatsuya directed "Mist Dispersion" towards Minoru while preventing this attack by disrupting the generation of the plasma bullets.

However, his magic was stopped halfway through invocation.

Minoru did not maintain his floating state but was moving in the air with continuous jumps.

Instead of flying, he jumped on the footholds created in the air.

By leaving the illusions of "Parade" he created after-images.

The problem was not only the difficulty of grasping the location of the main body.

Tatsuya wavered.

Minoru has that ability to heal and regenerate, even if he gets injured by Partial Decomposition. In order to control Minoru, he will have to take away his consciousness.

However, Minoru did not stop even after his wrist was cut off.

Using "Mist Dispersion", he can only neutralize him by killing him...

Tatsuya was hesitant to kill Minoru.

The attack directed by Minoru, even if it is fatal, cannot kill Tatsuya.

Tatsuya cannot even be killed by "Cloudless Thunder" or "Jintai Hakka". Much less, plasma bullets cannot even stop his movements.

The magic that can truly be a threat to Tatsuya is the magic that attacks the spirit or mind which is beyond his "Regrowth", but Minoru is not trying to use Mental Interference Magic. Or perhaps it cannot be used, but anyway, the magic he uses now is not a real threat to Tatsuya.

And also, first of all, Minoru never committed hostile actions against Miyuki, or even show any hostility to them. And the motive of Minoru was the treatment of Minami.

In other words, the current hostility is only temporary.

Even though he is now a parasite, it is highly likely that he will be of use in the future.

Is it okay to lose the precious military power of Kudou Minoru, here and now?

This dilemma made his point dull.

(However, we cannot be sure.)

If all of his body is decomposed, even the healing regeneration capacity will not be effective enough either.

Even if you do not turn the whole body into dust, the parasite will just leave the body after the heart is gone.

Decompose the heart, then if you can blow away the parasite using "Gram Demolition" within the reviving time, he may be able to return Minoru back to normal by using "Regrowth" to restore his heart afterwards.

(...Let's do it)

Minoru's attack stops when Tatsuya strengthened his determination to break from this deadlock situation.

"Tatsuya-san, do you really think we can settle things at this rate?"

Minoru said exactly the same thing that Tatsuya was thinking.

"Apparently to me, it seems that I cannot break through Tatsuya's defenses unless I attempt to kill you."

And it was the same as Tatsuya, he could not make a decision to give him a fatal injury. Minoru said so.

"It seems so."

Tatsuya agreed to this statement, while Minoru floated in the air and smiled with a nod.

"Tatsuya-san, I think that the best way for Minami to regain a 'healthy' body is to become a parasite."

"I do not think so."

"Is that so. It seems our opinions will continue to run parallel."

Minoru turned his eyes to the broken glass window. Beyond there is Minami's hospital room.

"But I've conveyed my ideas to Minami."

Minoru returns his eyes to Tatsuya.

"So as far as I am concerned, I am content with this for now."

Minoru's body begins to rise.

At his feet, the chemical clouds formed again. Minoru flew away on this cloud.

"...He's gone, then?" With a sigh of relief, Tatsuya muttered, when he watched the flying "cloud" with Minoru on it disappear from his sight.

This is not the end.

Nothing is finished with just that.

Minoru will be back.

*But we can think that at least for today it's over,* thought Tatsuya.

◊ ◊ ◊

"Minoru is gone." Tatsuya, having returned to Minami's room, only said this.

Zone Interference prevents the use of magic, but does not block magical waves. Even Miyuki's Zone Interference works that way. Both Miyuki and Minami felt the battle between Tatsuya and Minoru was fierce.

But Minami did not ask Tatsuya to explain the battle in detail.

Tatsuya told Maya about the attack by Minoru directly at the hospital and requested reinforcements for protection, and he then returned home.

Miyuki brought coffee to Tatsuya, who was leisurely sitting on the couch in the living room.

Pixie wasn't here. When he returned to First High on Tuesday, Tatsuya returned her there.

Sipping the coffee, Tatsuya returned the cup to the table. This feeling of fatigue that he felt, seems to have been the result of his life force being pulled out, but it only lasted for one moment.

"Onii-sama, are you all right...?" Miyuki asked worriedly.

She was standing on the other side of the low table, with the empty tray clinging to her chest.

"The fight was fierce, but i'm okay."

Tatsuya did not try to conceal that the fight was difficult.

"Was he a strong opponent because he became a parasite?"

"Yes. The original Minoru already had an excellent activation speed, but by becoming a parasite, it became even faster. And his regeneration ability brings a good amount of problems."

"His regeneration ability?"

"Yes. During the battle at First High, a parasite, pretending to be Lina's colleague, also had this ability."

"The parasite that Lina called 'Mia'? Right, if I remember correctly she had a very powerful self healing ability."

"The regeneration ability, which Minoru had, is either at the level of the parasite, or may even surpass it."

"Mhh... Indeed, that is problematic."

The beautiful face of Miyuki became gloomy when she said this.

"But what is really bothersome are not the abilities inherited from the parasite, but also the strength that Minoru already had. But also the strength of one more person."

"His primordial strength and... Another man's strength?"

"Yes."

Tatsuya's forehead became wrinkled. Excluding when he does it consciously, it was unusual for Tatsuya to make such a face.

"Minoru has Elemental Sight. I had suspected it for a long time, and today I was convinced of it."

By using magic with the opposite effect of that magic that Tatsuya used originally with Flash Cast, Minoru was able to neutralize the effect of Tatsuya's magic.

It wasn't a coincidence. And it wasn't really a prediction. Tatsuya realized that this was the result of reading the magic sequence emitted by the enemy.

"But then!"

Miyuki, though surprised, didn't say words like "that cannot be". And she also did not ask something like "Is that so?". Tatsuya said he "was sure of it". Neither consciously nor unconsciously, Miyuki had any doubt.

"...Onii-sama. Who is the other person you were talking about...?"

Just at that moment, her consciousness was filled with another question.

"I do not know how he did it, but Minoru somehow was able to get the knowledge and magic skills of Zhou Gongjin."

Tatsuya answered, and did not hesitate.

"Zhou Gongjin? You mean that Zhou Gongjin!?"

"Yes."

"You mean that Minoru-kun... For example, found a book on magic left by Zhou Gongjin, and he studied its contents?"

Miyuki interpreted Tatsuya's words in terms of common sense. If you think in that way, you won't become confused as quickly. However, Tatsuya was not going to hide the facts.

"No. Using simplistic expressions, I think that Minoru was able to swallow up the ghost of Zhou Gongjin."

Miyuki covered her mouth with one hand. Not both of them, because the other hand pressed the tray to the chest.

"...Does the Kudou family even have such magic?"

Tatsuya negatively shook his head to the question of Miyuki, intently staring at him.

"They should not have had the magic to unite with the ghost. This is contrary to the goals of modern magic. But the magic that makes a spiritual body you subordinate could have been used."

Tatsuya briefly interrupted her and pulled an easy-to-understand example out of his memory for Miyuki.

"For example, the Parasite Dolls. To finish this humanoid weapon, they needed a magic that could control the true body of the parasite. Using this kind of magic, Minoru could have absorbed the residual thoughts of Zhou Gongjin."

"'Ghost Walker', which he used in today's fight, was the exact same as the one used by Zhou Gongjin.

"I understand..."

Frankly speaking, it was hard for Miyuki to believe that it was possible to swallow the ghost of a magician who had died a few months ago.

But if that's what Tatsuya says, Miyuki could believe it.

"...We must take countermeasures. Magic of the former Ninth Laboratory, Continental Ancient Magic and the superpower of a 'parasite'. An adversary who combines all these forces will be very difficult to fight using the usual methods."

Tatsuya frowned, making a dull expression on his face.

"I also have to tell Elder Kudou about Minoru. Aunt-sama doesn't seem to want to talk about it, so I have to tell him myself. In addition, we will need the help of the Kudou family."

He had already had to allocate resources to confront Project Dione, and then there was another problem. Naturally, Tatsuya felt disheartened.

Miyuki stood and looked at Tatsuya with an anxious gaze.

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Tatsuya's worry, that Maya would not allow him to share the importance information about Minoru, was in vain.

Monday, June 17th.

The day after the senseless battle between Tatsuya and Minoru. Tatsuya was summoned to the Kanto branch of the Magic Association.

Today was not about trying to convince Tatsuya to join Project Dione. He was asked to attend an emergency conference of the Ten Master Clans as an observer. No, perhaps it was better to call him a witness.

In the conference hall of the Yokohama Bay Hills Tower, where the Kanto branch of the Magic Association was located, only 2 people were present, Tatsuya and Katsuto. Katsuto treated Tatsuya as a person from the Yotsuba family and addressed him in the professional way.

Katsuto acted as if they had never fought, when the fight had just occurred the last Sunday of the previous month. However, this behavior could also indicate that Katsuto had not fully digested the events that had happened.

In any case, this formal attitude was mutual from the side of Tatsuya.

There are ten people on the screen of the Kanto Branch. There are also ten regular members of the Master Clans Conference.

One of them, Katsuto, was present in this conference room and was not included in the image on the screen. Tatsuya, of course, was too.

In addition to the nine Family Heads of the Ten Master Clans, there was one other person. And his name was Kudou Retsu.

By reducing any formal greetings to a minimum, they immediately moved to the main issue.

"It's not that I don't trust you, but I want to ask you again."

Ichijou Gouki, who had just returned from his sickbed, made some remarks with a vigorous voice and didn't even look like he had been sick.

The question was given to Tatsuya.

"Is it true that Minoru-dono of the Kudou Family became a parasite?"

"He said so in person. When I confronted him, he had become one with a parasite."

The ten people on the screen reacted in three ways: one person would express their surprise, another person didn't show any emotion, and the other showed their sadness.

"...And the fact that the goal of Minoru-dono is a magician, submissive to the Yotsuba family, named Sakurai Minami-jou, is also true?"

"...Minoru-dono's aim is a magician under the Yotsuba family, Sakurai Minami-jou?"

This question came from Mitsuya Gen who was surprised.

"I also heard this clearly from his mouth."

"That... is there any special relationship between Minoru-dono and Sakurai Minami-jou?"

Tatsuya answered "I do not know" to Takumi Shippou's question. In fact, he could guess what it was about but he didn't hear it from those two people themselves. Minami would have probably given the same answer as Tatsuya even if she was asked directly. What she thinks of Minoru, as of now, there is no doubt that Minami would be in a state of embarrassment.

"Let's put Minoru-dono's motive aside for a moment."

Then, Saegusa Kouichi spoke.

"The problem is that Minoru-dono changed into a parasite and is targeting a magician of the Yotsuba Family, which is a massive problem. What I'm worried about is where the parasite that Minoru-dono possesses came from."

"Certainly. The parasites could have invaded Japan again, but if there was a source in the country, a crisis could occur and the damage could expand if it was left alone."

Itsuwa Isami agreed with Kouichi.

"...That is-"

"Last time."

Kudou Retsu tried to answer with bitterness in his voice. But before he could answer, Tatsuya talked over him.

"When the parasites had invaded the country, I sealed two parasites with the help of my friend, because at that point in time, the means to ultimately destroy the parasites was unknown, yet those two were taken by someone. I'm sorry, but I'm guessing that is the source of the problem."

"You don't know who took them?"

"Negative."

Tatsuya wasn't frightened by Kouichi's question, for he fought with a single word.

"Did you not investigate it?"

"Tokyo is not a territory of the Yotsuba Family"

Kouichi nodded to Tatsuya's clear answer.

"At that time, parasites were dealt with in collaboration with Mayumi-jou of the Saegusa Family, the Juumonji Family, and Erika-jou of the Chiba Family. We also shared information on the sealed parasites that were robbed with each other."

"I certainly have heard about it."

As Katsuto testified as a party, Kouichi gave up his pursuit any further. If Mayumi had heard it, it would be the responsibility of the Saegusa Family.

"I have one in hand."

Here, an unexpected line of words came from Maya.

"Because Tatsuya was in a battle with the rest of the parasites, I arranged for the collection, however, I could only secure one."

"...Did you not tell Tatsuya this?"

Futatsugi Mai asked with a seemingly mocking tone.

"Because I want Tatsuya to concentrate on his studies."

All of them knew this was a lie but only murmured their complaints.

"We received a report from Tatsuya and confirmed the status of our parasite just in case, and there was nothing wrong with it."

Thus insisting on her innocence.

"Then, is there a high possibility that the remaining one is the source of this infection?"

"It is dangerous to hurry to a conclusion. Regarding the source of the infection, the information that we have is still too little."

Yatsushiro Raizo put a stop to Mutsuzuka Atsuko's question in advance.

"I think the concerns of Saegusa-dono and Itsuwa-dono are reasonable, but shouldn't we prioritize dealing with the known problems now?"

"I agree. I believe that is the correct way." Raizo pointed this out and Atsuko nodded.

"I understand the problem is the treatment of Minoru."

"...I'm sorry for my grandson, but if he turns out to be a parasite, I can't leave things be."

"That's right."

Kudou Retsu nodded with an expression that showed he was trying to suppress his emotions. His son Kudou Makoto, doesn't have such a resolute attitude.

Minoru's father, the Head of the Kudou Family is Makoto, who instead of participating in the conference, is ostensibly saying that he is busy dealing with matters within the Kudou Family. However, the truth is probably that Makoto judged that this was a difficult talking point.

"It has been confirmed that, when a parasite loses their host, they will fly away in search of a new host."

Tatsuya gathered their attention.

All of the participants should know this fact, but the majority of the faces showed expressions that they were reminding themselves again.

"Well, is it necessary to mobilize magicians who can attack a mental body?"

Was said by Gouki.

"Is it not safer to disable Minoru-dono without killing him?"

Takumi made a strong objection.

"I agree with that opinion."

The former supported Takumi's opinion.

"Does Tatsuya-dono know the method used for sealing?"

Isami asked him on the screen.

"I will offer the know-how."

Before Tatsuya could answer, Retsu offered his help.

"Sensei will?"

"Excuse me, where did Sensei learn how to seal parasites?"

Hearing Isami ask this, Gouki reflexively asked Retsu. Doubt remains in Gouki's eyes. This could be understood even through the screen.

"From a teacher of course. The procedure that our family uses for sealing parasites, was taught to me by Sensei."

Maya put a bit of water in her mouth.

Gouki's eyesight was easy to understand and his sharpness was reduced.

"The countermeasure when capturing Minoru-dono is a measure that will be explained by Sensei, but when can we use this measure..."

Mai tried to change this worn out mood.

"Minoru-dono's aim is Sakurai Minami-jou. Is it okay to think like this?"

"I think that his final goal is Minami."

Tatsuya returned an affirmative answer to Mai's question, with a strong implication.

"Well, then it would be effective to put up a net in the vicinity of Minami-jou at Tokyo's hospital."

Kouichi boldly presented a plan to make Minami a decoy.

"Well, that's fine. We will arrange the protection of Minami."

Instead of protesting against it, Maya returned an answer that revealed a clear smile. It was a polite way of saying "There is no need to borrow the power of the Saegusa Family regarding an escort".

Kouichi frowned when heard this.

"Yotsuba-dono, I want our family to give you a hand with security."

Whether Katsuto was reading the atmosphere or not, he gave an incomprehensible offer.

"If you want to, it'll be outside of the hospital."

"That's fine."

"By all means."

Leaving Kouichi outside of the matter, the conversation between Maya and Katsuto continued to be coherent.

"What shall the rest of us do?"

"The final aim of Minoru-dono is believed to be Sakurai Minami-jou, but there is also a good chance of him returning back to the Kudou Family."

Takumi responded to the issue raised by Atsuko.

"Minoru has been concealing his whereabouts since yesterday. He has not returned back to the Kudou Family, but it cannot be said that he will not return." Takumi pointed this out.

"Obviously, I will catch him if he shows up. I will not harbour him."

"I am not really worried about such a thing." Mai answered the words of Retsu with a soothing tone.

"Minoru was anxious about certain aspects relating to his health, originally he was an extremely excellent magician. I can't predict how much of Minoru's power has transformed after becoming a parasite. If it's okay, I think I will also dispatch some people from my family."

Thus Mai offered to dispatch reinforcements to Retsu.

"If it's necessary, I will do so as well."

Thus Gouki took advantage of this as well.

"I am grateful. Well then Futatsugi-dono, may I ask for your help? I would also appreciate it if Ichijou-dono could lend me a helping hand with reinforcements."

"Certainly."

"I understand."

Retsu lowered his head on the screen, followed by Mai and Gouki.

"The Yotsuba Family shall guard Sakurai Minami. The Saegusa Family shall proceed to capture Minoru-dono. The Juumonji Family shall guard the outside the hospital of Sakurai Minami-jou. The Futatsugi Family shall send reinforcements and be the primary reinforcements, and the Ichijou Family will act as the secondary reinforcement to the Kudou Family. Is it okay for each house to remain on alert?"

A voice of approval was given to Katsuto's words one after another.

The Ten Master Clans's course of action was decided.

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The clean-up of the conference hall was left to the staff of the Magic Association. Tatsuya and Katsuto left the hall together and headed for the elevator.

They didn't walk side by side, Tatsuya walked one step diagonally behind Katsuto.

He wasn't walking right behind him to avoid getting into his blind spot. So it was as a result of Tatsuya not wanting to show any hostility to Katsuto.

They didn't talk to each other. They just walked in silence.

They really had nothing to talk about. It would not have been odd if one of them had died in the battle if the other had acted differently. Not even a month had passed since then. Because they weren't hostile to each other, it could be said that they were acting like grown ups. Or was it because they were used to these kinds of battles?

However, their silence was broken by a woman hiding in their blind spot just before the elevator.

"Juumonji-kun, Tatsuya-kun, has the meeting come to an end?"

"Saegusa... Why are you here?"

Despite the fact that Mayumi herself was a party in the current conflict, she spoke without a care in the world.

"Because I'm interested."

Katsuto felt a headache growing when he heard the abstract answer of Mayumi. Tatsuya was feeling the exact same thing.

"The meeting has ended."

"That was pretty fast. What did you decide?"

"Ask your father", Katsuto wanted to say. But they have known each other for a long time, so he knew that she was not a woman who would retreat after hearing something like that.

"... It's better not to talk about it here."

"Then let's go to a guest room."

In the Kanto branch of the Magic Association (as well as in the headquarters in Kyoto), several private rooms were prepared for negotiations with an elevated level of secrecy. Despite the fact that Mayumi was not a frequent guest here, she was still familiar with them.

"Tatsuya-kun, too."

Even without continuing, Tatsuya realized what Mayumi was saying. He didn't have any urgent business today. Miyuki was still going to be at school for quite some time, so he had a lot of free time.

"... Okay."

Tatsuya was not "glad" about it, but he still accepted Mayumi's invitation.

"Tatsuya-kun, I hope you'll be satisfied with black tea?"

"Thank you."

Entering the guest room, the first thing Mayumi did was to brew tea. She just asked Tatsuya about her favorite drink, and didn't need to ask Katsuto.

Although Tatsuya felt the temptation to ask for something else, he showed prudence in order not to create unnecessary hassles.

Mayumi put 3 cups of black tea on the table and sat down herself. Her place was opposite Katsuto and near Tatsuya.

"Drink up or it will go cold."

Hearing the advice that sounded more like coercion, Tatsuya and Katsuto took their cups and brought it to their mouths. The black tea, brewed by Mayumi, had become tastier compared to her school years.

For her, this was like a ritual of satisfaction. Mayumi put her cup on the table, because she was in a good mood.

When all the cups were returned to their saucers, Katsuto looked at the Mayumi.

"So, what do you want to know?"

"Everything." Mayumi answered Katsuto.

"Saegusa, do you know what the subject of the meeting was?"

"Minoru-kun has become a parasite." Mayumi responded to Katsuto's question without any delay.

"That's why you discussed countermeasures against him, didn't you?"

When Mayumi showed that she understood the situation, her voice was calm. Tatsuya was alerted by this.

"Do you really understand the meaning behind these countermeasures? You're pretty familiar with Minoru-dono, right?"

Looks like Katsuto was also worried it.

"Of course I understand."

Mayumi calmly answered the question without showing any angry reluctance to answer.

"I also took part in the fight against the parasites the last time. Although I didn't really benefit much from it."

In that last sentence, her tone was a little disgruntled. But besides that, Mayumi spoke cold bloodedly.

"...Knowing that Minoru has become a parasite, you can guess what was decided, right?" Instead of Katsuto, who was dwelling in his confusion, Tatsuya spoke.

"Catch Minoru-kun, seal him, extract the parasite, and deal with it, right? But how are you exactly going to catch him?"

Tatsuya and Katsuto exchanged views. With these views, they agreed that it is possible to tell Mayumi about this, and also who would be the one to tell her. Katsuto.

"...We will capture Minoru-dono by ambushing him when he comes to kidnap Sakurai Minami-Jou."

"Are you going to do that, Juumonji-kun?"

"No. Saegusa-dono took on this role."

"Mhh my family...?"

The calm expression on her face disappeared. After showing her discontent with her lips, she quickly corrected her polite smile.

"Sakurai Minami-san, is she Kasumi-chan's classmate, 'Sakurai-san'?"

"Yes. Minami is your younger sister's classmate."

In his response, Tatsuya used "Younger sister" instead of "Kasumi", which is how he usually referred to her.

"To use a girl who is in her second of year of school as bat? Tatsuya-kun, does that suit you?"

Mayumi looked at Tatsuya with a condemning look.

"Minoru will come to Minami regardless of our intentions."

"Inside of the hospital where Sakurai-jou rests, will be people of the Yotsuba family, people from the Juumonji family will patrol outside of the building. So you do not have to worry about Sakurai-jou's safety."

Katsuto added Katsuto to Tatsuya's explanation.

"But if security is so tight, will Minoru-kun even show up?"

"If that's the case, we'll just have to figure out a different plan." Katsuto responded clearly to Mayumi's fears.

"Yes..."

Although her response sounded cold, it seemed she was somewhat satisfied.

"So, Juumonji-kun and Tatsuya-kun will work together to solve this problem?"

Katsuto frowned without even trying to understand her intentions.

*She loves to stick her nose in other people's business,* Tatsuya thought, and in her mind, she must be smiling.

"...It isn't limited to just this problem, The Juumonji and Yotsuba families are partners in the form of the Ten Master Clans. Our temporary conflicts should not grow into permanent ones."

"Yes..."

The same answer as the other one. But unlike last time, Mayumi was smiling.

## *Chapter 7*

United States of North America, New Mexico, suburb of Roswell.  
The base Headquarters of STARS.

The STARS were divided into 12 units, and it often happened that a squad received orders and acted separately from the others. In fact, the High Commander, Lina, should know about the missions entrusted to all the units, but in reality there were many missions, details of which were not reported to Lina.

The previous Sirius had full control over STARS, but Lina had not reached this level yet. You could even say she was far from that level. There were whispers behind her back saying that she was only a symbolic commander, and you couldn't say that there was no reason for this.

"All the squads should have been here today..."

After taking a shower and dressed in her pajamas, Lina talked to herself "Unit 3 and Unit 6 were moved somewhere last weekend. And I wasn't told where to."

Lina did not see Arcturus from the 3rd Unit or Bolt from the 6th Unit on Saturday morning and hurriedly asked Canopus where they were. Canopus knew the activities of each Unit better than Lina, and was more like her commander, but not even Canopus knew where they sent Arcturus and Bolt to.

Although this comforted Lina because she was not the only one being left out of the loop, but then she got depressed when she realized that her status as a High Commander was not being acknowledged.

Though this kind of stress is pushed to the corner of her heart, but it stuck out to her this night and it wouldn't go away.

Although she tried not to think about it, but these thoughts kept repeating themselves in her head.

(Where did Unit 3 and 6 go, what are they doing?)

(Why wasn't she been told about the reason for their dispatch?)

She was too annoyed to tell herself not to pay attention to it.

(After all, is the High Commander just an instrument that can use Strategic-Class Magic?)

Power. Not the power that leads to the achievement of a goal, but only the Force\* that simply knocks over obstacles. In the end, this was the kind of Force\* she possesses... Lina was biting her lips.

[At the Marked "\*" places, the author used the English word "Force".]

(That's why, I'm just a 17-year-old girl. I didn't have the best grades. I wasn't that good in the first place. I haven't received an education on commanding troops. I'm not tall. I have a baby face.)

Lina did not notice that this depression drove her mind into a spiral of complaints against herself. Her mind warned her that self-pity was an unhealthy behavior, but she could not stop.

"But couldn't they have at least told me why they got dispatched? Plans of absence were reported in advance, but when the schedule changes, it usually is communicated to the 'Commander'."

She couldn't stop complaining out loud.

"If they aren't happy with me, as a High Commander, I'll leave at any time. I understand it isn't good to have an unreliable Commander. But I didn't come here on my own accord..."

Lina climbed under the blanket and turned off the light in the room with a voice command. No matter how much she complained, nobody heard her. Besides, she's just tired of torturing herself.

That night, Lina had a nostalgic dream.

The fact is, if you only look on the surface, it isn't a very good memory.

A memory of her infiltration in First High, a memory where Parasites were killed one after another, in the mountains.

Finding a parasite, killing in one shot by piercing it through the back of the neck with Movement-Type Magic, another attacked her and she shot it with a plasma bullet.

Finding a parasite, shooting it with magic, and killing it with the magic.



The dream continued to loop.

The attacking parasites were killed over and over. It was like a zombie shooting game.

While slaughtering a parasite, Lina turned her neck

"When will Tatsuya and Miyuki appear?"

In this unique dream, she was both an active person and a spectator, but it was strange to look at herself as a spectator.

At that time, she was fighting against the parasites, shoulder to shoulder with Tatsuya. Lina didn't forget that. Moreover she couldn't forget that.

Although she did not want to be helped, she had the feeling that they are friends who fought together on an equal footing.

He was supposed to be an "enemy", not a "comrade". Besides, she looked down on Tatsuya and did not think he was equal to herself.

However.

Neither Tatsuya nor Miyuki treated Lina like a "teenage girl".

Neither Tatsuya nor Miyuki treated Lina in a special way even though she was an "apostle".

Of course, they did not treat her like a "teenager", because they were the same age, but still, she was happy.

For Tatsuya, as a user of a Strategic Class Magic superior to "Heavy Metal Burst", there was no reason to treat her in a special way. And even now, having learned about this, her sense of joy had not diminished.

While in Japan, she wasn't able to admit such feelings.

However, back in an environment where she's only surrounded by "older subordinates", she comes to obediently accept this reality as time passes. Actually if Tatsuya was in front of her, she would feel that way again.

Miyuki wasn't here.

Tatsuya wasn't here.

In an attempt to distract herself, Lina kept repelling the parasites while remembering her feelings of loneliness.

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("Can't invade the mind of the High Commander.")

("Did the Commander have aptitude for Lunar Magic?")

("The High Commander should not have abilities in Lunar Magic.")

("Then why can't I penetrate her mind?")

("Why can't I?")

("She repels it.")

("She rejects it.")

("She beats it.")

In the darkness of the night, there is a rumbling sound like that of bees heard from a beehive, though it's not a sound that can be heard by one's ear. It's the exchanging and sharing of the spiritual bodies, a conversation between the Parasites.

("The assimilation with the Commander is difficult.")

("The assimilation with the Commander is impossible.")

("The High Commander is dangerous.")

("She's dangerous.")

("She will be our enemy.")

("This needs to be fixed.")

("Eliminate her.")

After a while, the noise became a single voice.

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Tuesday, June 18th. It wasn't 5 in the morning yet.

No matter how much one is a soldier, this was the time for sleeping unless one were on a mission.

"Is it because of my dream...?" Lina unconsciously muttered this when she awoke right before dawn and was sitting on her bed.

She only vaguely remembered what the dream was about. Although she could not say that it was a good dream, she still felt that her stress had diminished.

At least her mood was better compared to what it was before she went to sleep.

Usually it was hard for Lina to get up in the morning. One of her recent habits was to force herself to drink bitter coffee in the morning to awaken her consciousness.

But today, she did not feel that she needed to do this. Currently it's June. At this time of the year the daily temperature exceeds 80 degrees (27 degrees Celsius), and at night time it falls to 60 degrees (16 degrees Celsius). A good time for a walk.

Lina decided to put this idea into practice immediately.

However, Lina was a young girl. Before leaving her room, she had to do a lot of different things. She was not on a mission, and she could not justify her negligence...

The sky was already beginning to lighten up, as she was getting dressed and went out.

However, there were still quite a few people awake in the base. It was impossible to say "No one was there", because there were soldiers at their posts, as well as early awaking service staff. Passing by such busy people, Lina mentally "thanked them for their work". As a result, she walked around the training ground and approached the fence, which is the boundary of the territory of the base.

This was her former home country. The hands of armed insurgents claiming separation and independence hadn't reached this far. Away from a conflict zone, there was no need to worry about a sniper while standing near the fence, at least that's how it was supposed to be.

Murderous intent came without a sound. By sheer coincidence, Lina had unintentionally avoided an invisible sniper.

A high-energy laser burned the fence from the inside and through the illusion of Lina. When Lina independently trains, she uses "Parade". If not for the fact "she" was one yard away from herself, the sniper would have successfully hit their mark, killing Lina instantly.

Lina was shocked but not by the fact that she barely escaped death.

Naturally, she was frightened by death, realizing the fact that the sniper attack had happened, made her feel relief from the bottom of heart that she managed to avoid death. But the thing that shocked her most of all was that the attack came from the base.

"Mutiny!"

Now, Anti-Personnel missiles missed due to Lina's activation of Movement-Type Magic, and she used a magic barrier to protect herself from the heat and shrapnel. At the same time, she traced the trajectory of the sniper shot and sent a glance to the roof of the warehouse.

"Jack!? I knew it."

There she saw a silhouette of a man at that position shooting with something similar to a rifle.

The warehouse was just over 100 meters away. It was still quite dark and it was hard to see who was there with the naked eye.

However, the emitted Psion waves, undoubtedly, belonged to a member of the STARS familiar to Lina.

STARS Unit 3, First-Class Star, First-Lieutenant Jacob Regulus.  
Nickname Jack.

The magic Regulus was proficient in, was a high-energy infrared laser bullet and it was called "Laser Sniping". The magic was released using an armed device resembling a rifle.

And he attacked Lina with "Laser sniping".

"Jack! Why did I become your target?"

There was no reply.

Sensing the signs of magic activation, Lina used magic that reflects electromagnetic waves called "Mirror shield".

"Mirror shield" reflected the light bullet created by "Laser Sniping". This magic is perfectly suited for snipers because it is silent and does not leave a bullet. Its drawback is that before its launch, there is a small gap in time before firing. This time is not used to activate the magic, but instead is used to amplify the light. That is why she was able to deploy the shield and repel the attack, after sensing signs of magic activation.

"Mirror shield" reflects all electromagnetic waves coming into the shield from the outside. This also applies to the light.

Therefore the area inside of the shield is not visible, thus making it invisible to the enemy.

When "Mirror Shield" was released, Regulus could no longer be seen on the roof of the warehouse. Lina raised her magic detection to the highest level and ran towards the warehouse.

Flying objects using magic were caught by her detection. She noticed that it's "Dancing Blades", a magic shared among the combat magicians of STARS.

"Alec!"

The Psion waves of these "Dancing blades" belonged to Alec, Captain Alexander Arcturus. Lina's magical sense told her such.

Lina activated her Zone Interference. But she didn't focus the area around her. Instead she focused on the area around the four flying blades and it overlapped with them.

The knives that approached her went around in a circular swirl, dropping to the ground and losing control.

"Don't tell me that even the Commander of the 3rd Unit, Alec is involved in this mutiny!? Or..."

(Or is it his personal hatred towards me?)

Lina couldn't say this aloud. Although she was talking to herself, it was difficult for her to say it aloud as a seventeen year-old girl.

She knew she was jealous. However, Lina tried to treat her friends at STARS well. Vega and Deneb from the 4th Unit at least showed her their dislike, but she had the impression that this was not serious hatred.

But now she didn't have time to worry about this. New "Dancing blades" were approaching.

But this time there weren't 4 of them, just 1. But it was much bigger.

"Tomahawk!?"

She couldn't stop this attack with her Zone Interference.

Arcturus was a hybrid of white, black and Native American descent, being exactly a quarter Native American. So with this blood he also inherited their characteristic magic.

In Ancient Magic, it is possible to magically strengthen a weapon by focusing one's "senses" into it. Although such a technique isn't accepted as magic by others, it's widely seen worldwide. It's a technique that uses the magic of the Native Americans.

Arcturus uses a one-handed axe, reinforced by such a spell, making it his trump card against magicians. It's also used as a weapon in melee combat, where fighting with it is exclusively done with Movement-Type Magic. Lina's Zone Interference could not stop his Tomahawk attack.

Lina knew this and dodged by moving horizontally. She moved nearly 22-meters, as if she slid from the air to the ground. Upon landing, she simultaneously redeployed "Mirror Shield" and started running.

Although there were many obstacles and targets for shooting, but the fact that this was shooting ground with a good overview made her an easy target.

She ran into a warehouse that contained special vehicles. Even if she entered one of the special vehicles, they didn't have any heavy armor and there wasn't a tank. Using magic, there was a self-propelled vehicle that can float in the sky, or a wagon car that can transform into a riding suit with a reinforced exoskeleton. The warehouse stored experimental weapons that have been neglected due to them being impractical.

Lina would be testing the long-distance self-propelled vehicles flight functions. The door to it was open so that the attendants could enter and leave.

"This is Major Sirius! Everyone inside this warehouse needs to leave this place!"

When she ran into the warehouse, Lina was wearing the disguise of "Angie Sirius".

*It's good that I wore my training clothes,* Lina murmured in her mind when she was shouting inside the warehouse, not checking whether someone was actually there.

If it wasn't for the girl's clothes she bought under Sylvia's guidance, she wouldn't have looked very serious at the moment.

Lina didn't have time to check if any people had escaped from the warehouse. She sat down on one knee at the edge of the entrance and cautiously looked around.

She sharpened all her senses to miss nothing, and cautiously examined the neighborhood in search of enemies, trying not to get caught by a sniper shot.

Lina's reaction to this incident seemed calm. But in reality her mind was far from being tranquil.

When she left her room, she accidentally brought along her information terminal that's for private use. It is also used by non-commissioned officers but having done so was inevitable. Due to the time being outside of normal operations and with the current situation, she couldn't possibly make contact with the base headquarters.

However, the fact that she did not notice the phone on the wall right above her head, said that she had no time to be distracted.

Asking for help from the base's management. If she could do this, the current events might evolve in a completely different way.

Lina's attention was directed to the neighborhood around the warehouse. However, she was not able to locate Arcturus from the very beginning. In addition, the enemies were probably not limited to just Regulus and Arcturus.

The fact that she was able to react to a hand grenade aimed at the back of her legs was a pure coincidence.

The hangar wall survived the explosion. For this reason, most of the shrapnel coming from the grenades and the explosive wave were directed to Lina.

Lina, surviving the explosion and its aftermath inside the Magic Shield, unfolded and found the culprit of the explosion.

“Leila! You too!?”

She's from the Unit 4, a First-Class Star. Second-Lieutenant Leila Deneb. A tall, glamorous women of Northern European decent. She glared at Lina with hatred.

"Don't call me by my name. You, traitor!"

"Who did I betray!? What are you talking about?"

"Stop trying to act stupid and just quit while you're ahead!"

Deneb swung over Lina's head with the knife that was in her right hand. Immediately after that, a woman that was about 10 centimeters taller than Lina (and the size of her chest and hips were bigger too) appeared right in front of her.

The hand with the combat knife swung down at her.

Lina reflexively activated Movement-Type Magic and moved to the opposite side of the entrance to the warehouse. Bullets were fired from a silenced pistol and hit Lina's shield and she fell to the floor.

For Deneb, the combination of a knife and a pistol was her favorite tactic. Lina remembered this, so she deployed a magic shield simultaneously with the Movement-Type Magic.

"I'm not faking it. When and how did I betray anyone!?" Lina shouted, without removing her shield.

"How shameless. Okay, then I'll tell you. Even though you were the High Commander, you were seduced by that man, and then you sold the 6th Unit out to Japan!"

"The 6th Unit? What happened to Randy and his guys?"

Looks like you haven't really thought about what you did."

That voice came from behind Lina. Lina turned around hastily.

Deneb immediately shot her in the back, but the bullet was also reflected by the anti-object barrier. This was due to the fact that her magic event interference of her shield was stronger, so Deneb's magic could not penetrate it.

But the attack of the new participant came from an unexpected direction. Lina was thrown in the air together with her shield.

Lina did not apply any Movement-Type Magic to herself. It was the result of gravity inversion magic. In a circle with a radius of 1 meter around Lina, the gravity was rotated in inverted and heavily strengthened.

Lina hit the warehouse ceiling, with a speed that is 10 times that of normal free fall acceleration.

She didn't hit the ceiling heavily. She was only slightly shaken, and the sound that came from her sounded like it wasn't a heavy impact. Lina had managed to instantly neutralize her inertia just in time. And it helped.

However, it was not perfect. Lina still received some damage from the collision and she then began to fall back down. This time enhanced acceleration worked in the opposite direction.

However, Lina applied deceleration magic and endured the pain. She returned to the floor without taking any more damage.

But falling wasn't the only thing she was doing. During the fall, bullets of compressed air were thrown at her. Although they did not possess lethal force, they were able to contain her.

"The 4th Unit too..."

Landing firmly on her feet, Lina looked at the 4th Unit Captain Charlotte Vega, who had launched her to the ceiling.

"Heh... I thought that would kill you, but as expected of a Sirius. Well, at least that magic power of yours does the name justice."

After their exchange of attacks, Lina canceled Parade. In comparison with her previous appearance, the pretty blonde, blue eyed beauty was breathing heavily. Vega was proud of herself when she saw that Lina had changed back.

"But I thought it would be pretty painful. A good combination of treachery, seducing that man, and betraying your subordinates."

"I'm telling you! I don't know anything about any betrayal! I don't know what happened to the 6th Unit. And who is 'that man' who you keep talking about?"

"Still going to keep on lying?" Deneb snarled at Lina who was trying to proclaim her innocence.

"Okay, fine. Let me tell you."

However, Vega had stopped Deneb and then turned to Lina with mocking look.

"You have a secret relationship with a Japanese spy who tried to carry out the Micro Black Hole. Three people of the 6th Unit were sacrificed in that experiment and turned into parasites, and the spy originates from Japan. That's what we're talking about. You were seduced by a Japanese Strategic Class Magician, Shiba Tatsuya!"

"Tatsuya!"

This explanation was completely unexpected to Lina, and she could not suppress her thoughts about it. However, to Vega and Deneb, it looked like she had fallen into their trap, and was nothing more than proof of her betrayal.

"Yes. Three people, Rigel, Ian and Sam, lost their minds, were turned into parasites even though they were placed under your protection. So it's your fault they were turned into parasites!"



Rigel, Captain Orlando Rigel.

Ian is Second Lieutenant, Ian Bellatrix.

Sam is Second Lieutenant, Samuel Alnilam.

Naming the three members of team Orion with a tragic voice, Vega stared at Lina with a sharp stare.

"Parasites...?"

Lina's reaction, being frozen in shock, seemed like a pure acting game to Vega.

"Death to all traitors! I'll provide you with the same fate as the people you executed as Sirius!"

Lina instantly recovered and returned to her combat stance. However, she had lost too much composure when she heard that people from the 6th Unit had been captured by parasites.

Lina rotated her face to Vega, which had appeared from the depths of the warehouse. And then she rotated back the exit.

And once again a spinning tomahawk was coming towards Lina. Arcturus' attack penetrated the warehouse from the outside.

But the magically reinforced tomahawk was cut down by "Molecular Divider".

"Commander! Are you okay!?"

A figure of a man of large physique appeared at the entrance to the warehouse.

"Ben!"

"Major Canopus..."

Lina and Vega said the name of the person that had appeared, each in their own way.

"Major, are you on the side of this traitor?"

"The High Commander didn't betray us. Captain Vega, you were deceived by the parasites." Without moving, Canopus replied to the condemnation of Vega.

"What? How could you say that about Rigel and his team?"

"I'm not talking about them! Those parasite..."

Canopus had to interrupt his speech. Because he needed to repel a sniper shot and a new tomahawk flying at him.

Canopus had to interrupt his speech. Because he needed to repel a sniper shot and a new tomahawk flying at him.

Suddenly, a screeching sound was heard in the warehouse. The experimental car, which was to be tested today, suddenly started and moved towards Lina and Vega.

Lina and Vega jumped away in different directions. The car came to a halt near the Lina and its right front door opened.

"Commander, get in!"

"Hardy!?"

In the front passenger seat she called out the name of Second Lieutenant Ralph Hardy Mirfak. Lina reflexively jumped into the vehicle.

Mirfak drove to the left using the management console. In this experimental vehicle, the management console could move the vehicle from both the left and right side so that there would be no inconvenience both in the left-handed countries, such as the USNA, and in the right-hand countries such as Britain. And the front seat was in the form of a continuous bench without gaps. There were no pedals either.

When Lina closed the door, the car moved immediately.

"Commander, we are temporarily leaving the base!"

"Huh?"

Of course, this was unexpected for Lina.

"This is the order of Commander Canopus!"

Lina's objections stopped when she heard that it was the Canopus' command, whom she trusted the most.

Besides, she didn't have time to argue now.

This car was shaped like a pickup truck. And a sound could be heard from the side of the vehicle after receiving a strong impact.

"Don't move!"

Deneb, proficient at Movement-Type Magic, jumped onto the body of the pickup truck using pseudo-teleportation.

"Don't stop!"

However, Deneb was immediately forced to jump off the car. A man that had hid himself jumped at her.

"Ralph!"

The man who kept Deneb company when she jumped on the car, was the Second Lieutenant Ralph Algol, a member of the Second Class in STARS, the same as Mirfak.

"Let's leave this place to Second Lieutenant Algol! Watch out, this can be a rough ride!"

After Mirfaka said this, Lina hurriedly buckled her belt.

The pickup then took off.

They escaped and headed to Albuquerque.

"Hardy, what's going on here?"

When the base went beyond the horizon, Lina recovered her composure and asked Mirfaka to explain the situation.

"The exact time is unknown, but at about 5 o'clock in the morning there was an uprising led by Captain Arcturus and the First Lieutenant Regulus from the 3rd Unit. Other currently established members of the uprising are: Captain Vega, First Lieutenant Spica and Second Lieutenant Deneb of the 4th Unit, Captain Bolt, Second Lieutenant Bellatrix and Second Lieutenant Alnilam of the 6th Unit, as well as Major Antares and First Lieutenant Sargas of the 11th Unit."

"Wait! Charlotte said that Randy and his crew were infected by the parasites. So that was a lie!?"

"...Unfortunately, it appears to be true. And the three people of the 6th Unit weren't the only ones effected. Presumably, the parasites also infected two of the 3rd and two of the 11th Unit."

"How did that happen?"

"We received this information from the Second Lieutenant Shaula from the 11th Unit. She noticed anomalies in Major Antares and First Lieutenant Sargas's behavior, and came to Commander Canopus for instructions."

The 11th Unit was filled with magicians good at Mental Interference Magic, but Second Lieutenant Shaula was exceptionally good at sensing Pushion waves, and in protection from Mental Interference Magic.

It was quite convincing that she was not invaded by any parasites and was the first to notice the strange activity.

"She went to Canopus because the High Commander didn't seem to be in her room." Mirfak added with an apologetically tone. He thought that Lina wouldn't be happy when she heard Shaula didn't come to her, the Commander, but to the commander of the 1st Unit, Canopus. But Lina didn't complain about it, because she just hadn't noticed.

"Immediately after I and the Second Lieutenant Algol arrived at the Office of the Commander on an urgent call, Major Antares 'Hypnos Garden' was activated. We were able to avoid any difficulties with the help of Second Lieutenant Shaula's 'Lunar Eclipse', but all other people in the residential sector were neutralized.

Major Antares used 'Hypnos Garden', which is an extraneous magic that makes people within a certain area fall asleep. The efficiency of the magic depends on a few factors, the number of people targeted and the mental activity of the target(s). The more people that are targeted, the weaker the magic becomes, in addition to their mental activity. If someone is in the middle of a battle, they wouldn't fall asleep. But for someone that is resting or already sleeping, it is a very effective way to put them to sleep or keep them from waking up.

On the other hand, Shaula's "Lunar Eclipse" is a kind of shield magic that disables what is called "Lunar Magic" in the USNA, by hiding targets from mental attacks.

She escaped the assimilation with the parasites due to the reflective properties of "Lunar Eclipse".

"...What are we going to do now?"

Lina couldn't do anything to stop her voice from trembling with anxiety. She always acted with the support of STARS. And in the present situation she could not rely on them. It was the exact opposite: she had no gear, no money, and her enemies, most likely, are the magicians of STARS.

When Mirfak wanted to answer the question of Lina, the ringtone of an incoming message was heard from his chest pocket. Mirfak switched the car controls to autopilot and took the terminal out of his chest pocket.

His fingers were moving around the screen for a long time, apparently, to decrypt a message. The cipher seemed to be quite complex.

Finally, after deciphering the message, Mirfak read it seriously. Having finished reading it, he handed over the terminal to Lina.

"High Commander, these are the instructions from Colonel Balance."

Passing the terminal to Lina, Mirfak turned the car back to manual control.

"Immediately after the Commander (Canopus) learned of the attack on the High Commander, he asked Colonel Balance what to do next."

With bated breath, Lina looked at Mirfaka's terminal screen. While reading the message of Balance, Lina's eyes rounded.

"...To Japan!?"

In the instructions Balance sent, it said that Lina should flee to Japan and get the protection of the Yotuba family there.

"... Why... This is..."

"Why should I leave the States and go to Japan?" Mirfak deciphered from Lina's muttering.

"Apparently, Colonel Balance is concerned about the conspiracy against the High Commander. I can't even listen to such nonsense as assassinating the High Commander, a Strategic Class Magician, but the Commander can be brainwashed and used for their purposes."

After hearing Mirfaka, Lina recalled the "military secret", which she witnessed on board of the super-aircraft carrier "Enterprise".

Magicians who have become fuel for a generator and are forced to use magic.

"...They'll try to use me as part of some military machine like those guys...?"

"Indeed, the loss of 'Heavy Metal Burst', this idiocy is on par with trying to destroy your own country. However, if you would only look on the side of military power, then brainwashing Lina and turning her into an easily used tool is not completely impossible..."

"But then I will be considered a deserter..."

"I think everything will be fine if you look at it like this. High Commander, check out the attached file."

After these words, Lina hurriedly moved her finger on the screen of the terminal. The attached file had already been decrypted, as is the bulk of the message. Lina opened the file.

"This order!?"

Inside was an order to infiltrate Japan for the secret inspection of the officers residing there.

"I think the Colonel did everything within her power to make this happen."

Colonel Balance was the number two in the Inspection Department that focuses on misconduct in combat of military personnel. This meant that Lina was sent to Japan to inspect the officers working in the embassies and consultants. Although there were a lot of problems in terms of the command system, it could be said that this is somehow within Balance's powers.

"Please use this terminal for now. Don't worry, it doesn't have my personal information. The password is the same as the one I used back in the 1st Unit."

As High Commander, Lina had the authority to view the documentation of any of the units. However, these powers were largely ignored within STARS. Lina never made a problem out of it. Only Canopus and Major Capella from the 5th Unit honestly reported to Lina every time they changed their password.

"The bag on the back seat contains everything that is necessary for the mission, things such as a passport, credit cards and various other equipment. Given the way we're traveling, there are no weapons. Unfortunately, I did not have time to take a spare set of clothes, so please buy them yourself at the airport. Colonel Balance prepared a ticket for you."

After listening to Mirfaka, Lina once again glanced at the terminal. On it was the data on the ticket.

"We are now heading to the airport in Albuquerque.

"I think there will be no prosecution because the Commander controls the situation on the spot. However, just in case, I used a shield that obstructs detection, so, High Commander, I beg you to refrain from using any magic."

"... I got it."

Mirfak possesses magic that prevents being detected and he is the best at using it in the entirety of STARS. Being detected will be extremely problematic especially when Team Orion from the 6th Unit is involved as they specialize in prosecution missions. Lina obediently followed Mirfaka's advice.

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Lina arrived safely in Japan on the 19th of June at around noon local time. She immediately called the phone number she had received from Balance, and under the order of Maya, she went under the protection of the Kuroba family.

At the same time, at the STARS Headquarters base, it was decided that Canopus, Algol, and Shaula would be sent to a military prison for magicians on Midway Island as the result of a summary trial.

Mirfak did not return to the base and fled towards the West coast.

## *Chapter 8*

At the same time the riots were taking place in the USNA among the STARS, the New Soviet Union was rapidly repairing the super-CAD "Argan", intended for Igor's use.

"How are we progressing?"

"Doctor!"

The Chief of the Brigade, responsible for the repairs, turned round with astonishment when he heard Igor. He was surprised because Igor, being like a celebrity, appeared in a machine room.

"The repair will be completed today. I'd like to ask you to run tests tomorrow."

The head of the repair service was very tense and spoke very politely, because Igor was an important person, like a government official or a general of an army, and Igor was corresponding to this importance.

"That's good. What time should I come?"

Igor has never applied his power to ordinary people. He wasn't going to act arrogant with ordinary engineers who did not even occupy high positions. But it was not because he had such a character, but because he was absolutely not interested in the people of the lower classes.

"We can start at any time, even early morning!"

"Understood. Then... at 9:30."

"As you wish!"

Igor left the repair shop, after having given not only the Chief a kind look, but also to all the technicians involved in the repair.

He came to the workshop not only because he was in a hurry to continue the priority operation, which requires "Argan", but also because he still remembered how humiliated he was by Tatsuya.

It was a sudden "Tuman Bomba" attack, in which he was absolutely sure of success.

But he could not kill Shiba Tatsuya, even though he used "Igrok", human amplifiers for "Tuman Bomba". In addition, the 2 "Igrok" that he used were destroyed, and "Argan" received such a great amount of damage that it could not be used again. And what was made clear, is that Igor would've been dead if he hadn't used "Igrok".

Before, Igor had never failed a mission entrusted to him as a Strategic Class Magician. In the battle against the USNA in the Bering Straight, which was quite violent, despite its small scale, he killed the previous commander of STARS, William Sirius, with "Tuman Bomba".

But he failed his current mission. Or even better to say, he suffered complete defeat.

To get rid of this feeling of humiliation, Igor wanted to resume this mission as soon as possible.

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Thursday, June 20th.

It has been raining in Tokyo since morning. In the area around Hachioji where First High is, the streets are wet with the rain still gradually continuing on.

It couldn't be avoided because it's the rainy season, but compared to the other students, Tatsuya has been on alert since morning.

Mizuki, who was sitting next to him, suspected something, because Tatsuya did not try to hide his tension, and would only answer with vague phrases.

Although it's the rainy season, this year there wouldn't be a lot of rain in Tokyo compared to other years. During the first half of the month it had been raining a lot, but during the second half it had been raining pretty much since the morning. Though not as much as it does when it rains intermittently during the dry season.

It was just a season in which there were less rainy days than usual. But Tatsuya didn't like that. On the contrary, he would be glad that it didn't rain at the places where he was. He was originally not a rain lover, but it couldn't be helped during this time of the year.

He has been feeling like this ever since he returned to Tokyo from Izu. That day, when he was attacked by the Strategic Class Magic at Izu, it was also raining.

The best weather conditions for "Tuman Bomba" are when it had mildly rained and there was no wind. And today there was almost no wind. Tatsuya suggested that Igor would try again today. Igor has not surrendered.

Tatsuya was sure of that. Among those who Tatsuya had killed 11 days ago, Igor was not one of them. But Tatsuya also believed that Igor is not necessarily involved in the usage of Tuman Bomba... .

Igor is not the only user of Tuman Bomba. The New Soviet Union could surely have created someone "to replace" Igor.

Even if we only look at the State recognised Strategic Class Magicians, the "Thirteen Apostles", "Leviathan" has two users in the USNA, "Ozone Circle" has one user in Britain and one in Germany, "Agni-Downburst" has one user in the Indo-Persian Federation and one in Thailand.

Sharing of Strategic Class Magic is not a rare occurrence. In addition, magic that has great destructive force will, on the contrary, be spread to any suitable candidates in the same country.

However, Tatsuya clung to the idea that the activation of this specific Tuman Bomba was done by Igor.

His basis for this is off the physical information he obtained when he decomposed the two magicians from Izu.

The make-up of their bodies was the same, including their genes.

There is a possibility of them being identical twins, although Tatsuya presumes that they're clones. The Information Bodies, when looked at, are unnatural and the natural distortion of the body was worse than that of those with modified bodies.

Tatsuya hypothesizes that Igor himself is the one who controls Tuman Bomba and the two female magicians were only used as tools.

Raymond Clark also knows that Tatsuya is the user of Material Burst and that the information saying so would have surely been communicated to the New Soviet Union.

The New Soviet Union has decided to eliminate Tatsuya, the user of the Strategic Class Magic Material Burst, and to completely remove the existence of his Strategic Class Magic. Tatsuya concluded that the attack on the villa was the result of this.

This morning he also told Miyuki about his reasoning.

Tatsuya ordered Pixie to connect to the school system so that she could maintain maximum vigilance in order to warn him as soon as an attack is detected.

Three minutes remained in the last class of the morning, when the cautious Tatsuya felt signs of an attack. At that time he was sitting behind his training terminal in Class 3-E.

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After a bit of time was used to set up, Igor sat in the operator's seat of the super CAD "Argan" at noon.

The time in Primorsky Krai was 1 hour ahead of the standard Japanese time, therefore it was still noon in Japan. Although it was already lunchtime, Igor was not thinking about food. All his attention was directed to carrying out the operation.

Reflecting off of his previous failures, "Argan" was improved in order to prevent "Igrok" from being damaged or decomposed, all by the use of the Inter-molecular Bonding Force Neutralization Magic. Igor believes it will work because he thinks he understands Tatsuya's Decomposition Magic.

In addition to this, the train which housed "Argan" was originally in the suburbs of Vladivostok, but it was moved a little north over the new Trans-Siberian Highway, and was now in the vicinity of Ussuriysk. It was a precaution so he would not get attacked based on their previous geographical data.

Igor brought more than twice as many of the Igrok as last time, thus having five bodies available for use this time around. He took the initiative to introduce all of the remaining Igrok into this strategy.

The following formation was used: two "Igrok" were used as an external computing device for activation, one "Igrok" as a firewall (as a decoy), and two more "Igrok" as spares.

Even when Igor went up against the USNA's STARS, he didn't have to go about things like this. What happened before, the evidence of Igor's last disgrace is something he needs to rid himself of by accomplishing this mission.

...That time, being scared of Tatsuya's attack, he jumped out of the wagon, which contained the super CAD "Argan" and ran away from it.

This memory tarnished Igor's pride. This humiliation should be washed away at all costs. If he left the problem untouched, he'd probably go insane. These were Igor's true feeling.

And the only way to forget this disgusting shame was to destroy Shiba Tatsuya. Such reckless persistence is deeply entrenched in the consciousness of Igor.

He opens up the data that arrived to him via the Intelligence Department on his console. According to this data, Shiba Tatsuya was currently at First High.

Frankly, Igor couldn't understand how Tatsuya, someone who is planning on building a nuclear fusion reactor plant, would learn anything from High School and that it's nothing but a waste of his time.

Putting his presence at First High aside, his being there is still a problem. A strong, reinforced concrete building will be difficult to destroy with just a shock wave. Moreover, it was not the usual concrete from the last century, but the highly strengthened concrete developed during the Third World War. If the shock wave would only break the glass windows, a fatal injury is not guaranteed.

However, Tuman Bomba was not an attack used on moving targets. and the building where Tatsuya was could be seen on the satellite, and his being there made it even more difficult.

...Destroying the windows with a shock wave. The fog goes inside and the explosion would then also take place inside.

Igor recalled this among his previously thought up strategies. The chair, where Igor was sitting on, was dragged into the control cabin of "Argan".

He operated the "players" and played the song of destruction and massacre as the "conductor", but instead of swinging the conductor's baton, he operated a consoles switch.

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("Master, I detected signs of magic invocation. Invocation point is 200 meters above First High.")

The warning was sent by Pixie through active telepathy.

At that time, Tatsuya had already clearly perceived the invocation of "Chain Cast" that invokes duplicate magic sequences with time differences.

He stood up and pulled out a CAD in the shape of a large handgun from his bosom.

Right now, he was still in the middle of class.

Surprised at what's happening, his classmates were astir. Without looking at them, Tatsuya looked up to the ceiling, pointing the CAD Silver Horn Custom "Trident" directly above.

There was no delay in his movement.

The moment his aim was fixed, he pulled the trigger of "Trident".

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A grating alarm could be heard from the interior of the large CAD "Argan".

A warning message was being displayed on the console, stating that the Igrok for invocation was erased in the middle of building the magic sequence in a fraction of a second.

Magicians build magic sequences. Even if the construction of the magic operation area is completed, the magic will not be activated unless it is fixed to the target coordinates. If the magician itself is killed during that moment of projecting or fixing a magic sequence, the magic will scatter before it takes place.

"Replace it with the spare 'Igrok'. Hurry."

Bezobrazzoff ordered the workers on the outside from the inside of "Argan".

This time, he couldn't afford to escape.

As Igor waited for the replacement work to be completed, the eerie shadow of death frightened him when he thought about the vanishing flesh.

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It was difficult to obstruct the invocation of "Tuman Bomba".

To be more precise, it was difficult to invalidate "Tuman Bomba" with "Gram Dispersion" due to "Chain Cast". This was what Tatsuya concluded after confronting it twice.

The magic sequences built by "Chain Cast" differ a little from each other. The difference increases the further the coordinates are separated. Even if he tried to dismantle them by grouping them together, he couldn't erase everything at once.

Even if he tried to respond with "Gram Dispersion" on rapid fire, in the middle of it "Tuman Bomba" would activate and expose him to a powerful explosion.

Therefore, there is nothing left but to interrupt the activation of magic at its source.

This was Tatsuya's strategy.

In the last battle, he had acquired the know-how to trace the origin of the invocation of "Tuman Bomba". The moment "Chain Cast" starts, he traces the path of the magic, decomposing the caster with his triple decomposition magic "Trident".

"Chain Cast" was a technique where it extensively copies and fixes magic sequences and then simultaneously activates them. Decomposing an individual with "Trident" was faster than the required steps to construct a magic sequence over a wide area. When the target is two individuals, the added time is within the margin of error.

It wasn't a gamble. Based on a clear chance for victory, it was a counter-attack by means of defense.

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"Igrok, replacement complete."

Without responding to the worker's report, Bezobrazzoff stared at the satellite image on the console. Since the previous "Tuman Bomba" ended in failure before its activation, the targeted atmospheric conditions remain unchanged. There was rainfall under the heavy clouds and barely any wind. Attacking again immediately was possible.

In the previous battle, after erasing the two "Igrok", the second wave of magic that neutralizes inter-molecular bonding power did not come.

The result of simulating that phenomenon was that it took more than five minutes to activate, even with the computing power of the "Argan". It was presumed to be that complex of a magic.

With nothing but a portable CAD in hand, there was no way to cast it in rapid-fire.

Even if that was possible, it would take more than 10 minutes. Bezobrazzoff was thinking about it in this way.

In that case, the second shot of "Tuman Bomba" would be activated first. Just in case, he modified the settings of one "Igrok" at a time so that a third shot would be possible. In order for Bezobrazzoff to take Shiba Tatsuya out, he made "Argan" insert a put together activation sequence into his own Magic Calculation Area.

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(Verifying the firing point of "Tuman Bomba".)

Tatsuya consciously reproduced the projected path of "Tuman Bomba" above First High using his "memory" of "Trident" that he used to counter-attack with as the origin.

(Changing the target to the CAD the operator is connected to.)

During magic invocation, there is a close relationship between the magician and the CAD. In terms of information, when the CAD and magician become one together, the magician becomes a part of the system called "magic". It's the same even in the case of a large CAD that imposes magic on the magician.

Tatsuya puts "Argan", in his sight.

(Tactical target, complete destruction of the cargo vehicle type CAD.)

Inside of the CAD where Tatsuya was "seeing", the process that constructs magic sequences was starting.

However, the activation sequence was only in its reading stage. It seemed to be a considerably complex activation sequence, where even if a second was skipped, the reading stage would not be completed.

By nature, Tatsuya's Decomposition magic would need the same or possibly more preparation. However, Tatsuya's Magic Calculation Area specializes in "Decomposition" and "Regrowth." Decomposition and Regrowth's subsystems are prepared in advance, so it was possible to activate extremely complicated magic by inputting additional data there.

Therefore, the complex processing of "decomposition of substances at the elemental level" and "decomposition of information bodies at the Psion level" were able to be performed in a very short time.

("Gram Dispersion", "Mist Dispersion", Activate.)

Disassemble the event interference force covering the surroundings of the large CAD and break down "Argan" at the elemental level.

Being able to invoke two kinds of magic across a distance of over 1,000 kilometers in the blink of an eye consecutively was possible because the system used for his "Decomposition" Magic was provided for in his mind, but at the expense of other magic ability.

Decomposition of information bodies magic and decomposition of substances magic were consecutively activated.

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Bezobrazoff initially thought an earthquake occurred.

The scene in front of his eyes was like seeing doubles.

However, his body was not feeling any shaking.

He could not withstand any more hallucinations.

The feeling of falling. This was not a hallucination.

Suddenly, the chair he was sitting on lost its ability to support his weight.

It was not just the chair. The console, the floor and the walls all became vague.

The floor gave way.

The ceiling fell.

The walls crumbled.

Everything turned into sand. Into dust.

Hitting the ground hard, Bezobrazoff groaned.

A pain that made him unable to get up immediately.

Damage was not just limited to the body. It was not just external pain.

His head hurt badly.

He couldn't think about anything.

He didn't notice that the headache was due to the shock of forcibly severing his connection with the CAD.

Even so, the sand that covered his head made him irritated.

He struggled to raise his upper body and brushed off all the sand on his face. The current Bezobrazzoff did not have the strength to realize that the sand was the remnants of "Argan".

Before his eyes, the landscape of Ussuriisk stretched out. Once thrown outside, he finally understood after looking at the scenery. In the middle of a violent headache, Bezobrazzoff sat down.

The hearts of the three "Igrok" stopped due to the shock of forcibly severing the connection to the CAD.

Bezobrazzoff could not hear their anguish.

## *Chapter 9*

The magic attack on First, though it was only an attempt, was recorded by the surveillance systems.

Among all the High Schools affiliated with the National Magic University, First High is the best equipped. As far as things are when magic is concerned, it meets the need of equipment used to observe the schools surroundings, which is comparable to that of the National Defense Forces main bases

Analysis by the observation machine at First High shows that magic was used to generate oxygen and hydrogen gas that would have exploded when activated, and that the attack originated from the Primorsky Krai region of the New Soviet Union based off the objective data.

The data was passed on to the government via the National Magic University.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted the New Soviet Union, and they strongly condemned the attempted act of aggression and urged the international community to put sanctions on the New Soviet Union.

Toudou Aoba had the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry speak out.

After basing the truth off the data, it was announced that the unexpected attack was caused by the New Soviet Union's "Apostle" Bezobrazzoff.

Afterwards, serious doubts were raised about the peaceful nature of Project Dione that is co-sponsored by Igor.

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"I wonder what the consequences of such actions are..."

Saturday, June 22nd.

Tatsuya unwittingly muttered this while he was having breakfast and watched the recording of yesterday's press conference of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Economy.

"Ara, has Onii-sama calculated everything to this extent?" A giggling voice could be heard from the other side of the table.

Tatsuya had a crooked smile in response to the laughing Miyuki, and he shook his head.

"You're giving me too much credit. It was an accident that I intercepted Tuman Bomba when I was at school. On the contrary, I thought that the probability of an attack on that day was extremely low."

"So even Onii-sama can make mistakes in his calculations."

"Of course."

Speaking of errors in calculations, the hospitalization of Minami was one of such errors. But Miyuki did not notice this, so Tatsuya continued to smile, hiding his regret in a far corner of his consciousness.

The news on the screen had changed to something less interesting. So Tatsuya and Miyuki continued their breakfast.

"But will this change the public opinion that much?"

But Miyuki's interest had not changed.

"In Japan, you can expect that the majority will become against Project Dione."

Tatsuya realized that such bad things could also be said about him, but he wasn't going to complain about this.

Originally, Project Dione is the product of a conspiracy. Tatsuya didn't admit that there were no feelings of guilt at crushing the plot to expel him to space by manipulating public opinion, where as he used public opinion himself.

"But Onii-sama, even if the situation changes, will you still move forwards with Project ESCAPES?"

"Of course. From the beginning, Project ESCAPES was never to oppose Project Dione. I just used it because we had to stall for time. Frankly, I wanted to have more time to prepare, but now that we've started, we can't really stop."

"Yes. I believe that you're not wrong about that."

Miyuki feels that even if Tatsuya would want to plot world domination, she would still feel the same. Although Tatsuya's true aim is for the peaceful use of magic.

"By the way, didn't Aunt advise you to visit Miyaki-shima at least once?"

"Yes I want to, but I think Aunt-sama has been too hasty with scheduling the moving of the research facility to the island and all the while, promoting Project ESCAPES."

"But I still believe Aunt is doing this to benefit the Yotsuba family."

"Maybe, I hope so... Thanks for the food."

Tatsuya put his chopsticks down.

"I'll make some coffee." Miyuki said, and stood up, even though there was still food on her plate.

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Tatsuya and Miyuki had been talking about Miyaki-shima since breakfast, due to the fact that the flow of the conversation went in that direction.

Although, Tatsuya couldn't help but remember a conversation he had about guests coming over during dinner.

"H-Hi..."

With a confused face, she raised her hand and greeted Tatsuya and Miyuki.

"Lina!?"

As the surprised Miyuki said, it was Lina, Angelina Kudou Shields.

"Tatsuya-san, Miyuki-oneesama, sorry for coming at such a late hour."

"No, it's okay, we haven't even had dinner yet..."

Even Tatsuya couldn't hide his surprise. While answering Ayako, he was also directing his attention to Lina.

"Anyway, don't just stand on the porch, come in."

"Yes, Lina and Ayako-chan, come in."

After Tatsuya, Miyuki invited the two inside.

"Yes. Shields-san, why not take them up on their offer?"

"Yes, I agree. Uhm... Sorry for the intrusion."

Ayako looked accustomed to it, but Lina had an embarrassed face when they followed Tatsuya, and passed by Miyuki who was holding the door.

"...A rebellion and your escape from America?"

"Lina, that's terrible."

The situation was explained Ayako. The story was incredible, but she had no reason to plot against Tatsuya and his entourage. So Tatsuya and Miyuki took it as a fact.

"Shields-san, that is, Major Sirius is temporarily under the protection of the Kuroba family, but the Head-sama is thinking about taking her to Miyaki-shima, as a place for shelter."

"Is the environment in Miyaki-shima good enough for Major Sirius? Can she live there?"

"I've heard that there's no problem there. However, even if it's good enough for us, it may be insufficient for Major Sirius."

"... I don't need any luxury." Lina retorted with a quiet voice.

"So we are going to take the major to Miyaki-shima for a preliminary visit."

However, Ayako simply ignored Lina's words.

"Has Aunt ordered this?"

Miyuki also paid no attention to the protesting Lina. Lina was feeling a bit invisible and as if she was being bullied, seeing this, Tatsuya smiled, but said nothing.

"Yes. She also ordered to hand over the work of escorting the major to Miyaki-shima to Tatsuya."

"To Tatsuya-sama?"

Miyuki rounded her eyes with surprise.

"Understood."

However, Tatsuya nodded in agreement.

"If Lina's escape happened to be an excuse and the real purpose is to sabotage the Yotsuba Family, then Lina must be securely restrained. Though I guess I'm qualified to be her guide since I'm also a Strategic-Class Magician." Tatsuya answered Miyuki who was looking inquisitorily at him.

"I wouldn't do that."

Lina stood up.

"I know."

This time, Tatsuya didn't ignore her.

"The Head of the Yotsuba family, Yotsuba Maya, doesn't think you're going to do that either. But it's just a policy within the Yotsuba family."

"Ah... So that's how it is."

Lina struggled with the organization of things. Though with Tatsuya's explanation, she seems to be convinced.

"Ayako, what's your schedule for today?"

"Actually, I'd like to stay for the night, but Head-sama has ordered me to bring Tatsuya-sama's answer immediately."

"I'm worried about using the phone, so could you inform our Head that I've completed her orders."

"Yes, I will."

"It's too late now. We'll go to Miyaki-shima tomorrow. Miyuki will go with us, so ask Hanabishi-san to strengthen Minami's protection."

Tatsuya asked Ayako to convey this message, because it was not about Hyougo, but his father, Butler Hanabishi.

"Okay."

Tatsuya nodded in response to Ayako and turned his gaze towards Miyuki.

"Miyuki, I'm sorry, but could you prepare a bedroom for Lina?"

"Yes."

"Hey, wait a minute..."

The schedule continued to be determined without consulting Lina about it.

"In that case, Tatsuya-san, Miyuki-oneesama, today has been a pretty busy day, so I'll excuse myself for today."

"Yes. Next time, we'll find the time to talk about things a bit more slowly."

"Okay. Fumiya will be glad."

With a blurry smile, Ayako answered Tatsuya.

Miyuki also smiled, as to not destroy the image of her status as a bride.

"Ayako-chan, thank you for bringing Lina."

Miyuki said this to Ayako in the hallway after leaving the living room with her.

"No, It's fine. Then, goodbye."

The front door closed.

"Lina, can you tell me the details about the things that happened?"

When Miyuki returned, Tatsuya pushed his unilateral claim onto Lina.

"I wanted to ask you. Is it true that the parasites have reappeared?"

When Lina saw the serious faces of the two, she was only able to nod.

(End to the Escape arc)

(Grammar and structure edited by englishmuffins10)

