

Mahouka Koukou no Rettousei

Volume 31: Future Chapter



Sato Tsutomu

Information

Series: Mahouka Koukou no Rettousei by Sato Tsutomu; illustrations by Ishida Kana.

Genres: action; fantasy; science-fiction.

It's been more than 4 months ago since this project was initiated. As it progressed, more new members joined it to help with the release. And now, our team is glad to finally present you this English fan-translation of the 31st volume of your favourite series with the cryptic subtitle «Future».

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Downloads:	□ EPUB ✨ □ PDF ✨ □ Backup ✨ □ Template

Change Log

UPDATED: 2020-09-25 (Version 2.0)

- Finalised all chapters

Comments From The Team

“I was glad to work in such an enthusiastic team, whose work made this release possible! I hope the dear Mahouka community will get pleasure from reading this fan-translation (old and new members have put many efforts in this project so the challenging techno-magic descriptions would be easier to understand 🤖).”

(Artimec_w)

“Many thanks to the team for translation, correcting and editing to finish this volume, you guys are the best. For readers, enjoy the awesomeness of the series’ climax. As the closure volume won’t be (felt) as exciting as this volume. I personally enjoyed the last (or next?) volume too though. Please support the author by buying the book if it’s available in your language.”

(rashingan)

“Hey everyone, I am new around here, but I really hope that you enjoy my work! I, along with others, spent countless hours working on it all, so I hope that everyone enjoys it. Hopefully you will all be seeing (or reading) more from me. For everyone that worked on the project, thanks for making it so awesome and fun! <3”

(Khuma2)

“I want to thank all those who put in the time and effort to work on this volume, especially Artimec & Khuma2. Artimec made sure to go over everything, and checked with other translators, until he was sure everything was correctly translated. As for my fellow editor/proofreader, Khuma2, he made sure everything was grammatically correct. He also helped me make sure everything sounded okay and flowed well or was easy to read. I’m glad to be a part of a team that was able to release a quality translation for English readers. We all spent a lot of time and energy working on this, so I hope everyone has fun reading this volume. Thanks everybody!!”

(Blakegriffin89)

“Although I was a very late addition to this team (thank you Artimec for inviting me to help in this project!), and all I could do was help make final tweaks to the translation, I must say that readers are in for a treat this volume. Thank you so much to the members who graciously accepted me at this point in time! Especially with the release of the

second season in a few weeks, I hope this translation will hype up readers for when they get to see their favorite characters come to life in Raihousha-hen!”

(toksimeks)

“Thanks to everyone in the team for doing the heavy lifting. Hope everyone enjoys the volume.”

(One Singularity)

Don’t miss the second anime season, which starts airing from October 4th!

(on the photo: Miyuki, Tatsuya, and Lina’s voice actors)



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Illustrations List

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Notes

General:

- ⇒ All text normalized from the narrator's POV (with verb tenses in the past).
- ⇒ The terms former and latter are words used to distinguish between two things. Former refers to the first of these two things, and the latter refers to the second (or last) of them.

Text formatting in the translation:

- A time of day is written in the 12-hour notation in the form hh:mm AM/PM (for example 5:30 AM), where hh (0 to 12).
- Military ranks (like General, Major, etc.) are capitalized, while positions (like the ship's captain or the Stars Six Unit captain) in the military aren't capitalized.
- Spoken lines are written in "double smart quotes" and terms & idioms in 'single quotes'.
- *Italic formatting* is used for characters on the other end of a video/phone call
- (Parentheses) are used for characters' thoughts or inner dialogue (talking to themselves in their mind).
- «Double» and <Single> angle quotes are used for past and unspoken lines
- **⟨Heavy angle quotation marks⟩** are used when characters insert English words into their lines.
- Clarifications are placed in [angular quotes].

Japanese honorifics:

- a. English equivalent for 'Haha-ue' is 'Dear Mother'.
- b. English equivalent for 'Oba-sama' is 'Auntie'.
- c. 'Dono' is a term akin to 'milord'. It is also used to indicate that the person referred to has the same (high) rank as the referrer, yet commands respect from the speaker.

[Mahouka locations on a real map.](#)

Keywords

“Synchronized Linear Fusion”

Strategic-Class Magic utilizing by Miguel Diaz, one of the ‘Thirteen Apostles’ of the Brazilian Armed Forces. Also known as Synchro-Liner¹ Nuclear Fusion. The Magic Sequence was provided to Brazil by the USNA.

Collision of hydrogen clouds over the target triggers a fusion reaction, destroying the target area with heat and shockwaves.

This is the most well-known magic among Strategic-Class Magics utilized by the ‘Thirteen Apostles’, which was used as a demonstration by Brazil. No other magician aside from Miguel Diaz can reproduce this magic and it was the only successful use of this magic. In addition, no other magic that causes a similar large-scale thermonuclear explosion has been reported.

On March 31, 2097, it was applied in the battle between the Brazilian Armed Forces and the pro-independence armed guerrillas, resulting in more than a thousand casualties. At that time, they received a torrent of criticism regarding the utilization of ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’. This incident was a catalyst, triggering the usage of Strategic-Class Magics on battlefields across the world.

“Glacial Age”

Tatsuya constructs the magical formula for an ultra-wide area effect cooling magic on par with Strategic Class Magic for Miyuki.

The spell is an extension of the Deceleration / Oscillation type wide-area magic ‘Niflheim’ and invoked using the process of ‘Chain-Casting’ utilized by ‘Tuman Bomba’ and ‘Ocean Blast’.

In the situation where it is used in an area of open sea, it reaches up to ~20 kilometers in diameter, and because it requires aiming from such a difficult long distance, it uses an exclusive specialized CAD with the potential to invoke from long distance.

¹ TLN: most likely, the author got this term from a [Magnetized Liner Inertial Fusion](#) method of producing controlled nuclear fusion, which uses a fuel filled cylindrical metal **liner**.

司波達也
しはのちや

前妻兄妹の兄。第一高校3年E組所属。幼少期の養育を「ガーディアン」として守るべき存在と認識していること以外、全てに達観している。

「分かった。
こちら準備しておこう」

「明日、行くことにするわ」

桜井水波
さくらいみづな

達也の元同僚・ガーディアン候補。幼少期の元から達也と知り、本人の名前を好きで守る中と交際のオマケとして他愛している。

司波深雪
しはのみゆき

達也の妹。第一高校3年E組所属。生徒会長を務める冷静な少女。冷嘲魔法が得意。母の死を「重慶のブツ」にする。

アンジェリーナ・グッドウィルズ
Angelina Goodwills

一昨年年に交換留学のため、第一高校へやってくる転校生。魔法少女。その正体はUSNA軍最強の魔法師アンジェリーナ。現在は巴風流に身を預けている。

「あの男の頭上にトッマン・ボンバを撃ち込む」

「後顧の憂いを断つ為にも、あの二人は生かしておけない」

「スライツにとって明確な脅威となった司波達也を斃す」

エドワード・クラーク
Edward Clark
USNA国家科学局(NSA)所属の技術者。フリスケールの管理官にして、金庫への移住計画である「ディオーネー計画」の発案者。

イーゴリ・アンドレイビッチ・ベズブラゾフ
Igor Andreivitch Bezobrazoff
新ソ連の戦略級魔法師で「トッマン・ボンバ」の使い手。エドワード・クラークと共に、司波達也に奇襲攻撃を仕掛け、一度失敗している。

Chapter 1

Local time, July 22nd, 2097 night.

Midway base (combining a prison and supply base) fell. The Pearl and Hermes base was exterminated. The news that the two bases located on Northwestern Hawaiian Islands were attacked, one after the other in quick succession, shocked the White House and the Pentagon.

Thanks to the strict information control of the White House, this news was kept secret from the public. At the same time, the White House asked the Pentagon for a detailed report on the situation.

Because of that, the Pentagon — the Department of Defense was placed in a difficult situation. As of July 23rd, the USNA military's General Headquarters still weren't able to answer the question of who the attacker was. The Midway base answered only that they were raided by a single flying soldier, who alone destroyed all of the interception cannon turrets and took three prisoners away. There was no clue as to who the 'air soldier' was, not even a photo left behind.

The Pearl and Hermes base was in even more disastrous state, as the personnel at the base were wiped out. The soldiers who survived the sortie² only witnessed an unidentified flying object, and the only thing that can be considered a clue was the record of the communication exchange by the captain of the aircraft carrier 'Shangri-La'. The voice was also subjected to advanced electronic processing because even the highest-performance computer owned by the American Army failed to restore the original voice print.

However, all of this didn't mean that there were no assumptions about the identity of the attacker.

The combat flight suit was clearly superior in its features compared to the 'Thrust Suit' developed by the USNA Armed Forces. Besides, the person had high enough skills to master it perfectly. From these two facts, the USNA military had pretty much determined that the attacker's identity was Taurus Silver — the developer of flying magic, which was an alias for Shiba Tatsuya.

² TLN: it's an incomplete sentence, but probably the author here talks about the fighters' pilots, who tried to initiate a dogfight with the Aerocar in the previous volume.

But there was no evidence. Regardless of whether there was any evidence available or not, they couldn't just expose the fact that their two bases fell to a single attacker, not to mention that he was an eighteen year old boy.

Regardless of the criticism from the White House, the Pentagon couldn't answer anything but «the details are unknown».



Thus, the Pentagon, which supervises the American military, decided to shelve the question about the raid on military bases in Northwestern Hawaii Islands. However, it was only natural that there were people in the USNA who couldn't just silently observe such a situation and do nothing.

Perhaps, Edward Clark was the most impatient among them. He also speculated that it was Tatsuya who attacked Midway base, as well as Pearl and Hermes base. Clark interpreted those attacks as a power demonstration, carrying a warning from Tatsuya regarding the conspiracy aimed at his 'neutralization' (as the user of the Strategic-Class Magic, 'Material Burst') by force.

Clark believed that Shiba Tatsuya bragged, as if saying: «I have the power to cause serious damage to the USNA without using Strategic-Class Magic». Therefore, he feared that his position in the USNA will be jeopardized if there will be more people in Congress and the government considering that demonstration as a threat.

Even without considering Project Dione, he had no excuses for his secret conspiracy with Bezobrazov, who targeted Tatsuya and carried out illegal surprise attacks on the Japanese mainland.

Even though Clark was actually against Bezobrazov's surprise attacks.

- There is only one way to survive.
- Kill Shiba Tatsuya, who has become a clear threat to the States³.
- At this point, it is kill or be killed.

This is how cornered Edward Clark had become.

But actually, he had cornered himself by his own actions.

³ TLN: the phrase from the first teaser image.



Local time July 23rd.

Clark first called William McCloud in England to discuss plans for further action. McCloud was his like-minded colleague on Project Dione from the beginning, who maintained a cooperative relationship even after their cooperation with Bezobrazov had ended.

McCloud was the most reliable partner in the so-called «plot to eliminate the Strategic-Class Magician, Shiba Tatsuya». At least that's what Clark thought. However...

(...Why? Why doesn't he answer?)

McCloud didn't answer Clark's call.

The number Clark used was allocated exclusively to him, and should connect him with McCloud's private office. If McCloud was in his office, he would know it's from Clark. Even if McCloud was out of the office, he would receive a notification about the incoming call on his mobile terminal.

However, McCloud didn't answer his calls for the whole day, nor did he call back. This only made it seem like he was being denied contact.

(Why?! What's happened?)

Clark had even thought that he was betrayed. But even if that were the case, he couldn't do anything about it. If you compare America and England by national power, America was clearly stronger. However, McCloud was one of the nationally recognized Strategic-Class Magicians of the 'Thirteen Apostles' and a key figure in the British government. Clark, on the other hand, was only a government official. Clark couldn't incite the USNA government into putting pressure on the British government.

(As it is now, I alone have to set the Pentagon in motion.)

According to Clark's loss-gain calculations, there was no need to convince the government to force Britain (their closest ally) to take hostile actions. A plot to eliminate the Strategic-Class magician who threatens America's hegemony in the Western Pacific on behalf of a rival state (that being Japan) would be enough to convince the government.

(In that case, it might be necessary to reveal the existence of Hliðskjálf... but there is no choice).

Edward Clark was one of the main developers of Echelon III — the Army SIGINT⁴ system for signal interception, wiretapping, and intelligence assessments using cryptography. And Hliðskjálf was a hacking system that used the backdoor that was left by Clark in Echelon III thanks to his position as a developer. If the existence of Hliðskjálf was revealed, Clark would likely be sentenced to life in prison for treason. There was also a strong possibility that he would be executed without trial if his brain was scanned.

But if he continues on like this, he has no future.

Clark was determined to make a deal with the government by revealing everything to them.



Local time July 24th, afternoon.

Edward Clark arrived at the Pentagon.

He was visiting the Secretary of Defense, Liam Spencer.

He was able to get an audience with a key minister from the federal government because he was well known and highly regarded within the Department of Defense as a developer of the Echelon III system. It was also a show of confidence for the initiator of Project Dione, which once cornered Shiba Tatsuya — the Strategic-Class Magician, who was the biggest problem for the American military at the moment.

After a short greeting, Clark immediately went into the main topic.

“Sir⁵. There’s no doubt that Japan’s Strategic-Class Magician, Shiba Tatsuya was responsible for the surprise attack on the two bases — Midway, as well as Pearl and Hermes.”

“The magician responsible for the Great Bomb magic... that is, ‘Material Burst’ which caused Scorching Halloween, huh? What is this conclusion based on?”

“I have no evidence, but circumstances indicate that it was that man’s work.”

Clark wasn’t frightened by the Secretary of Defense’s question. However, he forgot to breathe for a while after the next line from Spencer.

“Did you figure this out using your vaunted Hliðskjálf?”

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signals_intelligence

⁵ TLN: the author writes the same ‘Your Excellency’ title for all people in high positions, even for foreigners. In this translation was used the ‘Sir’ title for USNA’s high-ranking characters.

“...You knew about Hliðskjálf?”

Clark was barely able to squeeze out this question.

“Edward Clark. Do not underestimate others. You’re not the only information network expert working in the Department of Defense.”

“You want to say that you knew about me, but I was overlooked?”

“I don’t know what all of you were doing specifically. It was ascertained that hacking using Hliðskjálf doesn’t cause harm to the system, so it was left as is.”

There was no need to consider whether Spencer was lying or not. He said «all of you» rather than «you», which meant Secretary Spencer knew about the ‘Seven Sages’ activities.

Clark realized that he had been dancing on the government’s palm. He was overlooked because they considered that the ‘Seven Sages’ activities didn’t conflict with the USNA government’s interest. If the ‘Seven Sages’ were judged to have posed a threat to the administration at the time, all of the operators (including himself) who took hostile actions against the government would, without doubt, have been eliminated.

“So? What do you think we should do if it’s that Strategic-Class Magician who attacked the Northwestern Hawaiian islands?”

When asked about this, Clark was reminded that he wasn’t in a situation to be in shock of how conceited he was in the past. His position was in much more danger than he expected, so he had to show his usefulness.

“We should no longer hesitate to perform military action. Shiba Tatsuya is very likely staying on the island where the construction of the Stellar Furnace plant is underway. This is an opportunity.”

“Hmmm... The Japanese government wouldn’t be silent about an attack on the capital’s suburbs, but the chance of success for a surprise attack on an island over a hundred kilometers offshore is not low...”

Spencer paused for a moment.

“However... could it succeed?”

Then, he asked such a question, piercing Clark with his sharp gaze.

Clark unconsciously gulped.

“...I understand that he’s far from an easy opponent.”

“Right. The opponent is a user of the magic which blew up more than a hundred military vessels, both large and small at the same time, including a naval base. Having numbers is practically meaningless.”

“Sir. I believe that your conclusion is a bit premature.”

Spencer raised his eyebrows as if demanding an explanation with his gaze.

As if waiting for this chance, Clark leaned forward and continued:

“Surely, attacking Shiba Tatsuya with a large fleet would be meaningless. Sending in a large formation of bombers would also make them easy prey for his magic. But that magic, ‘Material Burst’, only causes a very powerful explosion at one point. He wouldn’t be able to cope with attacks from multiple directions, all at once.”

Clark spoke with a burning passion in his voice.

Unfortunately, Spencer didn’t seem to be impressed.

“Why would you say that?”

Clark couldn’t immediately answer that question, which was asked in a cold, rather than calm voice.

“It’s just an optimistic speculation that he can’t use the Strategic-Class Magic ‘Material Burst’ in rapid succession. All we know about ‘Material Burst’ is that it converts mass into energy, but this is also nothing more than mere speculation based on the observed results. I guess the mass must be converted directly into energy in order for it to generate such destructive power.”

“.....”

“In fact, neither the mechanism of this magic, nor its limits are known to us. Or am I wrong?”

Clark couldn’t argue with Spencer’s point.

“...But we can’t just turn a blind eye to the one who committed terror attacks against the States.”

The only thing that he could do was change the argument in this way.

“From this point of view, you are absolutely right.”

That tactic turned out to be correct.

“Nevertheless, I can’t authorize an operation that will sacrifice a large number of American officers and men — Mr. Clark, do you understand what I mean?”

“I understand.” — Clark nodded right away, but then added:

“Speaking of which, Sir. Should we also avoid non-human sacrifices?”

“What a strange thing to say. Mr. Clark, our military forces are made up of citizens of the States, and those who have civil rights and responsibilities as citizens of the States are all humans.”

Thus, Spencer replied in response to Clark’s question.



After finishing the meeting with the Secretary of Defense, Clark immediately flew to Brazil. After spending the night on board, in the morning of July 25th, local time, he arrived at the Presidente Juscelino Kubitschek International Airport and then went to the USNA Embassy in Brazil. From there, he, along with the guide from the embassy, took a domestic flight to the Campo Grande International Airport in the west of the country.

He arrived at the destination, **the headquarters of the Western Military Command of the Brazilian Army, at 4:00 PM local time on the same day (or at 4:00 AM on July 26th, Japanese time).**

There, Major General Filho, Chief of Staff of the Western Military Command of the Brazilian Army, and Major Miguel Diaz were waiting for Clark.

Miguel Diaz is one of the ‘Thirteen Apostles’, nationally recognized Strategic-Class Magicians, and a user of the Strategic-Class Magic, ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’. He was the one who applied his Strategic-Class Magic against the base of armed guerrillas at the end of March this (2097) year, which triggered the series of Strategic-Class and large-scale tactical magic usage on battlefields across the world.

At that time, there was still an aversion to actually utilizing Strategic-Class Magic on battlefields. That is why, after ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’ was utilized, the international community accused Brazil of massacring non-combatants. Brazil denied the accusation of committing a massacre, but they couldn’t ignore the unstoppable critique, so they’ve refrained from using ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’ in subsequent battles.

It’s not hard to imagine that Miguel Diaz was dissatisfied with this course of events. Diaz was a regular officer of the Brazilian Army. Needless to say, the utilization of Strategic-Class Magic wasn’t his decision. This was the result of following orders from a

superior officer. However, the Brazilian government, which was blamed by the international community, announced that Diaz will receive punishment.

Even though the punishment turned out to be just a two-week house arrest, Diaz still couldn't agree with it. At first, the Brazilian Government had taken a firm stand in relation to the international public opinion, but as they couldn't resist the ever increasing criticism, they punished Diaz as an excuse. For Miguel Diaz, it was as if he was forced to bear the sole responsibility for it.

Of course, the government didn't forget to follow up with him — to keep him happy — as their valuable Strategic-Class Magician. During the time of the 'home arrest' he was provided with a large sum of money as an allowance, he'd also invited his entire family to a high-class resort that was regularly visited by senior government officials. Of course, all of the costs were covered by the government. Apart from that, Diaz was provided with entertainment available only to the privileged class of politicians, which included: granting special membership in the aforementioned resort and introduction to high-end semi-legal clubs in the capital. In addition, it's been firmly promised to him that as a military officer, he'd be promoted in rank the following year.

From an objective point of view, it can be said that he was provided with the maximum amount of support. Perhaps it worked, because the worst-case scenario — Diaz' defection from Brazil — was avoided. However, the conflict between them wasn't completely resolved.

Diaz wasn't the only one that was dissatisfied. High-level officials from the government, who made concessions with lowered heads, were also hiding ill will in their hearts. In truth, what politicians actually thought about him was that «he's just a weapon».

They were unable to completely conceal their contempt, even if they tried to. Those thoughts⁶ of the officials strengthened Diaz' alienation from the government. Currently, the relationship between the Brazilian government and Diaz was considered to be at an all time low.

There, Clark found an opening that could be taken advantage of.

“Major Diaz. My country needs your power.”

In response, Diaz just silently stared at Clark.

Still, Clark saw a positive response in his silent demeanor.

⁶ TLN: the author here used the word 'honne' from the Japanese conception [honne-tatemae](#). He likely wanted to say that Diaz was not pleased with what the government officials thought of him and how they treated him in public.

“We are planning a large-scale military operation against Japan.”

“Isn’t Japan your ally?”

This question of Major General Filho was a natural reaction to such an unexpected statement by Clark.

“It’s indeed as Your Excellency says, but our target is not the Japanese government or its military. It’s the terrorist who illegally attacked our military facilities.”

“The terrorist who attacked your bases is hiding in Japan, isn’t he? Does the Japanese government know that?”

Clark showed slight hesitation while answering Major General Filho’s question.

“...They probably don’t know.”

“Probably? Or did you just not ask?”

Filho showed an exaggerated surprise.

“Then the Japanese government wasn’t informed about the dispatch of your troops, right?”

“The Japanese government will almost certainly not respond to the request of handing the terrorist over to us, because the acts of terrorism against our military facilities were committed by Shiba Tatsuya, their unofficial Strategic-Class Magician.”

“Shiba Tatsuya?! As in, the one known as Taurus Silver?”

This time, the surprise from Major General Filho wasn’t feigned.

“Is it confirmed that he committed the acts of terrorism? Besides, this is the first time that I’ve heard that he’s a Strategic-Class Magician.”

The fact of Tatsuya being a Strategic-Class Magician already became an open secret among the upper echelons of the USNA. Even in Japan, it was well known among the heads of the Ten Master Clans and their close associates.

However, this wasn’t public information. From a global perspective, most countries still didn’t know about it.

“Shiba Tatsuya is a Strategic-Class Magician who used the mass-to-energy conversion magic, ‘Material Burst’, which caused mass destruction and mass slaughter — the event globally known as ‘Scorched Halloween’. This is reliable information.”

“Scorched Halloween... So he’s the user of that magic?” — Major General Filho repeated after Clark, stunned. Meanwhile, Diaz still kept silent.

“...But I haven’t heard that your country’s bases were hit by large-scale magic. If the magic that was used in the Far East two years ago was utilized somewhere, I don’t think that you could hide it, no matter how strict the information control is in your country.”

Clark immediately showed a bitter look after that comment from Filho.

“...Shiba Tatsuya didn’t utilize ‘Material Burst’ in this terrorist attack.”

“So, what’s the basis for concluding that the attacker was Shiba Tatsuya?”

Clark looked down to avoid eye contact with Filho.

“...Based on the circumstances, there’s no doubt that he’s the perpetrator of the attack.”

“In other words, you have no evidence, right?”

Filho cornered him by asking that question.

Clark failed to answer immediately.

“Mr. Clark. Do you plan to eliminate the Strategic-Class Magician, who’s a potential threat to your country, by exploiting the excuse of ‘someone attacked your military bases’? So, your Project Dione was for that purpose from the start, wasn’t it?”

“Your Excellency Chief of Staff. Isn’t that good enough?”

It was Diaz who saved Clark, who had a hard time answering.

“For an informal operation, clear justification isn’t needed. The sense of a threat is enough to send troops. Given our diplomatic relations with Japan, a secret operation will be even more convenient for us than an official request for assistance in an invasion operation. And in the worst-case scenario, everything can be reduced to my willful decision, which will minimize the damage.”

“Major, are you all right with this?”

No wonder Filho asked this question. Diaz explicitly declared that «in the worst case scenario» he’ll take full responsibility. Filho’s question clearly showed concern for a subordinate who might fall into a desperate situation.

“My current situation isn’t much different.”

Diaz answered with careless words, which could be considered as criticizing the government.

“—You’re right.”

However, Filho didn’t blame Diaz.

Filho was also dissatisfied with the government’s approach to curb the international criticism of using Strategic-Class Magic by portraying him as the ‘bad guy’.

“Besides... well, no.”

“Besides what Major? You don’t have to be reserved just because you’re in front of a guest.”

“...A magician who cannot use magic is worthless. Like I, who can’t use ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’, am worthless.”

“Major, it’s not that you can’t use magic, it’s just that you’re not allowed to at the moment.”

“No opportunity to use it. Don’t have the ability to use it. The result is the same.”

“Even if you don’t use it, it’s still a deterrent. That’s the worth of strategic weapons.”

“Nevertheless, the government took into account international public opinion, criticizing the use of ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’ in battle. Is this not tantamount to admitting that I can no longer use my Strategic-Class Magic? The guerrillas probably think so too.”

After the Third World War, Brazil was the only state in the South American continent that retained its political system.

In other areas, armed groups, barely taking control of small lands of several hundred square kilometers, still wage an ongoing struggle for territory. If we take, for example, the Japanese Awaji Island, which has an area of about 600 square kilometers, only about 10% of the armed groups on the South American continent have control of an area larger than this island.

The opponent whom Diaz released ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’ against was a large armed group from that 10%. The Brazilian government didn’t recognize the opponent as a state, so calling them guerrillas wasn’t a mistake.

“Your Excellency Chief of Staff. I don’t want to sit around idling away. If North America creates an opportunity to use ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’, I’ll be happy to oblige. My little brother definitely feels the same way.”

Major General Filho thought about Diaz's appeal for only a short time.

"Miguel, what you say is right."

This time, Filho called him not by his rank, but by his first name. Even so, the tone remained that of a senior speaking to his subordinate. The change in name didn't indicate any sense of familiarity, it was likely due to other reasons.

"A demonstration on the effectiveness of 'Synchronized Linear Fusion' will also benefit our military. Mr. Clark."

"Yes?"

Clark didn't get confused because of such an abrupt change of the topic.

"How long will this unofficial operation of yours against Japan last?"

"It will be settled within a month at the longest."

"I see."

Filho nodded and turned his gaze again to Diaz.

"Miguel. With my authority, I give 'Major Diaz' a month's vacation. Also, during this period he isn't obligated to report on his location. Tell that to Antonio too."

"I understand, Your Excellency."

Miguel Diaz stood up and saluted Major General Filho.

The question of why they talked about «Major Diaz» and Miguel Diaz as completely different people puzzled only Clark's guide.



After stopping the Great Asian Union's invasion, the New Soviet Union's Strategic-Class Magician, Igor Andreevich Bezobrazov, remained in Khabarovsk instead of returning to Moscow.

He didn't move from his current position in the Far East because he was looking for an opportunity to eliminate Tatsuya. Bezobrazov already made two attempts (in early and late June) to kill Tatsuya by hitting him with the Strategic-Class Magic, 'Tuman Bomba', although he failed both times. Instead, he got the opposite effect. The valuable clones that assisted with 'Tuman Bomba' and the train-mounted large CAD, that can be called a mobile base to cast 'Tuman Bomba', were destroyed. Bezobrazov himself tasted full defeat, suffering serious injuries in the process. Due to his excessive pride, Bezobrazov

was extremely obsessed with taking revenge to wash away the humiliation he has suffered due to his defeats.

In Khabarovsk, which is near Japan, Bezobrazov was collecting information about Tatsuya's movements, but there were other reasons for choosing this place to stay rather than Vladivostok, which is closer to Japan. Khabarovsk has been the central city in the Far East of the New Soviet Union and its predecessor since the days of Tsarists Russia. In the first half of this century, that position was lost to Vladivostok for some time, but after World War III, Khabarovsk started playing the role of the eastern capital of the New Soviet Union.

Vladivostok may be faster for gathering information about Japan and the Great Asian Union, but speaking for the latest information gathered by the New Soviet Union all around the world, it was easier to obtain in Khabarovsk.

Bezobrazov wasn't only paying attention to Japan.

To begin with, the first one who considered Tatsuya as a threat, and offered their cooperation to remove him, was Edward Clark from the USNA. Although the USNA is internally split into two factions — those who support Shiba Tatsuya's elimination, and those who oppose it — Clark won't sit idly by. Bezobrazov was sure of that.

He stayed in Khabarovsk instead of Vladivostok to quickly learn about news from both the USNA and Japan. Therefore, considering the capabilities of the New Soviet Union military intelligence, it was only natural for Bezobrazov to obtain this information on the day of July 26th.

(Clark seems to have gone to speak to Miguel Diaz.)

Bezobrazov's first impression of this was that Edward Clark seemed to be cornered.

(He failed to move any Strategic-Class Magicians from his homeland, so he decided to borrow a Brazilian one...?)

Bezobrazov knew that Angie Sirius had fled the USNA and was now hiding somewhere.

In addition to Sirius, the USNA also has two other nationally recognized Strategic-Class Magicians, Eliot Miller and Roland Bart, who were the trump cards that defend important strategic points — the military bases in Alaska and Gibraltar, hence they can't be moved so easily.

However, it's hard to believe that the USNA had only those three Strategic-Class Magicians on hand. Almost certainly, they should have other unofficial Strategic-Class Magicians — maybe even more than a dozen.

(For some reason he cannot move them...? No, I think that he simply failed to get permission for that.)

Perhaps the faction that is against hostilities with Shiba Tatsuya now has a dominant position within the USNA.

(...Anyway, it's not a big deal.)

At this point, Bezobrazov interrupted his thinking. He didn't care about the situation with either Clark or the USNA in general.

(This is a chance.)

Bezobrazov's goal was to kill Tatsuya. It was absolutely necessary for him to achieve this in order to overcome the sense of humiliation deeply lodged in his mind — by any means necessary.

(For the USNA, attacking the territory of Japan is a big gamble. For them, failure will be unacceptable. They will use a significant amount of troops for this operation.)

(I don't know anything about Clark's military talents, but he will likely involve several experts for assistance, and it's unlikely that their attack will be repelled easily.)

(No matter how strong Shiba Tatsuya is, he won't be able to afford to focus his attention on anything else during a surprise attack on him.)

(I'll unleash 'Tuman Bomba' above that man's head when he engages the invading troops.)⁷

Bezobrazov decided to bury Clark along with Tatsuya.



Conspiracies around Tatsuya occurred even in Japan.

“...Major General Saeki, isn't that a bit forceful?”

“Why do you think so, Chief of Staff?”

Near the evening of July 26th, Major General Saeki, Commander of the Army's 101 Brigade, had an interview with the Chief of Staff while visiting the Army's General Command Headquarters.

⁷ TLN: phrase from the second teaser image.

“Although the entire territory of Miyakijima is private land, it’s still Japanese territory belonging to the Kanto region. Isn’t it natural that our troops have to be stationed there for defense?”

“Exactly, it’s private land. In the absence of an imminent threat, we can’t station the troops there without the owner’s permission. It’s not like you can’t understand this reason.”

“That island was attacked by an irregular force at the beginning of the month. I believe this situation falls under a state of emergency.”

Chief of Staff Ootomo sighed at Saeki, who wouldn’t back down.

“Back then, the owner repelled the attack with their own defense squads without waiting for the sortie of our forces, right? It will be difficult to obtain approval for stationing our forces there by using the attack earlier this month as an argument.”

Ootomo hadn’t sided with the Yotsuba family. He felt the same way and was in agreement with Saeki’s proposal. Their land was attacked by a foreign power, and that attack had been repelled by civilian forces. The fact that the Self-Defense Forces played no role there wasn’t pleasant for uniformed military personnel.

The actual problem was that it was really difficult to deploy troops on private territory except during military operations.

If those civilians were common citizens, then they could handle it politically, but it was a different story when the actual owner of Miyakijima was *that* Yotsuba family. It was not clear if they have politicians in the family or if they have an influential backer from the National Diet [Japanese Parliament], but it’s an indisputable fact that the Yotsuba family exercised a strong influence on political circles. They also cooperated with the Self-Defense Forces in conducting unofficial operations.

As the Chief of Staff, he knew that they couldn’t afford to offend the Yotsuba just because he didn’t like what’s going on.

“That’s the problem, Your Excellency Chief of Staff. In a democratic nation, there’s no way to allow the existence of a private military force that doesn’t follow civilian control. Military volunteers must be temporary only.”

However, it seems that Saeki’s judgment was different from Ootomo’s.

“Is the Major General asking for the Yotsuba to disarm?”

Ootomo asked Saeki, who seemed willing to ‘stick her neck out’, with the intention of «Is she serious?»

“This inevitably must be done in order to preserve the principles of democracy, Your Excellency Chief of Staff.” – Saeki looked at Ootomo straight in the eye with an unshakable gaze.

Chapter 2

Saturday, July 27th.

Tatsuya was ‘discharged’ from Miyakijima’s hospital.

Exactly a week ago, he was seriously injured in the collision of the ship that he was on board with a coast guard ship. And he was hospitalized to treat this injury... That was the official version of what happened.

But in fact, everything was different: this fake hospitalization was supposed to be an alibi for Tatsuya, so he couldn’t leave from there until the end of the ‘treatment’.

Despite the fact that strangers weren’t allowed at the hospital, he switched places with the ‘doll’, which was made in great detail using the same ‘materials’ that make up living bodies and was his substitute in the bed until last night. After waking up the next morning, Tatsuya demonstratively left his hospital room — everything was thoroughly played out.

“Onii-sama, congratulations on your discharge.”

In the lobby of the hospital, Miyuki was waiting for him with a bouquet of flowers. Of course, Miyuki knew that Tatsuya’s hospitalization was faked, but her full-faced smile when presenting the bouquet seemed to not be acting to sell the fake, but rather because she truly was glad that Tatsuya was discharged from the hospital... or more specifically that she finally can be together with Tatsuya without worrying about other people’s attention.

“Thank you, Miyuki.”

Tatsuya smiled and received the bouquet. His smile had the nuance «It can’t be helped...», it wasn’t a bitter smile, but an expression of his deep affection for Miyuki.

Miyuki didn’t come alone — she was accompanied by Lina, who at least today didn’t show any signs of surprise at the behavior of this couple.

“Congratulations, Tatsuya. Now you, finally, can move freely.”

“Right. Looks like I inconvenienced you.”

“It couldn’t be helped. How could I leave you when you were injured.”

Lina's lines were also part of the cover, but it didn't mean that her words were completely meaningless. Since Lina had some unfinished business in her plans, which required waiting for Tatsuya to be discharged.



On the same day, information that Tatsuya was discharged crossed the sea and reached the mainland.

Outsiders were only prohibited from entering the hospital, but visiting the island wasn't forbidden. The Stellar Furnace plant under construction on this island was intended as a model case for non-military magic application, so it was highly preferable that its success be widely announced by the media around the world. Isolation from the media was undesirable for Tatsuya.

Besides, Tatsuya put on a performance with his discharge from the hospital in order to establish his week-long alibi in the eyes of the USNA and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. Among the reporters, there were clearly spies disguised as journalists and reporters collaborating with Intelligence Agencies. If they didn't inform their employers about what they saw, then the whole performance would have been for nothing.

Bezobrazov got information about Shiba Tatsuya's discharge on the same day in Khabarovsk, while Clark received it a day later in a transport plane flying to Hawaii.



Residential buildings used by administrative staff when Miyakijima was a former prison for magicians who committed serious crimes were currently being used as living quarters by the Yotsuba family's personnel. When Lina was hiding on this island, she also lived in former administrative housing. Shibata Katsushige, recently appointed supervisor of Miyakijima, also lived on the first floor of this eight-story building with his fiancée Tsutsumi Kotona... From the Main House, a recommendation came to settle on the seventh floor, but instead of the high-end apartments, Katsushige preferred to be able to respond immediately in case of emergency situations.

On the top, eighth floor of this building, there was a lodging room for Maya's exclusive use for when she visited the island and another apartment prepared recently as secondary residence for Tatsuya and Miyuki.

"Welcome back, Tatsuya-sama, Miyuki-sama."

“I’m back.”

“I’m back, Minami-chan.”

“Welcome, Lina-sama.”

“I apologize for the intrusion, Minami.”

Minami, who was brought back three days ago, was waiting for Tatsuya and his friends at the secondary residence.

She had returned to her duties as Tatsuya and Miyuki’s maid. At first, Miyuki suggested that Minami have a thorough examination at the hospital; however, Minami strongly desired to return to her duties on the day she got back, so Miyuki ultimately gave up.

Tatsuya stayed quiet during the dispute between the two girls.

Staying true to keeping silent, neither Tatsuya nor Miyuki questioned Minami in regards to the time that she spent with Minoru.

From Minami’s behavior, it was obvious that she sometimes had the desire to speak about it, but at such moments, Miyuki always changed the subject, and Tatsuya entrusted her with some simple but time-consuming work. Thus, they tried not to touch on the subject of her ‘escape’.

Tatsuya, Miyuki, and Minami returned to their daily life, which was outwardly no different from before.

“I’ll be leaving tomorrow.” — Lina told Tatsuya during tea time after the four of them had lunch together.

“Just as planned. Okay, I understand.”

As Tatsuya said, the day before yesterday it was planned that tomorrow, July 28th, Lina will go to the nuclear submarine aircraft carrier ‘Virginia’ which was sheltering Canopus.

“When is the departure?”

“I would like to leave before dawn.”

“Understood. I’ll get things ready as well. Then let’s meet in the underground port at 4 AM, okay?”

There was a hidden harbor under Miyakijima that was open to the sea. When Tatsuya headed for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, he also departed from there.

“...Really, you don’t need to burden yourself with this. You even prepared a Thrust Suit for me, so I’ll be fine going alone.”

Lina was hesitant because of Tatsuya’s promise to ‘give her a ride’ in the Aerocar.

According to Tatsuya’s plan, they should get to the rendezvous point with Virginia by Aerocar, and from there Lina, dressed in a copy of the Thrust Suit (American military flight combat suit), would dive underwater and board the aircraft carrier.

“I also have my own reasons.”

As Tatsuya said, he wasn’t escorting her out of kindness. Even small objects, such as a Thrust Suit or Mobile Suit, could be captured by the Surveillance Networks of military satellites.

A figure boarding the ‘Virginia’ underwater wouldn’t be seen from satellite cameras. But if they were to capture how some magician took off from Miyakijima and then dove into the middle of the Western Pacific, it could disclose the cooperation of the ‘Virginia’ and Tatsuya. In order to keep it secret, he planned on using the Aerocar with the advanced stealth function.

“I don’t want to create any problems for Senator Curtis. So you don’t have to worry about it, Lina.”

“All right... Then I’ll follow your advice.”

Lina also understood the necessity of covert actions. So she nodded with approval on her face.



July 27th, afternoon.

Kuroba Mitsugu was greeted as a guest during tea time at the Main House of the Yotsuba family.

“So, Mitsugu-san, about what you wanted to report personally?”

“Of course, I could just call; however, sometimes I at least want to see your beautiful face in person and not through the screen.”

Mitsugu answered Maya’s question with a staged ashamed expression upon his face.

“If that’s so, fine.”

Unfortunately, Maya’s response was coldly short.

Mitsugu decided that luck didn’t favor him today, so he changed his attitude and became serious.

“There was a report yesterday from Second Lieutenant Kurachi of the Army.”

“Kurachi-san? That girl who is working for the Army’s Chief of Staff, isn’t she?”

“Yes, that’s right. She’s a newcomer who entered the service only last year, but the superiors seem to highly value her.”

Second Lieutenant Kurachi that they both talked about is a female officer who Kuroba planted in the Self-Defense Forces through the National Defense Academy. Such a sudden appointment to the headquarters can be called an exceptional case, but if you take into account her background — since childhood she received an elite training as an intelligence agent in the Kuroba family and even in the Yotsuba Main House — it wasn’t strange.

“So, what did she say?”

“Major General Saeki came to visit Chief of Staff Ootomo. She insisted that military forces should be stationed on Miyakijima.”

“I see... Her Excellency Saeki seems to want this island.”

At Maya’s conjecture, Mitsugu nodded with a smile.

“She probably wants to confiscate all of our facilities on Miyakijima under the pretext of stationing a defense garrison there.”

Mitsugu’s smile was rather a smirk — a mockery of Saeki.

“Using the reasoning that the existence of military forces except for the regular army isn’t allowed. It wasn’t pleasant when civilians stole all the achievements from them [the military] — which was obviously the real motive.”

“Mitsugu-san, don’t say that. ‘Not allowing the existence of regular forces that don’t follow civilian control’ is the correct stance that the military should take, at least in public.”

There was a devilish smile shown on Maya’s face after rebuking Mitsugu.

“—However, civilians also have the right to self-defense.” — Added Maya and gracefully lifted the tea cup to her mouth.

“So, what should I do?” — Inquired Mitsugu in a serious tone after removing a faint smile, to which Maya widened her eyes slightly.

“Ara, how unusual. For Mitsugu-san to show such motivation in a matter involving Tatsuya-san?”

Mitsugu slightly frowned at Maya’s reaction that indicated a real surprise rather than her usual teasing.

“The Stellar Furnace business no longer belongs only to him. It’s a major project that will bring huge profits to the Yotsuba family if it succeeds. Any interference should be eliminated, and in this business, there is no place for personal feelings.”

“That’s right. The opponent is the Self-Defense Forces. Now isn’t the time for internal discord. Good thing you understand that, Mitsugu-san.”

There was still a slight grin upon Maya’s lips, but her eyes lit up with intense light to ensure that her statement was loud and clear.

As if trying to escape from Maya’s gaze, Mitsugu bowed his head in comprehension while still sitting.

“So, what’s the progress in the aforementioned case?” — Maya asked Mitsugu, who was looking down with his eyes.

“All of the necessary evidence has been collected. It’s possible to start at any time”

Raising his head, Mitsugu answered Maya’s question with a confident expression on his face.

“Well then, let’s see when His Excellency Soga will have time next week. Hayama-san, please inquire about His Excellency’s schedule.”

The aforementioned «His Excellency Soga» was the General Commander of the Japan Self-Defense Forces, General Soga.

“Certainly. I will attend to it immediately.” — Replied Hayama, who was waiting diagonally behind Maya, after which he left the room through the back door.



The morning of July 28th, 3:30 AM.

“Good morning, Lina-sama.”

“Eeek! W-what?”

Sleeping in the bedroom of her apartment on the 7th floor, Lina screamed in surprise and nearly fell out of bed when she abruptly tried to jump up, still in a drowsy state.



Having regained her balance on the edge of the bed and rubbed her sleepy eyes, Lina saw Minami standing next to her in a white apron over a black dress with short sleeves.

“...Minami. This, it seems, is my apartment.” — Appealed Lina in a reproaching voice.

“I know.”

However, Minami kept her calm attitude.

“So, why are you in my bedroom?”

This time, there was irritation in Lina’s voice. At this point, she noticed that her hands were firmly squeezing a small alarm clock. Looking at the dial of the digital clock, Lina opened her eyes wide.

“Besides, it’s only half past three!”

“Yes. It’s the time per your instruction.”

“Instruction?”

Lina frowned doubtfully. After about three seconds of thinking to herself, she exclaimed suddenly: “Ah!”

“You told me: ‘I may not be able to get up for the alarm clock, I’m entrusting my room key to you so please come to my room at 3:30 AM, and if I’m still sleeping, please wake me up’.”

“Ah, that’s right! It was exactly like that...”

With her cheeks reddening out of embarrassment, Lina admitted Minami’s claim.

Lina really had asked Minami to do so during yesterday’s dinner with Miyuki and the others, but she did it for insurance.

Missions of the Stars often require them to sortie before dawn or in the ‘dead of night’. At those times, she never needed someone else’s help to get up. During the ‘Vampire Incident’ last winter, Lina’s assistant, Warrant Officer Sylvia, called her ‘sleepyhead’, but the only time when she really indulged in sleeping late was on days when she didn’t have a scheduled mission.

She was confident that she could get up on her own today. So, she had completely forgotten that she had asked Minami to wake her up.

“...Thanks for waking me up. I’ll be ready soon.”

“Can I help you with anything?”

“Thanks, I’ll be okay. Instead, can you convey to Tatsuya my apologies for being a little late?”

“Understood.”

After a polite bow, Minami left the bedroom.

Lina put the alarm clock on the bedside table, slapped herself on the cheeks with both hands to help wake herself, and jumped up from the bed vigorously.

4:15 AM.

Lina, wearing a Thrust Suit (which was a copy), arrived at the underground port 15 minutes later than the scheduled time. She found not only Tatsuya, but Miyuki and Minami waiting there too.

Minami was still in the same maid outfit that she was wearing when she woke Lina, and Miyuki was wearing a light summer dress.

“...Miyuki, did you come here specially to see me off?”

Lina hadn’t said any words of gratitude to Minami or even any words of apology to Tatsuya because her attention was completely focused on Miyuki. Her one-piece dress was made of chiffon material and mid-calf length, but the upper half was indescribably vibrant with a camisole décolleté and exposed shoulders, which was extremely seductive and captivating.

This morning, Miyuki created sexual attraction surpassing the level of a young lady... No, the expression ‘created’ would be even too modestly said. She filled the entire space of this underground building with her charm and allure, which was equally dangerous for young girls as it was for adult men.

“Ara, it’s not like that, Lina.”

Seeing that Miyuki showed slight surprise and gave a negative answer, Lina mentally nodded, making another assumption.

(After all, it’s surely to bid Tatsuya farewell.)

Lina didn’t even notice that her inner voice had a sulking tone.

“I didn’t come to see you off, but to accompany you.”

“Eeh!?”

The misunderstanding that she had before just amplified Lina's surprise.

"Miyuki, will you also ride in the Aerocar?"

"The Aerocar's flight system and stealth system are two functions that are independent of each other. If Miyuki takes on the stealth system, it will make the concealment more perfect and will allow me to focus on flying."

Given the emotions behind Lina's question, Tatsuya's answer was off the mark. However, if he answered correctly, it would have made things awkward for Lina because of her misinterpretation of Miyuki's intentions. So Tatsuya must have deliberately changed the subject.

"Then, let's go?"

Regardless of his intentions, he managed to make sure that there was no unnecessary trouble before setting off.

Being seen off by Minami, the Aerocar with Tatsuya, Miyuki, and Lina on board plunged into the surface water of the sea. In the sea before dawn, there was literally absolute darkness to the point where they couldn't see an inch ahead of them. Tatsuya didn't even put the lights on when he sped off backwards into that darkness.

The propulsion force of the Aerocar is achieved by using gravity-controlled magic even in the water. The direction of the earth's gravity on the vehicle body has been modified to pull in the desired direction. Since, when flying through the air, the Aerocar enters an almost free-fall state, the passengers on the inside of the Aerocar don't feel the effects of gravity, much like inside of an artificial satellite. However, when moving under water, there is water resistance that can no longer be ignored, so people in the Aerocar will inevitably feel gravity pulling them in the direction they're traveling.

So, Tatsuya drove the Aerocar backwards because he thought that it would be more comfortable for Miyuki and Lina. After all, it would be better to receive the weight, occurring toward the traveling direction, into the seat's backrest rather than the seat belts.

While doing that, the physical load would certainly be less. For example, while moving forward, they would be feeling 1 G [G-Force], like in a car that keeps decelerating. And now, moving backward, they haven't even leaned completely on the seat's backrests. This moving reverse-forward made it so that the passengers didn't have to lean against the seat belt and only felt a light weight on their backs.

After less than 10 minutes, Lina completely lost her spatial orientation. Inside the Aerocar, inertia neutralization magic was being used, while outside the windows, there was nothing but complete darkness. She didn't even know which direction they were moving.

She was in a disorientated state and didn't know whether she was sitting inside this dimly lit car or 'floating'. Were they moving forward or backward? Sitting alone in the back seat, Lina was overwhelmed by anxiety that was gradually getting stronger.

"Hey, Tatsuya. Don't you want to turn on the lights?"

As a result, Lina couldn't stand the psychological pressure and turned to Tatsuya who was sitting in the driver's seat.

"It would be better to not turn them on. They're not very useful in the sea and will only increase the risk of being discovered."

"But don't we risk bumping into an underwater mountain or a whale?"

"There aren't any underwater mountains or cliffs that we could bump into in this area at this depth. Besides, I can 'see' the entire surroundings outside even without the lights."

"—What? That's not fair."

Lina suddenly complained childishly.

From the front passenger seat, Miyuki smiled broadly and turned to Lina.

"Lina, are you scared by any chance?"

"I'm not s-scared!"

Although Miyuki asked without any teasing, Lina instantly blushed and retorted without a pause:

"—I was just a little worried without knowing the situation outside."

Lina immediately lowered the tone of her voice as she thought that her behavior was like admitting that Miyuki's words were true. She couldn't keep an ideal 'poker face', so she said the last phrase with slight embarrassment on her face.

"Is it perhaps like that feeling when you don't know where the enemy may be lurking?"

"Yes, exactly like that."

“Lina, you’re a Major in the American army after all. Personally, such a susceptibility is incomprehensible to me.” — Muttered Miyuki in a tone that was unclear whether she was serious or kidding. After which, she turned to Tatsuya.

“Onii-sama. In some way I understand Lina’s feelings. Maybe it’s time that we rise to the sky?”

“All right. It’s a little earlier than planned, but I’m going to begin the ascent to the surface.” — Tatsuya agreed nonchalantly.

“You said ‘a little earlier than planned’ but... will it be okay to surface without moving a sufficient distance away from Miyakijima?”

The only one that was worried about Miyuki’s request was Lina.

“We are almost near the Japanese Trench. It’s more than enough to conceal our departure point.”

“Near the Japanese Trench? ...But it’s only been about thirty minutes!?” — Lina raised her voice in surprise after Tatsuya told her their current position. — “How fast does this vehicle go?”

“Max speed is four hundred kilometers per hour.”

“Four hundred kilometers per hour... That’s more than two hundred knots in the water!?”

Lina’s shout roared inside the airtight Aerocar.

Miyuki frowned, while Tatsuya remained calm and didn’t even raise an eyebrow.

“There is nothing special to be so exaggeratedly surprised about. Even supercavitating torpedoes of the last century reached speeds of two hundred knots. To reduce air resistance in flight, this Aerocar creates an air cocoon around itself in the same way as the Mobile Suit of the JSDF or your Thrust Suit. Underwater, this airy cocoon has the same effect as supercavitation.”

“...Is that so?”

“There’s no point in denying reality .”

Although she didn’t seem to be completely convinced, Lina didn’t ask any more questions or refute him.

The Aerocar emerged on the ocean surface with the body's front bumper lifting up. This happened because even while moving under water in reverse, the Aerocar turned around while maintaining the direction of movement. As a result, the Aerocar was now moving forward, after it began to increase its angle of inclination. But neither Lina nor Miyuki felt any change when all this happened. They noticed this slope of more than 45 degrees only when they broke the surface of the ocean.

Here, in the ocean 200 kilometers east of Miyakijima, the sun had just risen on the horizon. Only after seeing the water's surface that sparkled in the morning sun, did the girls realize the car's position.

The car sharply flew into the sky, in which there was still a little night color... When viewed from the outside, it just looked like a sharp rise at an angle of 60 degrees, but Miyuki and Lina, who were looking from the inside, experienced a genuine feeling of falling down.

"Miyuki, please take over the stealth control."

"Y-yes."

Amazed by the scenery, Miyuki hastened to respond to Tatsuya's instructions. Tatsuya instructed Miyuki to control the magic of camouflaging the electromagnetic waves. It was a kind of magical screen that emitted infrared light waves (with a wavelength corresponding to the outside air temperature)⁸ and monochromatic visible light, while not reflecting any other electromagnetic waves. Freed from maintaining that camouflage magic, Tatsuya could completely concentrate on the flying magic.

The Aerocar accelerated to 1000 km/h in the blink of an eye.

⁸ Electromagnetic radiation is one of mechanism of heat transfer, the author here means that stealth magic emits only infrared light waves identical to the ambient infrared radiation (leaving aside the fact that radiant flux or radiant energy emitted from the vehicle can be higher than the ambient one, which will be visible in IR scanners).

The rendezvous point with the nuclear submarine aircraft carrier ‘Virginia’ was 1,000 kilometers east of Japan and 200 meters deep. The ‘Virginia’ had been waiting at the indicated point since last night.

However, it was impossible to determine by ordinary means whether they were really waiting at the promised place.

The series of actions of the ‘Virginia’, including the help with the attack on the Midway Prison as well as the Pearl and Hermes base, weren’t based on formal orders. The only ones who knew their current location were limited to a handful of people from the Pacific Fleet Command. In such a situation, it was impossible to communicate either by radio or even by light signals, which could be intercepted.

However, this was only for ‘normal’ [communication] means. Tatsuya’s ‘eyes’ had already discovered the position of the nuclear submarine aircraft carrier while it was still 100 kilometers away from him.

“Lina, we’ve arrived.” — Tatsuya said while turning to Lina after he stopped the Aerocar right over the ‘Virginia’, 10 meters above the surface. — “You know how to get in, right?”

Submarines usually don’t expect crews to get on and off when they’re submerged. However, submarines equipped with nuclear reactors, which were officially banned, had entrances that could be used underwater to increase their stealth capabilities.

“It’s okay. I haven’t been on the ‘Virginia’, but I’ve been on another vessel of the same type.”

Tatsuya nodded after Lina’s reply and opened the back seat door.

“Tatsuya, thanks for everything. I’ll make contact when everything is sorted out.”

After waving her hand slightly, Lina dove into the ocean 10 meters below them.



The passive sonar of the nuclear submarine aircraft carrier ‘Virginia’ caught the sound of Lina plunging into the ocean.

“With an accuracy of almost a minute. It seems that the Japanese really are quite punctual.”

After receiving reports from the sonar operator, the ship’s captain, Colonel Michael Curtis muttered in an unclear tone, which made it difficult to determine whether he was impressed or astonished.

“Personnel in charge, prepare for embarkation of an honorable guest on board. We haven’t used an underwater hatch for a long time, so don’t screw up with something like flooding a section.”

During the replies: “Aye, aye sir”, that followed one after another, a middle-aged officer in his prime entered the Combat Information Center (CIC). That officer walked straight to the captain’s chair.

“Captain.”

“Major Canopus. It seems that a girl who identified herself as Major Sirius will arrive soon. She just needs to dive straight down, so she shouldn’t get lost.” — The ship’s captain Curtis told Canopus, anticipating his question.

The very reason that Canopus appeared was none other than Lina.

“I see.”

Canopus confirmed this with his reply.

“In that case, I would also like to go meet her.”

After which, he voiced out what business brought him to the CIC.

“Very well. Permission granted.”

If Lina and Canopus join forces and go on a rampage, they can easily sink even this giant nuclear submarine aircraft carrier. Canopus can also become a hostage to Lina, or vice versa.

Considering the ship’s safety, they shouldn’t be allowed to meet each other so easily, but Curtis wasn’t even thinking of that possibility and permitted Canopus’ request with ease.

Canopus — Benjamin Loews was a grandson of Michael Curtis’ aunt. For high society, such a blood relationship wasn’t considered all that distant. In addition, this work was commissioned by senator Wyatt Curtis — a rather influential person from their family. In such circumstances, there was no reason to doubt Canopus.

“Thank you, captain.”

Canopus saluted to Curtis, who saluted back without leaving his chair.



After they dropped Lina off, Tatsuya and Miyuki had been left alone in a confined space inside the Aerocar on the way home.

Despite the fact that it was like a date in the sky where no one could disturb them, Miyuki looked gloomy.

“What’s the matter, Miyuki?”

Miyuki seemed to want to talk about something, but it was difficult for her to start the conversation. Guessing this, Tatsuya spoke first.

“Is there anything you want to ask? It’s just you and me here. You don’t have to worry about others listening.”

After Tatsuya inquired once more, Miyuki hesitantly opened her mouth. Even in a situation where there was no worry of being overheard by a third-party, Miyuki was hesitant whether she should talk about the anxiety that she kept to herself.

“May I ask about Minami-chan?”

“Yes.”

Tatsuya responded in a tone as if he had expected Minami to be the topic of conversation.

“Onii-sama, you aren’t using ‘Gatekeeper’ on Minami... are you?”

‘Gatekeeper’ is a technique for neutralizing magical abilities by monitoring the ‘gate’ (the passage through which Magic Sequences are projected from the magician’s mind onto targeted phenomena) and destroying Magic Sequences immediately after detecting their passage through that gate.

“No, I’m not. It’s meaningless to use Gatekeeper for Minami’s condition.”

As mentioned above, ‘Gatekeeper’ is a magic that destroys the constructed Magic Sequences during the process of their invocation. It doesn’t limit activity of the Magic Calculation Area (MCA), which constructs Magic Sequences. There is no effective way to prevent overheating of the MCA, which threatens Minami’s mind and body.

“Why’d you ask that?”

“Because...”

Miyuki’s eyes showed a flash of indecision.

“Is it because you can’t feel any magic power from Minami?”

Tatsuya said the answer in place of Miyuki, who was hesitant to say it.

Miyuki turned to Tatsuya and opened her eyes wide.

“So it’s not merely my imagination?”

“It’s not an imagination. Minami’s ability to use magic is completely sealed. Her perception seems to be functioning to some extent, but... that’s also probably very limited.”

“Even her perception... Did Minoru-kun do something?” — Asked Miyuki with anxiety showing on her face.

There was no need to ask what she was afraid of.

“Currently, I found no traces of a Parasite in her.”

Tatsuya showed a bitter expression because he felt himself incapable of completely removing Miyuki’s anxiety.

“Neither have I. But regarding the Parasites...”

“...Minoru, who is a Parasite himself, but at the same time still preserves his ego, has far more knowledge and know-how about Parasites than we do. I don’t think that he could put a Parasite inside Minami without her consent... or rather, I don’t want to think about it. However, I can’t completely exclude the possibility of using some Parasite-related technique unknown to us, which made Minami’s MCA inactive.

“Onii-sama, you couldn’t understand this even with your ‘sight’?”

“Unfortunately, my ‘Elemental Sight’ can’t reach the areas of the mind .”

“Right... I’m sorry.”

Miyuki was well aware that Tatsuya’s ‘Elemental Sight’ couldn’t recognize the structure of Pushion Information Bodies. But magic uses Psionic Informational Bodies as a ‘medium’ when interfering with the mind. Tatsuya can see them, so he can recognize, analyze, and decompose even Mental Interference magic.

Miyuki, therefore, thought that Tatsuya should’ve been able to see Minoru’s magic.

“No, I totally understand your feelings. I’m also concerned about Minami’s state.”

“What should I do then...”

Miyuki hung her head with a grim face. From an outside perspective, it clearly looked like she fell into deep thought, trying to figure something out. Of course, at the same time, she didn't forget to maintain the effect of stealth magic to the Aerocar perfectly.

After about five minutes in that state, Miyuki suddenly muttered: "Right..."

"Maybe Yakumo-sensei can find out what Minoru-kun has done?"

"Really... I'll ask him."

The Yotsuba family also has specialists in Mental Interference magic. More precisely, due to their origin, the Yotsuba family has the largest (in terms of quantity and quality) number of users of Mental Interference magic among all the Ten Master Clans.

The fact that, for example, the Tsukuba family wasn't mentioned here didn't mean that these two trusted Yakumo more than the Yotsuba family. This fact, rather, was evidence that they still didn't completely trust the Yotsuba family.



After diving into the water, Lina began to move vertically down to the bottom and soon reached the 'Virginia' without getting lost on her way down... She was able to avoid making any stupid mistakes when it came to military affairs.

Clutching the tip of the wire antenna sticking out of the upper side of the hull, Lina established a connection through the ship's internal wire communication.

"'Virginia', this is Major Angie Sirius of the Special Operations Magician Task Force — Stars. I request permission to come aboard the ship."

Contrary to Lina's expectations, the reply came right away.

"This is Colonel Michael Curtis, captain of the 'Virginia' of the Pacific Fleet. Permission for boarding granted. Please enter with your real appearance."

It's already unexpected that the captain replied himself, but what was even more surprising was his instruction to cancel the camouflage magic at the entrance.

"Angie Sirius can't be in a place like this. You need not worry, the crew was informed that an agent of the Yotsuba family will arrive, who will impersonate the Stars' head-captain."

But she understood the reason after hearing that explanation.

"Understood."

Lina cut the connection by releasing the antenna and moved to the stern of the ship.

She got inside through an underwater entrance, which was a stern torpedo tube modified to allow underwater access.

“Ben! You’re safe...!”

Having passed through two successive hatches playing the role of an airlock, Lina saw Canopus among the welcoming group and shouted out to him, while forgetting to even take off her helmet and salute the crew of the ship.

“I see that you’re safe as well, Lina.”

The reason why Canopus didn’t call her «head-captain» was because he complied with the «scenario», stated earlier by captain Curtis. It looked quite natural, not only because he had certain acting skills — adults usually play different roles depending on the situation — but also because he was already used to treating Lina as a teenage girl rather than head-captain.

He had a daughter two years younger than Lina. This is why he looked out for Lina, who was suffering due to her duties as ‘Sirius’ to undertake assassination missions.

Lina even had some sort of emotional reliance on Canopus. For this reason, she was especially concerned about the situation he’d gotten into.

The crew of this ship watching the emotional (?)⁹ reunion didn’t know such details, but their gazes were friendly.

Noticing the warm gazes around her, Lina straightened her posture, raised the helmet plate, and saluted. After the crew saluted back, she took off her helmet.

The long hair, hidden under the helmet before, flowed down, and a sigh of admiration leaked out from among the crew. Even though Lina was a so-called blonde, her hair, shining like pure gold, was rare. Her face, framed by this sparkling blonde hair, was also of a rare beauty. Nobody whistled aloud — probably only due to their exceptional discipline.

Lina — not as Angie Sirius, but as Angelina Shields — was already accustomed to such a reaction from the crew. She simply paid no attention to that and turned to Canopus with a request: “I would like to greet the captain”.

“Lina, follow me.”

⁹ TLN: it’s the author’s style to insert question marks before or after some words from time to time.

After responding in a not very polite tone, Canopus led Lina into the CIC.

After meeting with the captain, Lina was now facing Canopus in quite a splendid room, which didn't seem like it was inside the submarine. It was a personal room of the ship's captain, Curtis, that he had lent to Canopus.

In the captain's cabin, there wasn't only a table and bed, but also a sofa set. Following the recommendations of Canopus, Lina sat on the right edge of the three-seated sofa.

"Ben, tell me what happened after I escaped."

Canopus didn't even have time to sit in front of her before she asked him.

"I was sent to Midway right after the head-captain escaped, so I can't tell you much." — Said Canopus as a preamble, after which he outlined the details of his dispatchment to Midway Prison.

"...Major Capella didn't give in to the influence of the Parasites, did he?"

Major Noah Capella, captain of the Stars Fifth Unit. He was the oldest among the Stellar-class Stars magicians and had the longest military career. Even Colonel Walker, the Stars base commander, can't ignore Capella's words, whose influence, regardless of his authority, was even greater than Lina's and Canopus'. So Lina sighed with relief after hearing the information that Capella didn't join forces with the Parasites.

"Major Capella is neutral. That is, he's not an ally to us either."

"It's enough to not have him as an enemy. What's the position of other Units' captains?"

The Stars are divided into twelve units under head-captain Sirius. Although none of the 12 captains have authoritarian control over their unit, the captain's stance influences the unit's actions beyond what is required of a formal command authority.

"I think Hardy can tell you that."

The «Hardy» that Canopus mentioned was Second-Lieutenant Ralph Hardy Mirfak of the First Unit, where Canopus serves as the captain. During the Parasites' rebellion at the Stars Headquarters, Second-Lieutenant Mirfak helped Lina escape and escorted her [by car] to Albuquerque Airport, after which he disappeared without any news.

"Captain Arcturus of the Third Unit, Captain Rigel of the Sixth Unit, and Major Antares of the Eleventh Unit were turned into Parasites. Probably, Captain Vega of the Fourth Unit also became a Parasite."

“I met Char... Captain Vega in Japan. She, along with Second Lieutenant Deneb and First-Lieutenant Regulus, were killed by a magician of the Yotsuba family. The True Bodies of the Parasites, which possessed them, were sealed.”

“Was that so? A Yotsuba magician...”

Canopus paused and fell into thought.

Seeing his somber face, Lina thought that Canopus had probably become concerned with the Yotsuba’s fighting strength.

Canopus didn’t remain silent for long.

“...At the time that I was sent to Midway Prison, there were already four captains who were definitely on the Parasites’ side. Although this is only my guess, the current state of affairs has unlikely to have changed. I don’t think there are any new Stellar-class members of other units including the captains, who have turned into Parasites. However, we can’t deny the possibility that the Parasites are multiplying among the Satellite-class or the Stardust.”

“That’s right. Setting aside the Satellite-class members, if Stardust members become Parasites, it may prolong their life... If they are turned into Parasites because of that desire, I can’t blame them.” — Muttered Lina sadly with lowered eyes, then pulled herself together and turned her eyes back to Canopus. — “...In any case, it seems that the only Stellar-class Parasites remaining at the Headquarters are the Sixth Unit.”

Canopus with a look asked Lina to explain her words.

“I’ve heard from the Yotsuba family’s... no, now there’s no reason to hide it. From what I heard from Tatsuya, it can be assumed that Captain Arcturus, Major Antares, and First-Lieutenant Sargas have already been killed by him.”

At the beginning of the month, Tatsuya fought Arcturus on a plane and then again with his astral body in the sky over Mount Takao. To be more precise, Arcturus wasn’t killed, but sealed.

Major Antares and First-Lieutenant Sargas most recently fought with Tatsuya on the deck of the destroyer ‘Chevalier’ (when Tatsuya was halfway to Pearl and Hermes base) and were destroyed by his ‘Astral Dispersion’.

“About ‘Tatsuya’ that you mentioned, is it Shiba Tatsuya, the Strategic-Class Magician with the mass-to-energy conversion magic?”

“Right.”

“The guy who also broke me out of Midway Prison, right?”

During the prison break at Midway Prison, Tatsuya neither introduced himself to Canopus nor showed his face. But Canopus perfectly remembered intel on Tatsuya, who had become the Stars’ target in the winter last year, and was aware of the identity of the magician who had broken him out of the prison.

“Yes.” — Nodded Lina, who didn’t give much thought about why Tatsuya was hiding his identity back then. Perhaps, the possibility that Tatsuya had been hiding his face didn’t even cross her mind.

Lina quickly changed the subject, completely unaware that she did a rather careless act.

“I don’t have any news about First Lieutenant Spica, but it seems that we don’t need to worry about her.”

...More precisely, she returned to the previous subject.

“First Lieutenant Spica was on the same vessel that Captain Vega attacked Miyakijima with.”

“Miyakijima is the base of the Yotsuba family where you were sheltered, isn’t it?”

“Yes.” — Lina nodded in response to Canopus’s question. — “First Lieutenant Spica has a very strong sense of duty. She won’t return to headquarters until she gets revenge for Captain Vega and Second-Lieutenant Deneb.”

“Indeed. She really was like that.”

Canopus agreed with Lina’s assumption.

“...Are you going to return to headquarters?”

After which, he made a conclusion about what Lina planned to do next, based on her words.

“That’s my plan. I don’t want to be on the run forever. Ben, you also don’t want to be branded as an escaped prisoner, right?”

“—That’s right.”

Canopus’ eyes lit up with a belligerent light. Lina had no intention of provoking him, but as a result, her words seemingly ignited a fire in his heart.

“Moreover, I can’t allow the Parasites to dispose of the Stars as they like. Fortunately, Tatsuya has already ‘taken care of’ the most powerful Parasites. I think this is our chance to get rid of their influence. Ben, please lend me your power.”

“Of course, head-captain.”

Canopus gave his consent to Lina’s request straight away.



Tatsuya’s Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP) was called ‘Elemental Sight’, but it wasn’t like seeing images with remote viewing or clairvoyance. ‘Elemental sight’ is the ability to recognize any physical information (including visual) and magical information, structured in the form of Psion Information Bodies. This didn’t allow Tatsuya to read thoughts, but he was able to understand the meaning of words spoken aloud, as if he himself had heard them.

At the same time, the physical distance is irrelevant. The obstacle for magic isn’t the physical distance, but the informational distance. If you can grasp the information about the target’s location as real perception (as if you really feel it)... and if you can perceive it like a «real feeling that the target is out there» rather than an abstract set of numbers, you will be able to use magic [on the target] without any problems.

‘Elemental Sight’ provides the user with all the physical and magical information with reliability and accuracy, which exceeds all five senses. That information also includes the location of the desired target. Reading the location information you perceive the existence of the target — this can look like circular definition, but actually these two recognition processes don’t occur simultaneously.

Tatsuya receives location information based on a [search] hint in the form of observed and recorded individual information about the target (the information, distinguishing the targeted person from the others). After which, he directs his ‘sight’ at the obtained coordinates, and after discovering the individual information there, he confirms for himself the fact that the target is ‘there’. However, his ‘Elemental Sight’ wasn’t so omnipotent that it allowed him to determine the location of any being, by knowing only their name. Besides, if the location information is disguised at the Eidos level (as is done, for example, with ‘Parade’), it won’t be possible to determine the location due to the inability to obtain the correct coordinates for where he should direct his ‘sight’.

In this case, Tatsuya’s target was a person he knew very well, not to mention that the time when he’ll make contact was decided beforehand, so Tatsuya easily placed her in his ‘field of vision’ without encountering any magical obstacles.

July 28th, 4:00 PM. Japanese time.

“Lina, can you hear me?”

Tatsuya spoke into the empty space in his room on Miyakijima.

(Loud and clear, Tatsuya.)

Lina’s words, spoken aboard the nuclear submarine aircraft carrier ‘Virginia’ somewhere under the waters of the Pacific, were converted directly into meaning and flowed into Tatsuya’s consciousness.

At the other end, Lina was receiving Tatsuya’s voice, reproduced by his magic. Tatsuya conveyed his voice to Lina by vibrating the air near Lina’s ear using Oscillation-Type Magic. He actually was uttering his words out loud like a monologue because reproducing sounds that actually created air vibrations was much easier than synthesizing a voice from scratch with magic. On his end, Tatsuya was reading Lina’s responses with ‘Elemental Sight’.

That’s how they were able to communicate being on Miyakijima and inside the nuclear submarine aircraft carrier ‘Virginia’, which maintained communication silence.

“Did you manage to talk with Major Canopus already?”

(Yes, Tatsuya. The captain also treats me really well... It’s all thanks to you, Tatsuya. Thank you very much.)

“Captain Curtis’ kind response to you isn’t because of me. So, what are you planning on doing next?”

(About that...)

Lina hesitated to answer. Tatsuya’s ESP ability conveyed to him even such small nuances in the form of information.

“Have you decided to return to your homeland?”

(Y-yes. After all, first I want to return. I don’t want to trouble you both while the situation is presently so unstable.)

“You are not troubling us, but if you think it would be better this way, then that’s fine.”

(Thanks, Tatsuya. I will contact you when I get my affairs in order. Could you also relay this to Miyuki?)

“Okay, I’ll tell her. Well, take care of yourself, Lina.”

Sending that message, Tatsuya cut off contact.



“Yes, you also take... uh, cut off already!?”

The conversation with Tatsuya was unilateral and used his magic ability. There was no easy-to-understand indicator of the presence of communication, like when using communication devices.

But somehow, Lina felt that the gaze directed at her had gone away. With this, she concluded that Tatsuya had cancelled the magic connecting her place with Miyakijima.

“...I hope you weren’t secretly peeping on me, were you?”

Lina deliberately uttered it aloud as a test.

There was no protesting voice from Tatsuya in return.

“...Tatsuya — sis-con.”

Even after that cautiously uttered comment, she got no response.

(There’s no doubt then.)

After being convinced that the contact was really cut off, Lina released her built up tension. She didn’t know in detail the nature of Tatsuya’s ‘Elemental Sight’, but she understood that it was an extremely advanced form of remote perception which included vision and hearing.

At least for now, her voice shouldn’t have been transmitted. It was awfully tiring to be aware of being under such one-sided observation. Perhaps it was true not only for Lina, but also for everyone. At her age, this was especially true if the observer was of the opposite sex.

Lina realized it was possible that Tatsuya could simply not be responding and she’s always being watched. However, she tried not to think about it. If you don’t think about someone’s eyes being on you, it won’t cause mental exhaustion because of the tension. Sometimes Lina had to tell herself: “Don’t worry. Despite how he looks, Tatsuya is a gentleman.”

She got up from her chair and flopped down on the bed. It was still too early for sleeping, but it was an individual cabin, arranged by captain Curtis for Senior Officers. So even if she allowed herself to be a bit sloppy, there was no one to see or reproach her.

Lina took off her shoes without using her hands while still lying down. That is, she simply kicked her shoes off on the floor. In the building where Miyuki lives on the top

floor, Lina for some reason couldn't afford such sloppy behavior even knowing that no one was watching her there.

Relaxing completely, Lina started thinking about what to do next.

(First of all, I have to clear Ben of all the false accusations that he was charged with.)

Canopus told Lina that before he was sent to Midway, he agreed that if he obediently served one year in prison, the record of imprisonment would be deleted from his personal file.

But Canopus has already broken out of jail. And Lina can't just believe Walker who 'wags his tail' at the Parasites. Lina doubted that Canopus would be acquitted as promised even if he had humbly served his appointed year.

(Senator Curtis should give us a helping hand, however...)

Canopus' prison break was entrusted to Tatsuya by Senator Wyatt Curtis, who was a great-uncle (grandmother's younger brother) of the former. The Senator wouldn't just leave Canopus without any follow up help after helping to break him free.

Restoring Canopus' reputation also suits Wyatt Curtis' purpose. Defeating the Joint Chiefs of Staff will help him to demonstrate his political strength. The only question was whether Senator Curtis would side with Lina regarding her plans for the near future. The senator probably won't approve of Lina's wishes.

(...All in due time.)

(Whether threatening or placating — I won't accept it.)

(Even if it's selfish, even if it's high-handed or reckless, I'll go all the way.)

(Because I decided to return home.)

When Lina reached out her hand to the ceiling as if she's trying to grab something, she saw in her mind Miyuki's and Tatsuya's faces.



Immediately after cutting off contact with Lina, Tatsuya called for Miyuki, who was actually sitting next to him all this time, and they stood in front of the wall display, which served as the receiver of the videophone.

They called the Yotsuba Main House. Hayama, who appeared on the screen, was soon replaced by Maya at the request of Tatsuya.

“Tatsuya-san, good afternoon.”

The time was still around 4 PM, so her words «good afternoon» really were more appropriate than «good evening».

But Tatsuya didn't need to worry about anything like that.

“Excuse me, Oba-ue. May I trouble you at this hour?”

“Everything is fine. After all, it was scheduled in advance. You are calling about Lina-san, aren't you? Has she safely reunited with Major Canopus?”

“Yes, that's what she said.”

Of course, sending Lina to the ‘Virginia’ was agreed upon in advance with Maya. According to a prearranged schedule, after the conversation with Lina, he had planned to report to Maya about the results of their conversation, which Lina had also agreed to.

“And what is Lina-san planning to do next?”

“She said that she will return to her homeland to sort out her personal problems.”

“I see.”

Maya didn't look surprised after hearing Tatsuya's report.

It was the same with Miyuki. During Tatsuya's conversation with Lina, she heard only Tatsuya, but his words were enough to understand the general essence of their conversation. She didn't appear upset after learning that Lina would return to her homeland.

The two of them (or rather, the three of them if you include Tatsuya), might have expected from the very beginning that Lina would decide to return.

“By the way, Tatsuya-san, do you need a replacement for Lina-san?”

Maya's question was about whether it was necessary to dispatch someone to escort Miyuki. She was aware that Minami can no longer serve as a Guardian. Until yesterday, Lina had played the role of an ‘escort of the same sex’, replacing Minami.

“No, there's no need.”

Tatsuya answered immediately. It was difficult to understand why he immediately refused additional protection for Miyuki. Was it in respect to Minami's feelings? Did he

think that an immediate call for a substitute would be insensitive toward Lina? Or was it for some other reason?

Maya narrowed her eyes on the other side of the screen, as though to ascertain Tatsuya's true motive.

"...I understand. Call me anytime if you feel it becomes necessary."

"Sorry for the trouble."

"Is there anything else you want to talk about?"

"No, nothing."

"I see. Tatsuya-san, you have done well today."

Upon receiving Maya's gratitude, Tatsuya bowed his head.

When he looked up, the display had already turned dark.



Oahu, Hawaii, local time July 28th at 9:00 AM. July 29th at 4:00 AM Japanese time.

Edward Clark arrived in Honolulu on a direct flight from Brazil, after which he immediately went to the Pearl Harbor Naval Base.

Clark was very anxious and impatient. The reason for this was the news of Shiba Tatsuya's discharge from the hospital, received during the flight to Honolulu.

But he wasn't shocked because Tatsuya's injuries were healed. From the very beginning, Clark was convinced that Tatsuya's hospitalization was a cover.

The hospital discharge meant that there was no longer any need for a cover. In other words, he might already be ready for the counterattack... Which was what caused Clark's anxiety and impatience.

Logically, that anxiety of Clark had no basis. Project Dione, initiated by him, had already completely lost its influence. The whole world was now more interested in the Stellar Furnace plant, which was expected to bring more substantial benefits.

Even if they started the development of Venus according to Project Dione, it's no longer possible to force Tatsuya to participate, since Project Dione can still be implemented without Tatsuya, but the Stellar Furnace plant can't be completed without him.

Looking at the current circumstances objectively, Clark was no longer a threat to Tatsuya... That, of course, was if he didn't do anything else.

He was impatient because he couldn't just accept defeat. Precisely because he was facing checkmate, he was in a hurry to make a gamble and reverse his defeat, turning it into victory.

And the only way for such a reversal was preparing here in Pearl Harbor. Clark wanted to check everything with his own eyes as soon as possible. Fortunately for him, tired from the long flight, the base was right next to the airport. But even the lack of time for rest didn't burden him.

It might be because of a call from the Pentagon, but Clark was able to enter the base right away. What's more, he was invited to the bridge of one of the most advanced ships.

"Welcome, doctor."

The female officer, who got up from the commander's chair, called out to Clark.

"I'm the captain of this amphibious assault ship 'Guam', Colonel Annie Marquis."

Receiving a salute from the captain Marquis, Clark returned a polite bow.

"Nice to meet you, captain Marquis. I'm Edward Clark from the National Science Agency. Thank you for accepting me at this time."

Clark wanted to approach her for a handshake, but stopped before taking a step forward. Even in this era, female captains were rare. Honestly speaking, Clark was bewildered, not knowing how to interact with Marquis.

However, Marquis was already accustomed to this type of altitude displayed by Clark. Not showing that it somehow bothered her, she offered Clark a seat opposite of her, while she sat back down in the captain's chair.

"Sorry to get to the point, doctor. I've been ordered directly by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to fulfill your request to the fullest extent. I was also told that the purpose of our dispatch will be given to me directly from you." — Declared Marquis, directing a sharp gaze at Clark. — "It is rather unusual for the Joint Chiefs of Staff to give direct orders to one captain, bypassing the Fleet Forces Command. Doctor, why do you need this ship?"

"To eliminate the great threat." — Clark gave a brief response to Marquis' question.

Of course, this wasn't enough to convince the captain.

“Please, give me a more concrete answer. First of all, what is our destination point?”

Marquis seemed to be a pretty patient person. She inquired without raising her voice.

“...The destination is about a hundred eighty kilometers south-southeast of Tokyo. It’s an island with the local name ‘Miyaki-jima’.”

Clark hesitated for a little, but he answered honestly in the end. He feared that captain Marquis would boycott the mission when she heard that it would be an attack on the territory of an allied country, but quickly realized that he would have to inform her anyway, so it’s not a problem to tell her now about the destination during their departure.

“Then, the so-called ‘threat’ mentioned by the doctor is Shiba Tatsuya, isn’t it?”

It didn’t take much time for Marquis to come to the correct conclusion because she knew from media reports that Clark was overly fixated on Tatsuya. Although it was officially presented as a search for talented people for the development of Venus, people who had a military view of things saw through Clark’s intention to put Tatsuya under the control of the American military.

When Clark’s hidden aim was guessed so quickly, his face stiffened for a moment. However, his confusion lasted less than a second.

“Shiba Tatsuya is a user of the mass-to-energy conversion magic, which caused massive destruction at the southern tip of the Korean Peninsula at the end of October the year before last.”

Captain Marquis widened her eyes. Now it was her turn to be openly surprised because she didn’t have any information about ‘Material Burst’.

“Mass-to-energy conversion magic... like in ‘Scorched Halloween’? Is it reliable information?”

“It is. Moreover, the Japanese government is unable to control Shiba Tatsuya. Even his very existence causes political instability. He’s far too dangerous. We were already too late by the time he turned into an actual threat. Therefore, he should be eliminated right away.”

Turning into a flame of hot black passion, Clark’s obsession swept over Marquis.

“...I more or less understand your thought process here, doctor.”

As if overwhelmed by that pressure, captain Marquis agreed with him.

“But in that case, would it not be better to use a missile destroyer with a large attack radius or an artillery ship capable of covering a large ground area with heavy fire instead of a landing ship such as this?”

The «artillery ship» referred to by the captain was a warship with Fleming launchers as the main weapon, which appeared during the last Great War (World War III). The Fleming launcher is a type of large-size railgun weapon mounted on-board ships, prioritizing the ability of continuous fire over projectiles speed. Such launchers allow continuous fire with large bombs at a firing speed like rapid-fire guns. This weapon was mainly used for heavy fire at stationary ground targets.

As the captain said, if the objective is destroying an object or eliminating someone rather than capturing a base, then missile ships and artillery ships are more suitable than amphibious assault ships, intended for landing operations... But only if the enemy was ordinary.

“There’s a high probability that the bombardment won’t kill him. We need to be guaranteed of his elimination.”

“Such a difficult opponent...?” — Muttered captain Marquis with an anxious expression on her face.

“We have prepared landing personnel. Captain, I’d like you to complete preparations for the ship’s departure sometime soon.”

“Of course. I’ll start with the preparations immediately. Tomorrow at noon we’ll be ready for departure.”

There were no further questions or objections from Marquis.

Chapter 3

July 29th, Monday.

In Hawaii, preparations were in full swing for an attack on Miyakijima in the Izu archipelago. Meanwhile, in the New Soviet Union, a certain force was progressing beneath the surface to seize this opportunity to strike Japan and the USNA simultaneously.

However, as the crisis has not surfaced yet, Tatsuya hadn't yet noticed that the USNA and New Soviet Union were playing with fire.

On this day, for the first time after a long time since the morning, he was resting in his room at their secondary residence¹⁰.

Tatsuya knew that this peace that he currently has won't last long.

Minami was taken back, but Minoru's location was still unknown.

Project Dione was neutralized, but Edward Clark — the mastermind behind it — remained alive and well.

Bezobrazov, who received serious damage from the counterattack, would also not remain silent for much longer.

Knowing that the time for settling all these matters was approaching, Tatsuya decided that it was all the more reason to get some rest.

However, if other people saw Tatsuya right now, they would say: "But why aren't you resting?" On the desk he's facing right now, there's a large display with a Workstation Console for editing magic Activation Sequences. Background music was playing in the room, and his fingers continuously tapped the keyboard. In preparation for the upcoming decisive battle, Tatsuya was developing new magic.

More precisely, he didn't start the development from scratch, but resumed it. The basis of the new magic was the 'Chain Casting' that was used in Bezobrazov's 'Tuman Bomba'. Parallel with the development of the Strategic-Class Magic 'Ocean Blast', which was given to Ichijou Masaki through Kichijouji Shinkurou, he was also working on the creation of the Activation Sequence for another large-scale magic. Tatsuya suspended the development to rescue Minami abducted by Minoru, and now he was working on it again.

¹⁰ TLN: the main **residence** of the Shiba is on the 7th floor of the Yotsuba Tokyo HQ.

It would look like work to other people, but for Tatsuya, it was just an efficient use of his spare time. That's why he could easily suspend the current project if there were more pressing matters at hand.

"Onii-sama, would you mind if I have some of your time?"

For example, if there was a request from Miyuki, like this...

"Of course."

He gave it priority without hesitation.

"I'm sorry, then would you mind coming to my room?"

"All right. I'm going now."

He answered Miyuki through the intercom, then saved his work and got up from his chair.

There was a bedroom with two twin beds between Miyuki's and Tatsuya's rooms. He could go through that bedroom, but Tatsuya went out into the hallway and knocked on the door of Miyuki's room instead.

"Please come in."

Simultaneously with Miyuki's response, the door opened.

While it was Miyuki who replied, it was Minami, wearing an apron on top of her short-sleeved shirt and short pants, who opened the door.

Miyuki greeted Tatsuya, standing almost in the room's center with her cheeks reddened out of embarrassment... She stood in front of a big mirror which reflected her whole body, wearing only a snow-white bikini, which could easily be confused with ordinary underwear.

"....."

Tatsuya quickly entered the room, slipping past Minami who had taken a step back, and closed the door behind himself. There were only three people in this secondary residence with a 4LDK¹¹ layout and floor area of 140 square meters, nevertheless he felt that it was better to close the door immediately.

¹¹ blog.gaijinpot.com/what-do-japanese-apartment-layout-terms-mean/

“Um... my bras have ceased to fit me in size... So along with the purchase of new underwear, I would like to buy a new swimsuit.”

Seeing Tatsuya’s doubting face, Miyuki hastened to explain herself, which only sounded like an excuse.

“...I see.”

Tatsuya didn’t show any embarrassment, but responded only with that.

“So, uhm, would you help me choose?”

“—All right.”

There was no change in the complexion of Tatsuya’s face. However, subtle facial movements showed that he’s not entirely unaffected by embarrassment.

Minami walked over to Tatsuya and handed him the AR glasses. And at that moment, Tatsuya finally understood why Miyuki was dressed like that.

In front of Miyuki was a tall mirror larger than her height. But it wasn’t a simple mirror. It was an AR display with a mirror function. In this ‘mirror’ goods are projected over the mirror image of the client, turning it into a virtual fitting room.

The AR glasses that were handed over to Tatsuya showed the tried on goods at a different angle relative to this display in the form of a full-figure mirror. The AR-display displayed a mirror image, and the AR-glasses were arranged so that the clothes were projected onto the figure, in the real field of vision of the person using these glasses.

The white bikini was ideally suited for this, as it didn’t distort the color and shape of the overlaid images. This made it possible to evaluate only the appearance of things, not the comfort of wearing them. However, in this way, it was possible to try on as many clothes as you like, even if you don’t have access to the real product. It was the cutting-edge tool developed for online clothing stores.

“Umm... Minami-chan, can we start?”

“Certainly.”

In response to Miyuki’s request, said with a slightly embarrassed voice, Minami operated the eight-inch touch panel.

The transformation occurred immediately. The reflected image of Miyuki in the mirror was wearing a one-piece high-leg swimsuit¹².

¹² Swimsuit having a V-shape bottom with a high waistline at the hips.

Miyuki's identical appearance was reflected in Tatsuya's field of vision through the AR glasses. It was a pretty adult-looking swimsuit with a tropical floral pattern on a white background. This in no way meant that she was too young to wear something like that. Quite the opposite, this wasn't sufficient enough for Miyuki, whose allure and elegance increased day by day.

Miyuki turned slowly on the spot.

"...How do I look?"

Miyuki made one full turn while looking at the AR-display. Then, she turned her face to Tatsuya and asked this.

"It's..."

Tatsuya was about to voice his thoughts that came to mind, but something else suddenly caught his attention.

"No, wait a minute."

"Yes...?"

As Tatsuya suddenly spoke in a serious tone, Miyuki seemed perplexed.

"Minami."

"Yes?"

Minami, who didn't expect to be called so suddenly, showed an expression on her face similar to Miyuki.

However, Tatsuya's next question increased Minami's bewilderment even more.

"The catalog uses online data, doesn't it?"

"Yes, that's right..."

The AR-data, used for fitting, could also be downloaded. However, there are few who do so. This is because ordinary homes usually don't have the computing resources needed to render a perfect AR image in real time — that is, in such a way that it doesn't differ from trying on real clothing. No need to even mention the amount of data.

Each person trying on clothes has their own individual body contour. Besides, during the fitting, no one stands motionless. Everyone takes various poses to see how they will look in these clothes. And if we take, for example, one hundred people, each of these hundred will move in their own way. Without a [Neural Network on the server side for]

pattern recognition, it's not easy to calculate such small differences each time from scratch, even with the processing power of modern computers.

Therefore, almost all users of this system use the image rendered in real time on the server and showing on the display online. Miyuki also used this online mode without hesitation.

“For starters, disconnect from the server. Download the catalog and switch to offline mode.”

Minami's reason for being puzzled by Tatsuya's order was mentioned earlier.

“...Won't the download take a considerable time?”

“This service is designed for a common consumer, isn't it? With the speed of this building's dedicated line, downloading won't take much time.”

This building was one of the command centers of the Yotsuba family, and had an information infrastructure comparable to that of military facilities. If the average home network is capable of viewing the image generated on the server without delay, it should also be capable of downloading the necessary data in a short time, even though the volume of this data will increase by four orders of magnitude.

“Understood.”

Minami bowed to Tatsuya as a sign that she understood. Then she immediately started downloading the catalog of data.

“Onii-sama, please accept my apologies.”

Meanwhile, Miyuki, who returned to her white bikini, walked beside Tatsuya and bowed.

“In my situation, it was reckless to allow the online transfer of my body's data that can be used for biometric authentication.”

Miyuki apologized because she interpreted Tatsuya's «order to stop» as a security measure, intended to protect the next head of the Yotsuba family.

However, Tatsuya made a slightly surprised face upon hearing her words.

“No, It's not only that...”

It indicated the main intention behind that order was something different.

“?”

Miyuki looked at Tatsuya with a questioning gaze.

“Although AR image rendering is processed automatically, there is no guarantee that the data stored on the server will not be viewed by someone from the operating company.”

“...Indeed. Even though the Terms of Service clearly indicates that the user’s personal data will not be visible to other people’s eyes, the possibility of data misappropriation cannot be ignored. Onii-sama, are you worried that someone may misuse it?”

“That too. But above all, it’s unpleasant for me that you could be put on display for complete strangers from who knows where.”

Tatsuya’s tone lacked confidence, even though he was talking about himself.

Miyuki was confused as to how to interpret his words.

At this moment, Minami invited herself into the conversation, announcing in a business-like tone:

“Tatsuya-sama, Miyuki-sama. Data download and offline settings are complete.”

Then, she unexpectedly added:

“It might be rude for me to say this, but I’m surprised. I didn’t know that Tatsuya-sama also has the desire for sole possession.”

Tatsuya widened his eyes upon hearing this statement from Minami.

Then an expression surfaced on his face, as if saying that «he realized».

“I see... So this is the desire for sole possession? This is the desire for sole possession...”

Standing beside him, Miyuki put her head down, blushing to the very tips of her ears.

She clasped her hands together in front of her chest, and a blissfully happy smile appeared on her face.



Chapter 4

Oahu, Hawaii, noon on July 29th, local time. July 30th at 7:00 AM Japan time.

Edward Clark, Brazilian Strategic-Class Magician Miguel Diaz, his brother Antonio Diaz, as well as several Parasites set sail for Japan on the amphibious assault ship 'Guam', accompanied by two destroyers.

The Japanese military's intelligence department learned about the departure of the 'Guam'. However, they had no information regarding Clark or any 'additional' crew members.

They also didn't know that the target of the attack was Japan. At that point, the Japanese military thought that the goal of the 'Guam' was just an ordinary military training exercise.



In contrast to the Japanese military, the New Soviet Union intelligence department 'got wind of' Edward Clark and Miguel Diaz being aboard the amphibious assault ship 'Guam'. The intelligence found out only this; however, Bezobrazov, who was staying in Khabarovsk, correctly speculated based on that information that the 'Guam's' mission was the elimination of Shiba Tatsuya.

Bezobrazov's authority in the New Soviet Union wasn't damaged despite suffering the painful defeat from Tatsuya. So even his words, supported by nothing except speculations, had enough power to set the army in motion.

The Command of the Eastern Military District in Khabarovsk¹³, following Bezobrazov's advice, sent the state-of-the-art missile submarine 'Kutuzov' from the Kamchatka Peninsula and began preparing for the launch of supersonic missiles stationed at the Birobidzhan base. Both of their targets were Miyakijima in Japan.

Thus, concerning the surprise attack on Miyakijima, Bezobrazov had outdone Edward Clark and the Japanese military. However, even with Bezobrazov's intellect, it wasn't possible to guess about the events unfolding in Mainland America, which will shake the foundations of the strategy against Japan.

¹³ TLN: the author wrote «Eastern Siberian Military District» in this sentence, but Khabarovsk is located in the Far-Eastern district while in the SU the command of Eastern Siberian district was in Irkutsk. In this translation is used «Eastern Military District» – the current military division in the Russian Federation.



The headquarters of the Stars — the Magician Corps under the direct command of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the USNA Armed Forces — located in a suburb of Roswell, New Mexico... Which is not the former Walker Air Force Base, famous for the ‘Roswell Incident’.

New Mexico local time: July 29th at 5:00 PM; Japan time: July 30th at 7:00 AM.

A small VTOL arrived at the Stars headquarters.

That aircraft clearly belonged to the USNA Armed Forces, but the base’s personnel weren’t informed of this visit beforehand and fell into confusion at its sudden landing.

Marshalers¹⁴ and maintenance personnel, who had to work at an unscheduled hour, were fussing around the small aircraft with discontent and anxiety, which landed without informing the base of the purpose for its visit.

Under those gazes, an officer in his prime descended from the aircraft.

Which caused a stir among the staff.

The stir changed to agitation when a figure of a young woman appeared next from the cabin.

Both of those people were well known to the base’s personnel.

The first tall man to come down was Major Benjamin Canopus, captain of the Stars First Unit.

The second red-haired, masked woman was Major Angie Sirius, head-captain of the Stars.

The staff were exchanging whispers, something like «Is that really them?»

However their chaotic uproar suddenly died down after the appearance of the third person.

The older gentleman was such a famous and high-profile politician that even the younger personnel, having little interest in politics, had heard his name. Among those affiliated with the military, there was no one who didn’t know his face, even if they weren’t officers. It was Senator Wyatt Curtis who was also rumored to be the ‘shadow director’ of the CIA.

¹⁴ **Marshaler:** a person who directs the movement of an aircraft between the runway and its parking stand at an airport.

Canopus and Lina (disguised as Angie Sirius) were able to meet commander Walker immediately after arriving at the base because Wyatt Curtis strongly insisted on it.

Right now, Lina and Walker were facing each other across the desk in the commander's office.

Behind Walker was standing his adjutant, while Canopus and Curtis were waiting behind Lina. Walker offered Curtis to arrange a formal reception in a private room, but the latter declined and was now the only person in the room sitting on a chair that was provided with a cushioned backrest.

"Major Sirius, has Colonel Balance ceased to support you?"

Walker asked Lina, who silently saluted with shining golden eyes, after saluting her back.

When she fled to Japan, Lina escaped suspicions of desertion on the pretext that she was helping with an operation from Balance. Walker's question was a kind of sarcasm toward that support.

"I got the permission of Colonel Balance for this return to the States."

Lina countered his sarcastic remark by answering in a business-like tone. Her words suggested that not only was Colonel Balance on her side, but also Senator Curtis.

"So, what's your business? This obviously won't be a mere report upon returning to base, right?"

Walker urged Lina to get to the main issue, while looking at Curtis behind her. He spoke in a domineering tone, as if trying to use his rank as a shield. However, Lina answered his question instantly, without flinching or hesitating.

"Colonel Walker, you were in a position to suppress the rebellion as base commander, but instead you conspired with the rebels and punished Major Canopus under false accusations, didn't you? There are also suspicions about your assistance in the unlawful attack on an allied country, committed by Captain Vega, Captain Arcturus, and others."

"This is absurd." — Uttered Walker and stared at Lina this time with an intimidating rather than an authoritative look. — "The actions of Captain Vega and the others were due to strong suspicions that you, Major Sirius, secretly cooperated with that Japanese magician. Do you perhaps classify her and Captain Arcturus as rebels to hide your collusion?"

“Then, let’s have the Internal Inspection Office judge which statement is legitimate.”

“No, that’s...”

Walker visibly flinched at Lina’s counterargument. The Internal Inspection Office was formed after the last war ended, which was tasked with preventing illicit activities within the USNA Armed Forces. Colonel Balance is second in command there.

Though rebellions and collusions are in the military tribunals jurisdiction, the prosecution of such cases is carried out by the Internal Inspection Office by organizing an investigation committee, which directs the process. In the current case, Lina followed the correct legal procedures of the USNA Armed Forces when she requested for arbitration of the Internal Inspection Office. However in this situation where Balance would clearly be on Lina’s side, it was reasonable that Walker would avoid the involvement of the Internal Inspection Office into the case, even if he had nothing to hide.

“How about hearing the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before entering the legal process?”

The person offering a lifeline to the cornered Walker, who couldn’t find the right words, was Senator Curtis.

“I share Mr. Senator’s opinion. Let’s contact them tomorrow morning.”

Walker took Curtis’ suggestion with unconcealed relief on his face... Or rather, he tried to.

“We don’t have to wait until tomorrow.”

The situation wasn’t going the way Walker wanted.

“But sir. It’s almost seven in the evening at the Pentagon.”

“Colonel, your concern is needless. I’ve already checked with the secretary and the necessary people from the Joint Chiefs of Staff have remained at their workplaces.”

Dismissing Walker’s words urging him to change his decision, Curtis instructed Canopus to establish a communication line with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Canopus immediately executed that instruction. Pushing Walker’s adjutant aside (Canopus had a higher rank), he opened a direct line through the video phone.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the vice chairman, and the USNA Army chief of staff appeared on the large monitor.

Walker went speechless at the sight of such unexpected people.

Taking advantage of his hesitation, Lina seized the initiative.

“I’m sorry for taking your time, Mr. Chairman. I’m Major Angie Sirius.”

“Major Sirius, Col. Balance already told me the summary of the story, but I’d like to hear an explanation once more directly from you.”

“Yes sir!”

Hearing the chairman’s request, Lina was going to begin her statement, when suddenly...

“Please wait, Mr. Chairman.”

She was interrupted by Walker, who came back to his senses.

“Colonel Walker, we’ll hear your claim later. Let Major Sirius talk first.”

However Walker was forced to retreat after the Army chief of staff reproached him.

“Major Sirius.”

Prompted by the chairman again, Lina made a statement about Walker’s guilt related to the rebellion by personnel, infected with Parasites.

He should’ve suppressed the rebellion as the base commander, but instead he conspired with the Parasites for his own convenience.

Then he charged Canopus with false accusations, who resisted the Parasites, and imprisoned him along with Second-Lieutenants Algol & Shaula at Midway.

Using the Stars as his private army, he illegally dispatched the soldiers infested by Parasites to Japan and the Northwest Hawaiian Islands.

Lina especially emphasized the part where Canopus was imprisoned under false accusations and argued that his honor should be restored.

After hearing Lina’s accusations with a grave face, the Army chief of staff turned to Walker and asked briefly:

“Any rebuttal?”

Of course, Walker insisted on his innocence. However...

“The Joint Chiefs of Staff have no record of any approval of dispatching Captain Arcturus, Captain Vega, Lieutenant Regulus, Lt. Spica, and Lt. Deneb. How do you explain this?”

“A military tribunal for sentencing Major Canopus was assembled by a simplified procedure... Was his [court] case so urgent?”

During this cross-examination, the vice chairman raised his question first, then the chairman was next. Walker failed to give a convincing answer to either one of them.

Those weren't the only pressing questions poured on him. Upon Senator Curtis' request, Colonel Balance had already provided the Joint Chiefs of Staff with enough materials to convict Colonel Walker as a criminal.

“Colonel Walker. I'm afraid your assertions aren't convincing enough to refute Major Sirius' accusations.”

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff took a deep breath and started to announce the judgment.

“Colonel. From this point, you're relieved from your duty as the Stars base commander. You will report to the Internal Inspection Office tomorrow at noon.”

“—Yes Sir.”

Walker must still have had pride and dignity inside him because he responded with that with his back straight.

Upon seeing his manly behavior, the three top-brass members nodded with satisfaction. Then, on the monitor screen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed his gaze to Canopus, who was standing behind Lina.

“Major Canopus. With the authority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff we cancel the imprisonment sentence imposed on you. In that regard, I proclaim that from this moment forward, the Major's honor is restored.”

“I am grateful to you.”

The chairman nodded toward Canopus and turned his eyes to Lina.

“Major Sirius. Until an official successor is decided, I'd like to entrust you the post of the base commander in addition to the head-captain.”

“With all due respect, Sir Chairman, I still lack the experience necessary to be the base commander.”

“So you declare your lack of experience? That’s brave.”

Judging by the chairman’s voice, he found it funny. Following him, the vice chairman asked Lina:

“Major Sirius. Then, who do you think is appropriate to be the acting base commander?”

“In my humble opinion, I shouldn’t interfere with personnel affairs not concerning the Stars.”

According to the military organization, the base commander didn’t belong to the Stars. Lina’s answer meant exactly this.

“You are right, Major, but this issue needs urgent temporary measures. No need to think about it so much. Feel free to express your opinion.”

“Yes, sir. Then with your permission, I dare say. Taking into account the professional officer’s training and experience of Major Canopus, I believe that he is the most suitable candidate for the post of the base commander.”

For Canopus himself, Lina’s recommendation of his candidacy was unexpected. However for the top-brass of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, her opinion seemed quite reasonable rather than outlandish. Paying no attention to the astonished Canopus, the trio of chairpersons from high command whispered to each other before making their decision.

“We decided to adopt Major Sirius’ opinion.”

Probably, the decision was largely influenced not by Lina’s recommendation, but by the presence of Senator Curtis, who’d been silently sitting on a cushioned chair.

“Major Canopus is appointed as the acting base commander.”

As evidence of that, the chairman’s eyes when nominating Canopus were directed at Senator Curtis who sat next to the standing Canopus.

“Major Canopus. A formal Notice of Appointment will come later, but with the appointment to the acting base commander post, you are relieved of your duty as the Stars First Unit captain. At the same time, your rank will be promoted to one appropriate for the acting base commander.”

Canopus tried to raise his dissent upon hearing that he was relieved as First Unit captain. However, the Army chief of staff was quicker and spoke right after the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“Up until now, your rank was limited so that it wouldn’t be above the rank of head-captain Sirius — Major. However, with proper evaluation of your achievements and abilities, we should have promoted you to Colonel long ago. Now is a good opportunity to correct those previous mistakes. Keep in mind that the ‘acting’ part in the title of your post will be removed soon.”

“...Yes sir. I’m grateful, Mr. Chairman. It’s a great honor for me to accept this appointment.”

Canopus stood at attention.

The chairman, the vice chairman, and the chief of staff nodded approvingly, at which point the communication line was cut off.

While Lina and Curtis congratulated Canopus for his appointment as the acting base commander and with the preliminary decision on the promotion to Colonel, Walker left the commander’s office with his adjutant. Neither Lina nor Canopus stopped them.

“Ben. Please take the commander’s seat.”

Instead of stopping Walker, Lina urged Canopus to sit at the commander’s desk. Wyatt Curtis hurried him with the words:

“It’s a problem if the commander’s seat is vacant.”

In response to the pressure, Canopus sat down in the seat, formerly occupied by Walker.

Angie Sirius nodded satisfactorily and removed her mask.

The red-hair changed to blonde and the golden eyes became crystal blue.

Her height shrank down and her figure became more elegant. Angie Sirius disappeared and Angelina Kudou Shields regained her true form.

“Ben. I’m very sorry that your very first duty at your new post will be like this.”

A somewhat lonely, melancholic smile surfaced on Lina’s face.

Such a singular look in her eyes gave Canopus a bad feeling.

“Head-captain...?”



“Sir acting base commander. Please accept this.”

Lina took out a letter from her pocket and handed it to Canopus. It had the inscription: «Notice of Resignation».

“Head-captain, what is this!?”

Only Canopus had a moment of panic. Curtis, it seemed, was told about it beforehand.

“This rebellion was organized entirely by the Parasites, but it’s also true that my presence was a trigger. I’m not fit to be the head-captain of the Stars.”

“So you want to take responsibility and resign!?”

“That’s just an excuse.”

“...What?”

Seeing Canopus’ stunned face, Lina leaked a small giggle.

“I was twelve years old when I became a regular member of the Stars. Two years prior, I was scouted by the army and entered the training center.”

Canopus, on the other hand, didn’t feel like giggling.

“It’s been about eight years since my admission to the training center, and I’ve spent that time knowing nothing but the military world.”

As Lina was telling it calmly, Canopus’ face became more and more stiff.

“Except for those three months last winter.”

Canopus understood without additional explanation that the «three months» were the days spent in Japan during her previous visit there.

“Ben, I got tired of hunting deserters and felony magicians long ago. But exactly at that time, I was able to realize that I don’t really want to deal with the punishment of criminals anymore.”

“Lina...”

Canopus asked her by her name and not with «head-captain».

“And when I went to Japan again, I could no longer lie to myself. That’s why I’m going to make those two people take responsibility after giving me ‘excessive wisdom’.”

“.....”

“I’m fully aware that this is irresponsible, but could you overlook this whim of a young girl?”

“...What are you going to do after resigning from the military?”

While asking this, Canopus was convinced that Lina was going back to Japan.

The loss of a Strategic-Class Magician to another country.

For a person involved in military affairs, that was totally unacceptable.

But Canopus had no intention to blame or stop her.

“I want to enjoy what little remains of my high school life in Japan.”

Against Canopus’ question, Lina answered with a carefree sincere smile.

“—Good. That’s good. Lina, I wish with all my heart that the everyday life waiting for you is joyful and happy.”

With his heartfelt blessing, Canopus received Angie Sirius’ «Notice of Resignation».

...This way, Edward Clark’s operation of invading Miyakijima had lost its backers in the form of the Stars & Stardust, as well as the source of fresh fighting power — the Parasites.

Chapter 5

July 30th night.

At the moment, neither the Japanese government nor the Self-Defense Forces were aware of the purpose of the amphibious assault ship ‘Guam’ that departed from Hawaii. If they knew of the imminent threat impending, maybe they wouldn’t lose time on internal strife.

To be precise, there still existed the authority struggle inside the Self-Defense Forces, but they tried to avoid any serious ‘secret feud’ and the violent means involved. In reality, however, the procedure of setting up garrison on Miyakijima was continuing without the consent of the private company who owned that island.

This activity, led by Major General Saeki, had even been put into question within the Self-Defense Forces. Her [Saeki’s] arguments were that the military can use private land without taking legal measures coercively and with only administrative procedures. But those arguments had been questioned in the feasibility of deploying ground forces on a small 8 square kilometers island and in the army officers’ antipathy for the island’s defense squads. They also feared it could cause a confrontation with the Yotsuba family — the actual island’s owners.

But in spite of that opposition, stationing a garrison on Miyakijima had already been scheduled.

In particular, troops selection for the garrison had been completed and the private company, which was also the owner of this island, was planned to be notified post factum — on August 1st.

At the time when all preparations were completed, the Yotsuba mounted a counterattack.

July 30th, 2097 at 7:00 PM.

Supreme commander¹⁵ of the Japan Self-Defense Forces, General Soga, visited a private membership club in the Tokyo metropolitan area escorted only by 2 people — a bodyguard and his secretary. Such a small escort was allegedly saying that he tried to

¹⁵ TLN: the current military hierarchy is: commander-in-chief of the JSDF (Japanese prime-minister) → minister of defense → chief of staff joint staff, but the author here introduced a fictional post (国防陸軍総司令官), in this translation is adopted ‘supreme commander’ to not confuse with the prime-minister’s position in military hierarchy.

avoid unnecessary attention. Soga didn't know it was also the same club where Tatsuya and Wyatt Curtis had met two weeks ago.

"Your Excellency, thank you for coming here in spite of your busy schedule."

As if repeating the events of two week before, it was Butler Hayama of the Yotsuba who welcomed Soga and his group, who were brought [by the club's clerk] to the same private room that was used two weeks ago.

"It's been a while Your Excellency. I'm honored to meet you again."

However, unlike that time, now behind Hayama was Yotsuba Maya.

"I'm too. Thank you for your invitation today." — General Soga responded to Maya's greeting with a smile.

Contrary to his expression, he was now filled with a sense of caution. It's Major General Saeki who was taking action and leading the case of deploying troops on Miyakijima, a private island that the Yotsuba owned, and Chief of Staff Ootomo was the one who backed Saeki. Soga himself didn't express any opinion about the case.

He didn't agree nor disagree.

However, the one ultimately responsible for deployment of the ground forces is the JSDF supreme commander — Soga. Inactivity does not relieve him from the responsibility.

In the first place, what Soga wanted was to prevent Saeki's rebellion.

Certainly, it cannot be denied that a garrison should be stationed at a place that has just been attacked by a foreign power. But it should be done in accordance with the law and he did not recognize the urgency of having to resort to extrajudicial measures.

Whatever it is, the Yotsuba themselves have the power to defend Miyakijima. It's also true that the top-brass of the JSDF weren't happy that the national land's defense is entrusted to civilian forces. However, Soga thought that what is more important is preventing the invasion of foreign powers, so there's no need to touch the well-functioning defense system in order to avoid unnecessary frictions. As currently the allied relations with the USNA had been shaken and the threat of another invasion from the New Soviet Union remained, there should be no place for an authority struggle in the Self-Defense Forces.

However, it was hard to dispute the fact that he, as a man from the top military brass, was guided by the reasoning «it's jeopardizing the military's honor». Because the logic telling «legal order is more important» is usually inherent to civilians and bureaucrats.

While the military brass should avoid words capable of undermining the morality of their subordinates.

As a result, Soga was forced to take the approval position regarding this issue.

But he never thought that reasoning can convince the Yotsuba family.

As Soga arrived at the same table as Maya, he lifted a glass of water to his lips while trapped in thoughts of how to get out of this situation.

(If only there's something for which I can punish Saeki, the mastermind of this, I could stop her plan to deploy troops...)

At the same time as Soga was thinking about the problem with annoyance.

“By the way, Your Excellency, do you know that there are some rumors circulating? They are related to the smuggling of the Great Asian Union magician, Lu Gonghu, into our country earlier this month...”

“What kind of rumors are they?”

Soga's reaction was close to a mechanical one.

“It may not be a pleasant story for Your Excellency.”

“Hoo... Now it makes me want to hear more about the content of these rumors. Because I shouldn't turn away from painful conversations.”

“As expected, Your Excellency. That's very honorable.”

Soga's face relaxed because of Maya's praise. Even if the woman in front of him was known as a monster that could easily take his life if she wanted to, she also had an exceptionally rare beauty. Supreme commander General Soga was also a man. So he didn't feel bad because of the praise from a beautiful woman.

“The content of the rumor is that some military General knew in advance about the smuggling of Lu Gonghu... but that person just overlooked it.”

“What!?”

However, Soga's loose expression immediately disappeared after Maya's words. If that rumor proves true, it's nothing other than an act of aiding a foreign power by some General.

“Just who did such a thing?”

“It's just a rumor... Even so, do you want to hear it?”

“I’m talking not with a random someone, but with the head of the Yotsuba family. Your allegations will unlikely be completely baseless.”

“Well... I’ve asked a family member to investigate it...”

Maya deliberately used vague words, that’s why Soga made an agitated face and leaned forward.

“By all means, please tell me.”

“It’s Her Excellency General Major Saeki.”

Maya this time didn’t play around the issue.

“Saeki...?”

Upon hearing that Maya said Saeki’s name, who took a hostile position against the Yotsuba family, Soga’s first suspicious thought was «Is this slander?»

However, he immediately reconsidered and decided that happened «right because of the hostile position». Soga decided that the Yotsuba had investigated the scandal, which became the basis for criticism, because the opposite side started showing open hostility.

“As I said, there is no evidence. But we know about one witness.”

“...Who is that?”

“It’s First-Lieutenant Fujibayashi-san of the 101 Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion. Actually, this rumor also came from her.”

Here, Maya mixed in a lie. She knew about the Lu Gonghu case even before obtaining Fujibayashi’s testimony. The testimony only confirmed it. However for Soga, it obviously didn’t make any difference.

“First-Lieutenant Fujibayashi-san was deeply distressed by the act of betrayal by Her Excellency Saeki... and during our chance encounter at the funeral of His Excellency Kudou, she reached out to me for consultation.”

“So, that’s how it was.”

Soga knew that Maya was attending the funeral of Kudou Retsu. For him, this information gave credibility to what Maya said.

“Actually, I have heard another thing from the Lieutenant.”

After saying that, Maya looked at Hayama who was behind her.

As a result, Soga also looked towards Hayama.

“Please, take this.”

In response to that look, Hayama presented to Soga the large-sized electronic paper he had in his hands.

Soga took the electronic paper and turned it on without any hesitation.

The display turned on immediately. Soga made a shocked face after reading the displayed report.

“This was the main part of Lieutenant Fujibayashi’s consultation. For her, this was a misconduct involving both her relatives and work colleagues. I suppose she couldn’t just turn a blind eye to it.” — Said Maya with sorrow in her voice.

It was a report with images of evidence accusing Major General Saiki and Kudou Makoto of continuing the Parasite-Doll development using the Military’s budget.

“This... Maj. General Saeki... what does she think she’s doing...”

“I believe Her Excellency acts so not out of selfish desires, but because she’s thinking seriously about strengthening the national defense.”

“Even so, it’s unforgivable.”

Soga turned to Maya and bowed deeply.

“Yotsuba-san. I am deeply grateful that you informed me about this serious matter confidentially.”

“I hope it will have some use.”

“If this matter becomes public, the authority of the Self-Defense Forces will be seriously damaged. I can’t punish Saeki openly but I promise that I will handle this to Yotsuba-san’s satisfaction.”

“Yes, I’ll leave it to you. That’s why I invited Your Excellency here from the beginning.”

Maya only gave a light smile but her eyes gave off pressure that «Leaving the matter undecided is not acceptable».

“I also will stop the troops deployment on Miyakijima orchestrated by Saeki.”

It looked like Soga came under such pressure given by Maya that he blurted out something he shouldn’t have.

Maya pretended with a smile that Soga's slip of the tongue (the Yotsuba family shouldn't have known about the secret plan for stationing garrison on Miyakijima) fell on deaf ears. Then she added in a deliberate manner, as if saying «Speaking of which».

“Please don't reprimand¹⁶ Lieutenant Fujibayashi and the unit to which she belongs.”

“Huh? ...It goes without saying.”

Apparently Soga wasn't pretending and was genuinely confused.

“I'm relieved. In this world, whistle-blowers tend to be hated.”

As Soga heard Maya's explanation, he showed an understanding expression.

“Still, Your Excellency, I have some concern, Her Excellency Saeki is a wise woman. I can't help feeling that she can find out who it was that gave the testimony against her. When that happens, not only Lieutenant Fujibayashi but the entire unit she belongs to would be subject to retaliation by Her Excellency Saeki.”

“No, I don't think that Saeki would go that far...”

Soga hurriedly tried to argue.

“Why don't we look at the activities of her Excellency Saeki's toward my family?”

“.....”

However, with Maya's additional statement, he couldn't say anymore.

“I have a suggestion.”

“...Let me hear it.”

Soga urged Maya to continue while showing caution upon his face.

“How about separating the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion from the 101st Brigade and making it a truly ‘Independent’ detachment? We have always highly evaluated that detachment. I think that if the Battalion gets more freedom, it will expand the scope of our cooperation with it.”

“Is it the opinion of the Yotsuba family or the Ten Master Clans?”

“It doesn't matter how you will interpret it.”

¹⁶ TLN: it's likely about military **reprimand**.

Maya was not holding a position of the Ten Master Clans representative. However there was no hesitation in her answer while her beautiful face was adorned with a composed smile.

“Excuse me a little.” — Apologized Soga and started whispering with his secretary.

Maya didn’t have to wait long.

“—I will submit the suggestion of Yotsuba-san to the Minister of Defense.”

“I am grateful to you, Your Excellency.”

Maya slightly bowed with a charming smile on her face.

Soga almost fell captive to that fascinating charm, but managed to keep calm thanks to his General’s dignity.

“—The Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion will be promoted to Independent Regiment. But please keep this information secret until the official decision.”

“Of course, Your Excellency.”

Maya’s smile became even more fascinating as she nodded at what Soga said.



On July 31th, the deployment of ground forces to Miyakijima, which only had to proceed to the phase of the actual movement of the troops, was suddenly stopped.

It was not postponed, but completely cancelled.

Major General Saeki, who was the mastermind of that plan, immediately tried to restart it, but Chief of Staff Ootomo, whom she paid a visit, put a stop to it by replying that the plan couldn’t be revived, after which ordered her to take the 101st Brigade (excluding the Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion) under personal command for immediate dispatch toward Eastern Hokkaido.

The pretext was to strengthen defense in preparation for an invasion of the New Soviet Union.

Furthermore, the duration wasn’t set.

Saeki’s strength was in the thick network of social ties which came from a long-standing career as a staff officer in the General Headquarters. She had little experience commanding on the front-line and she had no skills to grow her own political faction in a rural area.

In the border areas of Hokkaido, she won't be able to use her strength as a schemer.

Saeki, who was de-facto exiled from the capital for an indefinite period, had been neutralized in terms of internal power struggle, and she had no choice but to focus on the original task of the Self-Defense Forces — preparing for attacks of foreign powers.

The Independent Magic-Equipped Battalion were ordered separately to continue development of magical combat tactics while staying at the Kasumigaura base.

Chapter 6

August 1st.

No one in Japan (whether it be the government, the military, or even the Ten Master Clans) was aware of the looming threat.

The topic of the phone call Miyuki received this sultry afternoon was something very peaceful.

“Huh? To hold a Nine Schools Competition? By yourself?”

In early May, the Nine Schools Competition event was cancelled for this year because the magic that was developed by Tatsuya and used by Shizuku at the Competition, ‘Active Air Mine’, was later used by guerillas as a large-scale weapon of slaughter. Followed by the series of military incidents involving magicians, the question of the Competition resumption wasn’t even considered. Additionally, it’s been rumored that the Competition is to be abolished altogether.

So to suddenly hold the Competition at only the initiative of magic high school students? Miyuki’s surprise was reasonable.

“It’s not going to be the full Nine Schools Competition, just ‘Monolith Code’ matches.”

Honoka heard this too from Igarashi, the Club Management Group leader, when she came into the school library to access additional reference material in preparation of the university entrance examination.

“It’s kinda sad without exchanging friendly matches between the nine schools like the usual Nine Schools Competition — this topic has been hyped among all of the Club Management Group leaders of each school. First High is taking the lead for the preparations.”

“Quite a good guy, that’s pretty much Igarashi-kun.”

Miyuki wasn’t shocked by that, and broke into a smile instead.

“But how about preparations for the exam?”

Since the Competition was cancelled this year, third year students were able to put more effort than usual into preparing for the university entrance exam. Quite likely because of this, the passing grade for entrance into the Magic University will be higher compared to previous years.

Though Miyuki, who expressed that concern, didn't spend much time preparing for the exam. While Tatsuya, for example, wasn't preparing for it at all. Although in Miyuki's case, even if her scores for written exams were low she would easily pass based on practical exams alone, while Tatsuya is already guaranteed his bachelor degree from Magic University. So it was just pointless to worry about exams for these two.

"They're thinking more about the Inter-School Matches than the exam."

Honoka commented lightheartedly, as if it was another person's affair.

But maybe she became aware that it was a cold-hearted comment, since Honoka made a meek face while adding these words:

"...The players themselves spoke out in favor of holding the Matches, even if the participation will be at their own expense; however, securing the venue and operational budget had turned into a headache."

"That's... indeed quite the problem."

The Nine Schools Competition event was held every year with full support from the Self-Defense Forces. They even lent their practice field for the venue.

"So, for when have the Matches been scheduled?"

"The talk about it began July 10th, shortly after repelling the NSU, and the Matches themselves will be held during the last week of this month."

"...Isn't the timeline too tight?"

"Since it will only be for 'Monolith Code', therefore... taking into account the exams, one weekend should be enough to conduct the event."

"...Right. I don't think the autumn Thesis Competition will be canceled either, and for the current 3rd year students, the summer vacation timeline is the threshold¹⁷."

"As a student council member, I hope I can be of any help... Miyuki, do you have any good ideas?"

After being asked like that, Miyuki fell into deep reflection.

"...I'm sorry. I can't think of any good idea. Can you wait a minute? I will go get Tatsuya-sama, and then I'll call you back."

¹⁷ TLN: the 3rd year students shortly after summer vacation will stop participating in school extra curricular activities and start studying for their entrance exams for the National Magic University or National Defense Academy, that's why the summer vacations are **the threshold** for them.

“No, I’ll wait like this!”

On the monitor screen, Honoka shook her head strongly.

“Is that so? Well, I’ll be back soon.”

Miyuki said that and pressed the hold button on the video phone.

Like she’d said, Miyuki returned shortly to her room along with Tatsuya, while not even a minute passed.

She released the hold state on the video phone and said:

“Honoka, sorry to make you wait.”

“Ah, umm. I’ve not waited at all! At all!”

For some reason, Honoka repeated «at all» twice, but perhaps she wasn’t even aware of that herself.

“I’m sorry Tatsuya-san for taking up your time.”

Her tongue obviously got tangled, but she quickly said that in one breath and bowed down.

“Boom” — the sound of collision came from the speakers.

The angle of the image on the monitor suddenly changed and displayed Honoka’s feet.

Next there was a panicking voice: “uwa uwaa” heard from the speakers, the monitor went blank and a melody for waiting on hold started playing.

Tatsuya and Miyuki looked at each other. For them it wasn’t hard to imagine what happened. Very likely, Honoka bumped her head against the camera when bowing down. Miyuki’s room had a video phone with a monitor that had an integrated camera, but a common compact mobile video phone model had a separate, adjustable camera. [It could be assumed that Honoka had the latter of the two models.]

The video phone returned to the call state after about 10 seconds.

“...I’m really sorry...”

The monitor displayed the stooping Honoka with a tear-stained face.



“I have heard the story. It’ll be difficult to finish until the end of the month.”

Tatsuya thought that awkward attempts to comfort her would be counterproductive, so he immediately talked about the main issue.

“If we had a longer timeline, it would be possible to gather private sponsors, but since there’s only one month left before the Matches the most plausible option is having military cooperation.”

“Military cooperation? But how...?”

Honoka, whose attention was luckily distracted from her disgraceful behavior, asked with a tilted head. Judging by the expression on her face, they had seemingly reached the same conclusion as Tatsuya, but they’d failed to find a concrete plan to do it, and reached a deadlock.

“We asked almost all of the alumni who joined the military, but they all refused due to the lack of time.”

“The graduates are required to be ready for dispatching as combat magicians. They may want to ‘lend a helping hand’ to the current students, but have no free time.”

Despite the fact that the New Soviet Union’s invasion was repelled, the NSU only lost a fraction of its naval power. Compared to the Great Asian Union, which lost 30% of their entire fleet in one attack at the end of October 2095, it was really an insignificant amount. Now, when their alliance with the USNA is unstable, the Self-Defense Forces personnel looking after the border should stay in combat readiness for another NSU invasion.

“Hmm, right... The deceased His Excellency Kudou was always looking forward to the Nine Schools Competition every year. If you ask the military’s Public Relations Department to hold memorial Inter-School Matches in his memory, they’ll probably at least help with preparing the venue.”

“I see! I think that’s a very nice idea!”

From the monitor, it seemed Honoka leaned forward suddenly ...No, she actually got her face closer to the camera.

Tatsuya was almost taken aback by her eyes filled with glittering light, but he maintained a poker face while adding this line:

“There’s no other choice but to collect the accommodation and transportation expenses from donations — I’ll ask FLT for some assistance.”

"I understand. I'll tell that to Igarashi-kun."

After nodding cheerfully, Honoka suddenly began fidgeting.

"Uhm, Tatsuya-san. Actually, we've all planned to go to Shizuku's villa the day after tomorrow. So, if it doesn't bother you, can we drop by there on the way...?"

"No, it won't be a bother."

Miyuki broke into the conversation right after Tatsuya nodded in assent.

"So you're prepared for the exams? You said «all», so Erika and Saijou-kun will also be with you?"

"Oh, that's no problem. We are going there not only to play around. It will be half-kind of a 'training camp to prepare for the exams'."

"Really...? Then, that's fine."

Seemingly it convinced Miyuki, because she didn't ask any further. The camera's focus automatically turned to Tatsuya after Miyuki took a half step back, which could be seen from Honoka's gaze, when she took her eyes off Miyuki, and looked towards Tatsuya.

That's why Honoka's next lines were naturally addressed to Tatsuya:

"Then, sorry for the trouble. The day after tomorrow we'll be visiting using Shizuku's airplane. I think it will be around a bit after noon."

"Then we'll arrange lunch here."

"E-erm... we're good! Because Shizuku said she will give us bento boxes with meals during the flight."

At Tatsuya's offer, Honoka hurriedly shook her head and hands.

"Honoka, don't be reserved. The total number of people is six, right? If so, it's not much trouble."

"...Ah, okay, the usual six people. Thank you, I'll tell Shizuku."

But after Miyuki entered the frame again and said that, Honoka's hesitation diminished.

"Okay, then I'll see you at noon the day after tomorrow."

"Yup, the day after tomorrow. See you then, Miyuki. Excuse me, Tatsuya-san."

Honoka lowered her head. The call was cut after she bowed, so the words and the actions were probably registered as a ‘control gesture’.



Saturday, August 3rd.

A tilt rotor aircraft carrying Shizuku, Honoka, Erika, Leo, Mizuki and Mikihiko — the usual 6 people plus the pilot and Shizuku’s attendant maid — totalling 8 people, landed at the airport on Miyakijima a little earlier than planned.

At that time, Civil aviation still wasn’t issuing any warnings¹⁸.

¹⁸ TLN: flight Plan for **Civil Aircrafts** includes also the flight duration/arrival time, and some countries issue warnings for its violation.

Chapter 7

August 3rd, 2097.

The Ministry of Defense has been in a tense atmosphere since morning.

This was because, based on the current course of the USNA Navy's landing vessel 'Guam', that departed in the morning of July 30th (Japanese time) from Oahu island of the Hawaiian archipelago, they identified its final destination was definitely the Izu archipelago.

At first, neither the civilian nor military personnel of the Ministry of Defense believed the forecast made by the Tactical AI; however, they also couldn't simply ignore it either. So, the military turned to the Navy Pacific Fleet command of the USNA with a request for information about the purpose of the 'Guam's' voyage.

The USNA Navy's response caused panic in the Ministry of Defense.

They replied: *"Guam' is in a secret operation and cannot answer the question"*. And added: *"We can't find out their current location due to a malfunction in their information equipment"*.

From that response, it was obvious that they were lying. It's impossible for the USNA, which operates more military satellites than Japan, to not be able to find its own ship's position — even in the middle of the ocean. For them to make such a lie without hesitation, it was a clear indication that they were planning something hostile.

In this case, the tactical AI results could no longer be dismissed as a simple 'Calculation Error'. Among the military, there's been an increasing number of people who expressed their opinion of the need to prepare against the USNA ship's attacks on the Izu archipelago.

The naval officers held antipathy against the USNA from the start.

This was because of the sudden attack of the landing party, which landed from a transport ship onto Miyakijima, in the Izu archipelago, as if it were carried out alongside the invasion of the New Soviet Union.

Due to agreements between the Yotsuba, the actual island's owners, and the Ministry of Defense, this incident was never officially recorded. However, it was known that the transport ship used for the attack was the 'Midway' which belonged to the USNA Navy.

It was difficult to determine whether this was an indicator of hostility, so the Japan-USNA allied relations still persisted. However, a surprise attack by the USNA Navy was nothing more than an act of betrayal of this relationship. Moreover, after the sudden attack failed, there wasn't even any kind of explanation whatsoever, not even an apology. They acted as if nothing had happened.

For the military, the USNA's attitude and behavior was making a fool of them. The opinion for immediate interception grew stronger among those that were field officers and lieutenant ranks.

In contrast to the military personnel, the prevailing opinion among the civilian employees of the Ministry of Defense was that armed conflict should be avoided at all costs.

Since November 2095, relations between Japan and the USNA have been slightly strained. After Japan defeated the Great Asia Alliance with unbalanced military power, the USNA unilaterally regarded Japan as a threat, which Japan couldn't do anything about. Before the last World War, Japan could have reduced its own military power, but in the post-war situation, when it was no longer possible to count on the allies' help in case of emergency, weakening oneself was equal to abandoning their responsibility towards their people.

Even so, that didn't mean that relations between Japan and the USNA became overtly hostile. For Japan, the decision to enter into a full-fledged confrontation with the USNA due to a minor «blow to their honor» would be tantamount to suicide. After all, it is already surrounded by hostile countries with the Great Asian Union in the west and the New Soviet Union in the north. National security cannot be upheld unless their friendship is maintained (at least formally) with the east. The era of the so-called 'Prideful Isolation' has passed.

In other words, civilian bureaucrats were in favor of «giving up honor to get a result». This meant that one should humbly suffer some damage in order to avoid a final breakdown in relations. That disharmony of intentions inside the Ministry of Defense had led to the delay in taking actions against the approaching foreign warships.

Because of that, they also failed to give any warning to civilians.



“Tatsuya-sama, there's an incoming phone call.”

Minami came to notify Tatsuya about the call at the moment when dinner with their friends, who had come to visit after a long separation, had ended.

Since the news reported that Tatsuya was discharged from the hospital, Tatsuya has been receiving various phone calls from sales people, which were almost equivalent to fraud calls. No matter how much time he had, he wouldn't be able to accept all phone calls.

As Minami also understood this, she filtered it first, but there were still many calls that she had to ask Tatsuya to decide whether to accept or not.

"From whom?"

Tatsuya asked, while thinking about who might possibly be calling.

"From Ichijou-sama of Third High."

"From Ichijou?"

This option hadn't even come to Tatsuya's mind. Minami added «of Third High» to distinguish between Masaki and his father, the head of the Ichijou family, Ichijou Gouki.

At this unexpected phone call, Tatsuya wasn't the only one surprised. Miyuki also had a dubious expression, while his friends were whispering among themselves.

"...Fine. Is the call on hold?"

"Yes, in the 1st reception room."

They currently weren't in the apartment that Tatsuya and Miyuki used as a temporary home. The room they were currently in was a small dining room for visitors. Next to it were several reception rooms for business meetings, and the first reception room had equipment for video conferencing so that one can participate in the Master Clan's meeting online. Ichijou Masaki probably contacted him using the line for the Ten Master Clans.

As Tatsuya stood up, Minami headed towards the door to lead him, but he stopped her.

"Minami, take care of drinks for everyone."

Although there were other waiters in this dining room, no one would complain if Minami helped, as she has sufficient skills to be Miyuki's exclusive maid, which means to be the exclusive maid of the next head of the family.

"There are some people who also want to talk to you. After you've given everyone their drinks, could you talk to them?"

"...Understood."

Tatsuya headed to the first reception room by himself, leaving Minami, who politely bowed, with a slightly unsatisfied expression.



“I’m sorry to have kept you waiting.”

Tatsuya apologized to Masaki, who appeared on a large monitor screen after releasing the hold status.

“No, I should be the one apologizing for the sudden call.”

Tatsuya and Masaki were both people with common sense in that part of everyday life which didn’t involve magic. They were not insulting each other because of the suddenness nor did they unilaterally rush to state their business while ignoring greeting phrases.

“Do you have some urgent business? Has something happened?”

However, they weren’t good enough friends to gossip with each other. After the minimal amount of greetings, Tatsuya urged Masaki to get down to the main topic.

“Actually, my father told me that he heard something from an acquaintance in the military.”

“Ichijou-dono did?”

The ‘dono’ is a suffix used when calling the head of another family among the Ten Master Clans. In this case, ‘Ichijou-dono’ referred to Masaki’s father, Ichijou Gouki, who is the head of the Ichijou family.

“Shiba, keep calm and listen.”

Rather than Tatsuya, it’s Masaki who actually needs to be calm from what Tatsuya saw on the display, but he didn’t interrupt him with «I’m calm».

“The USNA’s amphibious assault ship ‘Guam’ is heading to the Izu Islands, accompanied by two destroyers. Their target is probably you.”

“...Are you sure that they intend to attack, and it’s not for military exercises?”

“It seems that the USNA military didn’t answer the inquiry about the purpose of its voyage.”

“It’s certainly not an exercise then.”

“Three warships are heading straight to Miyakijima. Our military expects it will enter into the attack zone tomorrow morning.”

“What is the type of destroyer? Missile-type ship?”

“That information...”

“Ah, sorry.”

After seeing Masaki’s bewilderment, Tatsuya realized that what he asked was something unreasonable.

“Nah.” — Masaki recovered fast. — *“Shiba, the military may not make a move... Are you not surprised?”*

Since Tatsuya was not upset at all when he was told that he would be abandoned by the military and kept his cool, Masaki was surprised and couldn’t help but ask him.

“The Yotsuba are currently having some trouble with the military.”

“...Is that problem relevant at all in the current circumstance? Our homeland is about to be attacked by a foreign power. Whatever the circumstance may be, it’s... it’s the military’s duty to defend.”

“In theory, of course.”

Tatsuya partially agreed in order to pacify Masaki, whose face showed that he was barely restraining his anger.

On the surface, Masaki returned to a calm state, but his inner fire seemed to be rising.

“Shiba, do you need reinforcements?”

“I’m grateful, but it would be a bad move.”

Tatsuya did not misunderstand the intention of Masaki’s inquiry. Masaki has offered to join the defense of Miyakijima. Even after understanding that, he declined Masaki’s offer.

“Why? If you’re worried about worsening the relationship between the Ichijou family and the military...”

“That’s not it.”

It was natural that Masaki would be concerned when he heard that the Yotsuba had «some trouble» with the military. But what Tatsuya was thinking was a more severe problem.

“It’s bad for you to leave now. The threat from the north hasn’t disappeared.”

“...You mean the NSU might attack again?”

“Even if the USNA military ships are targeting me, I don’t think that the USNA government approved this. It’s likely the reckless actions of a group of hardliners.”

“Do you have some reasons to think so?”

“I do.”

Masaki didn’t ask any further about what those reasons were. It was common etiquette among the Ten Master Clans to not snoop into other clan’s business.

“Another NSU invasion is more of a threat than the USNA, is that what you are saying?”

“Yes.”

“...I understand.”

Tatsuya’s answer was too concise, but his voice was convincing.

But perhaps more than that, Masaki was concerned by the question of the New Soviet Union’s future actions.

“I’ll prepare for the north. Shiba... are you sure that you can handle it?”

“Don’t worry, I won’t let Miyuki even get scratched.”

“That’s not what I meant!”

Perhaps Masaki was now blushing due to his resentment towards the unjust allegations?

Or...

“...So you’re not worried about Miyuki?”

“—See you!”

Without answering Tatsuya’s question, Masaki hung up.

His last words weren’t «goodbye», but were words suggesting they will meet again.





After Tatsuya left the small dining room, a bit of a strange situation was formed around Minami. Not only the fact that she's alone as a 2nd year student when everyone else is a 3rd year student. But the main reason is that Tatsuya's friends were only partially informed about the misfortune that happened with Minami.

"Ah, Sakurai. Have you recovered already?"

The one who first broke the awkward air was Leo. He and Minami had a senpai-kouhai relationship in the Mountaineering club.

"Thank you for your concern. I even have a document from the doctor saying that physically, I've completely recovered."

"That's good!"

"However, I can no longer use magic."

"Huh?"

Leo wasn't the only one who was surprised. Everyone here knew that Minami was a talented magician. So her confession of being unable to use magic was a big shock to all.

"Thank you, Saijou-senpai and everyone that has taken great care of me all this time, but I think I will probably drop out of First High."

"...What do you plan on doing after quitting school?"

"Tatsuya-sama has offered for me to continue serving Miyuki-sama, which I'm going to accept."

Erika was the first to react to Minami's words with an exaggerated nod.

"Yeah! Being a magician isn't the only way to live."

"That's right. It will be quite difficult to convince yourself of this, and it will take a lot of time to put your thoughts and feelings in order... However, most people living in this world cannot use magic." — Mikihiko followed up after Erika.

"Minami-chan had good grades in general studies, right? Whether liberal arts or science, she can transfer to an ordinary high school and go to any prestigious university."

Honoka said so, as she was a member of the same student council as Minami, who also knew her grades.

“Minami-chan is also very good at cooking.”

“Yeah. Even I want to make her my house maid. Minami, won’t you work at my house?”
— Added Shizuku in response to Mizuki’s line.

“Ah, no, sorry. I’m...”

Minami was seriously nervous about Shizuku’s offer.

“No way, Shizuku. I won’t give you Minami-chan.”

Miyuki, who had been silent until this moment, invited herself into the conversation.

“Greedy.”

As laughter followed Shizuku’s complaint, the awkward air that was floating around was alleviated.



After returning to the dining room, Tatsuya sensed the leftover awkwardness in the atmosphere, but didn’t ask what happened.

“Everyone, I have a serious conversation for you.”

As he now had a more important and urgent matter at hand.

“Are you talking about the phone call from Ichijou-san?”

“Yes.” — Tatsuya nodded to Miyuki’s question and turned his gaze to Shizuku.

“Shizuku, it would be better to stop your plans for a vacation at your villa.”

“What happened?” — Shizuku looked right into Tatsuya’s eyes and asked «What happened» instead of «What is it».

She understood that Tatsuya’s warning had a reason. Moreover, she requested him to reveal that reason.

Some ships are less than a day’s voyage from here, but no warning was received. This meant that for some reason, the government and the army do not want to make this public. Having come to this conclusion, Tatsuya was conflicted about whether to reveal the truth or not.

But after seeing the looks directed at him, Tatsuya felt... that not only Shizuku, but Honoka, Erika, Mizuki, Leo, Mikihiro, and even Miyuki... had fire flaring up in their eyes and realized that it was useless to hide it.

After all, if he won't tell them the truth, his friends won't change their plans. Perhaps, on the contrary, they will want to stay on this island. Initially, Tatsuya wanted to tell only Miyuki about this later. But it seems that he will have to discard this plan.

"As early as tomorrow morning, this island will be attacked by the USNA's amphibious assault ship and destroyers. There's a possibility that the battle can spread to the Ogasawara Islands."

"Is America attacking us?!"

"That's not it."

Tatsuya shook his head to Erika's shout.

"I knew that the USNA, as a country, didn't launch the attack on Japan."

Tatsuya said he «knew», but in fact there was no solid evidence. It was merely an assumption.

"It's very likely that Edward Clark instigated a small amount of the Parasites and part of their military as a desperate gamble. If this fails, Clark will definitely be abandoned by the USNA's government."

Even though it was a guess, Tatsuya was sure of it. From the experiences he had with contacts from the USNA's politicians as well as its military, like: Senator Curtis, captain Curtis of the nuclear submarine aircraft carrier and his crew, also the nameless fleet captain he had communication with during Minami's rescue, etc. Tatsuya felt that the American people still don't hold enough fear against him to fall into mass hysteria.

So far, the USNA wasn't regarding Japan as a threat to the extent of abandoning this 'hindrance on the water' that blocked the Great Asian Union's expansion into the Pacific. But the threat evaluation may change depending on the results of tomorrow's battle. His power should therefore be fully demonstrated, so that the USNA won't even dare try touching them again. And Tatsuya believed that the amphibious ships' invasion will be a good opportunity for the demonstration.

"Tomorrow, you say? However, the Self-Defense Forces do not seem to be doing anything."

Leo asked with a rather calm face.

“The Self-Defense Forces will do nothing.”

“What...?”

In response to Tatsuya’s answer, Leo’s voice was filled with anger. But his anger subsided after hearing Tatsuya’s next words.

“On the contrary, that will be more convenient for us.”

“...Are you planning to repel their attack with just forces from the Yotsuba family?”

“That’s right.”

When Tatsuya said the phrase «for us» he didn’t mean the Yotsuba family. However, he didn’t intend to go into any detailed explanations.

“Tatsuya, are you saying that Parasites will come here?”

This time, Mikihiko asked the question.

“They’ll come.”

Tatsuya answered Mikihiko’s question with a concise line. Even though he didn’t explain the reason for his confidence in this, his answer was very convincing.

“In that case...”

Mikihiko didn’t ask for an explanation upon hearing Tatsuya’s answer. Instead, he asked...

“—I could help you as well. As a practitioner of Ancient Magic, I can’t overlook this invasion of demons.”

“Yoshida-kun!?”

Unsurprisingly, Mizuki screamed unintentionally. Because Mikihiko’s request was to join the battle against warships (that still were the USNA’s warships, even if only 3 of them). He can even die in the worst-case scenario. Not only Mizuki, but anyone in her place would have thought that his attempts to take this risk should be prevented.

“Stop it, Mikihiko. You don’t have to risk your life.”

At Tatsuya’s answer, Mizuki was relieved.

On the contrary, Mikihiko still wasn’t convinced.

“Do not worry, the Parasites will be completely destroyed. And I’m not just talking about the assimilated former humans. Even if we talk about the True Bodies of the Parasites, not one of them will be able to escape.”

But after Tatsuya stated this, even Mikihiko couldn’t argue anymore.

“But Tatsuya-kun. I don’t think it’s a bad idea to leave Miki here, regardless of whether he’s participating or not.”

It was Erika who argued on behalf of Mikihiko who had lost his words.

“It will be bad if you have only the testimonies of the parties involved. And if you have the testimony of a civilian who was accidentally present during the battle, it will then be easier for you to legally argue for the right of your self-defense. Also, it will be easier to convince everyone that the USNA is breaking the rules.”

“Indeed... You have a point.”

Erika’s opinion was not immediately dismissed by Tatsuya.

“But you don’t have to go that far. Even if it gives an advantage in the information war, it’s still not worth it to risk your lives.”

However, in the end, Tatsuya still rejected Erika’s claim.

“Do you really think so?”

But unlike Mikihiko, Erika didn’t withdraw easily.

“Tatsuya-kun says it’s risky, but you won’t endanger the life of your friends, who’ve come only to see you and not to take part in the battle, right?”

“That’s right, but...”

“Tatsuya-kun, last time, you said you’ll protect Honoka. Will you protect only Honoka?”

Erika was talking about the promise that Tatsuya made in response to Shizuku’s request. This happened in the hospital ward, where Honoka ended up after being abducted by the USNA’s illegal operations unit called ‘Illegal MAP’. Also the other day, Tatsuya informed Miyuki and Lina that not only Honoka, but also Erika, Mizuki and their other friends are under the protection of the Yotsuba family... or rather, under his personal protection as the fiancé of the next head of the Yotsuba family. However, Erika shouldn’t have known about that conversation.

Tatsuya unconsciously looked at Miyuki with suspicion.

Miyuki slightly shook her head with a face saying «I've got nothing to do with it».

Erika was grinning while seeing the wordless dialogue between those two. She seemed to be able to read the situation from their behavior.

“...I'll guarantee all my guests' safety.”

In the end, Tatsuya was only able to return a reluctant reply.

A triumphant grin appeared on Erika's face.

“Then, can I stay here too? I told my home that I would camp out for four nights and five days, it's kinda harsh to come home so soon.”

“...Then it will be at your own risk.”

“I won't do anything risky.”

Resigned, Tatsuya made a final warning. To which Erika answered with a completely serious expression.

“Well, me too.”

“Count me in.”

Shortly thereafter, Honoka and Leo immediately said at the same time.

“Then me too.”

After the two of them, Shizuku went on like that.

“Uhm... then I will too.”

Finally, even Mizuki said that.

Tatsuya made a big sigh.

Then he turned to Minami.

“Minami, how many guest rooms are available for the use of others right away?”

“Please wait a moment.”

With her left hand, Minami pushed back the hair hanging next to her left ear and put her finger on the voice module inserted into that ear. It was a smart headset model featured with fingerprint authentication, which picks a command by reading the vibration from the throat using a choker that was close-fitting to the neck. This device was designed to solve the so-called ‘AI wiretapping problem’, which consists of the fact

that stationary ‘smart speakers’ recorded confidential conversations that weren’t even related to the operation of the AI on the server.

Holding her hand to her mouth, Minami repeated the question from Tatsuya in a low voice. She once again put her finger on the left ear unit to disconnect the smart headset and turned to Tatsuya.

“Tatsuya-sama, there is one Single and one Double room.”

“So the single room is for Erika, and the double room is for Mikihiko with Leo. Honoka, Shizuku, and Mizuki should return home before it gets dark.”

This time, Tatsuya didn’t give his friends any chance for a rebuttal.

“No way.”

Honoka protested with a pitiful voice, but Tatsuya let it slide with silence.

“...There’s no other choice then. Honoka, stay at my home. Mizuki too, if you don’t mind.”

Thanks to Shizuku’s intervention, no further objections were raised.



The information received from Masaki needed to be shared with more people than just his friends. All of this took a long time, so Tatsuya opened a direct communication line to the Yotsuba Main House, while leaving Miyuki to see Honoka, Shizuku, and Mizuki off, and Minami to escort Erika, Leo, and Mikihiko to their rooms.

“Tatsuya-sama, how can I help you?”

Hayama, who appeared on the videophone screen, had completely changed the way he interacted with Tatsuya and was addressing him as a ‘person close to the head of the family’. Hayama was not the only one. Every single one of the servants in the Yotsuba Main House have also changed their attitude towards Tatsuya.

“Some time ago, I received important information from Ichijou Masaki. It seems that an amphibious assault ship and destroyers of the USNA Navy are approaching Miyakijima.”

“It is so.”

“Did you already find out something about it too?”

While asking, Tatsuya never thought that the answer would be a surprise.

“The amphibious assault ship ‘Guam’ together with destroyers ‘Ross’ and ‘Hull’. We knew those ships were approaching Japan, but we were unable to ascertain their destination.”

“But did you make a prediction?”

“Yes. It matched what Tatsuya-sama said.”

Tatsuya didn’t argue with Hayama’s statement. And he wasn’t offended by it either. At the end of last month, a detachment, the core of which was Parasite-infected soldiers of the Stars, had already attacked Miyakijima. But none of the Yotsuba family members involved in Miyakijima operations believed the attack ended there.

“Well, it seems I didn’t have to tell you then.”

From the moment when Tatsuya quit the Self-Defense Forces, he began to consciously speak of himself in the first person, using the pronoun ‘watashi’ (the personal pronoun ‘I’).

“No, not by any means. We were ready for the attack itself, but the information that this will happen tomorrow is also useful. By the way, from whom did Ichijou-sama learn about this?”

“It seems that his father, Ichijou-dono, heard about this from his acquaintance in the Self-Defense Forces.”

“Understood. We also have our own people at headquarters, but...”

On the screen Hayama looked down somewhere. He was probably checking to see if there was any information from the aforementioned agent.

“...Apparently they’ve been dispatched to a base in the capital’s suburb today.”

“The timing is very suspicious.”

“It seems so. We will increase the number of spies in the military and the Ministry of Defense a little.”

Tatsuya didn’t comment on the explanation from Hayama, which sounded like he was talking to himself. Gathering intelligence through interpersonal contact is the work of the Kuroba family, and he didn’t really want to poke his nose into their affairs.

“We will deal with this later. And now I will personally see that reinforcements to help repel tomorrow’s attack are sent as quickly as possible. A squad of the Shibata family is on full alert, but should we also send the Tsukuba family to increase our readiness for a meeting with the Parasites?”

“I will leave the decision to the Main House.”

“Understood. Do you have any more messages for Madam?”

“Yes, convey the following: ‘I’ll do my best with my full strength to fulfill the promise I made with His Excellency Toudou.’”

Hayama’s expression became stiff because of Tatsuya’s words.

“...I’m sorry if this is audacious, but may I ask you something?”

“What is it?”

“Tatsuya-sama... Do you intend to use ‘Material Burst’?”

Tatsuya smiled faintly, as if indicating that «there is no need to worry about it».

“The situation in which it is required to be used won’t arise.”

“Which means...?”

With this short question, Hayama asked Tatsuya to clarify his real intentions.

“I want the world to understand that my magic is not only ‘Material Burst’. I’m going to show the world that magic can be a deterrent even without resorting to Strategic-Class Magic — which has a limited range of applications.”

Tatsuya did not give a concrete answer to Hayama’s question.

“So it’s like that... Understood.”

From the monitor, Hayama bowed deeply.

Tatsuya’s determination was conveyed clearly even without a specific explanation.

Without any chance of misunderstanding.



August 3rd, evening.

After having dinner with Erika, Leo, and Mikihiko, and sending Minami to her room, Miyuki finally had some time to be alone with Tatsuya.

Miyuki was sitting beside Tatsuya while enjoying tea-time with him. This iced herbal tea was brewed by Miyuki herself. Tatsuya smiled satisfactorily when Miyuki served him tea. For her, it was a blissful moment.

Miyuki furtively glanced at Tatsuya who was sitting nearby.

As she expected, he was still smiling while drinking from the glass cup.

Realizing that she was about to grin, Miyuki looked down in the most laid-back manner and lifted the cup to her lips.

After calming her feelings with the relaxing effect of herbal tea and breathing easier, Miyuki noticed a strong gaze from the side.

Miyuki stiffened involuntarily but immediately realized that there were no amorous thoughts within that gaze.

She timidly turned to Tatsuya.

Their eyes met. Tatsuya's gaze was terrifyingly serious, which indicated that he was going to raise some serious topic.

"Miyuki."

"Yes, Onii-sama."

Miyuki made considerable efforts to not let her shrieking voice out while trying her hardest to keep her voice natural.

"I'm actually really reluctant to put you onto the battlefield. As your guardian and your fiancé, *I think* this is something that should be avoided."

Upon hearing the phrase «your fiancé», Miyuki's consciousness almost flew away. It's because Tatsuya rarely spoke of himself as her fiancé.

"But tomorrow, I want you to lend me your power."

However, Miyuki's head came out of the clouds when she realized that Tatsuya was asking for help.

"What should I do?"

Tatsuya needs her help. Her mind naturally focused on that one thought.

"As I've said earlier, tomorrow in the morning, the USNA warships will be attacking us, but it won't be just them. I think Bezobrazov is very likely to take advantage of Edward Clark's plan and attack too."

"You mean Bezobrazov of the NSU?"

“Yes. I have no reliable justification for this statement. But for him, it will be a great opportunity to take revenge. Besides, for the NSU, I’m a Strategic-Class Magician of a neighboring country who must be killed by any means necessary. In other words, it is likely that the NSU will also intervene in the battle that will take place tomorrow. Their means of attack will most likely be: ‘Tuman Bomba’, medium-range missiles, and they’ll also probably send a missile submarine. It is likely that the NSU’s submarine is already positioned somewhere near this island.”

“I think it’s exactly as Onii-sama says.”

Miyuki was not following him blindly. At least now, after thinking with her own head, she admitted that Tatsuya’s guess was quite reasonable.

“If they really do attack, it will be natural to repel them. I won’t let them go back unharmed. But I can’t overdo it if I have to deal with the USNA and NSU at the same time. Because we can’t ignore what will happen after everything is over.”

“Do you think that just winning the battle won’t be enough?”

“I will take this chance to eliminate Edward Clark and Bezobrazov. If we want to get rid of future troubles, then these two cannot be left alive.”

Miyuki’s face darkened when she heard how decisively this was said. She was not yet so ‘battered by life’ to accept the killing of a person without psychological resistance.

Even so, she didn’t oppose what Tatsuya said. She understood well that there’s just some people who won’t compromise. She learned that through her own experiences.

“However, I don’t want to use ‘Material Burst’ because that magic has a fixed image of unconditional massacre that cannot be resisted.”

There were no self-reproaching nuances in Tatsuya’s voice. Miyuki didn’t argue either, as she knew that Tatsuya evaluates his own magic objectively.

“It’s preferable to have the USNA warships and the NSU submarines neutralized without destroying them. Even if they will sink in the end, I want to show them that it happened after their neutralization.”

Miyuki’s eyes lit up with understanding.

“Onii-sama wants to entrust that to me, right? I see. No matter how many ships they bring, I’ll freeze them all.”

Miyuki strongly declared that, as if having adopted the image of a holy virgin who received divine revelation from the god of war. This image seemed to emphasize and enhance her beauty.

However, for Tatsuya, such an image of her was not something that he could welcome. Though only for a moment, his face became clouded with sadness.

As if to hide that, Tatsuya immediately put on a poker face and took out a classically-decorated silver pistol from a leg bag. It was about 12 centimeters long, just right for Miyuki's hands. However, there was no muzzle on it.

"Is this a specialized CAD?"

Miyuki tilted her head inquiringly, taking this 'supposedly pistol' in her hand. With outstanding magic power, Miyuki never needed a specialized CAD.

"This CAD has a preinstalled Activation Sequence for 'Glacial Age' — a cooling magic with an ultra-wide Area of Effect, which utilizes the Chain Casting principle."

"'Glacial Age'... Is this possibly new magic?"

Miyuki rounded her eyes after hearing that unfamiliar name of magic.

"Although you'll have to use it without proper practice, this Magic Sequence only further expands 'Niflheim' by using Chain Cast, so there shouldn't be any risk with its activation. To prepare for the worst-case scenario, the Activation Sequence has a built-in limiter. So there's no need to concern yourself about the Magic Calculation Area overheating. I've tested the limiter's effectiveness on myself."

Upon hearing his explanation, Miyuki's eyes widened even more.

"Onii-sama tested it on yourself?... Isn't that dangerous?"

"For your sake, I will take on any risk to be sure of absolute safety."

"Onii-sama..."

Miyuki's eyes moistened. But she understood now isn't the time for tears, so she had to endure it. As a result, no tears fell.

"This expanded version called 'Glacial Age' should cause even less of a burden than the usual 'Niflheim'. And you'll use this magic to neutralize the enemy's ships."

"Understood. I will stand beside Onii-sama and perfectly fulfill my role." — Declared Miyuki bravely.

“No, wait.”

But instead of expressing his consent with Miyuki’s words, Tatsuya said this, as if splashing cold water onto a raging fire.

“I don’t want you to show yourself before the enemy, but rather use that magic from the command room.”

“...Why?”

Miyuki was seemingly not pleased with that, as she looked at Tatsuya with dissatisfied eyes.

“When you use ‘Glacial Age’, its power will likely be close to Strategic-Class Magic. It’s unacceptable for you to also become a target for any foreign power as a dangerous magician. All of their wariness should be focused solely on me.”

Even though he emphasized his words with such a powerful tone, Miyuki still wasn’t convinced.

“Onii-sama says he doesn’t want me to stand on the battlefield, but what I want is the opposite. I don’t want to just be a weak girl who always needs protection. I want to be beside Onii-sama instead of safely standing behind your back.”

Miyuki’s gaze towards Tatsuya was filled with resolute determination. If anyone else had been present here, they would have thought that persuading her would be difficult — even for Tatsuya.

In fact Tatsuya just...

“I’ve lost here, but...”

He just sighed sincerely (at least, it looked like his sigh was sincere).

“Miyuki. I’ve never thought of you as a weak girl. As proof of this, I couldn’t have even thought of creating this new magic and using this strategy if you didn’t have power.”

“.....”

Seemingly, Tatsuya’s words were something that Miyuki didn’t expect, since her enthusiasm was chilled. She didn’t know how to react and was at a loss for words.

“What I want is your support from behind... Having Miyuki behind me, I won’t ever be afraid of anyone or anything — even my power that can destroy the whole world.”

“That’s...”

“I believed you would continue to support me, but... was it just my selfish misunderstanding?”

“It’s definitely not like that!”

Miyuki hurried to refute Tatsuya’s self-reproaching statement.

“Now, and in the future, I will support Onii-sama from behind!”

Perhaps she didn’t even realize that she now had these internal contradictions.

“Thank you, Miyuki. Then, tomorrow I’ll expect your support from the rear.”

“Please leave it to me!”

“I’m counting on you.”

“Yes!”

Miyuki probably didn’t even realize that she ‘got played’¹⁹.

¹⁹ TLN: what this actually means is that Miyuki initially put herself in the argument of standing on the battlefield, and now she herself denied it and prefers to be rear support.

Chapter 8

August 4th 2097 AD.

This day, the world was reminded of magic's power once again.

The power, with which one magician can overwhelm even a large country.



August 4th 8 AM.

The amphibious assault ship 'Guam' crossed a line 24 nautical miles from the coast of Miyakijima. 'Guam' then continued sailing to the west. One of two accompanying destroyers — 'Hull' — reduced its speed, while the second one — 'Ross' — sped up and changed direction to the southwest.

The Japanese Self-Defense Forces, who identified these two destroyers as the amphibious assault ship's escort, were confused by that change. Someone even wondered if it was just their misunderstanding that the USNA's ships intended to attack Miyakijima.



While the Self-Defense Forces were in a state of confusion, the owner's of Miyakijima (the Yotsuba family) weren't confused.

8:20 AM. On Miyakijima's west coast, at the former 'monitoring facility' that had prevented felony magicians from escaping and has now been converted into a command room for the private security on the island, an officer at this command post responsible for monitoring the sea reported in a tense voice:

"'Guam' will enter into our territorial waters soon. At their current speed it'll take them about 5 minutes."

"The intercepting squad is ready for battle." — Reported through radio by Tsutsumi Kanata, guardian of Shibata Katsushige, who was tasked with command of the defense by Maya.

"Kanata, calm down a little. The sortie begins only after the opponent makes their first move."

Katsushige felt Kanata's impatience in his voice from the speakers and reminded the latter to not make a false start.

"I know, Master. I haven't forgotten that we need a justification for our self-defense against an attack."

Kanata's tone used for the pronunciation of «master» sounded in no way serious, like summoning some keeper of a coffee-shop, but there was no doubt about his loyalty to Katsushige. So instead of repeating the warning, Katsushige turned his eyes toward the main screen, which extended over the entire wall in front of him.

There was no window in this command room. The main screen, which usually showed the outside view, was now displaying a variety of information about the island's surroundings. Katsushige now stared at the displayed USNA warships data with concentration from above his multi-function Commander's Seat.

"Guam' has slowed down."

After reading this on the main screen at the same time as the operator's report, Katsushige manipulated the intercom built into the Commander's Seat.

"Tatsuya-kun, the enemy ships have made their move. Could you come to the command room with Miyuki-san?" — Katsushige said over the intercom.



Parting with Tatsuya after breakfast, Miyuki led Minami, Erika, Leo, and Mikihiko to a shelter located on the underground floor of the residential building.

Even though it was called an «underground shelter», it was as spacious and well-maintained as the above-ground floors. The room was equipped with 4 large-scale displays showing the entire territory of the island. With the presence of all kinds of amenities for a comfortable stay, this shelter was even better than any of the guest rooms above.

As for now, nothing unusual has been seen on the island.

The only difference from usual was that civilians (who weren't combat personnel of the Yotsuba family) were evacuated from the plant construction site located on the east coast.

But today was Sunday, when the plant construction and test operations were stopped anyway.

However, there were dispatched reinforcement combatants in place of the evacuated scientists and engineers. Actually, there were more people than usual.

The USNA warships weren't in sight yet. The cameras available from the shelter only showed the coast with some limited range. Specifically, its [cameras'] perspective was limited by the skyline 8 kilometers off the shore and 5 meters above sea level. Meaning, the territorial waters' borderline, located 12 nautical miles (\approx 22 kilometers) off shore, wasn't in the field of view of the cameras.

Although the image from the cameras cannot be called 'peaceful', it hasn't escalated the feeling of tension yet. That was probably why Erika got bored, took her eyes off from the display, and turned to Miyuki.

"How close are the enemy ships?"

"Minami-chan, do you know?"

Miyuki redirected Erika's inquiry to Minami.

"...Three kilometers from our territorial waters."

Minami wasn't sitting on a chair, but standing before a console for centralized control of all equipment in this room. Using a keyboard on the information terminal, she received a response from the Military Affairs Information System located in the command room. It wasn't possible to make that kind of search from rooms for civilian accommodation in this shelter. It was only possible because this place was intended as a VIP room used by the next head of the family.

"Three kilometers from our territorial waters means to the coast. It's about... umm..."

"It's about twenty-five kilometers, Saijou-senpai." — Minami politely answered after Leo invited himself into the conversation.

"Twenty-five kilometers. It's still outside the launchers range."

By 'launchers' Leo meant 'Fleming Launchers' that had been used as a warships' main weapon for ground bombardment during the previous war. 'Fleming Launchers' are able to launch large bombs using an electromagnetic launching mechanism, which commonly have a range of 20 kilometers.

"But it's in range to use missiles, if they have them."

This time, Mikihiko responded to Leo's line.

"If they aren't shooting yet, it means they're planning on landing. Sakurai-san, what type of ship is approaching — destroyer or landing?"

Minami glanced at Miyuki.

Receiving a confirmative nod from Miyuki, Minami answered Mikihiko's question with: "It's an amphibious assault ship".

"I see, it's indeed a landing operation. Instead of indiscriminate bombing, they're specifically targeting Tatsuya."

Hearing Mikihiko's guess, Erika snorted as if to mock them.

"Anyway, they'll switch to indiscriminate bombardment soon. As if they would succeed with assassinating Tatsuya."

No one objected to her. Leo and Mikihiko made a nod with convinced faces. While Miyuki showed only an inhumanely beautiful smile.

The conversation ended here. As if waiting for a lull in the conversation, the door of the room opened suddenly.

"Tatsuya-sama."

Miyuki, who had stood up even before the three-fold sliding door had fully opened, welcomed Tatsuya with a polite bow. Minami, who was slightly late, also hurried to give him a bow.

No one there was surprised at Miyuki's quick reaction. Even if it seemed so mysterious or irrational coming from another persons' perspective, for Tatsuya and Miyuki's friends, it wasn't so surprising anymore.

Erika, Leo, and Mikihiko were already accustomed to this incomprehensible ability to detect each other. Even through the door, that was made of gamma-ray shielding alloy covered by synthetic polymers that had a neutron shielding.

"Miyuki, Katsushige-san is calling. Come with me."

Tatsuya didn't even look at his friends and addressed only Miyuki, but none of them complained. This was because there was an atmosphere around Tatsuya, as if forcing it to be taken for granted.

Tatsuya was wearing an ultramarine blue colored flight armor suit, which at first glance could easily be mistaken for black. This was another version of the 'Freed Suit' developed by the Yotsuba family. This suit, along with a helmet, covered the entire body in armor, and now only the face shield of his helmet was raised.

The ‘Freed Suit’, used by Tatsuya before, could be called the ‘Civilian Version’ with a design that looked like an ‘unusual riding suit’ which one could wear even downtown and not seem suspicious.

In contrast [with the ‘Civilian Version’], now he was obviously wearing a combat suit emphasizing the armor on vital points, and there was also a handle of the melee knife exposed on one side. As opposed to the ‘Civilian Version’, it should be called the ‘Soldier Version’. This suit breaks many regulations allowed for civilians, and if the authorities caught one wearing this, they’re going to be treated as criminals. But whether the authorities would be able to arrest him or not is another question.

As this appearance clearly indicated that the battle was approaching, Erika and the others naturally thought that Tatsuya came to get Miyuki for something related to intercepting the enemy.

“Erika, Leo, and Mikihiko.”

However, Tatsuya didn’t forget or ignore those three.

“You guys stay here. If there’s something you want, Minami will take care of it for you. Don’t rush out into battle with the enemy.”

After Tatsuya made his statement loud and clear, Erika and Leo just shrugged their shoulders. Their reaction was equal to the confession «don’t expect us to be obedient».

“Mikihiko. Keep an eye on them for me.”

“Ah, yeah. I understand.”

After putting pressure on Mikihiko, Tatsuya left the room with Miyuki.

Mikihiko was the one forced to take responsibility in this situation solely because of the character traits of the 3 of them.



When Tatsuya entered the command room, Katsushige was changing out of his summer blazer and into a combat jacket (which had bulletproof, blade-proof, resistant to chemical weapons, and explosion-proof functions).

Katsushige’s trousers were made from the same material. It was similar to a flight armor suit, but in contrast to Tatsuya’s one-piece jumpsuit-type, it consisted of two parts. Both of its parts were pressed down by the jacket’s elastic belt, providing some airtightness, though not with the efficiency of the ‘Freed Suit’ or military Mobile Suit.

Nevertheless, it had the functionality needed for high-speed movements during short distances. It was sufficient for Katsushige who, unlike Tatsuya, was able to protect himself with magic alone.

“Sorry I made you wait.”

After locking up the belt and zipping the jacket’s collar, Katsushige turned around and replied:

“No, I’m sorry for suddenly calling you while [dressed] like this.”

With this, the greeting was over.

“Actually, the amphibious assault ship ‘Guam’ stopped just before it entered territorial waters.”

They refrained from such unproductive things like ‘competing for an apology’ and immediately proceeded to the main topic.

“I’d like to hear your opinion about the enemy’s intention.”

“Please tell me about the destroyers’ status.”

Tatsuya asked back instead of answering Katsushige’s question.

“The destroyer ‘Hull’ stopped about thirty kilometers east off the island, while ‘Ross’ is heading west at around fifty knots alongside the island’s southern border.”

“‘Guam’ seems to be waiting for ‘Ross’ to get into position.”

Upon hearing Katsushige’s answer, Tatsuya immediately expressed what he thought Katsushige would say next.

“Are they going to do a pinch attack with the two destroyers from east and west? But ‘Ross’ and ‘Hull’ are just naval melee escort ships mainly equipped with anti-aircraft and anti-submarine weaponry. They may have some missiles loaded which can be used for bombardment, but considering its capacity, there won’t be many. Unless they are going to use nuclear missiles... Are they planning to launch a nuclear attack?”

“They very likely won’t use nuclear missiles. I don’t think that the USNA government would turn a blind eye to it.”

Tatsuya’s answer had another meaning.

Katsushige didn’t miss it.

“...Are you saying that the enemy is prepared to use large-scale magic that is comparable to a nuclear attack?”

“It’s just a guess.”

“Even if it’s so, it doesn’t mean that we can sink them with a preemptive strike.”

“Miyuki and I will be preparing for long-range magic attacks from the destroyers.”

Tatsuya glanced over his shoulder towards Miyuki.

Miyuki nodded confidently.

“Okay. I’ll leave that to Tatsuya-kun and Miyuki-san. Meanwhile, I will repel the landing forces at the coast, as planned.”

After telling this to Tatsuya, Katsushige turned to Miyuki:

“Miyuki-san, please sit here.”

Saying that, Katsushige encouraged Miyuki to take the Commander’s Seat.

“Isn’t that seat entrusted to Katsushige-san from Oba-sama?”

“I got permission from the family’s head yesterday.”

“But...”

“Miyuki, just accept it thankfully. This Commander’s Seat has the functionality you need.”

Tatsuya added some advice to Miyuki who was hesitating. No, it was more like instructions rather than advice.

“If Onii-sama, that is, Tatsuya-sama, says so...”

Because of his unexpected advice, Miyuki inadvertently called Tatsuya «Onii-sama», but fortunately, neither Katsushige nor anyone else in the command room found this to be strange.

Right before she was going to take the Commander’s Seat, Miyuki made eye contact with Katsushige once more.

“What about Katsushige-san?”

“I’ll take command from a mobile command base on the northeast coast.”

The mobile command base that he referred to was an armored van with a built-in Tactical Data-Link System connected to the computer in the command room.

“With a flight device it won’t take much time to get there. Besides, it’s certainly more convenient to be near the site.”

“I understand, please be careful.”

“Thank you.”

Katsushige left the command room with his helmet under his arm.

Miyuki sat down on the Commander’s Seat and looked up at Tatsuya standing by her side.

“Tatsuya-sama, please tell me about the functions of this seat.”

“Strictly speaking, this desk has a special function, not the seat.”

“Desk?”

Miyuki made a dubious look.

That was only to be expected. There was nothing in front of the Commander’s Seat that’s installed on a circular platform and elevated one foot higher from the surrounding floor. Miyuki’s sitting figure was now in sight of the surrounding staff from head to toe.

“It’s faster to show you rather than explain it to you.” — Said Tatsuya and moved behind her diagonally to the right.

Miyuki followed Tatsuya with her eyes, while still having a dubious expression.

Tatsuya stretched his right hand over Miyuki’s shoulder toward the inner side of the right armrest.

Miyuki froze because it felt like an attempt to hug her from behind.

Tatsuya’s right hand pushed an inconspicuous button that was placed on the armrest’s inner side.

Then he removed his hand and straightened up.

Immediately after that, the wall that surrounded the back of the seat in a circular arc began to move from the left side of Miyuki to the front. After passing half of the circle and stopping before the Commander’s Seat, the wall started moving toward the seat.

Approaching a distance of 10 centimeters in front of Miyuki's hands, the arc wall transformed into a desk, surrounding the seat in an arc from the armrests' base on either side.

"This is...?"

Surprised with this exaggerated gimmick, Miyuki rounded her eyes.

"I honestly think they've been playing around too much..."

Seeing Tatsuya smile wryly, she realized that it probably wasn't his design.

"The engineer responsible for reconstructing this room was probably a special effects maniac or something like that."

Miyuki seemed relieved to know that Tatsuya also felt that this gimmick was strange.

"...So, what useful functions does it have?"

"Here."

Tatsuya, who 'escaped' outside the moving desk, reached out and touched a button that appeared on the table from Miyuki's right side.

The outer side of the table opened, and a mechanical 'arm' resembling a microphone stand extended out in front of Miyuki.

"Tatsuya-sama, what is this?"

"Miyuki, do you have the CAD that I gave you last night?"

"Of course."

Miyuki took out a CAD in the form of a compact handgun from her purse placed on her lap.

"Insert the CAD here."

The tip of the 'arm' that Tatsuya pointed to was shaped like a small pistol rack. When a gun-shaped device is inserted there, its 'barrel' is automatically clamped on both sides, thereby fixing it in place. The handle remains outside, so the CAD can be controlled even when it's installed on the rack of the 'arm'.

"This arm has the function of expanding the CAD aiming assistance. If you aim the 'muzzle' (when the CAD is set on the arm) to any image on the main screen, the Tactical Computer in this command room will transmit data on the target's position in a format suitable for the Activation Sequence to the CAD. Needless to say, your CAD is already

compatible with this system, so it can receive and utilize the Tactical Data. While sitting here, you can freely aim at any object within a fifty kilometer radius, as if you're seeing it with the naked eye."

"Just like Tatsuya-sama does with 'Elemental Sight'?"

Miyuki already realized that this system was designed specifically for her. Tatsuya who has 'Elemental Sight' doesn't need such a system. Actually, Tatsuya doesn't even need 'Third Eye' as an extended CAD with additional aim-assistance. With only a broadcast or satellite image, it's enough for Tatsuya to aim at the target. One could tell that this system acted as a [technological] replacement to the process of acquiring positional information, like 'Elemental Sight' does.

If you are asking if other magicians with this system could imitate Tatsuya — it would be impossible. Ordinary magicians couldn't apply magic to any distant object or area, located 10 kilometers away, even having location data in the form of an Activation Sequence. That would require magic power comparable to the 'Thirteen Apostles' such as Bezobrazov of the New Soviet Union, or like the amount of magic power that Miyuki possesses.

"With increased performance of the Enemy Search System connected to the Tactical Computer, it's possible to even reach the other side of the earth. As for the current system, a fifty kilometer radius is the limit."

But who installed this system here? Miyuki didn't think it was created based on Tatsuya's idea because he'd be against making magicians part of the weapon system. At the very least, Tatsuya would never consider using Miyuki as a part of a weapon.

Then it was probably Maya who ordered the installation of this equipment, and to use Miyuki for military purposes...

Miyuki stopped thinking further. Who conceived all this? What are their motives? For now, it doesn't matter. The main thing is that this system will be helpful in the upcoming battle.

Thanks to this system, Miyuki will be able to help Tatsuya.

"...I understand. I will master this system so that I can be useful to Tatsuya-sama."

Miyuki, for the time being, decided to think about it from this perspective.



8:50 AM. Finally, the amphibious assault ship 'Guam' has started military actions. Small high-speed boats descended from the hull to the sea surface through the stern slipways

one by one. And those weren't landing crafts for unloading military equipment, but assault boats²⁰ intent on delivering combatants carrying weapons.

There were six such boats in total. In addition to the crew, each boat carried 50 fighters, totaling 300 people — about two companies. This was rather small if we take into account that the 'Guam' was capable of delivering more than 1,000 soldiers. But given that the operation was unofficial, anyone who knew the current circumstances would applaud the fact that «they were able to gather so many people».

The assault boats weren't departing sequentially, but launched simultaneously after all 6 of them were on the sea's surface. Nevertheless, they didn't arrange into a formation. Those boats spread out and started advancing separately toward the east coast of Miyakijima. They seemingly didn't arrange into a formation, so as to not concentrate their attack on a narrow space, while their simultaneous start was to avoid the boats being destroyed one by one.

Even so, that was just six small boats. In theory, two companies should have enough troops to take an 8 square kilometer island. However, if they are distributed between 6 boats with a capacity of 50 people, the defending side should be able to sink them if it has 20-30 magicians capable of using long-range attack magic. Moreover, these magicians don't necessarily have to be users of powerful magic, such as Tatsuya or Miyuki.

Even without resorting to magic, if the coastal defense was equipped with modern anti-naval weaponry, those boats wouldn't even have time to get to the shore.

Even the captain of the landing ship 'Guam', who belonged to the USNA Armed Forces, had to understand that to some degree. As if to confirm this, simultaneously with the launching assault boats, unmanned attack fighters flew off the deck of the 'Guam'.

They were about 5 meters long — slightly larger than a small truck. For weaponry, they had only machine-guns (12.7 mm caliber) with the size of a high-caliber sniper rifle. It would be better to call them Gun Pod Drones instead of unmanned fighters.

They had single-type jet engine and canard type clipped delta wings with winglets, while their fuselage shape were similar to HiMAT²¹ — the unmanned experimental aircrafts from the second half of the last century.

These drones rely on a tactical philosophy of «using quantity and mobility» for eliminating light-armored aerial forces, infantry, and unarmored vehicles. Thanks to

²⁰ TLN: the term 'carrier-based/on-board boat' is in the source — this classification was used only by the Japanese Imperial Navy during WWII; the US Navy calls such vessel type 'assault boats'.

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rockwell_HiMAT

their small size, they can be loaded in large quantities on board landing ships, which have smaller hangars than aircraft carriers. For each boat, six drones were dispatched for air support. Plus eight drones were left circling above the 'Guam' as its guard.

Shibata Katsushige, who took position in a hollow on the other side of a hill along the coastal road, and kept track of the enemy's movements in real time through an information link between the command vehicle and the command room.

The enemy's assault boats penetrated deep into territorial waters, and were visible from the coastline even with the naked eye.

"Don't attack yet."

However, Katsushige has not yet given permission for interception. At this point, the only concrete measures taken against the invasion were the landing-obstruction fences installed last night along all of the possible landing sites. In less than one evening, they were able to construct a sturdy fence on par with the one installed along the national border against illegal immigration. This was only possible thanks to the convenient technology called magic, which in principle allowed them to make more preparations, but no aggressive measures, such as the installation of naval mines, were taken. So far, the Yotsuba family has avoided actions violating Japanese domestic laws.

There were blocks of wave-breakers piled up on the north and east coasts of the island. Military boats, used for amphibious landing, could overcome such obstacles, but the price for breaking through them would be very high. The first assault boats that reached the island were heading toward areas without wave-breakers, which could be called the logical choice.

Since their choice was logical, it was also natural to be vigilant of their opponent being prepared [with a welcoming party].

Actually, there was only sturdy fencing installed along the waterfront. There were no aggressive actions taken, like: hidden mines or turrets, or applying lethal-level, high-voltage current to the fencing.

However, the overly cautious enemy fired at the fencing with a grenade launcher even before approaching the shore. And it wasn't a single shot, but a simultaneous salvo of ten grenade launchers.

The fence had been severely damaged.

The attack was so redundant that even the warehouse building near the coast was damaged.

The incident was a clear action of sabotage to private property.

“—Start the counterattack.”

After confirming the damage, Katsushige gave his subordinates permission to open the battle in a calm and collected voice.



There weren't only Parasites among the soldiers sent from the 'Guam' landing ship.

Edward Clark promised in a secret talk with the Secretary of Defense that he «will not use humans with USNA nationality for the next assassination operation». At that time, Clark had intended to procure troops for the assassination from the Parasites, but at the stage of actually recruiting soldiers, the total number of Parasites turned out to be far less than he expected.

Therefore, Clark procured about 200 soldiers of foreign nationality who hoped for naturalization [in the USNA] by using the acquisition of citizenship after a successful operation as bait. Among them were even magicians, although they were low-level.

Around 90 people were the Stardust members, who themselves wished to become Parasites for the sake of prolonging their lives.

There were also nine members of the Stars, including the surviving Parasites of the Stellar-class: Captain Rigel of the Sixth Unit, Second-Lieutenant Bellatrix, and Second-Lieutenant Alnilam.

The commander of the assault boat landing party that was first to arrive on Miyakijima was Sergeant Alejandro Mimas, a Satellite-class member of the Stars born in the former Mexican territory. He was dispatched to Japan in the winter of 2096 and was seriously injured in a fight with Tatsuya. Sergeant Mimas turned into a Parasite because he wanted retaliation against Tatsuya.

This assassination operation was long-awaited for Mimas. He was one of the most active participants who signed up for this mission. Mimas' boat was the first to reach the shore because under his pressure, the crew drove the boat extravagantly, without being distracted by caution.

It was Mimas who ordered the use of grenades against the fencing that prevented landing. He had a short temper even when he was human, but when he became a Parasite, that inclination intensified immensely.

Speaking of the effects of Parasitism: when he was a human, Mimas was a magician who mastered the heating of objects by Systematic Oscillation-type magic. Like pyrokinesis, this magic could freely heat objects in the user's field of vision. However, it

wasn't the only magic that he could use. He also mastered the Stars' secret magic – 'Molecular Divider'.

However, assimilation with the Parasites altered his abilities. As observed among many of the Parasites, their magic skills become highly specialized in a small number of magics. In Mimas' case, his skills were more inclined towards the magic called 'Bio Ignition'²² a Heating-type magic.

As the name suggests, 'Bio Ignition' literally causes ignition of the bodies of living beings, but for some reason, has no effect on the corpses of organisms or materials derived from organisms. For example, a live tree can be burned, but coal cannot be ignited. This is another unsolved mystery of the technology called 'Magic'.

In return, Mimas gained incomparable power in battle against humans. Besides, he was able to activate that magic with very little Interference Strength. The reason for this was probably due to the aforementioned limitations of this magic. With 'Bio Ignition', he was able to kill a superior magician, which his magic normally couldn't penetrate because of insufficient Interference Strength.

In this situation, his 'Bio Ignition' wouldn't have any effect on the artificial fencing. Although, in the landing party he commanded there were magicians with the ability to attack remote targets. However, Mimas couldn't destroy the obstacle with his magic, so he made a hasty decision and gave the order to destroy it with conventional weapons.

"Begin landing!"

Mimas ordered as soon as the assault boat docked on shore. At the moment, he was so eager for revenge that he only looked forward. He didn't even order the search for enemies, which he should've done before landing.

One by one, the soldiers began to go ashore. More precisely, it would be more correct to say «they began to descend», since the deck was above ground level. But in fact, most of the soldiers simply jumped from the edge of the deck to the paved surface. It seemed like Mimas' attitude was contagious, because they didn't show vigilance in relation to their surroundings.

Suddenly, such a heedless landing party was hit by a storm of arrows.

They didn't rain down from above.

²² 生体発火; seitai hakka; 'Bio Ignition', as literal would be Living Body Ignition, which is different with 人体発火; jintai hakka, as literal would be Human Body Ignition; or as we know as Human Ignition, which Minoru often used as variant of Spark.

Short arrows about 50 centimeters long were striking like horizontal rain from one side.

There were about 30 arrows in each wave flying from the shadows of the warehouse in short intervals. The magician members in the landing party quickly responded and raised anti-object shields, but around 1/3 of the members were injured by the arrows.

No one was fatally wounded, but more than 10% of the platoon were incapacitated — those six people were either pierced in their legs or abdomen.

“Fire at that corner with grenades! Those of you who can use healing magic — take care of the injured. Bring the severely injured, who are unable to continue fighting, back to the assault boat!”

Following Mimas’ command, the landing members started to move at once. Eighteen non-magicians loaded their assault rifles with grenades, stepped forward, and took a firing position on one knee. Behind them, two magicians rushed to give healing treatment to the ten people who were slightly injured, while three other magicians started transporting the six seriously injured people to the boat using magic. Incidentally, these five magicians [who were helping the injured] weren’t Parasites.

Two non-commissioned officers stood beside the shooters who had taken a firing position on one knee. One of them swung down their hand with the command: “Shoot!” The next moment, nine simultaneous grenades were fired.

The nine soldiers after shooting stepped back with the signaling officer, after that another non-commissioned officer raised one hand. Peering into the dust raised in the impact area, the officer suddenly shouted: “Sergeant!”

“No sign of the enemy shooters.”

Mimas put binoculars to his eyes. There were no signs of humans on the other side of the wall destroyed by grenades. There were also no corpses on the ground.

“Stop firing.”

As soon as Mimas gave the order, another swarm of arrows came at them, flying in an arc around the place where the wall used to be.

Mimas understood the trick that prevented them from finding the enemy shooters — bending trajectories using magic. They changed the trajectory of the arrows with magic, manipulating them to fly around the warehouse in an arc.

“Shields!”

Mimas' reaction was immediate, but it couldn't be said that he made it on time. In this volley, more than twenty people were injured, including the soldiers who adopted a posture for grenade attacks along with their Squad Leader. Eleven out of the twenty injured were forced to withdraw from the battlefield.

Including the first seriously injured, there were 17 withdrawals, which already exceeded 1/3 of this landing party. With these casualty rates, it would be normal to consider a full-retreat.

Perhaps even the 'Guam' couldn't overlook their catastrophic situation. The drones, escorting the assault boat before landing, flew above Mimas – presumably in order to eliminate an ambush from the sky.

However, of the six drones that invaded the airspace above the ground, three were already shot down one by one.

There were no missiles to intercept the drones in sight.

There were no gunfire sounds either.

“Phonon Maser...?” — Muttered Mimas with suspicion in his voice. Phonon Maser itself isn't such a rare magic. A high Interference Strength is required for its activation. However, the Phenomenon Rewriting during the process was relatively simple. We could say that in this case, only the frequency of sound waves was pushed to the limit.

However, when it comes to a real battle, it is this «pushed to the limit» part that becomes a bottleneck.

In order to shoot down a highly maneuverable drone, it's necessary to generate a sufficient amount of heat during a moment of irradiation. It's completely different from an attack on a stationary target. In order to obtain that much power requires a [waves'] frequency that, without exaggeration, can be called 'hyper-oscillation'. The required Interference Strength is proportionate to that [frequency].

(There was no information that Shiba Tatsuya could use Phonon Maser.)

(Shiba Miyuki should specialize in wide-area cooling magic.)

(In addition to those two, here is a combat magician capable of using such high-powered magic...)

(After all, the Yotsuba are... way too dangerous!)

Apart from the desire for revenge against Tatsuya, a sense of worry arose in Mimas' mind.

The three remaining drones gained altitude. Possibly the operator controlling the drones decided that if they continued to try to eliminate the ambush (which they still couldn't find), all the drones would simply be shot down.

In the meantime, volleys of arrows continued.

(Only I / we will go further.)

Alejandro Mimas called to the Parasite of the same platoon via the Mind Link.

(I agree with Alejandro's / our decision.)

(I agree.)

(I agree.)

(I agree.)

(I / we are moving further.)

(Let's go.)

(Let's go.)

(Let's go.)

Eight Parasites telepathically responded to Mimas' suggestion.

"Sergeant!?" — His assistant, a Staff Sergeant who wasn't infected with a Parasite, called out to Mimas, who suddenly began to move forward.

"Sergeant Colombo, I'm transferring command to you. Return with the remaining soldiers."

Mimas replied to the Staff-Sergeant without stopping and plunged into a storm of arrows with eight Parasites from Stardust.



A food warehouse located about 50 meters away from the coastline. Having knocked down three drones from its roof, Tsutsumi Kanata felt signs of different magic approaching from the side of the embankment.

"This is... Are these signs of Parasites?"

Kanata had a habit of thinking aloud in order to digest information obtained during combat faster. Even now he involuntarily spoke to himself.

“If they’re able to block those arrows, whose penetrating ability has been increased with inertia control magic, with anti-object shields... They are on the same level with the fighters of the Shibata family in terms of raw magic power.”

Among the entire Yotsuba clan, the Shibata family was a side branch with the strongest disposition for maintaining their private army. They specialized not in assassinations and sabotage, but in frontal assaults and base defense.

When compared only by physical combat power (in the sense of not using Mental Interference Magic), the combat magicians of the Shibata family were considered the strongest among all of the branch families. Perhaps they even surpassed the Main family’s mercenary forces.

And those Parasites have power comparable to the magicians composing the core of the fighting forces of the Shibata family. At least, that was Kanata’s assessment after clashing with their magic.

“Perhaps it would be better to lend them a hand.”

The defense squad and Parasites haven’t faced each other yet, however, if the enemy decides on a close range attack, then the defenders wouldn’t be able to avoid a hard fight.

Kanata and the Parasites couldn’t see each other directly, being in the blind spots of each other. However, Kanata was the second generation of the ‘Bard series’ — enhanced magicians with a high aptitude for Oscillation-Type Magic interfering with sound. Emitting inaudible ultrasound, he could easily calculate the position, shape, and movement of a distant object from its reflection.

He was also capable of precision firing with magic based on that information.

Kanata shot the non-lethal magic ‘Echo Cannon’, aiming at the Parasites in the rear instead of the front.

There were three reasons for choosing non-lethal magic instead of the highly lethal Phonon Maser:

First, he couldn’t ignore the possibility that Phonon Maser (as Pinpoint Sniping) would be detected during the magic activation and the enemy would evade it. ‘Echo Cannon’ was also a targeted attack, but still had some Area of Effect.

The second was to measure the Parasites’ physical stamina. ‘Echo Cannon’ was magic that temporarily disrupts the functions of a human body. If the Parasites’ bodies aren’t different from humans’ by their structure and physical strength, then the ‘Echo Cannon’ would demonstrate all its usual effects. The answer to the question «will the usual

anti-personnel attack on the Parasite work, or not?» would be useful information for subsequent battles with the Parasites.

And thirdly, it would slow the progress of the Parasites. If they are killed, they will simply abandon the corpses of their comrades and move on. With a decrease in their number, their speed of advancement may, on the contrary, increase. At the same time, when using a paralyzing attack, there was a chance that they would all stop in order to protect their wounded ally.

In order to confirm the effects of ‘Echo Cannon’, Kanata activated the next magic — ‘Active Sonar’.



Suddenly, Mimas sensed signs of magic somewhere above, though not right overhead, but somewhere closer toward the end of their double column formation.

Although they were all Parasites, the individual characteristics of each of them depended on the level of the person with whom assimilation occurred. The Stars members even of Satellite-class clearly had higher levels of innate abilities than those of the Stardust.

Stardust’s fighting power had been forcibly increased by biochemical enhancement, and such ‘boosts’ weren’t reflected in the Parasites’ abilities. For this reason, only Alejandro Mimas caught the signs of magic activation.

Since the Parasites share consciousness, that information was instantly transmitted to the other eight members. However, the information about the activation point was shown relative to Mimas’ body.

They shared one consciousness, but had individual bodies.

If they try to avoid that magic from the initial information about its detected activation signs, the result would be confusion and disorder.

A roaring explosive sound hit two rear soldiers from above.

One of them was brushed by a small cluster of sound waves, while the other was hit directly with ‘Echo Cannon’.

That sound not only caused hearing impairment, but also partially blocked the connection between the mind and the physical body.

This affected all the Parasites with shared consciousness.

In particular, the largest impact was exerted on the eight Parasites walking nearby, including Mimas.

The Parasite who had been hit directly had only a part of their body temporarily immobilized.

However, the other seven experienced the unpleasant illusion of a ‘lack’ of a physical body.

After acquiring a physical body by assimilation with a human, the spiritual life form ‘Parasite’ stabilizes its existence in this world. And while drifting in this world in ‘spiritual form’, its state is unstable.

The cases when the Parasites become trapped or locked into a mechanical body, like Pixie or the Parasite Dolls, indicates that even such a state is more stable than the stand-alone spiritual body.

For spiritual bodies, ‘instability’ means ‘insecurity’. The physical body brings stability to the Parasites, while partial body loss brings about some sort of ‘anxiety’ associated with ‘instability’ — the loss of a vessel.

For Kanata, the results exceeded all expectations: ‘Echo Cannon’ caused a surge of anger and hatred inside the Parasites.

(I / individual named Alejandro Mimas will eliminate this enemy.)

Mimas, who detected the source of magic, announced to the others his decision to reach and kill Kanata.

(I / we will help with the movement.)

Other Parasites offered Mimas the help with movement, as his ability to move with the help of magic greatly deteriorated when specializing in ‘Bio Ignition’.

(Then start the transfer.)

(Transferring.)

After the exchange of thoughts was finished, Mimas’ body disappeared from the road.



“What!?”

(They’ve noticed me!?)

Kanata shouted aloud and in his thoughts when he sensed that those strong signs of a presence started approaching in a straight line toward where he was, the food warehouse.

The distance between them was about 250 meters. It would be an exaggeration to say that for magicians, such a distance was like nothing, but it still wasn't such a great distance to make it difficult to perceive each other. But for Kanata, it was in the nature of things during a sudden attack to carefully suppress the signs of magic, leaking of psychic energy in the form of surplus psions, allowing someone to detect the place of magic activation — that is, the place where he himself was.

Nevertheless, that Parasite was definitely heading for Kanata. Which meant that the magic perception ability of that Parasite exceeded Kanata's concealment technique.

Although Kanata had no intention of underestimating his opponent, he was forced to admit that he was naive.

At the same time, he firmly resolved to fight back instead of running away. Who knows what damage to allies this enemy will bring if left alone. Of all the magicians in charge of this sector, Kanata had the highest fighting strength. «If not me, then who?» — such a sense of duty made him stay here.

It took less than five seconds for Kanata to choose his counter-attack. At that moment when he decided, there were signs that the enemy was already in close proximity.

(—Now!)

The Parasite showed up on the roof where Kanata was located.

At the same moment, Kanata released Phonon Maser.

Mimas reached the enemy who made the surprise attack in two jumps.

The next moment, he felt the activation of attack magic and raised his arms in front of his vital points.

Intense heat occurred on his left arm that covered his heart.

Mimas isolated the sensation of his left arm.

By the time he realized that it was a Phonon Maser attack aimed at the heart, his left arm was already burned to the elbow.

His arm wasn't pierced thanks to the effect of 'Vacuum shield' (the most popular defensive magic that protects against air attacks, such as magic bullets from compressed air), which was deployed with his magic power as a regular member of the Stars (although his other skills had been reduced due to his specialization in other abilities). It was also thanks to the heat resistance of a forearm protector developed specifically for the USNA Special Operations Forces.

Still, it was a serious injury that caused third-degree burns to the elbow. Normally, it would be so painful that no one could move.

However, the Parasites have an ability to block physical senses for preventing any extra damage to their True Body — the spiritual one. Though one could become incapacitated if they blocked their physical senses at the wrong time, this allows one to keep fighting with continuous pain.

To prevent the enemy's second shot, Mimas first activated 'Bio Ignition' aimed at Kanata's right arm, which was aiming back at him with a gun-shaped CAD.

"Guaaaaa!"

Kanata screamed in pain. Sticking his right arm out in front of him, he fell to his knees.

Kanata had not lost his vigilance. He perceived that the Parasite, who used their own left arm to shield against Phonon Maser, was also trying to counterattack with magic.

The Parasite was simply faster. Kanata was already at the stage of reading the Activation Sequence to shoot a second Phonon Maser. Regardless of that, the Parasite was the first one to finish his magic.

The heat wasn't even felt by Kanata. The pain was so strong that all the senses except 'pain' was squeezed out of his mind.

His arm was engulfed in fire for just one moment.

In that short period of time, his arm was charred to the middle of his shoulder.

He no longer felt anything in his right arm. At the moment, severe pain was transmitting from the base of his shoulder.

The CAD gripped in his right hand fell onto the warehouse's flat roof with a noise, along with the carbonized fingers from his right hand.

After a moment, the lower part from the elbow fell off. With the fall of his arm, charred remnants of skin and muscular tissues scattered revealing white bones.

“—Shit!”

Perhaps witnessing the loss of his right arm raised his fighting spirit, which surpassed the pain.

With a meaningless scream that served both as self-inspiration and a curse on the enemy, Kanata rose to his feet, despite the fact that his knees were trembling.

His eyes were filled with fighting spirit and murderous intent — and with a clear intention to use magic.

However, in his current condition when even using a CAD was hampered by pain, he couldn't take the initiative against the enemy — Parasite.

The Parasite, Mimas, activated his magic faster than Kanata could complete his Magic Sequence.

Even with the burned right arm, the Yotsuba's combat magician didn't lose his fighting spirit.

On the contrary, even without one arm, he was about to release magic to counter-attack.

Upon seeing such a figure, even Mimas, who had become a Parasite, couldn't help but admire him.

That's precisely why he couldn't turn a blind eye here. Leaving this tough enemy will only bring damage to his allies.

Mimas constructed the Magic Sequence of 'Bio Ignition' with the maximum amount of power that he was currently able to use.

Such power wasn't required at all to kill his seriously-injured enemy — Kanata. To grant an instant death without suffering — this was a peculiar show of respect paid by Mimas toward the enemy.

Magicians who are turned into Parasites don't need a CAD, while their magic activation speed also improves.

Although Mimas' current 'Bio Ignition' was excessively powerful, it was completed prior to the magic Kanata had tried to construct.

Mimas activated 'Bio Ignition'.

Kanata's whole body burned in an instant... more precisely, it was supposed to burn.

“What?”

But nothing happened. There was certainly an indication that the magic had activated, but it was canceled just before the phenomenon of the human body's ignition became a reality.

The magic was erased.

By someone.

Mimas hurriedly turned around.

Not because he felt someone's presence. It was completely an intuitive move.

Behind him was a figure in a combat suit that was protecting vital points with armor.

The face was hidden under the helmet. From the silhouette, it was obviously a man.

His empty right hand was stretched out toward Mimas.

(This guy...!)

Mimas didn't know who it was, but intuitively understood that it was <this guy> who had erased his magic.

Mimas aimed 'Bio Ignition' at the man in the helmet.

During that moment, he completely forgot about Kanata.

Blood suddenly sprouted out from the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth of Mimas, who showed his back to Kanata.

After which his body collapsed forward.

There was a hole burned in the back of his head.

As if relieved with the enemy's death, Kanata also fell down unconscious.

Mimas was defeated by Phonon Maser from Kanata, who had gathered the last bit of his strength to release it.

Kanata didn't stop constructing the Magic Sequence for Phonon Maser even when Mimas' 'Bio Ignition' had been finished (but the phenomenon of ignition had not yet manifested).

Phonon Maser, fired along Kanata's line of sight, successfully pierced the back of Mimas' head and burned his brain. While the blood sprouting from the Parasite's facial openings was pushed out of the skull as a result of the boiling cerebrospinal fluid.

Destroying the brain means the death of the Parasite's physical body.

However, that alone won't destroy the Parasite's True Body. It will just escape from the corpse.

Returning to the state of a spiritual body, the Parasite will try to possess a living human host to replace the dead physical body. And right below the Parasite, which was 'Mimas' a few seconds ago, was a human body lying unconscious.

Following the instinct of stabilizing its existence, the Parasite tried to take refuge in Kanata's body. However, when the Parasite tried to move in, it suddenly lost its 'foundation' in the form of a Psion Information Body, which in this world, was supporting the Pushion Information Body, which was the core of its True Body.

The 'foundation' of its existence — the Psion Information Body — was decomposed into small pieces.

The support which allows the spiritual life-form to be in this world had been destroyed. As a result, the spiritual life-form disappeared from this world, as if being drawn into an invisible vortex.

The Parasite, which had been dwelling in the Stars' Satellite-class magician Sergeant Alejandro Mimas, vanished from our universe.

(Elimination of the Parasite is confirmed.)

After killing the Parasite with 'Astral Dispersion', Tatsuya pulled out his gun-shaped CAD from his waist with his left hand — his favorite Silver Horn Custom 'Trident', and pointed it toward Kanata, who was still lying unconscious.

'Regrowth' activated.

Hidden beneath the helmet, Tatsuya frowned slightly. It wasn't possible to ignore the hundredfold concentrated pain that he experienced from using 'Regrowth' on Kanata's burned right arm.

However, Tatsuya showed only that reaction to such pain.

After restoring Kanata's burned arm, Tatsuya operated the panel on the side of the helmet to establish a connection with the Mobile Base.

“Katsushige-san.”

“Tatsuya-kun, what is it?”

“Tsutsumi Kanata is lying on the roof of the food warehouse. Arrange a rescue team for him.”

The communicator clearly conveyed that Katsushige, on the other end of the communication line, was catching his breath.

“...What’s the state of his injury?”

“He’s not injured, just unconscious.”

“I see. I’m really grateful.”

Even without further explanation, Katsushige understood that Tatsuya had healed Kanata, who was so badly wounded that he had even lost consciousness, with magic.

“I will continue to wipe out Parasites.”

“Copy that.”

Tatsuya’s role at this point was to prevent the Parasites’ True Bodies from escaping. As could be seen in Mimas’ example, simply killing the human host doesn’t actually mean that the Parasite will be defeated. It will simply leave the corpse and move on to the next host.

However, the assimilation requires «a person with a strong and pure desire», so not every person who becomes a host turns into a Parasite. That is, even if the assimilation fails, the Parasite’s True Body will simply change the host and thereby will not disappear from this world.

In that respect, Tatsuya with ‘Mist Dispersion’ and ‘Astral Dispersion’ was capable of destroying both the Physical & True Bodies of the Parasites.

Tatsuya took off from the food warehouse roof in search of his next prey.



Seven Parasites attacked a defense squad who were armed with crossbows.

The defense squad combatants threw away their crossbows and started counterattacking by directly firing arrows using magic, but they were at a disadvantage. One by one, they were falling under the onslaught of the Parasites.

“Oh, not again!” — Shouted Erika, who was watching the scene on the shelter’s large display.

“Ngh... There’s still no reinforcements!?” — Leo, who was next to her, leaked this with a reluctant voice while grinding his teeth.

“Their level is entirely different from the Parasites that we fought before...”

In contrast with these two, Mikihiko still kept calm, nevertheless he couldn’t conceal his surprise.

“I can’t stand it anymore! Minami, open the door!”

Erika stood up and shouted toward Minami.

Minami showed no agitation at her loud voice.

“Where are you going?”

“Helping out of course!” — Answered Erika.

“Where are you going?”

But Minami once again asked the exact same question.

“Wha...”

“At the moment, there are ongoing battles in nine different places on the island. Of these, in three spots our people are at a disadvantage. However, reinforcements have already been sent to each of these places. The combat situation should turn around soon.”

While Erika was at a loss for words, Minami readily explained the current situation.

“Then what’s with the battle we’re seeing? Will you just abandon them?”

Erika, whose eagerness dampened, retorted with a displeased tone.

“No, almost there.”

As expected, Minami’s stance was unwavering.

Her eyes weren’t directed at Erika but toward a side console. The data displayed there was what gave Minami such confidence.

“What’s almost there!?”

“He has arrived.”

Minami shifted her gaze from the small console monitor to the large wall-mounted display.

Erika's stare followed in the same direction.

And at that moment.

A human figure in a dark-colored combat suit descended into the frame.

"Tatsuya-kun!?"

It was the combat suit worn by Tatsuya earlier. Even though his face was now hidden under a helmet, Erika and the rest recognized him right away.

Tatsuya waved his empty right hand toward the Parasites.

With that alone, more than half of the Parasites (4 out of the 7) disappeared.

The three friends looking at the display widened their eyes.

"What the hell was that..."

Stunned, Leo murmured.

"There's a fully thought-operated CAD built-in the combat suit of Tatsuya-sama."

Minami immediately added an explanation.

But that didn't answer his question.

No, Leo's words weren't even a question in the first place.

"Is that magic? Was that Tatsuya's magic...?"

Mikihiko's murmur wasn't a question either, but Minami dutifully answered:

"I'm sorry. I'm not authorized to answer that."

Neither Mikihiko nor Erika complained about Minami's reply.

All three of them have been on the battlefield with Tatsuya several times. However, this is the first time they've seen the details of Tatsuya fighting — of him erasing people with 'Mist Dispersion'.

Tatsuya waved his hand again on the screen.

With that alone, all the Parasites that were overwhelming the defense squad of more than thirty combatants disappeared.

Immediately after that, the footage switched to another place.

No one complained about it.

“That was... that kind of thing was magic, right...?”

Only Erika’s terrified murmur had silently passed by everyone’s ears, and then disappeared.



Tatsuya looked at the True Bodies of the seven Parasites.

As expected, he failed to ‘see’ the structure of the Pushion Information Bodies.

However, Tatsuya was already used to recognizing (‘seeing’ + analyzing) the Psion Information Bodies holding Parasites in this world, so he could feel their existence at the level of «there is something there».

He loaded and launched the Activation Sequence for ‘Astral Dispersion’ from the CAD integrated into his suit.

Now he was able to construct this magic as easily and naturally as ‘Mist Dispersion’.

Tatsuya raised his right hand above his head. He didn’t use the gun-shaped CAD because the Parasites don’t exist in the material dimension and aren’t directly related to physical existence. Tatsuya knew from personal experience that in such cases, the aiming assistance function in specialized CAD’s is instead a hindrance.

(The magic for decomposing the structure, supporting Psion Information Bodies, ‘Astral Dispersion’... activate.)

Aiming his mental sight towards all seven spiritual life forms, he waved his hand down in a horizontal position.

‘Astral Dispersion’ activated.

The True Bodies of the Parasites were drawn into an invisible vortex. Apparently, this vortex was a kind of dimensional passage leading to the world in which the Parasites originally existed. After the destruction of the Psion Information Bodies, serving as the anchor that holds the Parasites in our world, the True Bodies of the Parasites were literally ‘dragged’ into the world they should be in.

Seven Parasites disappeared.

They ceased to exist in both the Material and Information Dimensions that make up our universe.

The Parasites were destroyed by Tatsuya's magic.

The video footage that was shown in the shelter switched to another place to prevent Erika and the others from seeing 'Astral Dispersion'.

In particular, this magic shouldn't be shown to Mikihiko. This was the general opinion of both Maya and the technical experts of the Yotsuba Main House.

'Astral Dispersion' is a magic that interferes with the mind, albeit indirectly. The Yotsuba Main House still hadn't finished its analysis on it. They thought that if magicians of ancient magic came to know about that spell, they could develop variations of it that could pose a threat to the Yotsuba family.

To preserve this secret, not only was Minami given the corresponding order, but the Video-Streaming System was also programmed to automatically switch the footage after the destruction of the Parasites' physical bodies.



Perhaps the strongest enemies from the USNA military storming Miyakijima were in an assault boat led by Captain Orlando Rigel, captain of the Stars Sixth Unit.

During the platoons formation for this surprise attack, the USNA military didn't evenly divide the available military forces. Rigel's men from the Stars' Sixth Unit (Lieutenant Ian Bellatrix and Lieutenant Samuel Alnilam) were also present in his current platoon. All of them originally specialized in fighting together as one battle group — this was probably taken into consideration, but they also decided to gather together the only Stellar-class members of Stars who joined this mission. The result was an overwhelming superiority in fighting strength compared to the other attacking platoons.

Despite that, the landing party commanded by Captain Rigel failed to advance further along the coastal road.

Because the path of Rigel, Bellatrix, and Alnilam got blocked by Shibata Katsushige.



"...So strong."

Mikihiko expressed his admiration while watching the footage on the display that had been switched to another place.

“He’s definitely not your average fighter...” — Muttered Leo after him.

Erika just stared at the display silently.

At the moment, the display was showing a battle involving a defense squad commanded by Katsushige, who had left the mobile base.

“...Sakurai. Who is this man? Does the Yotsuba family have such strong people?”

“Shibata Katsushige-sama is the next head of one of the Yotsuba’s branch families. It’s said that his power is in the top ten among the whole clan.”

“Woah! Someone from the Yotsuba top ten. That makes sense. I can feel a little relieved.”

Leo responded to Minami’s answer with a relieved voice.

“You say it so casually. ‘His power is in the top ten’ means there are nine more people in the Yotsuba family that have at least the same power level as that man. I don’t feel relieved at all.”

But the relaxed atmosphere disappeared in an instant with Erika’s words, which broke her silence. The reason why Leo didn’t argue was probably because he agreed with Erika’s comment.

“...But I still don’t get it. With such strength, they could’ve repelled the enemy before they even approached the shore. But they didn’t — why?”

Or maybe his thoughts focused on another point.

“Perhaps, it was done on purpose.”

This time it wasn’t Minami who responded to Leo’s question, but Erika.

“I also think so.”

Mikihiko supported Erika’s speculation.

“Why?”

“To establish an alibi.”

“What?” — Leo responded doubtfully to Erika’s reply.

“After all, we were specially left as witnesses to attest that they counterattacked in self-defense only after the unlawful invasion.” – Mikihiko turned around and explained to Leo. Mikihiko’s expression was so serious like he was boxed into a corner.

“But hadn’t we ourselves volunteered to be witnesses? Although this is really annoying, it’s not like we can complain.”

Erika replied with a dry laugh. She didn’t avert her eyes from the footage for even a moment. Leo and Mikihiko from this moment on also didn’t turn away.



Rigel failed to suppress his impatience because the [enemy’s] fierce resistance exceeded all expectations.

As a Parasite, his agitation was transmitted to Bellatrix, Alnilam, and the other Parasites.

It’s unacceptable for a commander to show such feelings to his subordinates. Even knowing that, he felt more and more impatient.

Instead of the closest landing site on the assault boats’ course, which was the west coast of Miyakijima, he chose the road along the north coast. The target of their current mission wasn’t the plant construction area on the island’s east side, but the assassination of the magician, who was supposedly on the west side of the island.

If they landed at the harbor on the east coast, they would have to pass between many buildings (constructed as well as under construction). There would also be many obstacles that could hide an interception unit.

However, landing on the west coast wasn’t a good idea either. The buildings on the west coast were previously known to be used as a prison for magicians, so it had been fortified and completed with guns as measures against escapes.

On the other hand, the north coast was only a roadway connecting the old prison facility on the west with the Stellar Furnace plant on the east, which provided good vantage points. If one lands there, they wouldn’t need to worry about ambushes or facing the artillery bombardment from the naval defense system. It was also highly possible that the target himself would come to intercept them.

Taking that into consideration, Rigel had chosen a point on the west of the north coast as the landing site. It was hard to pass through the wave-breakers, but they weren’t confronted with barrage fire or any magic [attacks], so their boat safely reached the shore.

Prior to disembarking, everything went too smoothly. At this point, they should have suspected that it was «somehow too easy».

The moment when the whole landing party (except the boat's operating crew) went down the embankment and stood on the road, shock waves mixed with gravel struck them.

What was released towards them was the most popular attack magic — compressed air bullets. But there were small pieces of solidified lava mixed into the mass of compressed air. When the compressed air bullets collided with the ground, the compression was canceled [the air expanded at an explosive rate]. There appeared to be blasts of gravel being blown away by the shock waves.

On the battlefield, they often used similar techniques to increase their magic attack power. Most often, nails or small pieces of scrap metal are added to the air mass. This island for the most part was made of solidified lava; therefore, it was possible to prepare any amount of gravel. And the use of already solidified, rather than molten, lava could even be called a humane act.

However, with this attack, about half of the landing party lost their combat effectiveness. The ones who remained were the magicians who sensed the signs of magic in time and raised their shields, as well as the Parasites who were capable of ignoring injuries from blows with gravel. Although, the non-magician soldiers were completely incapacitated. There were few killed, but all the wounded, who received multiple hits with pieces of solidified lava throughout the body, lay there and moaned while bleeding.

Rigel, however, didn't care about the killed soldiers. As mentioned earlier, this place was an excellent vantage point. During the landing, there were no visible enemy figures because they were hiding in a hole dug out beyond the hill. But now, after the enemy got out of the trench to attack, they could already be seen.

Rigel ordered the platoon to counterattack, and he himself also released magic at the enemy.

However, his magic was stopped by a tall young magician who stood in the vanguard of the intercepting squad.

Rigel's height was about 175 cm, while one of his subordinates, Lieutenant Alnilam, was 183 cm, his other subordinate, Second Lieutenant Bellatrix, was 184 cm.

But the young man who stopped his magic was even taller. Perhaps his height was close to 190 cm. He was noticeably taller than the rest of the enemies. Besides, the

enemies stood on a hillside that towered above their current position. For Rigel, it undoubtedly looked like some ‘insurmountable obstacle’.

“What damn magic power!”

Bellatrix’s cursing reached Rigel’s ears. Rigel was now experiencing exactly the same feelings.

Now, Alnilam also joined their attacks, and already 3 of them were firing at the enemy with magic. However, the protection of the young magician wasn’t letting up. On the contrary, despite being three against one, Rigel, Bellatrix, and Alnilam were constantly forced to interrupt their attacks and switch to defending themselves from the magic of the young magician who regularly found the right time to shoot something at them during pauses.

(I / we will use ‘Thunder’. Together.)

(Roger.)

(Roger.)

Synchronizing their actions through the Parasites’ shared consciousness, Rigel, Bellatrix, and Alnilam shoot at the young magician — Katsushige — with a Systematic Release-type magic called ‘Thunder’.

Unlike Mimas (a Satellite-class member of the Stars), these three weren’t significantly affected by the negative effects of being infected by one of the Parasites (must be because they were members of a higher, Stellar-class) and weren’t as severely limited in the types of magic, which they were able to use.

Well, they were affected negatively, but only a little. Perhaps that disadvantage had almost no effect [on them] because all three were originally able to use many types of magic.

Anyway, those three chose the same magic and were able to not only avoid any reduction of power because of the interference of Magic Sequences, but were also able to amplify its power.

Unfortunately, the combined effect wasn’t multiplicative in power, but simply added together. Even so, the lightning strike, with power almost 3 times higher than a single attack, came at Katsushige from above.

Katsushige diverted the lightning strike.

Without moving a single step or shifting his torso aside, he altered the distribution of the air's electrical resistance, causing the electron beam to divert and flow into the ground some distance away from him.

Then, at the moment when the lightning disappeared, Katsushige's counterattack reached Rigel's team.

All three of them suddenly felt the sense of pressure on their entire body. After each of them reflexively deployed a pressure-resistant shield, they realized why they had felt pressure — the atmospheric pressure surrounding them was increasing.

Immediately after they deployed the shields, as if reacting to this, the atmospheric pressure sharply rose even higher.

(Deploying 'Cooling Zone'.)

(Deploying 'Cooling Zone'.)

(Deploying 'Cooling Zone'.)

Thanks to the cognitive synchronization, the trio released identical magic on Rigel's command.

They formed the field around themselves in order to lower the air temperature, which had risen with the pressure²³.

At that moment, heat was more dangerous than pressure. The threefold increase in atmospheric pressure is within the limits of adaptation of the human body and can still be tolerated. However, the temperature had risen to over 600 °C due to the atmospheric pressure increase (since the world adapts to the situation), which was something that the Parasites' physical body couldn't endure.

Katsushige's specialty was 'Density Manipulation' magic. The full name of the magic is 'Pressure / Density Manipulation'. This magic can separately manipulate pressure and density by proportionally altering those parameters in a natural environment. This magic can be applied in 3 different ways: by controlling the density without changing the pressure, controlling the pressure without altering the density, and controlling the density and pressure at the same time.

At the moment, the atmospheric pressure was increased [by Katsuhige] without changing its density.

Compared to Tatsuya's 'Decomposition' and Miyuki's wide-area cooling magic, it looked very simple at first glance. However, only a threefold increase in pressure

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adiabatic_process#Adiabatic_heating_and_cooling

demonstrates such a killing power. No wonder Katsushige was considered as «the strongest representative from the Yotsuba's branch families when compared by combat strength of simple magic».

To avoid the extreme heat, the three Parasites concentrated most of their magic power into the 'Cooling Zone'. As a result they were able to maintain the temperature of their surrounding air at about 30 °C, which corresponded to the normal ambient temperature at that place.

But it goes without saying that Katsushige's attack didn't end there.

The pressure on them suddenly disappeared.

Which meant that the increased pressure wasn't simply canceled. The atmospheric temperature and pressure returned to normal due to the effect caused by the termination of magic, but right afterwards, [around the Parasites] a decompression was created by an instant decrease in density.

The density reduction resulted in the subsequent air expansion, causing the explosion with Rigel's team in the epicenter, which also scattered the members of the landing party closest to them. In a small radius around the epicenter, atmospheric pressure and temperature sharply decreased.

The pressure became a third of what it normally was and the temperature dropped below minus 50 °C. The three Parasites, who had been maintaining the 'Cooling Zone', failed to cope with such a temperature change.

Their physical bodies, covered with small water drops, got frozen.

But Rigel was still alive.

Next, there was a group of boulders, about 50 centimeters in diameter, that rained down on Rigel's landing party — Katsushige's subordinates carried out the barrage, taking advantage of the enemy's disorder.

One of the boulders flew right at Rigel, but he managed to repel it a meter before collision, while being frozen. It also allowed him to protect Bellatrix, who was standing next to him.

And that's not all. Rigel managed to defrost his frozen body. He was probably able to because the freezing stopped on the surface of the body [without penetrating too deeply]. He was able to start moving quite quickly, and hastened to ascertain the status of his subordinates.

Following Rigel, Bellatrix was also able to get rid of the freezing on his own.

“Ian!”

Seeing this, Rigel called out Bellatrix’s first name with his voice, instead of using the Mind Link.

“Thank you, Captain.”

Bellatrix replied with words of gratitude. Even being frozen, he perceived that he was protected from the stone projectiles thanks to Rigel.

Rigel nodded to Bellatrix and turned in the opposite direction.

“Sam!” — Shouted the former in a heartbreaking voice.

Because the head of Sam — Samuel Alnilam — was crushed by a boulder.

He was unfortunate to get hit directly with the stone projectile. There was no need to ascertain his status. It was an instant death.

Only after seeing the scene with his own eyes, Rigel finally noticed that Alnilam was out of the shared consciousness. The Parasite’s True Body, that which lost the assimilated host, also loses its ability of human thinking. The Parasites that had assimilated with humans could sense only some instinctual signals of Pushion Waves emanating from its [Parasite’s True Body] presence.

“Ian, let’s go!”

“Yes sir!”

Perhaps they communicated with their voice because they didn’t want to feel the loss of Alnilam’s consciousness.

Rigel and Bellatrix started running simultaneously.

The fighting style, in which the so-called ‘Orion Team’ from the Sixth Unit specialized in, was essentially close quarter combat utilizing high mobility via self-acceleration magic. Up until now, they had to go with medium-range attacks because they couldn’t ignore coordination with the rest of the landing party.

But with the loss of Alnilam, Rigel and Bellatrix abandoned any consideration for the other members. Thirsty for revenge, they targeted Katsushige alone. Although it wasn’t Katsushige who released the magic that directly killed Alnilam, it was he who created the situation that led to that outcome.

Rigel and Bellatrix reached Katsushige in no time. Katsushige’s subordinates weren’t standing idly by watching this, but no one could keep up with Rigel and Bellatrix.

However, about 5 meters from their target, the two Parasites suddenly lost their balance.

They did not fall, but their steps slowed sharply, as if they got bogged down in something.

There were deep footprints appearing on the surface of which they were running on. Upon closer examination, it was possible to see that the semi-circular surface of volcanic rock, in the center of which stood Katsushige, had turned into soft sand.

This was also the result of ‘Density Manipulation’.

Having lowered the surface density of the basaltic volcanic rock in the area around him, he achieved the instantaneous ‘weathering’ in the sand.

Immobilized, Rigel and Bellatrix were bombarded with a variety of attack magic from the Shibata family’s elite — magicians directly under the command of Katsushige.

Even for the Stellar-class members of the Stars, it wasn’t possible to defend against all those attacks.

Bellatrix was the first to collapse to the ground which had become a sandy plain; next was Rigel who fell to his knees due to the accumulated damage.

The decisive blow was dealt by Katsushige’s magic.

The Parasites’ bodies got sucked into the sand, the density of which had been even further reduced, after which the density was restored to its original value, and they were crushed by basalt rocks.



“So brutal... It’s like ‘Antlion Prison’²⁴ magic.”

Leo muttered in a shocked voice and with a stunned face, while watching through the display how Katsushige killed the Parasites.

However, his ‘shocked voice’ in this case could be called a manifestation of outstanding fortitude.

Mikihiko, who was watching the same scene, looked like he was going to throw up, and even Erika had a deathly pale face.

²⁴ **Ant Hell/Antlion Prison (蟻地獄)** magic spell which creates an illusion where the target feels like they are being pulled into the earth, Mikihiko used this spell against Kichijouji Shinkurou ‘George’ of Third High in the 2095 9SC (in their 1st year).

The footage on the display switched to another place on the battlefield.

Covering his mouth with both hands, Mikihiko somehow managed to avoid his gag reflexes, after which he casually turned to Minami [as if he suddenly remembered something].

“Speaking of which, what happens with the True Bodies of the Parasites? If the True Body isn’t sealed after it leaves the destroyed physical body, it can’t be said that the Parasite is really defeated.”

“Tatsuya-sama is personally getting rid of the True Bodies of the Parasites.”

Minami answered Mikihiko’s question without hiding the truth.

“Oh, right, using ‘Seal Ball’. Indeed, he does have that magic, so everything will be fine.”

“Seal Ball?”

“What’s Seal Ball?”

Leo and Erika raised these questions with doubt in their voice.

While Mikihiko answered them, Minami remained silent.

She gave an honest answer about who is dealing with the Parasites, but made no explanation about how Tatsuya does it — following the order from the Main House.



9:30 AM.

The fierce battle on Miyakijima was still going on when the situation offshore changed.

Giant clouds of hydrogen plasma formed in the sky over the destroyer ‘Hull’, anchored 30 kilometers east of the island, and over the destroyer ‘Ross’, stopped at a point 30 kilometers west of the island.

Needless to say, this wasn’t a natural phenomenon. Those were artificial phenomena created by two magicians. The plasma cloud in the east was created by a magician named Miguel Diaz. And in the west, Antonio Diaz. These two magicians were identical twins.

The magic formed by the brothers, who looked like two peas in a pod, hadn’t been completed yet. First, the plasma clouds grew to 50 meters in diameter, after which they decreased... or rather compressed to about 5 meters in diameter within seconds.

The plasma clouds compressed into a perfect spherical shape and simultaneously began to move at exactly the same speed.

The plasma cloud in the sky above the destroyer 'Hull' flew to the west and the plasma cloud above the destroyer 'Ross' flew to the east.

The two plasma clouds started moving on a collision course at speeds more than 10 times faster than the speed of sound.

Tatsuya noticed the activation of magic in the east and west of the island at the moment when he had some breathing space between the 'cleanup' of the True Bodies of the Parasites.

(They are trying to force the [two clouds of] high-density hydrogen plasma to collide in the sky above Miyakijima?)

(Approximately 6 seconds until collision.)

(Nuclear fusion doesn't occur in a collision at such a speed. But if they continue to apply pressure from the east and west, then that's an entirely different story.)

(This is... 'Synchronized Linear Fusion'!?)

Those thoughts took him about 1 second. There were 5 seconds left before the collision.

There was no time for an accurate assessment of the explosive power, but given the precedent in Brazil, it could reach several kilotons of TNT, or maybe even a few tens of kilotons.

Tatsuya didn't hesitate to use 'Gram Dispersion' to nullify it.

(The components of this Magic are: plasma generation, preventing its diffusion, and moving it.)

(Two completely identical sequences of magic are used, only their directions of movement are different.)

— The first step was the analysis of the Magic Sequence that needed to be neutralized.

(Based on the nature of this magic, it can be prevented from activating if one of the two Magic Sequences are erased.)

(But in this situation, it's better to erase both sequences.)

- The second step was to aim at the magical sequence that needed to be neutralized.
- And the final step.

(‘Gram Dispersion’, activation.)

A moment later, ‘glowing objects’ flying at supersonic speeds in the sky in the east and west of Miyakijima disappeared.

...As a small departure from the topic: it was worth noting that there was some commotion due to the «unexpected appearance of UFOs» at a meteorological observatory that was monitoring the vicinity of the Izu Islands via satellite.

Whereas the turmoil on the USNA destroyer ‘Hull’ wasn’t so carefree as the commotion at the meteorological observatory.

“‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’ has been nullified!”

“Nullified? Maybe it was just an unsuccessful attempt?”

“No! It was definitely nullified by someone else’s interference!”

Miguel Diaz argued in an elevated tone with the magic technician, who was assisting him with the operation of his CAD.

At that moment, Miguel received a transmission from the destroyer ‘Ross’.

“Miguel, it’s me.”

“Antonio?”

The person who sent the transmission was Antonio Diaz — Miguel’s younger twin brother and his partner for casting ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’.

“Miguel, what’s that supposed to mean? I didn’t know that our magic could be nullified.”

“Neither did I. Antonio, let’s do it again!”

“Without even knowing the cause of the nullification?”

“Precisely because we don’t know. This time, have the technicians carefully monitor the whole process.”

“You mean that even if they neutralize us again, we can at least identify and study the cause of it, right?”

“If we find out how the neutralization is carried out, we can prepare countermeasures.”

Speaking of countermeasures, Miguel Diaz didn't mean ensuring success for the current operation. It was for their next battlefield.

If there's a method to nullify 'Synchronized Linear Fusion' and they don't find any means of neutralizing that 'nullification method', then the meaning of their existence will be called into question.

“Right.”

Antonio thought the same thing and immediately agreed with Miguel's proposal.

“For the sake of our future, we...”

However, his next words were cut short unnaturally

“Antonio?”

There was an unintelligible noise heard from the speaker, which meant that the transmission wasn't interrupted.

“What happened, Antonio!?”

“Major Diaz...”

The voice which responded to Miguel's shout wasn't his younger brother Antonio.

Miguel, who was overwhelmed by an ominous feeling, held his breath and waited for the next line.

“How to say it... Mr. Antonio suddenly disappeared.”

“...What do you mean?”

“Mr. Antonio Diaz vanished in an instant, leaving a small shock wave!”

Miguel couldn't understand what he was being told right now.

“...Do you mean that my brother was killed with a bomb?”

“No, I don’t think that’s the case. There were no body parts nor a drop of blood left. At first it seemed like the silhouette of his body blurred and then disappeared, scattering in the wind! As if he himself turned into the wind!”

“.....”

“Major Diaz. What is happening? Was that your magic? Have you invented the magic of teleportation!?”

“...No, nothing like that. I also have no idea what it was...”

Everyone involved in this process, on both destroyers, were perplexed.

Although the phrase from the technician from the destroyer ‘Ross’ «disappeared, scattering in the wind» accurately described what happened, nobody on either ship believed that something like that had really happened.

(Erasing of the target confirmed.)

After eliminating Antonio Diaz with ‘Mist Dispersion’, Tatsuya returned the Silver Horn from his right hand to the holster on his hip.

(So, ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’ was a magic activated by two people at once.)

There was a fierce battle still going at the island, it was not a situation for a leisurely analysis of magic.

Even knowing that, Tatsuya simply couldn’t help but think about this newly-discovered secret of the Strategic-Class Magic ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’.

(Plasma clouds are launching towards each other using absolutely identical magic for a head-on collision.)

(If there happens to be a small mistake in the course or timing, this magic will fail.)

(Maybe even the Interference Strength of the two magics should be at the same level.)

(In fact, the Interference Strength levels of the magic of Miguel & Antonio Diaz that I observed were exactly the same.)

(Are there any magicians I know who can meet these conditions...? Hmm...)

(...Perhaps the double team of Kasumi and Izumi would be able to take advantage of this.)

“Tatsuya-sama.”

At the very moment when he came to a certain conclusion, Miyuki contacted him.

“What is it, Miyuki?”

It was the right time to get out of his thoughts. Responding to Miyuki, Tatsuya made a note in his mind to think about a magic technique based on ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’, after which he refocused his mind on the ongoing battle.

“I felt strong magic power on the two destroyers that stopped east and west of the island. That was probably an attack against us, and Tatsuya-sama prevented it, am I right?”

“You are absolutely right. The ‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’ released from both destroyers was nullified by ‘Gram Dispersion’.”

“‘Synchronized Linear Fusion’! That means Miguel Diaz from Brazil joined this battle, doesn’t it!?”

“Yes, but don’t worry. Diaz as a Strategic-Class Magician has already been neutralized.”

“Thank you. As expected from Tatsuya-sama. Amazing skills, as usual... By the way, what about immobilizing those two destroyers ahead of the amphibious assault ship? Just in case.”

“I think it’s a good decision. Do so.”

“Then, I will take care of it immediately.”

“Yes, please do.”

“Happy to help.”

After those polite words, communication with the command room was cut off.

Ten seconds later, Tatsuya sensed the activation of a powerful magic from the command room located on the west coast of the island.



Miyuki had already deployed the aiming assistance arm out of the commander’s desk.

The compact specialized CAD was installed on the arm.

The main screen of the command room displayed a view of the USNA destroyer 'Hull' captured from above. It was an image from a place 30 kilometers east of the island, but the resolution was perfect.

Until a while ago, the question of «where was this taken from?» was stuck in the corner of Miyuki's consciousness, but now she didn't have any unnecessary thoughts. After the words «please do» were transmitted from Tatsuya, her consciousness completely focused on the magic that she was about to activate.

You could even say that Miyuki was in a kind of trance. The extreme mental focus made her already surreal beauty look even more inhuman and transcendental.

There was no wind in the command room. For air-conditioning, the room was equipped with a method of cooling the walls and ceiling from the outer side. Nevertheless, while Miyuki was sitting on the Commander's seat without leaning on its backrest, the tips of her long hair slightly swayed, as if in the wind.

The CAD was aimed at the destroyer displayed on the screen. While maintaining a perfect posture with her back extended in a straight line, Miyuki grasped the CAD handle with a laid-back motion of her hand and silently pulled the trigger.

All the machine processes were performed automatically. Nobody voiced a report about the completion of a particular process. The coordinates data, converted into activation-sequence format by the tactical computer in the command room, was sent from the tactical computer to the CAD and combined with the Activation Sequence from the CAD, after which it was absorbed by Miyuki [the combined code was read into her Magic Calculation Area].

This CAD only allowed the selection of one type of magic.

The aiming processes were handled by the machine.

In order to reduce the burden on the caster, this magic didn't include the process of specifying its range. The Area of Effect of this magic was a circular region centered at the targeted area with a radius depending on the amount of applied Interference Strength.

Miyuki was only required to choose how much power to release with this magic.

Since it was her first time to actually use it, she decided to use 80% of her power for casting this magic. With the exception of the magic 'Cocytus', which freezes the soul, she rarely resorted to unlocking as much as 80% of her maximum Interference Strength.

The Magic Sequence construction was completed and the first of these sequences of magic ‘hit’ the target. That was definitely the response Miyuki felt.

The magic effect didn’t show up immediately. The modified phenomenon distorted reality approximately 0.8 seconds after the magic was activated. This was rather slow, given that the average standard of magic activation speed was 0.5 seconds.

However, none of the people watching the main screen in the command room could afford the extra thought. All of them simply held their breath at the scene unfolding on the screen.

An icy surface.

An endless ice field that filled the entire screen.

Appearing in the mid-summer sea, it wasn’t even a frozen island, but a land²⁵ of ice.

The land of ice, which imprisoned the ‘Hull’ destroyer in its center, had grown in an instant to a radius of 10 kilometers. The area turned out to be visibly larger than even Miyakijima.

‘Glacial Age’, was the new magic created by Tatsuya exclusively for Miyuki.

As the name implies, it plunged the world not just into an Arctic winter, but into an ice age. Its power was too much for just one destroyer, either way you look at it.

This magic was more suitable for imprisoning a large fleet.

[It was] Magic capable of rendering a big armada immobile with one hit.

Magic capable of destroying naval forces the size of an entire fleet with one application is called ‘Strategic-Class Magic’. But if in this definition, the word ‘destroying’ is replaced by the word ‘neutralizing’, would such magic be considered Strategic-Class, or not...?

Having recovered from the shock caused by the scene that filled the main screen, the command room staff turned their awestruck gazes to Miyuki sitting in the innermost part of this room.

Miyuki, the only person here who kept a calm state of mind, misunderstood all those gazes as awaiting further orders.

“Please display on the main screen the destroyer, which is 30 kilometers to the west.”

²⁵ TLN: the word used here roughly means Solid Ground. Commonly used by sailors in the sense of the opposite of Ocean.

“Y-yes.”

Following Miyuki’s order, the staff member in charge of the Enemy Search System turned in a hurry to the console and made some manipulations on it.

The island of ice, which imprisoned the ‘Ross’ destroyer, had a radius of 5 kilometers, while the amphibious assault ship ‘Guam’ got captured into an ice field with a radius of 1 kilometer. Seemingly, at the third attempt Miyuki was finally able to adjust the power to some degree.

In less than a minute, the USNA naval forces involved in this surprise attack were completely suppressed.



(This was predictable to some extent, but... this is definitely at the Strategic-Class level. Moreover, the scale is even larger compared to the original version...)

Looking at the ‘Glacial Age’ cast by Miyuki, Tatsuya mentally ‘grabbed his head’.

The original, which Tatsuya recalled for comparison, was Bezobrazov’s ‘Tuman Bomba’.

To be more precise, it was a monologue comparing the scale of ‘Chain Casting’ utilized in ‘Tuman Bomba’ with the scale of ‘Chain Casting’ proliferating²⁶ the magical sequences of Miyuki’s ‘Glacial Age’.

(In my version, the magic power doesn’t dissipate pointlessly, but in the end, it’s Bezobrazov who created the Chain Deployment System for Magic Sequences. So that man should have definitely noticed that ‘Glacial Age’ uses his ‘Chain Casting’.)

And without doubt he will realize that Miyuki’s ‘Glacial Age’ is superior to his ‘Tuman Bomba’ in terms of the proliferation scale of Magic Sequences.

(Since he is a man with such an inflated pride... I just hope this doesn’t cause him to enter into yet another annoying rivalry.)

Despite such thoughts, somewhere in the depths of Tatsuya’s consciousness was the belief that Bezobrazov would certainly intervene in this battle.



(Again! Stolen again!)

²⁶ **Proliferating:** increase rapidly in numbers; multiply.

Just as Tatsuya thought, Bezobrazov sensed the invocation of ‘Glacial Age’. However, the reason for his anger was a little different from what Tatsuya thought. Bezobrazov was angered because the new spell used a part of ‘Tuman Bomba’ — the magic created by himself.

For Bezobrazov, the Chain Deployment System for Magic Sequences, which Tatsuya (privately) called ‘Chain Casting’, was exclusively part of his ‘Tuman Bomba’, and not an independent technique. For him, Ichijou Masaki’s ‘Ocean Blast’ and Miyuki’s ‘Glacial Age’ were nothing more than plagiarism of the processes that form his ‘Tuman Bomba’.

Magic created for military application is never open to the public, so there are no intellectual property rights like a patent right. Even if the process of the magic or some part of it was misappropriated, it wouldn’t be possible to claim infringement of rights.

But emotions are another matter entirely.

When you have no legally protected rights, you’re not pleased when someone makes use of your original [technique] without permission. Especially when the person who used something of yours without permission is your hated enemy.

Bezobrazov had already planned since the start — July 30th — to intervene in Edward Clark’s sneak attack on Miyakijima. Well, a more appropriate expression would be «take advantage of» rather than «intervene in».

Merely shooting at Tatsuya with magic won’t work against him, no matter how unexpectedly it is done. Even though it kind of offended him to admit, but one can’t turn away from the facts. His pride wouldn’t allow him to be defeated again. Bezobrazov was full of determination to kill Shiba Tatsuya — this time for sure.

Bezobrazov speculated that his sudden attacks didn’t work because Tatsuya had memorized the waves emanating from his magic. It wasn’t Shiba Tatsuya who defended against the first strike he launched at Izu. However, starting from the second strike, he suffered a painful counterattack even before the completion of ‘Tuman Bomba’. Bezobrazov believed that when magic was activated, magicians emit something like individual waveforms that are unique to them, and Shiba Tatsuya is able to distinguish between them.

In that case, will it be possible to terminate Shiba Tatsuya if someone creates a situation where he won’t be able to detect a surprise attack? Since there will be a shootout with powerful magic on the battlefield, where it will be necessary to urgently respond to something else.

That was the conclusion made by Bezobrazov. Following this line of thinking, he was watching like a hawk for the right opportunity.

And just at that time, large-scale magic was activated using the ‘Tuman Bomba’ technique. Bezobrazov, although feeling furious anger, mentally shouted «this is a chance!»

Bezobrazov requested the General Staff to execute the previously prepared plan.

Following the order received from the East Siberian Army Headquarters, a hyper-sonic missile was launched from the Birobidzhan missile base, located 150 kilometers west of Khabarovsk. The target was Miyakijima. With its speed exceeding Mach 20, there were less than 5 minutes before impact.

The Japanese Self-Defense Forces detected the launch of the missile, but as soon as the expected landing point was determined, they canceled the interception. Even with modern technologies, the chance of succeeding in shooting down a hyper-sonic missile is about 50%. When it was identified that the missile wouldn’t fall on Honshu [the Main Island], the Self-Defense Forces calculated that it would be more profitable not to shoot it down, but to let it fall in territorial waters and then use it in diplomatic negotiations.

Three minutes after the Birobidzhan missile base launched a hyper-sonic missile, the ‘Kutuzov’, which was lurking underwater 40 kilometers south of Miyakijima, surfaced to a depth of 50 meters and launched several Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) one after another.

The ‘Kutuzov’ was the most-advanced missile submarine of the New Soviet Union. It could launch missiles from a deeper depth as well, but in this case, it was decided to launch from a shallow depth and at close range, prioritizing reliability over stealth.

Six missiles were launched in total. They ultimately accelerated to Mach 2 and there was about a minute and half left before impact with the west coast of Miyakijima.



Tatsuya constantly allocated half of the capacity of ‘Elemental Sight’ to monitor any threats approaching Miyuki. He always watched for the appearance of physical phenomena and signs of magic capable of harming Miyuki. Since he cannot foresee the future, remotely activated magic that can instantly overcome long distances and suddenly appear right next to the target can only be detected shortly before its activation. However, if it’s an object or phenomenon moving in physical space, Tatsuya

is able to detect it with a high degree of reliability almost in the moment that it begins to move towards Miyuki.

Even now, Tatsuya recognized the hyper-sonic missiles at the Birobidzhan base and the SLBMs from the ‘Kutuzov’ at the moment they were launched. He didn’t destroy the missiles targeting Miyakijima immediately after they launched because he had the feeling that he should wait until the very last moment.

It was merely an intuition, with no concrete basis. Although it was a gamble, he had a certain confidence that he could manage to take care of everything in time — even if it would be at the last moment.

Besides, there wasn’t much time left to say that «he should wait».

Missiles approached the airspace of the island.

(I think that’s the limit.)

Without taking his Silver Horn out of the holster, Tatsuya used the thought-operated CAD built-in his combat suit to activate ‘Decomposition’.

Since he was empty-handed, there was no need for visual aiming. So he aimed using only his magical perception.

First, the six SLBMs were decomposed down to the level of their chemical elements.

Then, he immediately aimed his magic at the hyper-sonic missile. It was difficult to track such a missile with the conventional Weapons Interception Systems, but for Tatsuya, it was no different from stationary targets because he aimed at its information.

Like the previous SLBMs, this missile wasn’t nuclear.

There were no chemical or biological agents, and there weren’t any ‘non-nuclear’ harmful chemical elements in them either.

All missiles that targeted Miyakijima were decomposed into tiny pieces on the level close to the Buddhist concept of ‘minutest particles’.



With the assistance of the stationary large CAD located in Khabarovsk, which was designed to activate ‘Tuman Bomba’, Bezobrazov sensed Tatsuya’s magic being released in the sky above Miyakijima.

That magic had an extremely strong Interference Strength that broke down the SLBMs to the level close to molecules without leaving any fragments.

(Good, everything is going according to my calculations!)

When someone has just used magic that distorts reality so much, even if it was their own magic, it will be difficult for some time for them to recognize other magic.

This was a common consideration among present-day magic researchers, including Bezobrazov.

(The effect of the large-scale magic that froze the USNA warships should still remain.)

(This is my chance!)

Those thoughts raced through Bezobrazov's mind immediately after the destruction of the missiles fired from the submarine 'Kutuzov' and a moment before the destruction of the missile fired from the Birobidzhan base.

Preparations for the activation of 'Tuman Bomba' were already completed.

(Die!)

Bezobrazov casted 'Tuman Bomba' at the same moment that Tatsuya's magic finished destroying the hyper-sonic missile.



At the same time as he was casting 'Decomposition' aimed at the hyper-sonic missile, Tatsuya sensed signs of magic that hadn't been activated yet and pulled his Silver Horn out of its holster with his right hand.

In one motion, he raised his right hand directly above his head, pointing the large gun-shaped CAD into the sky, and pulled the trigger.

'Tuman Bomba' is an aggregation of a myriad of Magic Sequences. Moreover, each of those Magic Sequences is slightly different, so they can't be grouped together and decomposed at once. Even if Tatsuya erases part of them with 'Gram Dispersion', the remaining countless Magic Sequences will still be activated independently of it. Simply put, it would be like lowering the power from 100% to 99%.

However, in the Chain Deployment System for Magic Sequences, which Tatsuya named 'Chain Casting', the entire process starts with a single Magic Sequence. Before the chain starts deploying, 'Tuman Bomba' can be completely neutralized by destroying the first Magic Sequence, which can be called the 'master copy'. Tatsuya already obtained the structure of the Magic Sequence to be decomposed in the previous confrontation with Bezobrazov. So if he knew the coordinates where the first Magic Sequence would appear, before the magic is 'unleashed', he could nullify it.

For example, like now.

- ‘Tuman Bomba’, activation.
- ‘Gram Dispersion’, activation.



Copying the Magic Sequence and arranging the position of this copy in adjacent coordinates²⁷.

Before that process was completed, Tatsuya's magic for Information Bodies Decomposition decomposed the Magic Sequence of the 'master copy' [or the first Magic Sequence at the beginning of unfolding chain] for the entire process of arranging.

With this, Bezobrazov's 'Tuman Bomba' was completely blocked by Tatsuya.



(Still not activated...?)

(Or was 'Tuman Bomba' just canceled?)

Bezobrazov was severely shaken because there was no longer any response from the 'Tuman Bomba', which had definitely been activated.

(Impossible! How can this be!?)

(Did he separately destroy several thousands of Magic Sequences?)

(It's impossible. No human has the processing power to do that!)

(What kind of trick did he use?)

(Did he create a virus for destroying the Magic Sequences with high speed?)

One might say that this magic was the meaning of Bezobrazov's existence, and after its misfire, his consciousness was completely absorbed in this issue.

His emotions were saying «I can't believe it» and «I don't want to believe it», while his pride as a scientist retorted «You can't just escape from reality».

Bezobrazov found himself trapped in that dilemma.

²⁷ TLN: 'adjacent coordinates' term used when arranging something into a matrix-like structure. It's only a speculation, but probably the AoE of 'Tuman Bomba' looks like a square area, while for 'Glacial Age' it's a circular field. Using this speculation it's possible to explain why distribution of myriads of Magic Sequences in 'Glacial Age' is more effective than in 'Tuman Bomba'.

The only thing that Bezobrazov could do to come to terms with his emotions and pride was to convince himself by giving a scientific explanation for the failure to activate ‘Tuman Bomba’.

Therefore, he didn’t notice.

That he had already been caught in the sight of someone else’s magic.

The muzzle was already pointed at his heart, and right at that moment — the trigger was already being pulled.



In late June, when Bezobrazov attempted an attack on First High School, during school hours, Tatsuya was able to acquire ‘personal information’ about this Soviet magician.

When Tatsuya was six years old, he became the subject of an experiment in an attempt to create an artificial magician by his biological mother. As a side effect of the Mental Design Interference carried out during that experiment, Tatsuya completely stopped forgetting anything. In fact, this can’t really be called something good, but since then, Tatsuya has been able to freely extract accurate data from his memory — regardless of its complexity or quantity.

From Bezobrazov’s ‘personal information’, Tatsuya located him in a laboratory at the Khabarovsk’s Institute of Science. He wouldn’t have been able to find Bezobrazov so easily if he hadn’t remembered everything about the attack two months ago. Of course, he could have located Bezobrazov by using the remains of ‘Tuman Bomba’ still floating in the Information Dimension to search, but he wouldn’t have found the location in such a short time.

While searching, he probably could even have been struck by a second or third wave of missiles. Since there was a high probability that while he was engaged in the search, he wouldn’t have the mental resources left to detect the missiles and deal with them.

Bezobrazov was sitting inside a box shaped CAD that looked like a railway container, which was located inside a building resembling a small astronomical observatory.

This CAD had simpler construction than what Tatsuya ‘saw’ last time, but they had similar basic functions.

Last time, Tatsuya limited himself to only inflicting damage on Bezobrazov’s mind by destroying his CAD while he was connected to it. This was done to keep the world’s military balance intact.

But now, he wasn’t going to be so condescending anymore.

Although doing that could lead to a harsher future, but for his own sake, and for the sake of Miyuki, he had to sever all the threads of fate leading to Bezobrazov.

Now that Tatsuya was so determined & resolute.

(Obtaining information on the state of the magical defense of the laboratory.)

(Obtaining information about Bezobrazov's magical defense... his personal Zone Interference is absent.)

He returned the CAD to the holster and turned his right arm north-northwest — in the direction of Bezobrazov. He did so because, based on the results of the observation, the thought-operated CAD which was built into his combat suit was more suitable than the Silver Horn for his next attack.

Tatsuya tightly clenched his extended right hand into a fist.

(Construction of the Magic Sequence for Zone Interference decomposition... completed.)

He extended the index finger from his right hand that was clenched into a fist — as if counting «One».

Over the distance of approximately 1,700 kilometers, the magic which decomposes Information Bodies was activated.

The Zone Interference field surrounding Bezobrazov's laboratory disappeared.

(Construction of the Magic Sequence for Data Fortification decomposition... completed.)

In addition to the index finger, he now extended his middle finger.

The magic of Data Fortification neutralization was activated. All structural materials of the laboratory's roof and walls became open to magical attacks.

(Construction of the Magic Sequence for the building's Information Structure decomposition... completed.)

He stretched out his third finger — the ring finger.

The decomposition magic of matter was activated and the laboratory in the form of an observatory, located 1,700 kilometers from here, disappeared without a trace — turning into a cloud of dust.

(Construction of the Magic Sequence for the CAD's Information Structure decomposition... completed.)

The fourth finger was stretched out — the pinky finger.

The decomposition magic of matter was activated. The large CAD in which Bezobrazov was located turned into dust, without a trace, just like the laboratory.

(Construction of the Magic Sequence for personal Data Fortification decomposition.)

With this, Tatsuya extended his thumb. Now all five fingers on his right hand were extended.

After the magic of Information Bodies decomposition was activated, the Data Fortification that protected Bezobrazov's whole body was removed.

(Construction of the Magic Sequence for decomposition of the human body's Information Structure... completed.)

Tatsuya clenched his right hand into a fist again, as if squeezing something invisible.

'Mist Dispersion' hit Bezobrazov's unprotected body.



The magic defense of Bezobrazov's personal laboratory suddenly disappeared.

All of the structural materials of the laboratory's roof and walls, furniture and equipment, the entire interior — everything crumbled, turning into sand.

The large CAD where he was located (including the case, console, and electronic equipment) lost its shape and crumbled in the same way.

Only at that moment Bezobrazov finally realized the situation. However, immediately after the realization, he was forcefully cut off from the connection with the functioning CAD, which caused a severe blow to his mind.

Perhaps, he could be considered lucky because he avoided the sense of agony and despair after his consciousness became blurry.

Bezobrazov's contour became blurry along with his clothes. The shape of his body got distorted, its colors faded and scattered. The next moment he disappeared from this world in a flash of a barely noticeable passing flame.



Even after Bezobrazov was erased from this world, the battle still wasn't over. There were still Parasites on the island that should be 'cleaned up', but for Tatsuya, the missile base and submarine of the New Soviet Union, which launched missiles at the

island, had higher priority. Without Tatsuya, it would be extremely difficult to counter them all.

«Abandoning the counterattack» wasn't an option. Giving up and accepting the situation would only invite further attacks. The only one who protects your dignity is yourself. That's the same whether for individuals or nations.

Tatsuya once again took out his Silver Horn. Unless it was an opponent with extremely strong magic power such as Bezobrazov, long-distance magic sniping is easier to do by aiming and forming images with a gun-shaped CAD.

Tatsuya turned back to the south. Based on the trajectory of the SLBMs, it was clear that the submarine was hiding underwater south of the island. No more than five minutes had passed since it launched the missiles. It shouldn't have moved far.

(...Boat's name 'Kutuzov'. Located forty kilometers south of Miyakijima, at a depth of fifty meters. Currently not moving.)

The submarine 'Kutuzov' didn't move from the missiles' launch point. Probably as Tatsuya worried, they'd planned to launch a second wave of missiles, or maybe they were ordered to observe the battle's outcome... In any case, it was convenient for Tatsuya that the submarine stayed in the contiguous zone²⁸.

(Receiving information about the submarine's structure.)

Tatsuya analyzed the structure of the submarine, paying particular attention to the design of the propulsion system.

'Kutuzov' was propelled by non-electromagnetic type pump-jets. Modern military vessels use mostly electromagnetic propulsion engines, perhaps the non-electromagnetic type were used here as a countermeasure against magnetic detection systems.

Regardless of the reason, a propulsion system with lots of moving mechanical parts was much better for Tatsuya.

Allowing him to choose a specific method of destruction.

(Decomposition level, dismantling into 'interchangeable parts'.)

Among all the variations of decomposition magic, dismantling something into parts that were made interchangeable from the very beginning was the easiest and least burdensome.

²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_waters#Contiguous_zone

Tatsuya pulled the trigger on his Silver Horn.

This inflicted massive damage to the 'Kutuzov' propulsion systems. Although it didn't cause fatal damage to the hull of the submarine, underwater repair was impossible.

Unless something was done, they would be stuck underwater. The 'Kutuzov' didn't have a nuclear reactor onboard, so it didn't have any equipment for producing oxygen from sea water. Sooner or later, oxygen reserves will run out and the crew will die.

The 'Kutuzov' had no other choice but to surface.

Next, Tatsuya destroyed all the missile launchers in the submarine, just in case. But the word «destroyed» didn't mean that he blew them up or took them apart. He just cut the wires to the hatches opening & closing mechanism.

Thus, there was no longer any need to worry about attacks with SLBMs.

Without waiting for the 'Kutuzov' to surface, Tatsuya turned toward the opposite direction.

He aimed his Silver Horn at the Birobidzhan missile base over 1,700 kilometers north-northwest from here, and 150 kilometers west of Khabarovsk.

(Reverse tracing of the missile's information.)

Using 'Elemental Sight', he traced back in time the information about the recently decomposed hyper-sonic missile.

In an instant he traced the missile's trajectory, which had traveled for 5 minutes at a maximum speed of mach 20, and reached the underground missile silo where the missile was launched from.

From there, he expanded his 'field of vision' horizontally.

The image that appeared in Tatsuya's mind looked like aerial footage, allowing him to see through the ground (like an X-ray).

(Visually confirmed 6 unmanned missile silos underground.)

There were six underground missile silos at Birobidzhan missile base, which was surprisingly few. Perhaps there were many such bases scattered throughout the vast territory of the country, ready to attack an enemy. It seemed that instead of preventing the neutralization of missiles prior to launch by using mobile launchers, the idea of geographical distribution of stationary launchers was put into practice. It was a luxury that only a large country with excessive territories can afford.

Even if he destroyed this base, there was a possibility that the next attack would come from another base. However, he would think about that if it really happens. The current situation was where he should pull the trigger to send a warning to the enemy.

(Targeting — 6 underground missile silos.)

There was also a missile control facility underground, but this time he didn't target any manned facilities.

This was done to avoid escalating the situation. Tatsuya judged that this will be enough to achieve his objective.

(‘Mist Dispersion’, activate.)

Tatsuya released magic that decomposes matter down to the level of chemical elements.

Six underground silos simultaneously exploded near Birobidzhan, located 1,700 kilometers away, and the reason was obviously not the missiles' self-destruction.

None of the people present at the site understood that these explosions were caused by an increase in pressure resulting from the instant evaporation of all solids: heavy metals, synthetic polymers, chemical elements in compound semiconductors, multilayered plywood partitions, artificial stone, and so on.

The rising pillars of dust looked just like a volcanic eruption without the fire.

Chapter 9

Japan time, 9:45 AM, August 4th, 2097.

Just over 30 minutes after the battle began, all of the American troops that landed on Miyakijima were annihilated.

They weren't annihilated in the sense that there were no survivors. After restraining the injured enemy soldiers, the [island] defense squad provided them with treatment, but all of the survivors were humans. Every single Parasite, without exception, was exterminated.

There were also no Parasites who escaped destruction after leaving their physical body. Tatsuya didn't overlook a single one of them.

In this way, the 'Battle on Miyakijima' ended with the total victory of the Yotsuba family.

Although it wasn't an authorized operation and was treated formally as a «rebellion of traitors», it turned out that the USNA's Armed Forces was no match against this group of civilian magicians in a head-to-head battle. This fact shook the military officials of each country (Japan included), and made the notorious 'Yotsuba' even more infamous throughout the world.

However, this fact wasn't the only thing that made the world tremble.



“Onii-sama! No, Tatsuya-sama. Thank you for your hard work.”

Tatsuya returned to the command room about five minutes after the battle had ended.

Stopping just before embracing him, Miyuki rephrased her «Onii-sama» to «Tatsuya-sama» and welcomed him with a gracious bow... The staff here seemed to act as if they didn't hear anything.

“Miyuki, thank you too for your hard work.”

Miyuki broke into a big smile in response to Tatsuya's words about her hard work. This smile had the perfect balance of a sophisticated lady and pure maiden.

“Thank you very much. Tatsuya-sama, are you injured?”

At first glance, Tatsuya’s combat suit had no scratches. It got a little dusty, of course, but there were neither any traces of bleeding nor blood on him.

“Everything is fine. I don’t even have a scratch on me.”

“I am relieved to hear that.”

Backing up her words, Miyuki stopped looking anxious about his health. She smiled charmingly once again and turned toward the main screen.

“By the way, Tatsuya-sama, what should we do with that?”

Miyuki’s eyes were pointing at the 3 split images showing the USNA warships that were stuck in ice. They were the destroyers ‘Hull’ & ‘Ross’, as well as the amphibious assault ship ‘Guam’.

“At the end of the battle, Katsushige-san advised them to surrender. We’re waiting for the answer now. If the other party agrees, cancel ‘Glacial Age’.”

“Understood.”

“Command room, please connect me to Miyuki-san.”

As if overhearing their conversation, Katsushige opened audio communication. There was no video feed, possibly because he used the transmitter in his combat suit while re-broadcasting the signal through the Mobile Base.

Just in case, they looked at the additional screen showing the island, and saw Katsushige standing on the pier of the east coast. From there, only the Superstructure²⁹ of the ‘Guam’ was partially visible offshore, but it seemed like Katsushige wanted to monitor the enemy’s movements with his own eyes.

“Katsushige-san, did the American military respond?”

The one who replied was Tatsuya, not Miyuki.

“Tatsuya-kun, so you’ve already returned to the command room.”

Katsushige expressed no complaints that the reply wasn’t from Miyuki.

“Like you said, we received the response from the captain of the amphibious assault ship ‘Guam’, [navy] captain Annie Marquis, and they accepted disarmament. The two destroyers also agreed to disarm.”

²⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superstructure>

“They agreed not to surrender, but to disarm? They have quite the stubborn captain.”

After hearing Tatsuya’s lines, Miyuki showed an expression as if she wanted to ask what he meant.

“As civilians, we don’t have the authority to capture military property or take Prisoners of War. It will be equally difficult to deal with either issue.”

But even without Tatsuya’s reply to Miyuki’s unspoken question, Katsushige’s words enabled her to understand the main point.

“First of all, I’m going to request that they leave the ship without weapons. Therefore, I’d like you to cancel the magic that froze the sea. This is Miyuki’s magic, right?”

“That’s right. And, that is a reasonable suggestion.”

Tatsuya expressed his consent with Katsushige’s words and looked toward Miyuki.

Seeing Tatsuya’s gaze, Miyuki nodded.

The next moment, a strange thing occurred in the sea. No, considering the current season and Latitude, it would be more apt to say that «everything returned to normal».

Ice fields with a radius of 1, 5, and 10 kilometers disappeared in an instant. Not only was the speed at which it melted evidence towards it being unnatural, but there was also no observed temperature drop in the sea waters. Conversely, the surrounding waters, which had been cooled by the appearance of the ice field, returned to its original temperature.

“Katsushige-san, you may continue the negotiations.” — Said Miyuki into the microphone in her usual voice, as if nothing happened.

“Understood.”

Katsushige replied in an amazed tone, as if saying «Sheesh, you guys are...»



The ‘Guam’ captain, Annie Marquis had completely lost all willpower to resist.

A natural disaster attacked her ship. It was nothing like any magic she knew.

The scale was different.

It was no exaggeration to say that it happened in an instant, but the giant body of the ship with a length of over 300 meters was trapped in ice. Everything inside of the ship

escaped the cold corrosion³⁰, but its exterior got completely frozen up to the deck. Even the seawater that was inside the ship's electromagnetic propulsion systems was frozen, rendering the ship totally immobile.

Everyone knew without being told that it was the work of a magician on the targeted island. However, in this state they couldn't counterattack. The immobile warship that couldn't move was the same as a fixed target, and they [the ship] are doomed to be shot after their [the ship's] attempt to counterattack. First of all, the turrets and missile hatches were frozen, rendering them non-operational.

Not long after, there was an incoming radio communication advising them to surrender — captain Marquis didn't take long to accept. Or in this case, she didn't have any other choice. Even so, she pretended to think about it for about 5 minutes in front of her subordinates.

Immediately after that, not only captain Marquis, but also the crew members were dumbfounded once more.

They witnessed the ice that had imprisoned their ship, as well as the ice field [20 km in diameter] that had surrounded them, disappear.

Everyone in the crew felt as if they were having a dream, or more likely — a nightmare.

Since they felt that no human would be able to win against that, no one was against the captain's order to leave the ship.

“Doctor, wouldn't it be better for you to also get off the ship.”

Subordinates of Annie Marquis started to leave the ship, not on combat vessels such as the previously used assault boats, but on emergency inflatable boats. Watching their figures leave on screen from external cameras, Marquis urged Edward Clark, who remained in the Combat Information Center (CIC), to abandon the ship as well.

“It's inevitable in such circumstances... But can I return to my cabin for a moment? I'd like to get my personal belongings.”

“No problem, as long as it's not a weapon.”

“It's not a weapon. Then, excuse me.”

³⁰ **Cold corrosion in marine engines:** it occurs due to the presence of sulphur in fuel oil and affects the cylinder liner and other parts of the combustion chamber.

TLN: probably it's about an on-board generator working on fuel and providing energy for the ship's electromagnetic propulsion system.

It was evident from Clark's behavior that he was unsuccessfully trying to hide his dissatisfaction. She could see right through his feelings — in reality, he completely disagreed with the order to leave the ship... and with the decision to surrender.

But this is exactly what reassured Marquis. She was the kind of person in this situation who thought «If he behaved without trying to hide anything at all, however, it would be evidence of an attempt to deceive me».

Marquis left the CIC after checking the ship's internal security system to make sure that no one else remained there and all the engines were shut down.

She wasn't mechanically ignorant, but she doesn't have the same knowledge as a technical specialist. Hence, captain Marquis failed to notice that the Information System of her ship had been hacked by Clark's crew.

Shortly after the CIC was vacated, Clark returned there with his accomplices. For Clark, who was in control of the ship's 'electronic brain', it was easy to ascertain how many people were left on the ship and where they were located.

His 'accomplices' weren't foreign soldiers, whom he lured with the promise of [acquiring the USNA] citizenship, but non-commissioned naval officers and soldiers who had been bribed before the voyage started. There wasn't a single Parasite among them. All of them had the necessary skills needed to operate a warship, which means that Clark had planned for an escape before the operation had even begun.

Of course, this didn't mean that he expected that they would be defeated from the very beginning. However, he certainly made preparations in case of defeat. Clark understood that his position in the USNA was deteriorating day by day. That was why he knew very well that this operation was a huge gamble — it was going for a 'home run in the bottom of the ninth' to overturn the whole situation.

Clark probably thought that if he loses here, there's no place for him to return to in the USNA.

And he was right to worry about his situation in the USNA. As it later turned out, both the Pentagon and the White House planned to discard Clark — regardless of the result of the operation.

If one thinks calmly, it's not that difficult to understand. Edward Clark may have had great influence in the underworld as the mastermind behind the 'Seven Sages', but in public society, he was no more than an employee of a government agency. Hliðskjálf — the source of his power as the mastermind behind the 'Seven Sages' — could also be disconnected at any time if the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the USNA Armed Forces wanted to do so.

In contrast to him, Tatsuya was a wielder of Strategic-Class Magic, which currently had the most destructive power in the world. On one hand, this magic could really shake the hegemony of the USNA. On the other hand, it could be expected to serve as a deterrent for the New Soviet Union and Great Asian Union to the west of Japan. The USNA's intelligence services had already learned of recent events, which showed that Tatsuya was currently at odds with the Japanese military. Experts at the Pentagon believe that Tatsuya could be used as a strong ally for the USNA in the Western Pacific.

In addition to his military value, the White House economists expected that Tatsuya's Stellar Furnace technology, if it can be obtained, would bring significant benefits to the USNA economy. The American business community wasn't satisfied with so-called, 'Renewable Energy', which was unstable.

Consuming as much energy as they desire, whenever they want, anywhere in the country. Many people believe that the Stellar Furnace would be the catalyst for regaining the «rich society of mass production and consumption» that they once enjoyed. Although no one really dared to talk about it openly, many thought that way.

Judging by his relationship with the USNA, Clark's choice to steal the warship and flee in this scenario wasn't wrong.

Once he saw through the external cameras that the inflatable boat, which captain Marquis had boarded, was quite a distance away from the ship, Clark ordered his crew to restart the engine. The Emergency Code, which was given to the ship captain, which forcefully freezes all the ship's functions, can't be used wirelessly. So, even if captain Marquis tried to get back on board, she was already too far away to get there in time.

“Launch missiles aiming at the east coast of the island.”

Clark's order wasn't about trying to carry out Tatsuya's assassination. The evidence showed that he aimed at the east coast, not the west coast, where it's known that there are housing facilities for people related to the Yotsuba. Clark tried to cause confusion and make time for his escape by attacking the 'Prisoners of War' and the defense squad, waiting for the inflatable boats from the 'Guam' to land.

Eventually, this decision led to Clark's death.

“Go south at full speed.”

“Roger. Full speed ahead.”

The sailor, responsible for the navigation and control of all the mechanisms on the ship, at the direction of Clark, immediately increased the power output of the electromagnetic propulsion systems to maximum.

“Doctor! The VLS hatch won’t open!”

At the same time, the non-commissioned officer who took control of the ship’s weapons system reported the first incident that occurred on the amphibious assault ship ‘Guam’.

The ‘Guam’ missile system used vertical launchers. If the hatch that protects the missile doesn’t open, it won’t be able to launch.

“It can’t be helped. The missile attack was canceled.”

Clark quickly abandoned that idea. After all, it was meant to just be a distraction, so there was no need to stick with the attack.

He turned to the sailor responsible for navigation in order to hurry up with the departure.

But before he could say a word, the ship’s Condition Monitoring System alert came on.

“What happened!?”

Clark raised his voice to shout over the piercing howl of the siren.

“It’s flooding! There are multiple cracks in the outer shell of the ship!”

The voice of the sailor who answered was even louder and more hysterical than Clark’s.

“Bulkheads emergency closure!”

“No good, that won’t make it in time!”

The CIC fell into a panic.

“The cracks are expanding! The ship is breaking apart!”

Immediately after the ominous scraping, Clark felt a great shaking and floating feeling.

The chair he was sitting on was tilting.

Clark realized that the ‘Guam’ was sinking.

“.....”

He failed to vocalize anything because his thoughts were cut off there.

Perhaps, he was fortunate.

Edward Clark didn't have to experience the frosty and unbearable torment of death by drowning.

Clark's life ended the moment that the sinking of the 'Guam' became apparent to everyone.

His corpse will never be found and lifted from the depths.

His death will never be confirmed by finding his bones scattered on the sea's bottom.

His body disappeared at the same time that he lost consciousness.

It was decomposed to the level of chemical elements, some of which dissolved in the sea water, while the rest dispersed in the form of bubbles.



Tatsuya holstered his Silver Horn, which was just recently aimed at the main screen, showing the sinking amphibious assault ship at the moment.

All of the staff in this command room were excellent magicians from the Yotsuba family. Particularly, they were selected among those gifted in Extra Sensory Perception [ESP]. Despite that, there were only three people who felt signs of magic being released from Tatsuya's body.

"Thanks for the good work, Tatsuya-sama."

One of them, Miyuki, thanked Tatsuya for his work in a reserved tone. The staff of the command room, who heard her voice, were suspicious that neither the joy of victory nor open praise was present in her voice. However, they were immediately convinced that as the next head of the family, she probably did that because she's currently in front of others.

There were only 3 people who noticed that Tatsuya had sunk the 'Guam' using 'Decomposition'.

However, it was only Miyuki who realized that Edward Clark had been erased with 'Mist Dispersion'.

Edward Clark was a potential magician, but his power was weak, so Miyuki doesn't think that decomposing his body was such a burden for Tatsuya.

However, it was only about the load on his magic power.

As for Tatsuya, he wouldn't feel any repulsion against erasing people, but Miyuki never thought about that.

“Thank you. This completes the battle. I believe it’s alright to think so.”

Tatsuya responded to Miyuki’s praise with an expression that made it seem as if nothing had happened.

“Miyuki, declare our victory to everyone.”

Before Miyuki’s face clouded, Tatsuya urged her to fulfill her role as Supreme Commander.

“No, that should be Tatsuya-sama...”

Rounding her eyes, Miyuki shook her head.

“Miyuki.”

But after Tatsuya called her name once more, she was reminded what her role was.

A female member from the command room staff put a microphone stand in front of Miyuki.

Miyuki turned to the microphone stand with a straightened posture and faced the camera.

Tatsuya stepped back to get out of frame.

The sub-screen projected a medium shot with Miyuki.

Miyuki looked at the camera in front of her with a dignified expression, and began to speak in a calm voice.

“In the name of Shiba Miyuki, the next head of the Yotsuba family, I’m declaring that the battles have ended.”

Miyuki then took a deep breath.



“We are the victor!”

Cheers rang out in response to Miyuki’s proclamation.

It was happening everywhere on Miyakijima, especially on the northeastern coast.

It wasn’t only a cheer for victory, but an enthusiastic voice for the young and beautiful leader.

“I, Shiba Miyuki, on behalf of the family head, Yotsuba Maya, would like to thank everyone for how bravely and persistently you fought. Thank you very much.”

On the screens set up everywhere on the island, the image of Miyuki switched to a full-length shot of her.

A beautiful woman gracefully bowed to everyone from the screen, and she was flawless from every angle — from the tip of her toes to the top of her head, and even to the tips of her hair.

The island was engulfed in an increasingly fervent cheer.



The broadcast to the whole island with Miyuki in the main role was over, so the camera pointed towards her was switched off.

Tatsuya, after thanking and praising Miyuki for her work, walked over to the staff member responsible for handling communications.

“Excuse me. Can I take over here?”

The female staff member, whom Tatsuya approached, was older than him. Nevertheless, she didn’t seem offended by his informal tone. Everyone in this room observed Tatsuya’s true strength, which was demonstrated by him less than an hour ago. She offered up her seat to Tatsuya with such a respectful attitude, as if she was bowing to the emperor.

With accustomed hand movements, Tatsuya used his usual method to connect the communicator with a satellite link.



“My name is Shiba Tatsuya, a Japanese magician.”

The message began with such an ordinary greeting.

“Today, at 9:41 AM on August fourth, Japan time, with magic, I destroyed the Birobidzhan’s missile facilities in the New Soviet Union. This was an act of self-defense against the hyper-sonic missile that was launched from the Birobidzhan base and targeted Japanese territory — Miyakijima — where I’m currently staying.”

However, the following words were far from ordinary.

“The missile was destroyed before it hit its target, but I couldn’t ignore the threat of a second and third missile attack being launched.”

“There was no time for negotiations. Since it’s possible that while looking for the people responsible to negotiate, subsequent missiles could’ve been launched.”

“For that reason I decided, and carried out, the destruction of the missile launch facilities.”

“At the same time as the missile attack, we were attacked by the Strategic-Class Magic, ‘Tuman Bomba’. In order to prevent the damage caused by this magic, I magically sniped Igor Bezobrazov — a nationally recognized Strategic-Class Magician of the New Soviet Union.”

“As a result, I do not deny that Igor Bezobrazov may have died.”

“I will repeat. This was an action of self-defense. It wasn’t an act of terrorism, which violates the international legal order. It is a totally legitimate act, and the responsibility of its consequences must be borne by the New Soviet Union, who carried out the illegal attack, and Igor Bezobrazov himself.”

“I have no intention of using my power for acts of terrorism, destroying the legal order. I swear that I never will be involved in any acts of terrorism, whether now or in the future. However, if we are attacked again or exposed to an imminent threat and I find it necessary for self-defense, I will not hesitate to use force.”

“I hope that you all understand — I have sufficient military power for self-defense. I can deal with unjustified attacks directed at me, without large-scale explosions, indiscriminate slaughter, and significant destruction of infrastructure.”

“No matter where they choose to attack from in this world.”

On this part Tatsuya intentionally changed his tone.

“Once more, this is my declaration. I want peaceful coexistence with magicians and non-magicians. But when I need to use force to defend myself, I will never hesitate to use it.”

This voice message was sent directly to private news sites as well as to the Government Public Relations Agencies of the USNA, the New Soviet Union, the Great Asian Union, the Southeast Asian Confederacy countries, Australia, and others, not to mention Japan.

This message was sent at 10:00 AM Japan time. It was 9:99 PM on the USNA east coast, but less than 10 minutes after reaching America, not only internet news sites, but also major TV networks reported it as breaking news.

About an hour later, the New Soviet Union denied the content of the message as groundless, stating there's no facts about any launched missiles nor was there any destruction on the base.

However, as if they had been waiting for it, the USNA Department of Defense released satellite images of the destroyed Birobidzhan missile base. As a result, Tatsuya's message gained credibility, allowing it to be accepted by the world as an indisputable fact.

Taking advantage of this, the USNA Department of Defense claimed that the surprise attack on Miyakijima was the result of a fake order fabricated by the New Soviet Union agent, Edward Clark, and that soldiers involved in the surprise attack were victims deceived by Clark. Together with the somewhat of an apology to the Japanese government, they've requested to 'keep presence of mind' and not escalate the situation.

Tatsuya didn't deny the USNA government's claims.

The whole world recognized that Tatsuya possesses a deterrent power that is equal to, or surpassing the Strategic Forces of the so-called four superpowers: the USNA, the New Soviet Union, the Great Asian Union, and the Indo-Persian Federation.



Even after Miyuki declared that the battle had ended on the island, and Tatsuya sent out his message to the world, in reality, not all of the series of battles were 'cleared up'.

The New Soviet Union missile submarine 'Kutuzov', which launched Ballistic missiles from the sea towards Miyakijima, had given up after being disabled and surfaced about an hour later.

The New Soviet Union soldiers, who had escaped from the submarine on emergency boats, were rescued by Miyakijima's defense squad as castaways unrelated to the battle, while Tatsuya decomposed and sank the 'Kutuzov'.

Chapter 10

On the same day of August 4th, in the afternoon, the media have flocked onto Miyakijima.

Of course, they came to Tatsuya.

Anomalous (in terms of season, place, and scale) ice fields, which appeared all of a sudden in the coastal waters of Miyakijima and just as suddenly disappeared, were observed not only by the national meteorological observatory, but also by civilians. Nevertheless, none of the reporters even tried to pry the truth about that unnatural phenomena, which would be the top story in normal circumstances.

Reporters from TV, newspapers, and online news sites — everyone was shoving microphones at Tatsuya, hoping to catch any sensational comments.

Tatsuya didn't turn down interviews, although he didn't answer all of the questions from the media. If he tried to satisfy every request from the media, he would have no time to eat or sleep.

Among the reporters, there were also those who asserted in a provocative manner that Tatsuya's actions were nothing more than terrorism, and his proclamation was in defiance of the international community. Moreover, they didn't stop at mere provocations: one newspaper wrote an article, branding him as a criminal; there was also a TV station, condemning Tatsuya in every way possible on one of its programmes... All of them were companies belonging to a certain media group that had long since been creating journalistic content by depicting magicians as enemies.

However, the government immediately stated that the acts committed by Tatsuya were legal, both in terms of domestic and international law. Therefore, such comments from some of the media outlets failed to change public opinion in any way.

The goal of such a quick reaction from the government, seemingly, was to negate suspicion and criticisms as to why the Self-Defense Forces didn't respond to the missile, which targeted the Japanese territory, or even the possibility that they couldn't detect the missile altogether.

The Ministry of Defense countered that they detected the hyper-sonic missile at the moment of its launch and asserted that Tatsuya was entrusted with the interception of the missile under the Defense Cooperation Memorandum, which had long since been established between the government and the Magic Association.

Many people got the impression that such an answer was an attempt to evade the essence of the question. But since the memorandum itself had been published a long time ago, their suspicions didn't become a widespread opinion.

However, the comments of the Japanese government alone couldn't have influenced public opinion so much. It was probably the American military experts, together with diplomatic commentators and international law experts, who spoke out in Tatsuya's defense one after another, that had a much greater impact.

One might even say that American commentators were more proactive about this issue than the Japanese. Each and every American expert (at least those who publicly expressed their opinions), although having different [legal] grounds, claimed that attacking the Birobidzhan base and killing Bezobrazov was self-defense by Tatsuya, and it was lawful. The New Soviet Union, meanwhile, stubbornly denied the death of Bezobrazov.

Such enthusiasm from the Americans even generated speculations that the White House might be pulling the strings behind the scenes.

Stories about the dominating positive public opinion hold little interest for the media. The belief that journalism's *raison d'être*³¹ is criticism remained deeply-rooted even at the end of the 21st century.

Only three days after the incident occurred, the media left Miyakijima en masse (all at once), attracted by another fresh story.

³¹ **Raison d'être** is a French expression commonly used in English, meaning «reason for being» or «reason to be».

August 7th, three days after the event later called the «Miyakijima Incident».

The USNA Secretary of Defense, Liam Spencer, made an urgent visit to Japan. The event was reported with great surprise by both Japanese and American media.

After World War III, the American president stopped leaving the country, so the overseas trips of the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense symbolised the USNA's diplomacy at the highest level. Moreover, Liam Spencer was a well-known politician who had even been called the strongest presidential candidate in the next election.

Furthermore, this visit from Secretary of Defense Spencer was made without prior notice to Japan. There was nobody from the political world, business community, or the media industry who couldn't see the great significance of this visit.

Therefore, the loss of interest in Tatsuya was a natural course of events.

The public waited with bated breath for the press conference, which should have started after the meeting between Secretary of Defense Spencer and the Prime Minister of Japan.



On the same day, a secret special envoy of the USNA visited Miyakijima, which seemingly returned to tranquility after the media had left the island.

And it didn't cause a big fuss.

Unfortunately, it was rainy on the Izu Islands that day.

“Miyuki, I'm back!” — A vigorous and very cheerful voice rang out, as if to dispel the clouds. — “It's been about ten days, no? Yeah, exactly! ...Wait, you don't seem surprised.”

Her voice in the last phrase quickly got slightly dissatisfied, as if she wanted to say that «it's not what she expected».

“Welcome back, Lina. You've returned faster than I expected. I'm glad.”

Lina was going to pout her lips, but parted them into an embarrassed smile after Miyuki's last words.

Miyuki led Lina to a research facility on the east coast. Tatsuya, who got free from the media interviews, was working there on the mass production of the key component of the Stellar Furnace — artificial relics, which can store copies of Magic Sequences.

“Lina, welcome back.”

“I’m back” — Lina responded shyly to Tatsuya, who took the initiative and talked as soon as they saw each other. After which she promptly raised her voice in resentment:

“—Hey! Why are you both acting like it’s a given!?”

“What are you talking about?”

“What else could this be about!? What’s with your ‘Welcome back’? You haven’t even thought that it’s strange, have you?”

Perhaps, Lina was correct from an objective point of view.

However, for Lina it was better not to say such a ‘careless’ statement.

“Ara, wasn’t it Lina who declared ‘I’m back’ first?”

“Ugh...”

Lina had nothing to say toward Miyuki’s ‘counterattack’.

“That’s because Miyuki and I believed that Lina would definitely return.”

Next, Tatsuya stated «definitely» and «believed» in such a tone without even the slightest trace of a joke.

“Why do you guys embarrass me like that!”

Miyuki’s smile and Tatsuya’s expressionless face remained unchanged even after Lina’s sharp comment.

“—Baka.”

It took five minutes for Lina, whose face got bright red, to pull herself together.

“Ahem.”

Five minutes later, Lina, with a residual blush on her face, deliberately cleared her throat to get their attention.

Tatsuya wondered if it would be appropriate to smile now, but in the end he decided to wait for Lina's next words with a serious face.

"The White House entrusted me with a letter for Tatsuya."

"A letter from the White House!? From the President!?"

Miyuki rounded her eyes, while Tatsuya just frowned quizzically.

"Not to the Japanese government, but to me...?"

After checking that the addressee's name on the envelope was unmistakably his, he asked:

"Lina, is it alright if I open it here?"

"Rather, it's better this way. I don't know the contents, so I would be pleased if you told me."

Nodding to Lina, who looked at him with anticipation, Tatsuya picked up a craft knife as a substitute for a letter opener.

From a sealed envelope, which at present is used only for official formal correspondence, Tatsuya took out a sheet of thick writing paper, which was rare nowadays, and unfolded the paper so that it could also be seen by Miyuki and Lina.

However, both girls weren't so rude as to peek from both sides of the letter, addressed to Tatsuya.

The letter was purposely written in English and Japanese with the same content. It was quite long and detailed writing, but Tatsuya read through both the English and Japanese text all at once and raised his face.

"In short, it's a reconciliation offer."

Tatsuya's words were quite predictable, so neither Miyuki nor Lina showed any surprise, but rather nodded with understanding.

"It's written that they want to build friendly relations to maintain peace in the Pacific region."

Miyuki and Lina's reactions to these words varied greatly.

A faint reaction from Miyuki clearly showed that she didn't feel any particular emotions about this. In contrast, Lina had a wry smile with a hint of disgust. The latter was an

USNA high-ranking officer, so she immediately saw it as an intention to limit Tatsuya to the «Pacific region».

In other words, it meant «Stay away from the Atlantic Ocean».

Tatsuya also understood this, but from the very beginning, he didn't intend to plunge into the troubles of the Atlantic region, so he didn't have any negative feelings in this regard.

More than that, he was more interested in another matter.

“Lina.”

Tatsuya looked at Lina and smirked faintly.

“W-what?”

Lina's face twitched slightly out of an ominous premonition.

“Here is written: «In proof that the intention of cooperation is not a lie, Lieutenant Colonel Angelina Shields is indefinitely lent to you as an ally for free.»”

“What did you say!?”

Lina shouted that, and then froze.

“Amazing. Lina got promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, didn't she?”

“Hey, hang on!”

But she quickly regained her senses and began to object with a panicking face.

“I've quit the Stars! They've got my resignation notice!”

“Probably, that's why it's written as «Lieutenant Colonel Angelina Shields» and not «Major Angie Sirius.»”

“It's... some scam!”

Looking at Lina, who was left speechless and dumbfounded, even Tatsuya couldn't resist a slight laugh.

“...Anyway, it's purposely written here as «indefinitely». They probably don't expect Lina to return to the USNA military. However, they don't want it to look like a defection, so they decided to present it more like ‘loaning’ you out.”

“If that's so... wait, I'm not a thing to them!”

Whether it was relief or anger, strong emotions occupied Lina's mind.

"Also, it says that they want to be a sponsor of the Stellar Furnace Project."

Having decided to leave Lina in that state of high emotion for now, Tatsuya moved on to the next not insignificant point.

"To be a sponsor?" — Miyuki immediately responded to the new topic of conversation. — "Do they want you to... provide them with technology in return for financing?"

"You're probably right."

Although he said «probably», that couldn't be interpreted in any other way.

"I actually planned to provide this technology from the start."

Tatsuya's goal is to spread the technology of non-military use of magic, thus freeing magicians from the fate of becoming weapons.

He also wanted to replace the future where Miyuki is used as a weapon with other possibilities.

Hence, the USNA didn't need to voice their request [to Tatsuya].

"Well, you can never have enough money. If they want to invest, I will gladly accept it."

Tatsuya stopped ignoring Lina and turned to her.

"By the way, Lina, how should I send the reply?"

Lina blinked a few times and returned from her world of inner struggle with an imaginary adversary³².

"...Umm, the reply right? If possible, I'd like to ask you to write it today. So that tomorrow I can deliver it to the Secretary of Defense while he's in Tokyo."

"Okay. There's no need to consult with the head of the family regarding this matter. I'll go ahead and write it now."

Tatsuya took out a classic fountain pen from a drawer and began to write his answer on a blank sheet of paper, which was specially enclosed in the same letter.

While Tatsuya was busy, Miyuki stood next to him and spoke to Lina in a low voice so as to not disturb him.

³² TLN: the original author's words were «world of [solo sumo](#)».

“Even so, Lina, you’re pretty bold.”

Miyuki was thinking about what happened last winter after the destruction of the disembodied Parasites’ aggregation.

Back then, Tatsuya offered a helping hand to Lina, saying: *«If you ever wish to quit being a soldier, I think I could help»*. Lina, however, refused Tatsuya’s offer by saying: *«It’s not that I particularly want to quit the Stars»*.

“Bold? Do you mean my exit from the military?”

Lina answered rather quickly, which meant that she hadn’t forgotten that conversation either.

“Well... Since then, I’ve thought about a lot of things... Although I’m still a teenager, somewhere deep down in my heart there’s these thoughts that ‘I don’t want to do’ what I don’t want to do. But now I realized turning away from my true thoughts and forcing myself to continue doing something is wrong.”

Lina, although embarrassed, still confessed in a firm tone about the change in her mental attitude.

“I was able to realize it because of you guys. Thank you.”

Smiling softly, Miyuki shook her head.

“It was you who made the decision, Lina. Even if it’s only psychologically, it must be hard to free yourself from the obligations of the Stars’ head-captain. In my opinion, you’re really amazing.”

“That’s enough about me.” — Turning her gaze away, Lina uttered in a tone, obviously trying to hide her embarrassment. — “If anyone here is brave and decisive, it’s Tatsuya.”

After those last words, Miyuki’s smile disappeared from her face.

Lina was still looking away from Miyuki and didn’t notice the change.

“After making such a declaration, Tatsuya will have a hard time. The world is now aware of Tatsuya. It can’t be undone. The attention that Tatsuya has attracted is undoubtedly even higher than that of Sirius.”

Miyuki’s face turned pale and she even trembled slightly.

“Miyuki? Hey, what’s with you!?” — Lina asked in a dismayed voice, finally noticing that something was wrong with Miyuki.

“It’s no...”

Miyuki wanted to say «It’s nothing», but Tatsuya interrupted her with his words:

“I decided it by myself.”

Raising his face while still moving the fountain pen, he continued in an indifferent tone:

“So you don’t have to worry about that, Miyuki.”

“...Yes.”

Miyuki was about to object, but stopped.

She forced herself to smile.

She understood that grieving over it is wrong because it’s tantamount to insulting and despising Tatsuya’s determination.

With his message to the whole world, Tatsuya was able to obscure (make uncertain) the existence of Miyuki’s Strategic-Class Magic, ‘Glacial Age’.

For now, he has managed to postpone the future where Miyuki would be assigned the role of being a Strategic-Class Magician... where she is forced to become a weapon.

But the price was great. For the entire world, Tatsuya ceased to be simply one magician or just one person. He became the deterrence power itself.

The future where Tatsuya is not required to act as a military force,

a future where he is not forced to be a weapon...

was hopelessly pushed further away.

The future, which people take for granted.

Perfect for both — Tatsuya and Miyuki,

It’s still not visible.

The future hasn't come yet, it has still yet to come...

(End of the «Future» Chapter)

Afterword

You've received the 31st volume of «Mahouka Koukou no Rettousei» — «Future Chapter».

How was it? Have you enjoyed it?

It might seem to you that the subtitle of this volume is misleading. Even I think that I slightly deceived you.

What, dear readers, do you feel about the 'future'?

— It hasn't come yet. But must come someday.

— It will never come. There's no sign of it coming. I don't think it will come.

In my youth, I thought it was the former. Well, until the '80s.

It was not only due to my age, it just was such a period. From the '90s (from January 1990 to be precise) my view about the 'future' changed toward the latter.

I already had a feeling of impasse even before that. It was like a premonition. I think this feeling of impasse had become clear and definite from the outset of the '90s. In general, I feel like the impasse situation for me began immediately after the «collapse of Japan's bubble economy» in March 1991.

The impasse situation, in which the characters of this story fell in, is far more serious than my experience. This situation, arguably, is originating from my vision of the future.

...Well, as the author of this story, I ought to be less pessimistic.

I will try my best, at least in fiction, to create a world where «the future is still ahead».

Speaking of fiction.

«This story is fiction. All names in the story have no connection to real people, organizations, or structures.»

I get the feeling that I must say this cliché once again.

I've made a mistake. The name 'Virginia' for a fictional nuclear submarine was indeed a bad choice. However, this name had been finalized in the previous volume. So «this story is fiction» and «names have no connection to real ships».

I'll probably do something similar in the future, but please overlook it with a laugh.

...Although, it seems, even this volume has lots of these moments.

Now, for the next 32nd volume.

The subtitle... is a secret. Not 'To Be Decided', but a secret. Because it's a spoiler.

However, I feel like I've already talked about this. Besides, the name will be revealed shortly before publication, so attempts to hide it are futile. Nevertheless, I hope that my dear readers will be able to enjoy the content of the 32nd volume without prejudice.

So, please look forward to the next 32nd volume of «Mahouka Koukou no Rettousei».

(Sato Tsutomu)

