

# 魔法科高校の 少等生21

動乱の序章編(上)

The irregular  
at magic high school



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## 三矢詩奈

みつや・しづな

十歳族「三矢家」の少女。この子、第一高校に主序で入学を果たした。聴覚が锐敏すぎるため（魔法的な知覚力に起因すると言われる）、イヤーマフを常に着けている。

「何?!

## 矢車侍郎

やぐら・しゆろう

詩奈と誕生日が二日違いの、生まれた時からの幼馴染み。『魔術役』を宣言し、詩奈に深い自己と教養の会を行つ。

## 司波達也

しば・たつや

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

「新人生だな?  
話を聞きたいので同行してもらいたい」

## 司波深雪

しば・みゆき

達也の妹。第一高校3年E組所属。生徒会会長を務める優等生。冷嘲魔法が得意。元々溺愛する『重度のブフコン』。

【さきからの部屋に知覚系魔法を  
侵入させようと頑張っている子は、  
詩奈ちゃんの幼馴染みくんで間違いな?】

「一体何者なんですかね……？」

もしや大軍連合艦隊を殲滅した、戦略級魔法師でしょうか」

イーゴリ・アンドレイビッチ・  
ベゾブラゾフ

Igor Andreyevich Bezobrazoff

新ソビエト連邦所属の戦略級  
魔法師『十三使徒』の一人。

## *Chapter 1*

This news reached Japan at about 7 am on April 1, 2097.

Tatsuya and Miyuki arrived yesterday from Okinawa, watched an emergency news release sitting at the dinner table.

"This is not an April Fool's joke?"

"The usual third-rate jokes would be more appropriate." Frowning, Tatsuya answered Miyuki, who asked in a frightened, unbelieving voice.

Using the remote control, Tatsuya divided the monitor screen in the dining room into 4 parts. Each part of the screen showed news with subtitles on different channels. Everywhere it was talking about the same bad news.

"...Apparently, it's still not a joke."

The area of Santa Cruz in the territory of the former Bolivia in South America, local time on March 31, 17:00. In a battle between the Brazilian army and independent armed guerrillas, which continued uninterruptedly for three months, the embattled Brazilian army used Strategic Class Magic "Synchronized Linear Fusion".

"The scale of the explosion is estimated at several kilotons? ...The problem is, in what situation was the magic used. If around a mountain or a desert, then the damage was limited only by the fighting forces."

"What if they used it near urban areas or refugee camps ...?"

"In this area there are often fights, therefore there should not be many civilians."

Immediately after Tatsuya answered Miyuki, the news showed an official message from the Brazilian army.

"...The epicenter of the explosion was in the center of the ghost town, in which guerrillas were based. About 1000 dead, only members of the armed partisan organization became victims."

Tatsuya read the text from the screen with a grim face. His face was not pale, but his eyes expressed despair. Under the fixed gaze of Miyuki and Minami, who are looking at this uneasy expression, Tatsuya continued his evasive tone in an uncharacteristic manner. "I did not think that "Synchronized Linear Fusion" would be released for such a quantity of enemy."

"...Then, the actual number of victims..."

"At the moment I can only say that there are more of them. However, there is no doubt that among the victims there are not only the guerrillas of the battle."

"How so!?" Miyuki was indignant at Tatsuya's suggestion. Sitting opposite, Tatsuya stretched out his right hand and laid it on Miyuki's left hand. Miyuki did not become enthusiastic, as usual in such a situation. But to some extent the anxiety passed.

"Because the division of guerrillas combat forces and civilians in this case is ambiguous. For example, in the regular army, supply teams are also considered to be a combat force, but people providing partisan supplies are generally classified as civilians." Having said this, Tatsuya raised his hand from Miyuki's hand to her head.

"Even if we worry about them, there's nothing we can do now." Tatsuya slightly patted Miyuki's hair. It was a rough movement with such a gentle hand. Fixing her hair, Miyuki looked at Tatsuya relaxed and clearly was happy. Seeing that Miyuki had calmed down, Tatsuya again looked at the monitor showing the news.

"Despite everything, Brazil seems to have easily recognized the use of Strategic Class Magic..." Tatsuya muttered, talking to himself. It was just an expression of doubt, but for Miyuki it sounded like an ominous prediction that "an era is coming when Strategic Class Magic will be used quite often." Miyuki felt the chill run over her back growing into a small tremor all over her body.

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9 am. Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami came to school, despite the fact that there were spring holidays. Although Tatsuya was worried about getting further information about the use of Strategic Class Magic, but, unfortunately, they had a planned schedule. Because of their stay in Okinawa until yesterday, the meeting to prepare the entrance ceremony for the school was postponed.

With the graduation of previous high school students, and with the start of the new academic year, in a few days Tatsuya and his peers will become pupils of the third, final year. In October of last year, the new school board of First High was, as usual, assembled from the most well-known and top-ranking students on the list of pupils.

But this did not mean that Tatsuya had strong emotions about this. He did not have to suffer a sense of responsibility, like Miyuki. He could only hope as much as possible that there would be no problems.

When they entered the school board room Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami were already expecting Izumi, Kasumi and a first-grader who will represent the newcomers of this year. Kasumi was as a replacement for the head of the disciplinary committee, who could not come.

It seems that the representative of the newcomers, Mitsuya Shiina, was familiar with Izumi and Kasumi for a long time, because they were talking lively when the three entered, headed by Tatsuya.

"Miyuki-senpai, we have not seen each other! Ah... Today you are beautiful, as always... No, you have become much more beautiful..."

But at the same moment, when Izumi noticed Miyuki's appearance, she jumped up from the chair she was sitting on.

"Good morning, Izumi-chan. Thank you for doing various things in my absence." Miyuki was taken by surprise by the enthusiastic greeting of

Izumi, but she could skillfully reply with gratitude with a smile on her face.

"Miyuki-senpai, these are undeserved words of praise! Ah, is it true that such happiness happened to me?" These were not just words, Izumi was literally ready to faint.

"Izumi-chan, you're exaggerating." Miyuki smiled and lightly rebuked Izumi. Miyuki knew already from personal experience, that she will not stop, until she herself says a couple such words.

"Kasumi-chan, and good morning to you. Thank you for your work on replacing Yoshida-kun."

"Good morning, President, Shiba-senpaii, Sakurai-san." Unlike the twin sister in the clouds, Kasumi responded with a polite greeting to the proper junior high school student. After Tatsuya's and Minami's answer, amidst the awkward silence that arose, Miyuki drew attention to the new one.

"Good morning. It's nice to meet you, Mitsuya-san. I am Shiba Miyuki, the president of the school board of First High."

"Good morning. My name is Mitsuya Shiina. Nice to meet you." Shiina with a strain on her face bowed to the wide-smiling Miyuki. Dark brown lush airy hair slightly jumped, and it became clear that she was wearing headphones. Raising his head with a face expressing the cry "A ~ ...!", Shiina tried to remove her headphones in panic. But Miyuki took the initiative.

"All is well. I know about your situation."

"...Sorry. I will make sure that this does not stand out at the inauguration ceremony." She looked shyly, looking at the floor. However, not only Miyuki, but also Tatsuya and Minami did not blame her for being impolite for wearing headphones before the high school students she had just entered. Not even talking about Kasumi and Izumi, whom she had known before, everyone here knew about the "situation" of Shiina.

Shiina does not listen to music or radio. Her headphones are some kind of earplugs. These "headphones" were made in the style of a head hoop with ears covering the ears. However, unlike the usual closing ears from the external sounds of the headphones, these had built-in microphones on the outside of each cup, and the speakers inside. She used this device because she was not able to withstand loud sounds.

It was slightly different from hypersensitivity. In her case, the rumor was really beyond the limits of just sensitivity. Shiina will hear in the form of sound, even the smallest air swing, which can never be heard by ordinary people.

Like Mizuki's hypersensitivity to pushions, her "symptom" manifested itself with the development of magical power, so it is believed that it is associated with magical susceptibility.

However, unlike Mizuki, Shiina perceives not psion or pushion waves, but a real physical sound.

She does not have problems with controlling magical feelings.

The magic scientists who diagnosed her came to the conclusion that "she is constantly unconsciously using magic that amplifies hearing," but there was no sign of magic. And attempts to suppress the amplified hearing magically ended with side effects, like blocking all magical perception.

Such a solution would be suitable for normal daily life, but for a magician this was a significant drawback.

Eventually, having received sound isolating headphones, which with the help of a microphone and a speaker automatically adjust external sound to an acceptable level, Shiina was able to combine everyday life with the life of a magician.

When Shiina goes to official events, she uses headphones hidden in her hair with a neck strap. However, the built-in microphone and speaker still have a certain weight and load their ears for a long time, so using headphones with a head hoop is still easier for her.

"At the admission ceremony it will be better to wear something that is not striking. But for the usual daily wearing at school, I think, is quite suitable. In our school there is no person, including teachers, who would reproach you for this. So do not worry, including right now."

"Yes ... Thank you very much, Shiba-senpai."

Tatsuya picked up the words to smoothly translate the conversation to the topic of the meeting. He also had a goal to say that you can use headphones "permanently". Since this was a delicate topic, which, if the words were not chosen correctly, could sound too harsh, he decided not to let Miyuki say it.

However, Shiina seems to have embraced Tatsuya as caring about her, and bowed with an apologetic smile. In Tatsuya's eyes, this bow was, although not the same as that of Miyuki, but still pretty handsome.

And yet, Tatsuya's speech was able to remove some of Shiina's anxiety from the thought "I'm to blame." The preparatory meeting for the opening ceremony, which began after that, was held in a peaceful atmosphere.

"I think that this speech is quite suitable as an official response."

"Good." Shiina agreed with Miyuki's words.

Her expression was hard to read, because she was not used to such things.

"If you are not sure what to remember, then you can take the text with you."

"No, it's okay ... probably."

"Miyuki-senpai, there will be no problems. Because Shiina-chan has a good memory."

She smiled modestly after these words of Izumi. Thus, the meeting with Shiina continued smoothly and ended in two-thirds of the planned time. Probably because during the absence of Miyuki, Izumi was well prepared. She also had a good grasp of the routine, and did not have to repeat what she had already said.

Apparently, she had already heard in advance from Kasumi and Izumi about what would be discussed at this meeting.

She is also from the Ten Master Clans, but of a different age. Shiina seems to be quite familiar with Kasumi and Izumi, probably because the main houses of their families are located in the same central district of the capital. Shiina has a rather big age difference from the other brothers and sisters of the Mitsuya family, so perhaps she had more motivation for new acquaintances with her peers.

Thus, the meeting with Shiina ended at 11 o'clock. But for Miyuki and other high school students there was still much to do at the school. And for Shiina today's responsibilities are over.

"Shiina-chan, good work. That's enough for today."

"Actually, Shiina and I were going to have dinner together, but it's still a bit early."

After Izumi's words, Kasumi said this with the expression "what a nuisance" and smirked at Shiina. To which Shiina responded with her tense smile.

"Um ... I did something in honor of meeting all of you ..."

Saying this, Shiina took out a picnic basket from the sports bag that was next to her.

Shiina opened the lid of the basket. There lay piled in perfect order "pancake sandwiches" the size of a palm, each of which was wrapped in a separate sheet of paper. For convenience, so that the contents could protrude and not spoil the hand, round pancakes were folded in half, covering themselves with a filling in the form of cream and fruit.

"Uwaa, today also looks appetizing!" As Kasumi, who was cheered up, noticed, and the shape, color, and swirling smell skillfully evoked the appetite.

"Shiina-chan is really good at making sweets." said Izumi, smiling with a glance in the basket. "Miyuki-senpai, she put so much effort, do you want to try?"

"If you do not mind, of course." After the words Izumi offered Shiina with a timid smile.

"Thank you, Mitsuya-san. Then, if you suggest, I'll try."

She took a pancake and brought it to her mouth.

Seeing Tatsuya showing her eyes with consent, Miyuki said:

"Delicious." Miyuki smiled at Shiina, and there was not a trace of her cream on her lips and teeth from the freshly baked pancake.

"Um, Shiba-senpai, do you want to? Or do not you like sweet things?" A slightly reddened Shiina suggested to Tatsuya.

"I'll try."

Tatsuya took a pancake and ate it in two bites. Tatsuya's face which was covered with chocolate cream, had received a napkin from Pixie to wipe his lips, and a drink to wash it down, at least did not show that he was overzealous. Stress from the face of Shiina passed.

"Minami, try too."

After Tatsuya's words, Minami stretched her hand to the basket. And as if at a signal, after that Izumi, Kasumi and Shiina herself had taken from the basket a "pancake sandwich."

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Realizing that the anxiety was in vain, and the home-made sweets were unexpectedly popular, Shiina walked from school with an easy gait. Her thoughts, before meeting with Miyuki, filled with tension and anxiety, were now full of optimism in the spirit of "We got along unexpectedly well."

(Perhaps from the very beginning it was not worth it to be afraid that this president of the school council is the heir of the Yotsuba family.)

Even entering the same Ten Master Clans, the Yotsuba family was considered exceptional. The world community of the family Yotsuba and Saegusa are regarded as two equivalent pearls of the magical world of Japan, but Yotsuba still outperforms in real magical abilities.

The Saegusa family only looks like it's standing with the Yotsuba shoulder to shoulder because of their ability to solve political issues by numerical superiority. All this Shiina heard from her older sisters and brothers. That's why she was so afraid of the first meeting with Miyuki, imagining what a terrible witch she would turn out to be.

Miyuki's appearance Shiina had seen before. She attended the Nine Schools Competition in the past and the year before.

However, her too beautiful appearance caused Shiina's impression "I don't think she's human." And too strong magic inspired fear of the kind "she is beyond the limits of humans."

In January of this year, when Shiina learned that Shiba Miyuki actually is directly related with the Yotsuba and is an heiress, she was not at all surprised at this. On the contrary, she was completely convinced of this. The heiress of the "Demon of the Far East" should be a true "Demonic Princess". This and similar thoughts naturally came to mind.

However, during the face to face conversation this impression seemed completely inappropriate. Not to mention beauty, elegance and greatness were not at all like ordinary people. It was the image of a princess, no, even a queen. Shiina did not feel today any demonic evil, which fear she was prejudiced. Except for incredible beauty and strength, everything else was normal. She was discouraged, not seeing the eccentric characteristic of powerful magicians.

But concern about relations has not completely disappeared. Another person from the Yotsuba, Tatsuya, evoked from her an incomprehensible sense of fear and mystery. However, Shiina felt that he, too, was not a threat to her.

(Until we become enemies.)

(It will be very good if you manage to make friends with them.)

(While the Mitsuya family does not commit any foolishness against the Yotsuba family, there's nothing to fear.)

Having come to this conclusion, Shiina relaxed.

After all the anxiety and stress, she was even a little in high spirits.

"Shiina." She almost jumped from surprise when she was called after she left the school gate.

"Saburou-kun...!" She could not avoid the increased tone of voice, although otherwise unseemly behavior was not noticeable.

"Shiina, good work." However, it seems, it did not worry the guy with long hair who called her, which was now a rare phenomenon. At least, he showed no excitement.

"Have you waited all this time?" I told you that you can come home sooner."

"You finished faster than expected. Besides, I, like security, cannot leave you as a mistress, and go home."

"The guards say, despite the fact that ..." Shiina looked puzzled at the looking sullen fellow.

The name of this guy is Yaguruma Saburou. She and Shiina were born with a difference of 2 days and are close friends of childhood since birth. By the way, Shiina was born before.

The Yaguruma family has a lineage of magicians of ancient magic, but for more than 30 years they have been maintaining a mercenary relationship with the Mitsuya family. Because of their birthday, it was decided that the boy Saburou will become an escort for Shiina.

However, this agreement was canceled even before entering the high school of magic.

Because the magical power of Saburou did not develop to the expected level.

Together with Shiina, he became a pupil of First High. However, he entered the second course.

Saburou's parents advised their son to enter another, ordinary school. Saburou has one older brother and one older sister, but they both did not attend magic high school. The magic of the Yaguruma family from the very beginning did not meet the requirements of the formation of modern magic.

The older brother and sister learned magic from their grandparents, they were allocated a room in the Third Research Institute which is still open for this purpose.

However, in spite of everything, Saburo stubbornly wanted to enter First High to be near and protect Shiina. However, Saburo did not have the most necessary component in this situation - a magical talent. His predisposition to magic was meager not only as a magician of modern magic, but also for a magician of ancient magic.

But still Saburo was able to enter First High . Although he said that "it's because I cannot live like an ordinary person," it was clear to all of his family and the Mitsuya family that it was for Shiina.

As a result, even though Saburo did not receive a duty to protect Shiina, he was even allowed to go with her to the same school. That is, he was allowed to be with her, as before.

"So, how did it go?" Saburo asked his childhood friend, ignoring her words meaning "do not need to be guarded" (in fact, she did not mean it, but Saburo understood them so.)

"How did it go?"

However, Shiina could not understand what this rather abstract question was about. Although they were friends of childhood, it was not always possible to understand each other with a half-word.

"Well, it's ... the most."

However, it seemed that Saburo thought that it would be quite natural to understand him even without details. For the first time, wondering what exactly he should ask, Saburo looked terribly irritated.

"Uh ... I meant how a meeting with people from the Yotuba family was. Shiina, I've been so worried about you all morning."

"Oh, then it's all right. Apart from Shiba-senpai, President Shiba herself is a kind person."

"Not to mention? Is everything alright?"

Saburou more alarmed, about the words about Tatsuya than worried about Miyuki. After all, Shiina is a beautiful innocent girl. In Saburou's opinion, there is no man who does not take an interest in such a beautiful girl, no matter how beautiful his lover is. So the words, like "apart from Shiba-senpai," inevitably caused him anxiety.

"What's okay? Are you talking about Shiba-senpai?"

"Yes. If he looks dangerous, it's better not to meet him alone..."

For Saburou it was a very serious conversation.

However, Shiina laughed a little, as if she heard a silly joke.

"Saburou-kun, I would not go to a meeting, where I will be alone with any man, not just with Shiba-senpai."

Saburou wanted to say "I did not mean it" in protest. However, Shiina continued in a whisper earlier than he had done it.

"But you are so worried about me, are not you? Thank you."

"N-Naturally, I'm worried about Shiina. I'm your guard, after all.

Saburou shyly looked away, and responded in a quarrelsome tone. She smiled secretly, when Saburou could not see. However, aloud she did not comment on this self-imposed assignment of herself as an escort.

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Because of the unexpected morning snack from Shiina, dinner was late, and Tatsuya ordered Pixie to include news on the monitor about the use of "Synchronized Linear Fusion".

Kasumi and Izumi did not object. It seems that everyone was interested in this major incident. When the wall display, usually divided into small parts, began to display the full news on the whole screen, all four except Tatsuya, involuntarily stopped their chopsticks.

"On other channels About the same content." Pixie did not speak with the telepathic voice of Parasite, but through the speaker of the robotic body, and her speech was intermittent. Unlike magical engineering, in this area Tatsuya was, after all, an amateur, so the way of communication was so imperfect.

But this was quite enough for understanding the communication. Tatsuya nodded in response to Pixie and looked again at the screen.

But even if you did not look at the screen, the necessary information came through your ears.

The latest data on the victims, voiced by the news anchor, were about 9,000 dead and 3,000 wounded.

This was significantly different from what was said in the morning news release. In the morning they said that there were only about 1000 victims, such differences are common in almost every case, when the number of victims increases as the situation becomes clearer. Such a big difference clearly shows an attempt to hide the truth, as well as the fact that this attempt failed.

The true meaning of using weapons of mass destruction should be in suppressing the desire to resist a large number of victims. Therefore, the understatement of the number of victims is a rather contradictory act, which may indicate that people in the Brazilian government are not united in their opinions. Or, perhaps, they will expose this as "counted victims of the implicit type"?

Recently, it is rare to see that the scale of the damage reached 12,000 people (unless you consider "Scorched Halloween," of course), but, regardless of this, Tatsuya was concerned about the poor balance between the killed and the wounded.

Tatsuya did not know what kind of magic it was - "Synchronized Linear Fusion", and how it is arranged. But he knew what it looks like and what effect it has.

Heavy Metal Burst. Leviathan. Tuman Bomba. Army of Terra. Thunderclap Tower. Abyss. Synchronized Linear Fusion. Agni-Down-Burst. Ozone Circle. Bahamut.

Of the 10 types of Strategic Class Magic used by thirteen different magicians, only the "Tuman-bomb" of Igor Andreivitch Bezobrazoff from the New Soviet Union has unknown effects and appearance. For the others it is known how they look when activated and what effect they have (for some, only one of these two points is known).

"Synchronized Linear Fusion" magic, the nature of which is fairly well known among all the published Strategic Class Magic. On the active demonstrations conducted by the Brazilian army, one can understand that the activation state can be easily recognized. In other words, the activation process is so noticeable that it's hard to hide.

"Synchronized Linear Fusion" accelerates high-density hydrogen plasma clouds, separated horizontally by a distance of several kilometers to several tens of kilometers, are accelerated towards each other. The clouds collide in the middle of the region, which is the target of the attack, which causes a nuclear fusion reaction there, as a result of which the target is destroyed by thermal and shock waves.

In order to obtain power comparable with the Strategic Class, each of the innumerable protons of a plasma cloud must collide with another proton almost simultaneously. Although fundamental information is not known about how this accuracy is achieved, it clearly has the same effect as a pure hydrogen thermonuclear bomb. The destructive force is inversely proportional to the cube of the distance to the epicenter. In other words, as the distance from the collision point of the plasma cloud increases, the destruction power drops sharply.

But in this case, the number of dead significantly exceeds the number of wounded.

Usually, in areas with a low population density, the wounded should be much greater than the dead. It's not a question, if it was aimed at the accumulation of enemy forces.

Although there is a problem of humanity, there should be no claims to the magician who applied it for military purposes.

But what will happen if you aim it at the center of a large refugee camp?

This time the battlefield was the Santa Cruz area in the territory of the former Bolivia. Mired in a global conflict, also known as the Third World War, once Brazil occupied this territory, there was a strong armed guerrilla movement. Even at this time, irregular battles between the Brazilian army and guerillas continue, and as a result, many people become refugees. That is, refugees could potentially become victims of this battle. In the fight against enemies who are guerillas, this is inevitable. Unfortunately, it was a possible strategy. And if such an uncompromising mass slaughter was intentional, then not only those who ordered, but also the performers will not be able to avoid conviction.

It will be fortunate if in this situation the target for criticism will only be the Brazilian military Strategic Class Magician, Miguel Diaz. However, there is also the possibility that all magicians will be labeled as "enemies of humanity" as a whole. Tatsuya felt that the realization of such an opportunity made him dejected.

Despite the fact that the dinner was over and the news was off, the school boardroom was shrouded in a gloomy mood, but the work on the preparation for the ceremony was progressing without delay. Not only Tatsuya and Miyuki, but also Kasumi, Izumi and Minami demonstrated their steadfastness.

"Let's finish this for today." When Miyuki announced the end of work for today, the time was about 16 hours.

"Um, Miyuki-senpai." Preparing for home care, Izumi hesitantly spoke with Miyuki.

"What is it, Izumi-chan?"

"Is everything okay with Mitsui-senpai? Maybe you should go and see her..."

Honoka was absent today due to illness. She caught a cold immediately after her return from Kumejima to Tokyo. No matter how southern the Okinawa archipelago is, it was too early to go there in a swimsuit.

"She must get better if she's alone all day. Also, a message came with a request to refrain from visiting her."

If Honoka said this herself, then Miyuki would be worried that she "pretends to be strong." However, this message was from Shizuku. Since Shizuku will never do bad for Honoka, Miyuki thought that you can trust the words that she will be cured in one day.

Besides, if Izumi goes to visit, then naturally Miyuki will go with her, and this will mean Tatsuya's inevitable presence with her. Miyuki thought that she would not want Tatsuya to see her, lying with an inadvertently caught cold, as if she were lying with a serious illness. She was sure that Honoka had the same opinion.

"That's how it is..."

"I think if tomorrow it does not get better, then let's go visit her. Izumi-chan also wants to go?"

"I can go with you!?"

"Yes, of course."

"I understand! I will certainly go!"

Although in the end, almost nothing has changed, but Miyuki felt relieved that Izumi could be distracted by this. As a result, Izumi's gloomy mood, caused by news of the massive victims of Strategic Class Magic, has been slightly improved.

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Miyuki somehow managed to distract her mind from the shock caused by

using "Synchronized Linear Fusion", but she could not get rid of the thought that "people who cannot use magic" will consider magicians to be dangerous.

For an anti-magic movement, this can be an event that will help spread their countless complaints to society. Despite the fact that people were afraid of magical power, there were a large number of magicians controlled by the government. However, since the government has officially recognized the use of Strategic Class Magic, the fears of people who cannot use magic have come true.

The Japanese government did not disclose any details of the attack that destroyed the naval base of the Great Asian Alliance in late October 2095. And on official requests of other countries through diplomatic channels, and requests for disclosure of details from the media, the answer was a refusal with the same words: "military secrets."

From the situation it was obvious that Strategic Class Magic was used for this mass destruction, but the Japanese government did not recognize this. It was natural to hide the existence of the "Strategic Class Magician, a special officer named Ooguro Ryuuya," which could become a trump card in any war, but at the same time, in fact, there was no sense in justifying the use of the Magic of Mass Destruction / Mass Murder in a real war. If you confirm this, then likelihood of being attacked by Strategic Class Magic of other countries will also increase.

Even if it is such a "secret" that everyone knows, for the interested party it is still very important not to recognize it. Do not recognize officially - then do not use it openly. Even on October 31, 2095, despite using it in an emergency, a strong psychological load was required to make a final decision.

Accordingly, similar officially opened weapons of mass destruction, too, there are similar obstacles to use. Like the principles "we do not want to use weapons of mass destruction." The use of Strategic Class Magic in real combat also obeyed these principles.

But this time, it is obvious that the Brazilian army used Strategic Class

Magic, with an attitude toward it, like any other weapon.

Although they themselves did not say this, such an easy recognition of the use of "Synchronized Linear Fusion" is equivalent to such a statement. And the decisive factor of agreement was the fact that this magic is difficult to hide. The Brazilian government simply decided that using Strategic Class Magic as a means of resolving disputes is acceptable. Therefore, they made an official statement recognizing the use of "Synchronized Linear Fusion".

"Scorched Halloween" greatly shattered the psychological barriers of the various armies of the world, preventing the use of Strategic Class Magic. And in this particular case, political barriers finally collapsed. Those who understood this reacted more aggressively than before.

United States of North America (USNA), New Mexico, a neighborhood of the city of Roswell. Local time: 15:00, 1 April. In Japan, it's now 6:00, April 2.

"The uprising in Mexico!?" There was a cry of a young girl at the headquarters of "Stars", a magician's corps subordinated directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the army of the USNA. "Even for an April Fools' joke, the quality is very bad, Sylvie."

Major Angelina Sirius, the commander-in-chief of the Stars, with a strained smile looked at the assistant who had become her friend since the time of the secret operation in Japan, the warrant officer Sylvia Mercury First.

Lina hoped that Sylvia with an apologetic smile would say something like "oh, I was discovered?".

However, Sylvia did not smile at all, and with a serious face said:

"Commander-in-chief, it's true."

"...In fact?"

"At 9:50 local time, in Monterrey, North Mexico, there were riots caused by an anti-magic organization. The state troops were sent to suppress the

insurrection, but suddenly a part of them opened fire on their own. As I understand, they decided to join the rioters. However, the shots, as it turned out, were precautionary, and there were no casualties." Sylvia said in a business tone who was afraid to ask Lina.

Incidentally, "the state of Northern Mexico" is an administrative entity created when Mexico was absorbed by the USNA. The territory of the former Mexico was reorganized, forming three new states. South Mexico, located around the city of Mexico City. East Mexico, located from the isthmus of Tehuantepec to the Yucatán Peninsula. Northern Mexico, covering the rest of the territory in the north, including the California Peninsula.

"Government troops joined the rebels!? How did it come to this..."

"It seemed like a bad idea to send a detachment of Wiz Guard along with state troops."

"They sent a detachment of Wiz Guard, consisting of low-level magicians, to suppress the anti-magic mutiny!? Yes, this is how to add fuel to the fire!"

Regular National Guard troops of each state, maintaining security, do not have magician units in their composition. But on the other hand, the federal government established the internal security service "Wiz Guard", which gathered soldiers who were low-level magicians who did not qualify for "Stars". Because of this initial difference, the two organizations never got along well with each other. And in addition to this, they sent magicians of the "Wiz Guard" to eliminate the revolt against the magicians. Therefore, the question arose, did someone in the government consciously want to increase the turmoil?

"Who!" Who gave this order !? What was he thinking about !?"

"I do not know from what level the intention came to give the order to send the Wiz Guard. However, it is obvious to me that the situation has exceeded the expectations of these people."

"... In what sense?" Lina cooled slightly, continuing to respond in an uninterested tone to Sylvia.

After surprise and anger, she suddenly began to show a calm attitude to the issue.

"A group of soldiers who crossed over to the side of the rebels, from the very beginning were negatively inclined towards magicians. Initially sympathizing with the anti-magic organization, they wanted to solve this issue peacefully. It seems they came to an understanding with the party that organized this riot."

"The Wiz Guard dragged in there went to such measures only because ...?"

"Yes, unfortunately."

"Is the Commander of the Wiz Guard - an idiot, or what?"

Sylvia did not reproach Lina with her thoughts aloud. Because Sylvia herself had a similar opinion. Given that the name "Wiz Guard" was short for "Magician Guard", and the word magician bears the meaning of "good sage", one could not deny their sense of losing their "name."

"Suppose that there was resistance from those outside of the Wiz Guard. But at a point when the Wiz Guard squad crossed the line, not only the members of the anti-magic movement, but also the local citizens began to join the riots, and at the moment the large administrative body of Monterrey has already fallen into the hands of the insurgents."

Between Roswell and Monterrey there is a 1 hour time difference. Monterrey is now 16 hours, that is, since the beginning of the riots, it has already been 6 hours. Both the National Guard and the Wiz Guard took about 4-5 hours to arrive in the field, so it appears that the administrative authorities were captured about an hour ago.

"How so..."

For some time, Lina could not accept Sylvia's last words.

"... So the Joint Chiefs of Staff wants us to suppress this insurrection?" With a wary face, Lina asked about her mission, still gazing at Sylvia.

"No, as expected, the headquarters did not order anything reckless."

Hearing this, Lina slightly relaxed her tense face.

The stars are not a unit responsible for maintaining public security. Even if their job is to get rid of the magician-deserters, their main task is to confront foreign troops. Therefore, it is unlikely that they will be assigned such a task to suppress the uprising. Hearing this, Lina felt relieved that she would not have to harm the citizens of her own country, the USNA.

However, this small sense of relief immediately passed.

"The order of the main headquarters is to save the detachment from the rioting crowd, before everything becomes too bad for the Wiz Guard. At the same time, civilian damage, including rioters, is required to be minimized."

"As if it's so easy ... Thank you, though they do not make you harm your citizens."

Putting her hand to her forehead, Lina tried to console herself. She was glad that she would not need to send a muzzle or blade to the same Americans (they were former Mexicans, and now they are real Americans), although she was well aware that the complexity of the mission is significantly increasing.

"Commander Walker was ordered to immediately organize a meeting, which will also consider the candidates to send."

Colonel Paul Walker is the commander of this base. The Stars Commander-in-Chief is Lina, but Commander Walker can control the Stars from the point of view of non-magical subordination.

"Colonel? And where is he?"

"Waiting in the office of the commander of the base. Major Canopus is also due to arrive soon."

Canopus is the commander of the First Corps of the Stars, and next to Lina is the Second Number in the Stars.

"Has Ben called you yet? I understand. Tell the commander that I'll be there in 5 minutes."

Being a high-class magician, but not yet having enough experience and skills in her short career as a military leader, Lina relied heavily on Canopus in matters of command and control. Quite frankly, on such an important issue she could not have solved anything without his advice. If Walker did not do this, then Lina herself would have called Canopus.

"Yes, Commander-in-Chief." Sylvia saluted and left the locker room. Having removed the dirty fighting clothes after training and left in a T-shirt, Lina hurried to continue dressing.

The capital of the German federation, Berlin. Local time: 10:30, April 3. In Japan, it's 17:30 the same day.

At the University of Berlin (renamed from the Free University of Berlin), students formed two groups of demonstrators, a group for the boycott of magicians and a group for co-existence with magicians. These groups got involved in a conflict on campus territory.

The use of violence and brute force has not yet been reached. While both sides are relatively calm and simply insulting each other. But with their enthusiasm, this at any moment can turn into a fight. It cannot be denied that this could eventually evolve into a real armed clash. In addition, for the magicians themselves, it was inconvenient not only for the claims of the anti-magicians, but also for the defenders in the style of "we must accept the magicians."

Professor Karl Schmidt looked with bitterness on her face from her laboratory at this quarrel, which had no logical arguments. But she looked through the monitor, and not through the window. It is not known what would have happened, show it to their face in the window. It can come not only with a bullet, but with a gun shell. Professor Schmidt knew this from the personal experience of the past few months.

Immediately after she looked away from the monitor, the video call indicator blinked. Schmidt did not use the remote control of the voice, but pressed the answer button on the console with her hand.

"Good morning, Professor Schmidt. How are you?"

"Professor MacLeod ... I have not seen you for a long time. Thank God, you're still healthy."

A small pause after the name of the interlocutor emerged due to the surprise of a call from a person whom she had not seen for a long time. However, she quickly regained her usual facial expression

"And you, Professor, how are you?"

"Age already affects me, but fortunately, there are no special problems yet. And by the way, Professor Schmidt, as I said before, my current place of work is not a university, so I'm now not a professor." MacLeod did not protest seriously. It was a kind of joke, and his face on the screen showed a polite smile.

"In our country, Herr MacLeod, your proficiency is still valid. I think that at this university professors will be happy to accept you at any time." However, Schmidt did not even smile and did not break her serious tone.

"I think our British University will also receive you at any time, madam." MacLeod did not try to offend. But in his straightforward phrase, there was a slight feeling of an admixture of some kind of anxiety, which had not existed before. "There seems to be something terrible happening at the University of Berlin."

"You already know?" As she said this Schmidt looked not surprised, but ashamed.

"The news has even reached here. Now even the broadcast from the scene of events."

"At the university, after all, they decided to refuse an interview..." Schmidt expressed disagreement, not believing. However, people who are shooting cannot be connected with MacLeod, so there is no point in making a claim to him.

Freedom of access to information is one of the basic principles of democracy. Even if there is no way to interview, there are always many interesting things that the camera will see.

Schmidt sighed in front of the camera. She knew from the beginning that it was pointless to be angry with MacLeod.

"Professor. Have you called me to discuss the importance of the existence of the media? "However, Schmidt felt that valuable research time was groundlessly spent talking about the trouble she already knows about.

"I'm sorry. It looks like we are a little distracted by the empty chatter." MacLeod understood that she was serious. His figure on the screen straightened. "Professor Schmidt. Would you like to escape to Britain?"

"Professor..."

"This is not a joke. I seriously invite you." MacLeod interrupted Schmidt, speaking with concern, with a serious voice.

"You have a bad temper, if you are not joking. People like you or I cannot afford to flee to another country."

Carla Schmidt is the same as MacLeod, a Strategic Class Magician, officially open to the public. One of the Thirteen Apostles. It is the backbone of all defense of its country. After the events of "Scorched Halloween," its value was recognized even more. Until October 31, 2095, she might still have thought about fleeing. But now, when a year and a half has passed since this major incident, the government will not allow the departure of the Strategic Class Magician from the country to which he belongs.

"I think in Germany, madam, you are not very comfortable right now.  
"...you are absolutely right, professor."

"Sorry. However, if you are aware of the situation, you must first think about yourself. Among young people, support for the principles of parties with racist ideas like "magicians are inferior people, and their rights should be limited"

MacLeod interrupted his speech, because he saw that Schmidt frowned. She was unbearable with the idea that the citizens of her country, the Germans, in their stupid youth are being led to incitement and abandon logical thinking. But she did not stop MacLeod's speech.

"While the military is expanding its influence, under which magicians should be given in full for the sake of the country, and magic is considered an instrument, magic researchers seriously engaged in peaceful research, like you, Madame, lose their destiny, do they not?"

Schmidt could not object to what MacLeod said. Her silence meant agreement.

"Fortunately, in my country, extremist ideas against magic were sorted out at an early stage, and there is practically no conflict between citizens on this ground."

"Did not your country isolate the adherents of anti-magic ideas at the local level?"

"So it is. For those who cannot live together, the best solution is to change the place of residence."

For Schmidt her words were absolute sarcasm, but this did not work for MacLeod.

"But this is also a temporary measure. Once they accept coexistence, they can return to their original homes at any time. In our UK, the name of His Majesty the King, both magicians and non-magicians are given the same opportunities."

The proposal of MacLeod sounded very attractive for the current Karla Schmidt.

"...A wonderful story, however, I still cannot leave my country."

Probably, that's why she could refuse it. The stories with too good circumstances always have another, dark side. The situation that surrounded her, the world in which she lived, left such a lesson in the depths of her heart.

"I see. At the moment it's still okay, I guess. However, if your life as a researcher becomes really difficult, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. I will never think badly about your request."

"Thanks for your words. Well, then, all the best."

Avoiding to hear MacLeod's answer, Schmidt quickly turned off the videophone. On the way back to the table, her gaze fell on the monitor, showing the situation outside. Next to the building where her laboratory was located, the students have already begun to fight.

The new Soviet Union, the Black Sea base. Local Time: 11:00, 4 April. In Japan, it's 17:00 the same day.

Lieutenant-General Leonid Kondrachenko met a special guest from Moscow.

"Your Excellency, we have not met each other."

"Welcome. Dr. Bezobrazzoff, glad to see you."

Kondrachenko's visitor was a man who, at a relatively young age (slightly over forty), had already been recognized as a leading researcher of magic at the Academy of Sciences of the New Soviet Union. It was Igor Andreivitch Bezobrazzoff, who was also one of the "Thirteen Apostles", the officially disclosed Strategic Class Magicians . Although officially he was an ordinary scientist, it was rumored that his voice in the country is on par with the Minister of Defense.

Speaking about special people, Kondrachenko also took a unique position in the Black Sea base. He is authorized to freely use the personnel and supply of this base, while not being its commander. The commander of the base has the same as his rank of Lieutenant-General, therefore Kondrachenko is not obliged to obey him either. According to the conventional military system, Kondrachenko must report directly to the Minister of Defense, but in reality only the Prime Minister can give him orders.

(The new Soviet Union did not adopt the presidential system, the supreme power is held by the Prime Minister of the Union government.)

Kondrachenko invited Bezobrazzoff to his private office. To be precise, it is in the reception room arranged on the basis of his personal residence. The Kondrachenko Residence possessed a luxurious layout and design comparable to the level of luxury rooms of first-class international hotels, and the service organized by the base's staff was at the level of the employees of the above-mentioned first-class hotels.

Although there was one inconvenience, the total absence of women. Kondrachenko was not gay, and the pretty low-ranking subordinate bases, dressed up by servants, did not provoke him.

"The doctor after all that is not drinking?"

"I apologize for the mistake." With an apologetic face answered Bezobrazzoff on Kondrachenko's question.

"What do you like. I myself have not been very tolerant of alcohol lately."

He laughed, and Kondrachenko snapped his finger twice. Soon the subordinate appeared and brought a small samovar (kettle-water heater), two tea cups and two small bowls with jam (fruit broth with sugar).

Pouring the brewed tea from the tea pot set on the top of the samovar, the subordinate set the cup and bowl with jam to Bezobrazzoff. Serving Kondrachenko in the same way, putting the samovar between them, and having received an approving nod from his master, the subordinate retired from the waiting room.

Kondrachenko did not taste tea, poured hot water into a cup from a samovar, put a little jam in his mouth and took a sip of tea. Ugly, after having tasted the tea and jam on the palate, also added some hot water to the cup. Taking the cups in hand, the two looked at each other again.

"So ... Can I find out the reason for your visit, Doctor?"

"Perhaps this is exactly what you thought, Your Excellency."

When he heard Bezobrazzoff's answer, Kondrachenko frowned. He made this expression for the first time in his entire meeting with Bezobrazzoff today.

"Is it because of the riot that took place yesterday at our base? But we have already solved this problem."

"I know. If I was worried about this, I would have come to the commander of the base, not to your Excellency."

"Indeed so." Kondrachenko took off his gloomy expression from his face with a gray beard. "Then, I wonder, what did you want to ask?"

After Kondrachenko's question, Bezobrazzoff showed slight indecision.

"...I am a researcher of magic, not a policeman."

"Of course, I understand." Kondrachenko said to Bezobrazzoff who in a mournful tone, answered with a clear voice, unusual for his age.

Perhaps, here his special manner of speech affected. Bezobrazzoff got rid of the hesitation and moved on to the main topic.

"So, I'm not here because of the search for the perpetrators of the mutiny. I'm here to find out if magic was involved in yesterday's riots."

"In other words, do you suspect that this is the work of a foreign or opposition magician? Do you think the incitement of a mutiny, no, the insurrection was made with the help of psychic interference magic?"

"I would not say that I came to this conclusion. However, there is such a possibility, I suppose. Of the nine Strategic Class Magicians in our country, only two are open to the outside world: Your Excellency and I. In my opinion, it's hard to imagine a Strategic Class Magician, officially announced to the whole world who will stick to the base, to which he is affixed."

"I do not think I'm willing to accept the usefulness of those worsened clone copies that cannot even leave the sterile room without protective clothing, but I understand your concern. However, your suspicions are superfluous."

"True?" Accidentally escaped from Bezobrazzoff. Kondrachenko looked at him with a stern face.

"Do you want to say, my intuition cannot be trusted?"

"I apologize. I did not mean anything like that."

In response to the reprimand Kondrachenko, Bezobrazzoff guiltily lowered his head.

"...The reason for your suspicion doctor, is that you probably suspect the involvement of 'Dracula.'"

Since Bezobrazzoff instantly apologized, then Kondrachenko also went to meet him.

"What an insight, I'm surprised."

This was a hit in the top ten, and Bezobrazzoff could only raise the white flag. "Dracula", which Kondrachenko mentioned, is the code name of a Romanian magician specializing in secret murders and sabotage. He is not just an expert on illegal operations, even his real name is unknown. There are even rumors that he is a hidden Strategic Class Magician, but there is no confirmation. This Black Sea base was not far from the Romanian border (the Black Sea base and the base of the Black Sea Fleet are two different bases). Therefore, when Bezobrazzoff heard about the riots on the Black Sea base, the first idea was precisely the participation of Dracula.

"To be honest, I'm also surprised."

"What?" Bezobrazzoff opened his mouth in surprise. Seeing this, Kondrachenko grinned quite a bit.

"Thus, the soldiers who organized the riots were carefully studied for traces of the magic of mental intervention. As for the instigators of the riot, I personally conducted an investigation."

"I see... Apparently, I was unnecessarily worried."

"Please do not worry. I understand that the doctor is also under the influence of these Kremlin panties. ...Well, it's true, between us."

"I understand."

Kondrachenko and Bezobrazzoff had the same smiles of a mischievous child on their faces. A calm atmosphere returned between them.

"But your Excellency. If yesterday's riots are not connected with the sabotage of foreign forces or the opposition, should not they be afraid of repeating it?"

"This is a conflict between soldiers based on the relationship of magicians and non-magicians."

Bezobrazzoff nodded in agreement with Kondrachenko's words.

"In America and Japan, the anti-magic movement has spread, fueled by complaints and dissatisfaction with social inequality. However, in our Union there is no social inequality."

Actually, it was "not supposed to exist," but Kondrachenko and Bezobrazzoff themselves considered such reservations superfluous.

"There was another point in yesterday's riot of supporters of the anti-magic movement."

"Exactly. Soldiers who are not magicians feel uneasy. In the near future it is expected that only magicians will be active in the army, so they are afraid that they will become unnecessary."

With an understanding face, Bezobrazzoff expressed his agreement with Kondrachenko's words.

"In fact, it is impossible to organize an army consisting of magicians alone. Even if we organize a separate magical military unit, we will not be able to find as many magicians as possible to cover the entire personnel."

"But for soldiers to understand this, they need to go to the real battlefield." Bezobrazzoff again expressed his agreement with Kondrachenko's remarks. "Then, let's organize such an opportunity."

"Wow... Doctor, do you have a specific place to attack?"

Kondrachenko looked steadily at Bezobrazzoff's gaze, which you cannot tell what he is already over 70.

"Unfortunately, in Europe there is no suitable place for the transfer of soldiers." Under this look he apologized not only in words, but also cringed all over. But this turned out to be unnecessary worry.

"About the military situation in Europe, doctor, I know much better than you."

"Really. I'm sorry."

"In other words, if not Europe, then... Far East?"

"Yes." Bezobrazzoff cautiously agreed with Kondrachenko's suggestion. "Just the other day an incident occurred in which the junior officers of the Hong Kong army with a group of their subordinates deserted from the army and fled the Great Asian Alliance."

"Interesting. This is the first time I heard of it."

"I only recently found out myself. Further, in order to catch these deserters, the Great Asian Alliance cooperated with the army of Japan."

"Did deserters plan any kind of subversive activity in Japan...?"

"Correct. But they have already been defeated."

"That's it, that's understandable. Finally, having resolved their long-standing hostility, the Great Asian Alliance and Japan, showing each other and all the others their cooperation, use this to ease tensions. If you think so, then this is quite natural. There are no people or organizations that could live in a constant state of war. We will use this."

Stroking his long gray beard, Kondrachenko nodded several times.

"I will suggest this to the Kremlin when I return to Moscow. If the operation is approved, I think I will be able to include in it the subordinates of your Excellency."

"This will be a good test for the soldiers."

"Doctor, then I ask you to do this for me."

Kondrachenko bowed slightly to Bezobrazzoff. It was difficult for him to walk, since his knee was damaged and he used a cane. Of course, Bezobrazzoff understood this well, and with a smile bowed in reply to the old general, showing his consent.

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Saturday, April 6, 2097. At the Magic University in Tokyo, the induction ceremony was successfully completed.

However, the coastal region of Hokuriku was shrouded in tension, which made the whole body tremble. The reason for this was the appearance of a suspicious vessel, seen yesterday in the coastal waters of Sado.

Five years ago, at the same time, when the Great Asian Alliance invaded Okinawa, the New Soviet Union landed a small detachment on Sado Island. Even if it is said that the detachment is small, it was enough to destroy the local garrison and capture the most important objects of the island. Many civilians were victims at that time. Kichijouji's parents, who were employees of the magic research lab on this island, were also killed during the battles.

The New Soviet Union has not yet acknowledged that the troops that landed in Sado belonged to their country. However, local residents did not care why the government of the New Soviet Union pretends to be fools.

We will not let them devastate our native lands again. Be it an army of another country, be it an armed grouping of an organization.

Every volunteer who helped to break the invasion at that time, swore in his own heart. And now they came together to fulfill the oath of that time.

Among the newly assembled volunteers were also those who five years ago did not yet have the strength to resist the enemies. They also vowed with those who fought then, risking their lives. Among them was Kichijouji, who lost his parents at a time when the land of Sado was trampled by the shoes of unidentified armed men.

"George, calm down."

Kichijouji could not dismiss the thought of revenge. The discovered suspicious ship, undoubtedly, also belonged to the New Soviet Union.

"These are my words, Masaki." However, at least in appearance, Kichijouji controlled his emotions.

"...Since you say so, everything seems to be in order." Standing next to him Masaki felt relief.

"Team, are you ready !? Ichijou Gouki, the head of the Ichijou family, the acting commander of the volunteer squad, turned to the soldiers, asking for their readiness.

"Yes, yes!" All the volunteers shouted in a single rush. Masaki and Kichijouji also unleashed a full war cry.

"Well! Team, go!"

"Oh, oh!"

One hundred and nine magicians with a war cry began landing on three so-called seabed exploration vessels, but in fact they are armored ships belonging to the Ichijou family. At this point, most of the male magicians that the Ichijou family can mobilize have gathered.

The ships they sat on were not military missile carriers, but armadillos of the old style (because these were private ships). Although the case was in the old style, new equipment technologies gave speed at the modern level. Unfortunately, they had a disadvantage - low maneuverability.

From missiles and shells they can be protected by magic. But something like a machine gun for a magician - rather troublesome problems. So using an armored ship to transport a group of magicians was a reasonable choice.

Three ships left the port.

Of the three ships of this "fleet", two will land people on the island of Sado. And the third will go to the side of a suspicious ship at sea.

Yesterday, a stratospheric camera recorded the entrance of a suspicious ship into the territorial waters of Japan off the coast of Sado.

At the moment, this ship returned to the open sea (meaning: came out of territorial waters). The ship cannot be captured, since the right to pursue was not officially recorded, and it does not violate Japan's economic interests, so it was planned to keep it under control, just getting close to it. But if they attack, then it will be a different conversation.

After leaving the port, Gouki turned to the guy standing next to him.

"Shinkurou, are you okay?"

Kichijouji and Masaki were on the same ship as Gouki.

"Y-yes! All is well!"

"Are not you afraid?"

"...To be honest, I'm a little afraid."

"This is normal." Gouki nodded in satisfaction, replying to Kichijouji. You cannot rely on normal judgment when in a state of anger, hatred or numb with fear. Without courage, only quick death awaits in the battle. Gouki did not want this fate for those who followed him into battle.

Then he turned to his son.

"Masaki."

"Yes."

"Of course, you will not be afraid?"

"I know. I will not show fear."

I'm not "not scared," but "I will not show fear." Gouki grinned at Masaki's response.

"Good. For you it will be normal on the advanced positions of the vanguard.

Shiba Tatsuya-dono from the Yotuba family recently demonstrated combat feats in the waters of the Okinawa archipelago. Play is prohibited!"

"I understand."

Tatsuya's participation in preventing the diversion of an artificial island in the waters of Kumetzim, the Okinawa archipelago, was kept secret. However, a review of the incident was revealed to each of the chapters of the Ten Master Clans. There is an obligation to notify the other Master Clans in the event that one of these Clans participated in a magical battle. This is a measure intended to limit the abuse of magic for personal purposes.

Although it cannot be said that this rule is protected from bad faith (for example, details of the use of magic in combat are usually concealed), but this time it was a joint operation with the military, and the Yotuba family immediately told the other nine families some facts .

Initially, this information is only for the heads of families. For example, Kasumi, Izumi, Shippou Takuma and Mitsuya Shiina did not hear about it from their parents. However, Gouki reported this to Masaki that same evening.

Naturally, this was done to motivate his son. And it was not necessary to say that Gouki was on target. From the next day after the story, Masaki gave himself entirely to training and even now was full of morale.

As already mentioned, one of the three ships that left the port was approaching a suspicious vessel. His task was to control the actions of the enemy and try to force him to attack. If the other side attacks, then under the pretext of a counterattack it will be possible to attack in response even in neutral waters.

And this dangerous role of bait took over the ship on which was Gouki on. Many were against such a strategy. No, it would not be an exaggeration to say that everyone except Gouki and Masaki opposed this. Number One and Number Two of the Ichijou family rushes to the most dangerous place on the same ship. Everyone who is aware of the importance of risk diversification must say that this is recklessness.

However, Gouki did not listen to the persuasion of his subordinates. "Is not the strongest and the most likely survivor to be in the vanguard of the fighting ranks?" These were the words of Gouki.

He is the organizer of a squad of volunteers. He had no intention of creating an army.

For Gouki, his subordinates were those whom he must protect.

Paraphrasing, they were like family to him. When protecting citizens and national interests, the army always inevitably lost soldiers. However, the Ten Master Clans are an organization that defends the interests of magicians, and their subordinate magicians are also citizens of this country. Unlike soldiers who are not considered civilians in wartime, they must be protected, for the Ichijou family, her subordinate magicians, even during the battle, are "comrades" whom she must protect. At least, Gouki thought so. Masaki also adopted his father's beliefs.

But the ideas of Gouki and Masaki had a rational explanation. From the point of view of focusing the force, it is wise to send magicians Number One and Number Two to the necessary places of battle.

In addition, even for the Ichijou family of the Ten Master Clans, it was a challenge to find enough magicians with sea battle skills.

As a rule, magic effects one event, one object, and requires a high level of skills to designate only a part of the object when the event changes. Magic with an effect on an area that changes an event in a certain space, for the same reason, is considered more complex than point magic, which designates a specific object.

The special magic of the Ichijou family is "Rupture". This is magic, almost instantly evaporates liquids. The goal may not only be fluid in the human body or inside a machine. Seawater can also be exposed to a "rupture". For the magician of the Ichijou family, the surface of the sea is like a warehouse of endless ammunition.

But no matter how good a magician is, it's impossible to make all the sea water magic. In order to really blow up seawater, some part of the sea must be mentally cut from the general mass and designated as the goal of magic.

This problem concerns not only the "gap". To use sea water as a means of attack, no one can escape the obstacles that "it is necessary to specify only a part of the object." Shells from sea water are more difficult to make than air bullets, because, unlike air, water is visible and connects the mind with the sensation that "this is one huge object that is everywhere." The magic of liquid evaporation is a useful technique in a sea battle, however, the magicians who can use it in real combat are unexpectedly few.

On one ship from the Gouki were collected magicians who mastered such a skill. This was another reason why Masaki got on the same ship as Gouki.

In any case, the stage of discussion of the formulations has passed. Changing the plan at this point will lead to confusion.

Having reached Sado, the fleet was divided into 2 groups, 2 ships in the first, and 1 ship in the second. Two ships circled the island from the south and landed at the port of Ryotsu, which is on the eastern shore. And the ship from Gouki and Masaki continued to go to the north, not turning off.

An unknown ship was discovered 50 nautical miles north of Sado. But nothing can be done while it is away from territorial waters.

In addition, Gouki's ship is primarily a private vessel. Strictly speaking, he does not have the authority to intercept and search. From the very beginning, he was ready for illegal actions (piracy).

But still, he was not going to suddenly sink this ship.

Military power was enough for this. Gouki's ship did not carry weapons, but the combat power of the magicians on board the ship over compensated for the lack of weapons. No, for Gouki alone, it would not be difficult to sink one warship.

The Strategic Class Magician is defined by the expression: "A user of magic who can destroy a city or fleet with one magic challenge."

If you replace "one magic challenge" with "one battle" in this expression, then this definition is suitable for Gouki.

With the Ichijou family "Rupture", which is good in destroying not only human bodies, but also machines, it can easily sink five or even ten warships in a row. And if the enemy does not have a magician comparable in strength to the Ten Master Clans, then Gouki alone can destroy a whole fleet.

On this side, the nearby volunteers had less risk. But Gouki who guided them, instead of sinking the ship without any unnecessary questions, decided to go on a close battle with the enemy in order to find out his identity.

Five years ago, when he was evacuated from Sado, the New Soviet Union completely denied any involvement. There were no prisoners from Japan, and there was nothing on the corpses that would help prove the identity, so the New Soviet Union could not be blamed.

Despite the fact that the invasion troops were discarded, from a diplomatic point of view, this incident ended in defeat for Japan. It was this bitter memory that made Gouki choose such a risky plan.

"Is the enemy ship moving?" When the suspicious ship was in sight, Gouki cried out a question he had asked many times before.

"It's not moving!" The answer of the subordinate was the same.

There was no radiation of active radars, no increase in heat emission by the inclusion of an engine. There were also no signs of guns aiming or missiles launching. The suspicious ship was suspiciously quiet.

It was impossible to say that there was no movement at all. Gouki was sure of that. In any case, they were already approaching the distance where you can see with the naked eye.

The suspicious ship looked like a small cargo ship. Small by the standards of cargo ships, because its size exceeded the size of the destroyer. There were no signs of weapons on board, but everyone remembered the example of a disguised ship in the Yokohama incident. The volunteers did not lose their vigilance for a second.

However, there was no point coming here just to see.

"Reconnaissance squad, go ahead!" - Gouki finally made the decision.

"There!"

Masaki cheerfully answered the order. Like the four young men standing behind him.

For convenience, Gouki called it "reconnaissance squad", but in fact it was the vanguard sent to gain total control over the enemy ship. The members of the detachment, not even mentioning their fighting strength, were chosen on the basis of defense and maneuvering abilities that will help survive even in an extremely desperate situation.

"Masaki, be careful."

Kichijouji did not behave like a man who dissuaded me at the moment when the order was already sent. He received the role of supporting the withdrawal of troops in the event of an emergency, and will follow the movements of the "reconnaissance squad" through information obtained from the stratospheric chamber.

"I rely on your support, George."

Kichijouji nodded to Masaki counting on him.

Masaki stretched out his lips in a smile and jumped off the deck into the sea. He did not dive. His feet did not sink below sea level.

Immediately, as their feet touched the waves, Masaki and four people behind him, as if nothing had happened, ran on the water towards the suspicious ship.



While running on the water there were no attacks aimed at them. Five people led by Masaki quickly reached the target ship and jumped onto the deck one by one. Of course, it's good if the enemy is hiding, but even here they were not attacked.

"What's happening? George, do you see anything?"

Masaki, who sensed something wrong, stood in a position near the edge, where he could be evacuated at any time, and contacted Kichijouji.

"The camera did not detect human silhouettes. Judging by the data collected from observation, the ship looks unmanned."

Kichijouji checked not only the information from the stratospheric camera, but also watched the communication channel with the sensors installed in the equipment of Masaki and other volunteers.

Consequently, his answer meant that there were no threats found. This response helped Masaki slightly ease tension.

"...Wait, Masaki. Your sensors found a gas leak there." However, the words of the strained Kichijouji, quickly spoken, quickly restored vigilance to him. Instead of commissioning a subordinate, he checked his sensor himself. Although it was a simple multi-purpose detector in the form of a wristwatch, it could clearly show the concentration of flammable gas in the air above the ship.

"Everyone raise barriers and evacuate the ship."

The detected gas was propane. It was probably chosen because it is colorless and odorless, and also heavier than air and slowly dissipated. However, it was an inferior trap. Although it is said that it is difficult to dissipate, even a light wind will quickly blow this gas out just like any light methane.

In addition, even if the entire ship is filled with propane gas, its expected combustion power is insufficient to break through the barrier magic of the elite Ichijou family fighters. Also, propane gas has a very low upper explosive threshold (the upper limit of concentration, beyond which gas will not explode), so it is not suitable for attack.

And the lower explosive limit is so low that you cannot think of anything other than the effect of surprise, annoying enemies.

That's why Masaki's instructions did not have a hint of urgency.

Meanwhile, the gas spread to the side of Gouki's ship. They have already heard about the gas through wireless communication.

Perhaps it was a trap.

That's why the relaxed Gouki looked at the water's surface with astonishment.

"On the surface of the sea, signs of the activation of magic...!"

Kichijouji could not finish his sentence. Until that moment, there were no signs of a magical attack. But now the Gouki's ship was surrounded by a huge number of magic sequences activated on the surface of the sea. All of them were activated simultaneously at the same time as they appeared.

"Father!"

Standing on the surface of the sea, Masaki also noticed signs of activation of magic. The next moment, right before his eyes, the sea exploded. There was multiple simultaneous explosions, similar to a blasted minefield, strewn with mines without spaces.

Thrown back by a sudden rush of air from the blast wave, Masaki's group fell into the water. Masaki's overview was hampered by the emergence of water sprays, steam and rain from sea water.

"Damn!"

Calling the air flow, Masaki returned to the surface of the sea.

"Father!"

The sight of the ship has not changed. The armor, which was considered obsolete, turned out to be not for sight. It seems that the magic barriers were not enough, and the ship was badly damaged. Damage to the front of the deck was minor. This meant that the newest developed multi-layered barriers were able to withstand the blast. Masaki intuitively was sure that his father used defensive magic.

However, his relief did not last long.

"Masaki, Masaki! With Gouki-san...!" From the dynamics of the communicator, the confused voice of Kichijouji burst out and reached Masaki's ears.

Feeling the ominous cold running down his spine, Masaki shouted into the microphone.

"George!" What about my father !?

"It's awful! Return fast, faster!"

"Got it!"

Masaki, completely forgetting about the command of his subordinates, rushed to the side of an armored ship. Fortunately, there was no attack from the suspicious ship. And the remnants of the explosive gas were thrown back by the blast wave.

◊ ◊ ◊

Tomorrow, April 7, the admission ceremony to the Nine Schools of Magic will take place. Miyuki, as the president of the school board, expects a lot of different work. Not only welcome introductory speech on behalf of all current students, but also management of the progress of the whole ceremony, meeting with guests and much more.

Other behind-the-scenes work can be shared with other members of the school board. Therefore, Tatsuya for a while will work separately from Miyuki, and for him it will not be "just Sunday."

In addition, since Miyuki was declared the next head of the Yotsuba family, the entertainment time of the guests will undoubtedly decrease. Last year, many "guests" with evil intentions ran after her, but now, having learned that she is a magician of Yotsuba, the number of brave souls overwhelmed with such a desire will be greatly reduced.

Given this future responsibility of Miyuki, Tatsuya wanted to give her the opportunity to rest as soon as possible. But after learning the contents of the secret message that came after dinner, he could no longer say that it would work. When he finished reading the letter in his room, Tatsuya pressed the intercom button for Miyuki's room.

When Miyuki entered the living room and sat on the couch, Tatsuya ordered Minami to close the window. This room had high sound insulation, completely blocking sounds for external listeners. Peeping, of course, also was impossible.

Seeing Tatsuya's more cautious behavior than usual, Miyuki realized that the "question is not easy" and straightened up.

"Sorry, that at such a time."

"No, you did not interrupt anything. So, Onii-sama ... Is this something from Maya-sama?"

During dinner, about an hour ago, Tatsuya told her "today you must finish your work early and have a rest". She was going to take a bath at the moment when he called her on intercom. She was not dissatisfied with this. If Tatsuya said that he has something to say - this is a top priority for Miyuki.

If Tatsuya calls, then whenever it happens, wherever she is, whatever she does, she will hurry to him. Regardless of whether this is possible or not, Miyuki will always have this feeling.

On the other hand, Tatsuya will never abuse the feelings of Miyuki. Tatsuya also puts Miyuki as a priority at anytime, anywhere, and in any situation. Although this interruption of the affairs of Miyuki often contradicts her will, she knows that all these decisions are made on the basis of the notion "everything is done for the sake of Miyuki." In the case of Tatsuya, this is not even "within the limits", but "always". It is also not an exaggeration to add the word "absolutely."

Therefore, Miyuki thought, what was so impossible that the head of Yotuba could ask for, that could be more important than tomorrow's arrival ceremony?

"Yes, this is a report from the head of the family, and there are no orders for us."

"Report...?"

Not an order, not a notice, not another attempt at communication, but a report. Although she was declared the heiress of Yotsuba, until now it was only a formality. It is unlikely that the position of Maya and the heads of branch families will change so suddenly. In other words, there was important information. Miyuki realized this. And her thoughts were not wrong.

"This afternoon, the head of the Ichijou family, Ichijou Gouki-dono fell into the trap of the enemy and is now in serious condition. He is conscious, but it seems he cannot move normally. Also, it says that it seems he did not get physical damage. The head of the family suggested that the magic calculation zone was paralyzed by overload."

Miyuki turned petrified, covering her mouth with her hands and opening her eyes wide. Minami was so surprised that she could not even change her expression.

"They were trying to seize a ship of unknown origin, from which hostile actions were expected. During the attempted capture, they were subjected to a powerful explosion caused by magic. Ichijou-dono unfolded a four-layered magic barrier to protect his people and barely kept the onslaught of this force to the last remaining layer. Thus, the report concluded that serious damage to the magic calculation zone was caused by the destruction of three layers of a large-scale barrier covering more than a hundred people."

"More than a hundred people ..." Minami whispered in a startled voice, still holding the same petrified face. Since barrier magic was her strong point, she was well aware of how terrible this load was.

"The Ichijou family is not as strong in defensive magic as the Juumonji family. The choice of the technique of simultaneous multilayered barriers was completely unreasonable."

"Onii-sama..." Miyuki whispered anxiously, watching Tatsuya indifferently utter his words. She thought that he remembered about her - Honami, who burned her life with an overload, using the magic of a large-scale barrier.

Sakurai Honami. Miya's guardian, mother to Tatsuya and Miyuki, as well as genetically aunt Minami. A woman with the same face as Minami, with the same appearance that she will have when she grows up. Five years ago, having given all her strength, she defended Tatsuya from large-scale shelling from warships.

Discuss the situation, similar to the death of Honami in front of the girl who is her exact copy... It's like opening the lid of painful memories. Miyuki thought that since she feels this way herself, then her brother just suffers even more.

"...Miyuki, I'm sorry. I think I reminded you of sad events."

However, Tatsuya seems to have misunderstood the essence of Miyuki's suffering. No ... is it wrong? Really?

But Miyuki's suspicions were immediately discarded.

"We cannot do without recognizing such things in our situation. Tatsuya's voice was not disturbed by the memories of old times. "Judging only by magical skills, Ichijou from Third High can become the head of the family right now. However, magical power alone is not enough for the status of the head of the Ichijou family responsible for defending part of the coast of the Sea of Japan."

After this explanation Tatsuya, Miyuki thought that, finally, she realized the seriousness of the situation. Five years ago, the key role in repulsing the attack of an unknown enemy in an incident involving an invasion of Sado was played not by the army, but by volunteers gathered from the subordinates of the Ichijou family. The presence of the Ichijou family in the defense of the coast of the Sea of Japan from Hokuriku to Tohoku is so great.

The Ichijou family not has only excellent magical abilities, but also leadership, under the influence of which they received many subordinate magicians in the Hokuriku region and the western half of Tohoku. These magicians supplemented their fighting power of the defense army, dispersed from Okinawa and Kyushu to Hokkaido. When the head of the Ichijou family is immobilized, this is not only a problem for the Ten Master Clans, but also a huge hole in the organization of the country's defense.

"Of course, the Ichijou family should also have countermeasures for the case when the head is temporarily absent. Without a doubt, the families of Ithinkour and Issiki will strengthen their support. However, it seems, the Yotuba will not be allowed to sit idle."

"So, we also have to help?"

"At the moment, we just sent Yuuka-san to treat Ichijou-dono. Tatsuya answered Miyuki's question in a not very confident voice. Perhaps he believes that this is not the end. However, Miyuki was now more concerned with what he had said, rather than his pessimistic expectation."

"I did not know that Yuuka-san can treat magicians."

"Yuuka-san is studying in postgraduate study the phenomenon of deterioration of the performance of the magic calculation zone by excessive use of magic, the so-called 'overheating of the calculation zone of magic'."

"That's it..."

"The head of the family seems to be actively supporting this study. After all, for a gifted magician, the phenomenon of overheating of the magic calculation zone is a threat to life, and not just to magical skills. But even without the order of the head of the family, she could not remain indifferent."

For Tatsuya's generation, the only example of the loss of life from the "overheating magic calculation zone" was Honami, but in the Yotuba family there were many victims of this phenomenon, including the previous head of the family, Yotuba Ganzo.

The development of methods for the therapy of this problem was also conducted at the time of the previous head of the family.

This is not only the Yotsuba family. The magic technique, which is the trump card of the Juumonji family, also has the prerequisites to cause "overheating of the magic calculation zone". Juumonji Kazuki, the previous head of the Juumonji family, lost his magician's ability because of this. The Juumonji family investigated methods for preventing overheating.

In fact, the study of this problem involved magical researchers not only the families of Yotsuba and Juumonji. The magic calculation zone still remains a "black box", the device of which has not been clarified, and outside the families of Yotsuba and Juumonji, the "overheating of the magic calculation zone" is still at the stage when there is still discussion whether it exists at all.

Therefore, according to the available theories, it immediately became clear what happened to Ichijou Gouki, albeit at the hypothesis level.

"Among the many magicians of the Tsukuba family, specializing in extra-systemic magic, Yuuka-san is excellent in techniques of interference in the mind. Both-uh, apparently, came to the conclusion that if it was Yuuka-san, then it would be possible to cure Ichijou-dono."

Not control thoughts and work on consciousness, but magic, interfering with the mind itself. Its representatives, the magic of "interference in the structure of the mind", which was used only by Miya, Miyuki's "Cocytus", and Tsukuba's "Pledge" - are also magic that changes events in the mind.

Unlike Miyuki's magic, which causes compulsory absolute freezing of the mind, "Pledge" is a technique that limits the work of the mind. Yuuka-san is good at this kind of magic, so perhaps she will be able to speed up the recovery of the magic calculation area located in the subconscious area. Therefore, the choice of the head of Yotsuba was fully justified.

"But if it does not work out, will not the Yotsuba's position worsen?"

"Yuuka-san is not officially related to the Yotsuba family. She will introduce herself as a researcher of magic, capable of treatment, which the Yotsuba family found."

"..."

In other words, in which case, it can get rid of it. The fact that Miyuki hesitated and could not say anything, was proof that he could not treat this heartlessly. We can say that she is too naive for the successor of Yotsuba, but Tatsuya did not even think to deny such kindness of Miyuki.

"In addition, the Yotsuba family offered Ichijou-dono treatment with good intentions. The other side will not lose anything, therefore the idea of help cannot be criticized, even if it proves to be unsuccessful."

"... Really." Miyuki spoke in a tone that read an attempt to convince herself of power. Hearing this, Tatsuya tried to forcefully change the subject.

"We are a bit distracted from the topic. Currently, the head of the family plans to limit the support only by sending Yuuka-san. However, I do not think that this will end."

In fact, this was not a "distraction from the topic," but Miyuki did not seem to notice this. Minami made a slightly suspect frowning face. However, this feeling quickly disappeared.

"There is also a possibility that I will be ordered to intercept the armed forces."

"Order from the military!?" Miyuki's raised voice meant that it would be a violation of the contract between the Yotsuba family and the army.

"From the head of the family." However, Tatsuya's response was even more amazing.

"...But after all, Onii-sama is my guardian!"

"It should be borne in mind that this status changed when I was appointed by the suitor Miyuki."

"This is..."

Miyuki felt guilty that Tatsuya was bound by the duties of her guard.

However, while he is her guardian, he cannot be forced to assign another job. Justified by this rule, she, at least, could distract Tatsuya from this sense of guilt. And then Tatsuya tells her that this excuse no longer works. Hearing this, Miyuki was shocked more than when Tatsuya told her that his work could be dangerous.

"Do not worry. I used to say. Only you, Miyuki, really can hurt me."

These words from Tatsuya showed Miyuki that he did not understand the reason why she turned pale. Miyuki was not upset that Tatsuya would go to the battlefield, but because no more justification could be used, that Tatsuya was her guard. But since Tatsuya "promised" not to get any injuries, Miyuki calmed down a little.

"I, too, am still sure of what I said earlier. Onii-sama will not lose to anyone."

"Clear. Tatsuya replied, catching Miyuki's piercing gaze."

Minami, watching this pair from the side, for some reason did not feel the usual disgust in such cases. Unlike the usual state, Minami was now fascinated by the unshakable mutual trust of two people.

"However, the number of cases where I will have to leave Miyuki for a while will probably increase. Minami."

"Y-yes!" Minami reacted too violently, slightly stumbling and raising her voice, because Tatsuya was slightly out of consciousness from this story.

Tatsuya ignored this too energetic answer from Minami, only slightly raising his eyebrows.

"In such cases, I entrust Miyuki's protection to you."

"Please rely on me."

The protection of Miyuki is the purpose of Minami even without Tatsuya's words. He himself must understand this. But Minami was well aware of the meaning of why this order was again spoken out loud.

"Miyuki, I will not take you with me to the battlefield."

"...I understand." And in the voice and on Miyuki's face the words "what a nuisance" was read, but she was not stupid enough to not understand Tatsuya's train of thought. "Miyuki will follow what Oni-most said... no, I will follow Tatsuya-sama's order."

As a result, having shown a weak sign of discontent, she changed her words to show that she speaks not as a younger sister, but as a bride.

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The information that the head of the Ichijou family had fallen into the enemy's trap fell not only on the Yotsuba family. Perhaps the Ichijou family wanted to hide it, but among the "28 Houses" it spread throughout the day. However, there was a difference in the accuracy of the information, even among the Ten Master Clans.

Having learned from his father, Koichi, about the misfortune that struck the head of the Ichijou family, immediately upon returning to her room, Mayumi received an incoming call from Katsuto.

"I apologize for calling at this late hour."

"I think it's so late to call, it's definitely not in the style of Juumonji-kun, but it's okay, because I can guess the topic of the conversation. Is this about the incident with the Ichijou family?"

"That's right. It will be easier, once you guessed it."

All magicians of the Juumonji family have tremendous power, but their number is very small. In comparison with the Saegusa and Mitsuya families based in the same center in Tokyo, one can say that they have almost no outstanding magicians at all. In addition, the abilities of the Juumonji family are considered only suitable for battle.

Therefore, they lag behind other families in terms of gathering information. In case of an emergency, Katsuto uses personal connections with the Saegusa family to obtain information. In the past, there have already been examples of this.

"I just heard it from my father. You're just in time. So, Juumonji-kun, what do you already know?"

"I heard that a ship of unknown origin entered territorial waters, and then left and stopped, instead of leaving. Taking measures to seize it, Ichijou-dono was trapped by the enemy in the form of a sudden explosion and seriously wounded."

The information available to Katsuto was rough, but Mayumi did not rate the Juumonji family low. Instead, she felt frustrated that her father had learned so much detail, although the incident happened only today.

"Only one inaccuracy. Ichijou-dono was not physically injured. The main symptom is that he is in a state of a strong weakness so that he cannot get up. The family suspect that the reason may be excessive use of magic."

"Excessive use of magic...?"

"Juumonji-kun, what is it?" Seeing that Katsuto's face tensed, Mayumi frowned in suspicion.

"No, nothing. Do you have any details about the explosion that Ichijou-dono got into?" Katsuto moved the conversation into another direction without answering Mayumi's question. She understood this, but did not interrogate him.

"The result of the analysis of sensors from the stratospheric platform says that it seems that this was an explosion of a large amount of explosive gas, a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen. I can only assume long-range magic that generates gas and controls its ignition."

"Ignition... Maybe this is the work of "Pyro" Igor Andreivitch Bezobrazzoff ...?"

"You think it could be Strategic Class Magic "Tuman Bomba"? It cannot be..."

Mayumi with a smile rejected Katsuto's assumption. However, it was felt that this smile was very strained.

"...Really. I do not think that Strategic Class Magic would be used to attack a single ship." Katsuto agreed, saying the last phrase as if to himself. He realized that he denied such a possibility on too weak a basis.

"Right. Juumonji-kun, you exaggerate."

Mayumi also understood the precariousness of this reason. She looked away from this analysis almost unconsciously.

"In any case, then it was an attack of unknown magic?"

"That's right."

"...This is a serious situation."

"Yes... Apparently, therefore, my older brother said that he wanted to talk with Juumonji-kun." Mayumi said, slightly hesitant after agreeing to Katsuto's words.

"Tomokazu-dono? ...Understood. Tell him I'm ready at any time."

"It's okay that I told you this, but will the convenience be adjusted to our family?"

"Here's how? Then, how about tomorrow night? I leave the choice of place on Tomokazu-dono."

"I think it will be okay. Then, I'll contact you tomorrow afternoon to report the place."

"Thank you. Also, thank you for providing information on the Ichijou-dono incident."

Katsuto bowed on the screen. This interrupted the connection. It looked like a lack of good manners, but it was an act of self-defense to avoid pincering Mayumi.

"...Only such measures will be smart against the habit, which cannot be remedied." The voice sighing and cursing on the extinct screen Mayumi, obviously was fun

## Chapter 2

The 7th of April, 2097. Today, in the nine schools of magic concurrently, is the admission ceremony.

Three members of the school board, Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami, came to school 2 hours before the ceremony.

Entering the backstage of the assembly hall, they met Mikihiko, Izumi, Kasumi and Mitsuya Shiina waiting for them.

"Good morning everyone." Not Tatsuya, the president of the school council Miyuki first welcomed the schoolchildren who came earlier.

"Good morning, Miyuki-senpai! Today, too, you are even more..."

"Yes, yes, stop, stop. Good morning, President Shiba, Shiba-senpaii, Sakurai-san."

This morning Izumi's tension was also ready to jump, but Kasumi prevented this, interrupting it. Miyuki, with a smile in which there was not a trace of surprise, greeted Kasumi and Izumi in turn, then turned to Shiina.

"Mitsuya-san, I made you wait?"

"No, nothing like that. I just came, sooner than I needed to..." Shiina waved her head, showing a denial. In this action was the charm of a pretty little animal.

She was short, below Kasumi and Izumi. Obviously, above the former president of Azusa, but at the same time she was similar to the atmosphere Azusa created around herself, and not by a physique. But just looking adult, she did not feel that weakness. At least that's how she saw Tatsuya.

When she waved her head, hidden headphones with neck straps appeared from under the swaying lush air hair. Their color was the same as that of the hair - olive brown.

She had previously said at the meeting that she would take something less noticeable. Perhaps this is for her routine, because it looked very neat.

(It feels like a daughter raised in a good family,) thought Tatsuya.

"Before going to the final meeting, Mitsuya-san, can I ask you something?"

"Ah~ ...yes. What is it, Shiba-senpai?" She could not hide the tension on her face, but still answered, looking Tatsuya straight in the eyes. Tatsuya revised his assessment of Shiina in the depths of her mind.

"Is a guy with long hair gathered behind in a ponytail, standing outside the assembly hall your friend?"

Hearing Tatsuya's words, Minami's expression "Eh?" Appeared. Like Miyuki's guard, she was going to follow the neighborhood. Guys with long hair at the present time - a rarity. She thought that such a guy would have noticed.

"Long hair .. Ah~, are you talking about Saburou-kun?" However, Shiina seems to understand who he is talking about.

"His name is Saburou-kun? He hides himself rather skillfully."

"I think, undoubtedly, that this guy is my friend, Yaguruma Saburou-kun. "I" from "bow with arrows", "guruma" from "wheel", the first part of the name, as "samurai", and "ro", as in the name "Jiro", "Yaguruma Saburou." In any case... oh, this Saburou-kun, why was he hiding?" Shiina frowned in embarrassment, and in her voice read the subtext "there's absolutely nothing you can do about it."

[note. trans.: Shiina lists the hieroglyphs of the surname and name Saburou, explaining how to write them using the example of known words. A common practice for the Japanese with an oral explanation of spelling.]

"Judging by your words, you are not just acquaintances? It seems that you are quite close friends."

"This is because we have been friends since childhood."

Shiina's cheeks blushed slightly, and she looked away from Tatsuya. This expression of a person with lowered eyes, undoubtedly, made the others suspect the presence of a romantic relationship. However, Tatsuya guessed from Shiina's behavior that a guy named Yaguruma Saburo was an escort assigned to her by the Mitsuya family.

Of course, he did not say anything, so as not to interfere in the internal affairs of another of the Ten Master Clans. This was because Tatsuya did not know about his poor ability to evaluate others.

"Today, both the cafeteria and the canteen are closed, there is more than an hour left before the opening of the assembly hall, and newcomers will be admitted to the school building only after the admission ceremony. He can wait here."

What Tatsuya said, in fact, was good intentions (or sympathy), based on personal experience two years ago. He noticed that there was no emblem on the chest of that guy.

"Everything is fine. After all, Saburo-kun is surprisingly self-assured ... that is, adamant. However, thanks for your concern."

"I see."

Almost simultaneously with Tatsuya's answer, Honoka burst into the room, hastily apologizing:

"Sorry for being late!"

Miyuki told Honoka that she was just in time, and Tatsuya turned to everyone:

"Let's begin the final check."

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The reception ceremony ended in a solemn atmosphere and without problems. Undoubtedly, the calm atmosphere was caused by the curiosity of newcomers, parents and guests regarding the members of the school board.

They were particularly interested in Miyuki the president of the school council. After all, it's about the school where they go. In addition to the most reckless newcomers and their parents, everyone always pays attention to First High . Therefore, most students knew that the current president of the school board of First High is the heir of the same Yotsuba family.

Miyuki also collected the views of most of those who saw her in the images and broadcasts from the Nine Schools Competition. But again, they remained in a state of disbelief of the unearthly beauty seen by the living and the awareness of a direct relationship with the Yotsuba family. Simple novices and their parents could not resist the pressure created by the beauty of Miyuki and the imagination of the Yotsuba family.

And the "uneasy" parents, too, could not ease the tension from the hidden unlimited magical power of Miyuki and the possibility of having an ominous hidden power in Tatsuya who is always with her.

The only moment of diminished atmosphere was the time of reading the representative newcomers address by Shiina. It was impossible to praise the "fluency" of the speech, calling it "gorgeous." Often stammering, she somehow found the strength to continue, and after completing the reading, leaving with a sense of accomplishment, she looked like "giving all her strength."

However, it was so touching for the thick-skinned "guests" that they surrounded and stopped Shiina, who seemed to them to be the correct freshman, innocent and unreliable. Compared with Miyuki two years ago, Shiina was released much faster. (The situation seems different when the representative is a guy, because last year there was no such performance.)

Also, as Tatsuya had suggested last night, Miyuki was not vigorously affiliated with the guests. Long held by Miyuki last year, Congressman Ueno, this year retreated at the very beginning.

Thanks to this, the time of conversations with Shiina ended earlier than expected.

Shiina-chan.

Izumi-san?

Waiting for the crowd around Shiina to begin to thin, Izumi called her. The ring of guests around Shiina dissolved naturally.

Among the people associated with magic, it was widely known that Izumi was the youngest daughter of the Saegusa family. She was also Koichi's most beloved daughter. The betrayal of Saegusa Koichi at the Conference of the Master Clans was ordered to remain silent. For people connected with magic outside the "28 Houses" the Saegusa family is still the pearl of the magical world of Japan, along with the family of Yotsuba. Among the guests invited to the ceremony of entering First High of Guests, there was no one who had the courage to disappoint the Saegusa family.

"It was a perfect response."

"Thank you very much... So, what do you have for me?" Despite the shyness of the compliment to Izumi, Shiina firmly asked why she called her. Izumi knew that in spite of the fluffy atmosphere, Shiina was pretty smart. Therefore, she was not surprised by this guess of Shiina.

"I need to discuss with you one question, so will you give me some time?"

"Yes, I do not mind. Izumi-san, should I go with you?"

"Yes please. By the way, do you not want to call Saburou-kun?"

"After the inauguration ceremony there will be a conversation with the school board, Saburou-kun should also know this." Shiina did not show a drop of excitement when she heard the name of a childhood friend that was suddenly mentioned.

The place where Izumi took Shiina was the room of the school board. There they were expected by Miyuki and Minami.

"Mitsuya-san, thank you for coming."

Miyuki rose from the chair of the school board president, and headed for the meeting table. Izumi placed Shiina opposite Miyuki.

"First, sit down, please." Smiling, Miyuki pointed to the place opposite. Looking at Izumi's face, Shiina crouched timidly. After that Minami and Izumi sat down on each side of Miyuki.

A cup of tea was put before Shiina. After trying to thank, she saw that it was a 3H (Humanoid Home Helper), and rounded her eyes.

"Surprised? This 3H "Pixie" belongs to my fiancé and helps with the different routine affairs of the school board."

Miyuki smiled to ease the strain of Shiina.

Shiina was fascinated for a while with this smile. Quickly pulling herself together, she showed an embarrassed smile. But on the face it was visible, that pressure became less.

"I think you've heard from Vice President Saegusa about the custom of the school board of this school."

"Yes, I understand what you mean."

Shiina confirmed what Miyuki had said. To be honest, the question Miyuki was about to ask was already decided informally between Shiina and Izumi. Shiina's call here was only a necessary formality.

"Clear. Then, considering this, I will ask. Do you want to become a member of the school board?"

"It's a great honor for me. I respectfully ask you to let me work with you."

Miyuki slightly relaxed her face. She was not worried about the refusal, like last year, because Izumi had already told her about the consent. However, she could not calm down until the issue was really resolved.

Miyuki also realized that she had, you might say, a similar problem in her time, and this also caused calm.

"In that case, starting tomorrow, Mitsuya-san starts working as a secretary of the school board. About the details of the work you can learn from Sakurai-san."

"I am Secretary of Sakurai Minami. Mitsuya-san, I will be happy to work with you."



Following the words of Miyuki, Minami bowed and introduced herself.  
"Please take care of me!"

Apparently, because of the excitement of the seniors, Shiina greatly nervous, bowed timidly.

"Um, President, Sakurai-senpai. I do not mind if you just call me Shiina." She suggested.

"I understand, Shiina-chan. Will that work?"  
"Yes, please."

Such a friendly response from Miyuki helped Shiina finally relax.

◊ ◊ ◊

With the issuance of ID cards, the first part of the receipt ceremony was completed. For first-year students, they opened a school building, despite the fact that it was Sunday.

Many newcomers went to see their classrooms and make friends with classmates whom they will spend together this year. The other students got bored together and went off to eat. This description suited most freshmen.

But, as they say, any rule has exceptions. This year, too, was a student, not suitable for templates.

After completing the formalities of the inauguration ceremony, Tatsuya left the assembly hall, leaving the cleaning and locking of the doors to the staff of the school and teachers. With him were also Mikihiko, Honoka and Shizuku. Mikihiko, as head of the disciplinary committee, listened to the final report from each member of the committee. Honoka, as a representative of the school board, checked the equipment. And Shizuku, quite simply, left to compose the company Honoka.

From the entrance to the assembly hall to the entrance to the building of the school go not far. Passing this small path, Mikihiko suddenly stopped with an amazed face.

"Mikihiko, what happened?"

"...Did someone use a spell?"

Hearing Mikihiko's answer to Tatsuya's question, the accompanying Honoka and Shizuku exchanged glances.

"A ancient magic spell?"

"It looks like... Maybe it's Vigilance. This is a spell that collects sounds from a specified remote location."

"An eavesdropping spell?"

"Hmm, well, in principle it is true..."

Shizuku did not know how to react to Mikihiko's sluggish speech, joke or scold. However, he quickly revived.

"It seems that he trained a lot. The level of skill is quite high. But the output power of the spell is low. Is this deliberate containment of strength or lack of ability...?"

"High skill with meager abilities?"

"Tatsuya, do you know anything?"

Tatsuya's voice showed that he thought he might know the identity of the user of this technique. But he did not answer the question of Mikihiko.

"Do you know where he is?"

Hearing Tatsuya's question, Mikihiko closed his eyes. Then he slowly began to turn his head, as if looking around. After making a third of the turnover, Mikihiko opened his eyes and answered with a confident voice Tatsuya's question:

"It seems that somewhere in the vicinity of a small sports hall number 1."

"Tatsuya-san... Today, after the ceremony did not a small gym open?  
Tatsuya agreed with Honoka:"

"Correct. Club activities are also absent at the weekend. In any case, let's go and look at the place."

"Better to see once than hear a hundred times. No one objected to Tatsuya's opinion."

◊ ◊ ◊

At this time in the room of the school board passed a tea party. Despite the fact that it was time for Shiina to go home, she stayed here, waiting for Tatsuya and Honoka to greet them again.

"By the way, Shiina-chan."

Waiting for a pause in a lively conversation about the high school days between Izumi and Shiina, Miyuki set the cup of coffee on the table and spoke to Shiina.

"Yes, president?"

Shiina turned to Miyuki with a very tense face. At this point, she was absolutely not ready for this.

"Someone has recently tried to penetrate this room with perception magic, is not this the childhood friend of the kun Shiina-chan? It seems that his name was Yaguruma Saburou-kun."

Miyuki smiled in a friendly way. But there was a mysterious light in her eyes.

"Er?"

On the one hand, she was depressed by Miyuki's gaze. But more than this, Shiina was shocked by what she heard from Miyuki. After a brief stupor, Shiina quickly took off her headphones with a quick movement of her hand.

"Shiina-chan, that's okay!"

Izumi panicked when she saw this. Miyuki looked calmly at Shiina, understanding why she had done it. Trying to speak with Shiina, Miyuki stopped Minami with a gesture of a finger attached to her lips.

The sound and magic perception of Shiina are not related to each other. This is different from Mizuki, who uses aura-blocking glasses to contain the power of her magic perception. However, Shiina felt that removing earplugs (headphones with volume control) would exacerbate the perception of external magical waves. Without headphones that physically weaken the sound, Shiina cannot lead everyday life.

Forced adjustment of the hearing by magic will spoil the magic perception, which will make the use of magic difficult. When she wears headphones, there is no problem with using magic, but she becomes insensitive to external magic interference. Therefore, she did not notice the perception magic aimed at the school board room. The dilemma of Shiina (in this case we can say "three" lemma) could not be solved, except that the surrounding people tried not to make noise.

Shiina, with half-closed eyes, concentrating her mind, looked for a while as if listening to barely noticeable sounds, and soon after that she opened her eyes.

"Saburou-kun, what are you doing...!" There was more anger in her voice than surprise. In addition, this anger was caused by shame.

"Shiina-chan, I think you'd better wear headphones first." said Miyuki, after which the part of anger disappeared from the face of Shiina. Instead, her cheeks instantly turned red. Wearing the headphones hanging around the neck again, the still red Shiina looked away shyly to the floor.

"Um, sorry... For the impolite behavior of my friend .." she said in a fading, fading voice.

"Do not worry about that. To all important places, including the school board room, especially strict protective measures are applied."

Not immediately realizing what Miyuki said, Shiina showed her hesitant face for a while.

"...Protective measures, is it something like a barrier?"

"The principle of action is very similar. Two years ago in our school there was one small incident, and since then we have concluded a contract with a specialist to enhance security."

Thinking for a few seconds about the "little incident," Shiina finally understood something and gave an ambiguous "Hmm...". The older sister told Siena what happened in First High 2 years ago. She was shocked to hear that Miyuki called the invasion of armed terrorists a "small" incident.

"Is Yaguruma-kun - bodyguard of Shiina-chan?"

However, with Miyuki's next question, the oppressive pressure of Shiina was dispelled.

"Yes, no, that is, it's a bit different..."

This time the senseless answer of the agitated Shiina made Miyuki think. Izumi at that moment, looking with pity at Shiina came to the rescue.

"Miyuki-sempai, Yaguruma is a family completely subordinate to the Mitsuya family, and all her people combine the work of servants and bodyguards. Saburo-kun was to become Shiina-chan's personal bodyguard, because they are of the same age, but they refused him to enter the senior school after that. Correct, Shiina-chan?"

"Y-yes, this is..."

Shiina's evasiveness was due to the fact that she did not want the reason to be heard. Even in a place where he does not hear (eavesdropping is impossible, according to the president of the school board), she could not say aloud that he was removed from the position of guard because of the lack of magical talent. Shiina knew that this decision was very painful for Saburo.

"That's how... In other words, is Shiina-chan incapable of controlling Yaguru,a-kun's behavior?"

"Ah, yes."

But Miyuki's question was unexpected for Shiina. Having said "this is a problem...", Miyuki became thoughtful.

"In that case, unauthorized use of magic is considered a personal decision of Yaguruma-kun... In that case, one cannot hope for mitigating circumstances."

This remark of Miyuki left no room for misunderstanding. Therefore, Shiina could not say a word.

"Even if you subtract that the attempt of magic failed... To show such a poor discipline at the very beginning of the semester... What do you think, Izumi-chan?"

Shiina stared at Miyuki, who turned to Izumi, stunned. She did not stop them.

"Since I know him a little, I would ask for condescending measures for him... On the other hand, I think we cannot answer too gently. Because other students are adversely affected by the realization that those involved in the Ten Master Clans can go unpunished, violating school rules."

"Please wait a bit!"

She rose sharply. Her words spoken in a hurry were difficult to make out, but she was able to draw the attention of Miyuki and Izumi.

"Saburo-kun did not agree with this! So he did something so stupid!" When Miyuki looked at her, Shiina continued to speak in an agitated tone.

"I did not agree with this'? Do you mean that he did not agree that he was removed from the position of your bodyguard?"

"...Right." With a confused face, Shiina answered Miyuki's question. Following a slightly receding wave of excitement, a wave of shame swept over her.

"In other words, did Yaguruma-kun try to find out the state of the school council room with the aim of ensuring the security of Shiina-chan?" Miyuki said this not to tease Shiina.

"Right. The main reason for the incident is that the Mitsuya family could not convince Saburo-kun. We had to convince him correct. Therefore, if he acted for me, then it is my duty to stop him. It's incompetence for me as a leader. Saburo-kun will receive a severe reprimand from me, and this will not happen again." She spoke with caution, avoiding words she could not say. "Therefore, please, only this time, forgive Saburo-kun for his stupid act!"

"Shiina-chan. Do you understand the meaning of your recognition of responsibility for Saburo-kun?"

And in Miyuki's voice, in behavior and eyes, there was softness and kindness. However, to answer this question, Shiina had to collect all her will power.

"...I understand."

"Izumi-chan, what do you think? I believe we can trust Shiina-chan."

"I also think that this time it will be ok." Izumi answered with a smile. With this smile, she was more like her father Koichi than her older sister Mayumi.

"Many thanks!" Shiina bowed deeply. She understood the meaning of the words "this time," uttered by Izumi.

◇ ◇ ◇

Tatsuya and the other three stopped in front of the small gymnasium number 1.

"What about the spell?"

"Still active. I think, just behind this wall." Mikihiko replied honestly to Tatsuya's question.

"...But, without asking me, Tatsuya, you do know yourself, do not you?" he also added.

"I do not want to use extra power."

Mikihiko did not object to Tatsuya's seemingly selfish words. Mikihiko had enough knowledge to understand that Tatsuya does not speak this way because of laziness.

The beholder will see. This was clear even without quotations from famous philosophers. A magician who looks with perception magic, will feel the magical power invested in such a look.

If there is a huge difference in magical skills, you can monitor the enemy and not be seen, but with any magic, the risk will not be zero. Even Tatsuya's Elemental Sight can be seen if the enemy knows such a technique. If Mikihiko is able to recognize the enemy, Tatsuya does not need to take risks.

"Tatsuya-san, then, what will you do?"

"Can you catch him?"

Although Honoka and Shizuku did not fully understand Mikihiko, they seemed to think that it was not worth creating problems if their friend had already taken up this matter. They asked Tatsuya what he would do with the violator of school rules. ... It seems they were not completely aware that in this case, the first one they should ask is the head of the disciplinary committee, that is, Mikihiko.

Tatsuya glanced at Mikihiko, but it seemed that it did not bother him. Therefore, without saying anything superfluous, he told these three his plan.

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"...Someone is approaching."

A freshman, enrolled in First High , Yaguruma Saburo returned his consciousness, directed to the room of the school board, back to the back of the small gym No. 1.

"These presence signs... two, no, three people?"

Perception magic does not overwrite Eidos (unless it is the type that strengthens its own five senses), so it is difficult for other people to perceive it. But this does not mean that there is no trace at all. Saburo knew it very well. Even just aiming "Vigilance" on the school boardroom room had the risk of being accused of unauthorized use of magic. He did not plan to take on further risks.

Based on reading the signs available without magic, Saburo believed that three magicians approach him. Two of them are women. They were definitely students, not teachers. And they did not hide their presence at all. But the remaining one man ably controlled the signs of his presence. It was not like he was sneaking, hiding his presence. It seemed that he controlled his signs naturally, unconsciously. This shows significant skill. It could be one of the teachers.

*I used perception magic, which is difficult to notice to others, besides it was an ancient magic that detectors do not pick up well, but an experienced First High employee can well guess,* thought Saburo.

The probability that these three are simply being inspected, he ruled out from the very beginning. Unfortunately, the stated goal in the form of monitoring possible threats to Shiina was not realized. His "Vigilance", in the end, could not get through the barrier surrounding the school boardroom.

*It seems that magic schools not only use modern magic spells,* came to mind. Saburo reluctantly admitted this. However, he will not hear what Shiina is talking about, even if he strengthens the "rumor" even more. Keeping quiet judgment, and knowing that it's time to retreat, Saburo escaped.

(...I intended to escape.)

Without making a sound, Saburou left the place where he was hiding. Naturally, he went in the opposite direction from the approaching people. Walking along the wall of the gym, he was going with an innocent look to the alley passing there. However, he was forced to stop without going a couple of steps.

"What!?"

He barely managed to suppress a cry in amazement. But it did not make any sense.

"Are you new? I felt in these areas unauthorized use of magic. I would like to listen to what you say, so please come with me."

A high school student whose presence was not felt until he faced him face to face. Saburou knew that face. In addition to him, there were many newcomers who knew this person and name.

A member of the school board. The super-engineer of the Nine Schools Competition. The key participant in the "Stellar Furnace" experiment. And also the groom of the next head of the Yotsuba family.

"Shiba Tatsuya!"

Saburou was an extremely cautious man. He quickly untied the thread that held his hair with his ponytail. And he hid his face in the long hair. Then he activated the ancient magic of the Skanda high-speed movement, and tried to escape from Tatsuya.

"Wait."

The voice Tatsuya called to Saburou was not that strong. At least, the forces to hold back the legs of the fleeing was not there. The movements of Saburou's legs were delayed by a psion projectile shot with this voice. Countermagic, Gram Demolition.

It was, quite simply, a psion cannon. If the entire body is subjected to the psion stream, then the magic that is in the process of activation is also canceled, but the physical control of the body is paralyzed.

The legs no longer held. The balance of the whole body was disturbed.

During the fall, Saburou was barely able to regain some freedom of movement to fall, without getting injured. Although the fall looked awkward, but it helped to avoid injuries.



(Damn, move!)

Swearing in his mind at his body, Saburou tried to regain control of himself. He knew why his limbs did not obey him. Therefore, he was not afraid of the sudden onset of paralysis, and therefore he was overly impatient.

The muscles contract, following the signal transmitted along the nerves. So all people are arranged, magicians have no differences in this. But for people like Saburou, that's not all.

The muscles perform the command that the brain gave. There is a slight delay in time until the nerve passes the command. This delay is a few fractions of a second, which does not interfere with daily life. This is usually not even recognized.

But for those who have sharpened their minds in order to feel this moment, the time stretching between the intention and the performance is a terrible and unpleasant moment of inconvenience. The increased concentration of the mind seems to stretch the time, and, seeing the approaching attack of the enemy, you feel regret that you can neither avoid nor prevent it, because the intention has not yet reached the limb. No, it's good if you can at least realize your annoyance. After all, this moment can also bring an end.

Those who could overcome the sense of a gap between intentions and actions, developed various techniques for a more free movement. One of these techniques instead of transmitting commands to the muscles with the help of nerve impulses, uses psions to convey intentions directly to the body.

This technique is a kind of non-systematic magic, but people who can master it are not limited to magicians. It cannot be said that anyone can learn this, because in any technique everything depends heavily on the availability of talent. However, if you train in the right way, you can achieve mastery even without magical talent. There are many people who, not knowing that this is actually non-systematic magic, mastered it in the form of a martial arts skill.

Therefore, deprived by magic talent Saburou willingly studied martial arts.

As a result, he already mastered this technique at a high level. By today, he could already, without using magic, move on par with or even faster than magicians using self-acceleration magic.

But this time it had the opposite consequences. From the interruption received by Tatsuya's spell, not only was the self-acceleration magic forcibly canceled, but Saburou also lost physical control over the body, because it was carried out with the help of psions.

(Grab me? Are you coming here for this?)

He himself fell, and the enemy was already a step away from him. Saburou understood that he was in a position from which he could not escape under ordinary circumstances. However, he did not give up.

After regaining control a little, he lifted his head and looked around looking for a suitable stone. Neither on the surface of the elastic water-permeable pavement nor on the lawn of the adjacent territory was there any stones desired by Saburou. However, he found a thick branch lying at the base of one of the trees.

Apparently, it broke off at some point. Not bad, one of the tips is sharp.  
(Great, it will do.)

Saburou concentrated his mind on a branch. He was not going to cause serious injury. He wanted to escape from this place, taking advantage of the moment of confusion caused by a slight poke. But before the "power" of Saburou worked, he was again swept by the psion stream.

A second Gram Demolition.

It struck not the branch on which "force" was supposed to act, but Saburou himself.

(Are you kidding!? Is it usually a final blow from such a situation...?)

Finally, the restored control of the body was again lost with a second blow, and Saburou's clouded consciousness fell into darkness.

◇ ◇ ◇

"...Ruthless as usual Tatsuya,. Was it necessary to use Gram Demolition for the second time?" Mikihiko asked in a half-joking tone when they met again after they split up in front of the small gym.

"He seemed to have a rather troublesome ability."

"Ability?"

Mikihiko was puzzled why Tatsuya used the expression "ability", not "magic." However, Tatsuya did not answer this question.

"But he unexpectedly for me lost consciousness... It seems that he has a pretty strong susceptibility to psions."

"Tatsuya-san, will everything be all right? Maybe it's better to take him to the school infirmary?"

With this question of Honoka, Mikihiko's interest also shifted to Saburo's state.

"If the susceptibility to psions is especially high, then, Tatsuya, it's a bad thing? In addition, Tatsuya's interruption of spells causes a shock, as if struck in the gong next to the ear."

"You're creating a bad reputation for me. I adjusted the output power. Well... this time, really, everything got out of hand."

"Tatsuya !?" Mikihiko with a nervous voice reacted to the recognition of Tatsuya.

Tatsuya, on the contrary, remained cool, despite the fact that he did.

"I think he's asleep now, not fainted. To be sure, let's take him to the school infirmary."

Tatsuya deftly lifted Saburo's body and put it on his shoulder. Not Mikihiko, nor Honoka, nor Shizuku began to joke about the way he looked, understood the difference between fainting and sleeping.

◇ ◇ ◇

When Saburo opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was the face of a childhood friend looking at him.

"Saburo-kun. Thank God you woke up."

In a tear-stained, smiling face, then the shade of anxiety manifested itself, then disappeared.

"...Shiina, I'm fine."

He did not understand the current situation and could not remember how he went to bed, but immediately got up to show that he was okay.

Because for him the first priority was to eliminate Shiina's alarm.

"Does it hurt anywhere? The look is not clouded? Do you hear me normally?"

"Does not hurt anywhere, eyes and ears are normal."

Shiina calmed down a little when she heard Saburo's report. Yes a little. Saburo thought that the anxiety in her was not yet completely eliminated.

"Thank God. Then..."

However, what is this pressure, felt by Shiina, looking as if something else is disturbing her? Saburo's back was covered with an unpleasant sweat, while he expected that he would hear from his childhood friend.

"Saburo-kun, do not shy away."

Saburo thought, *did he correctly hear what Shiina said?* He not only did not understand why Shiina spoke inappropriately for her soft personality, but also did not have time to figure out what was going on.

The subsequent behavior of Shiina was generally incomprehensible to the perplexed Saburo. She swung her right hand and slapped Saburo. From the cheek Saburo heard a loud slap.

Saburo saw the movement of Shiina, and could easily evade. It would be better to say that he did not have problems with this. But in his mind, there was not even such an option as evasion.

Tears began to appear in Shiina's eyes.

"For what...?" Saburo wonderedly asked Shiina, who looked as if she would at any moment be roaring.

"...Why did you try to do something stupid, like eavesdropping?" Instead of an answer, from Shiina there was a counter question. Not even from the content of the question, but from this trembling voice, Saburo could not utter words. "I look so helpless...?"

"Shiina..."

Saburo could not answer "yes" or "no". Helpless or not, he intended to eliminate the dangers that threatened her. But if he voices his real intentions, Shiina will take them for a positive response. On the other hand, if he responds negatively to Shiina, he will lose the reason to be with her side by side.

Shiina looked tearfully at her childhood friend, who called her name and fell silent.

"Saburo-kun." She said a little sad, but accusing voice. It was not pretense, so the young man could not stop feeling guilty. Of course, this greatly affected Saburo's feelings. He was still silent, not because he was stubborn, but because he did not know what he could say without blurting out too much.

She looked steadily, Saburo stared.

The first to give up (or was just tired) is Shiina.

"...You know, I promised the president-san. To take responsibility for Saburo-kun."

These words had a dramatic effect.

"Wha...!?"

Saburou looked at Siena with a panic on his face.

"Why did Shiina become responsible!?"

"And you yourself, Saburou-kun, why are you so worried?"

Saburou again could not say anything. But this time he could not take his eyes off.

"What's wrong with assuming responsibility?"

"This is..."

"You did something bad just because you thought I would not take responsibility!"

There was nothing to justify. Shiina came straight to the point.

"Eavesdropping in a room of the school board with the help of unauthorized use of magic - this is in fact threatening to be suspended from class? I do not want Saburou-kun to do this!"

"...I understand. Sorry."

Saburou could do nothing except to say it and bow. He understood why he was removed from the position of guardian of Shiina. His feelings were not convinced, but he understood the reason.

His actions, taken to ensure the security of Shiina, are, after all, only complacency. Saburou was aware of this. There was no question of disturbing Shiina with her own problems. Since he already harmed her, you could say that he takes the investigation for the reason.

"So... like Shiina's father said, will I have to keep a distance from you?" Asked Saburou, with difficulty pronouncing the words. He will not be disappointed if he does. But if the refusal is received from Shiina herself, he will surrender. It was Saburou's thoughts at that moment.

"It's too late."

But Shiina's answer was something completely unexpected for Saburou.

"Too late... how?

"Have not I told you lately? I promised President Shiba. That I will be responsible for everything related to Saburo-kun."

Saburo realized that this time he really blundered. However, he could not simply answer "Yes, is that how it is?" and accept this.

"I did not ask for this!"

"He did not ask!"

Saburo reflexively screamed, but was interrupted by another brisk cry, accompanied by a menacing face.

"But will this help!?"

Shiina was worried more and more.

"After all, if I had not said this, Saburo-kun would have been punished with suspension from the day after the reception!"

Saburo did not make a sound in response to the hysterical cries of Shiina.

"I'll be watching Saburo-kun! If Saburo-kun does something bad, I will have to take responsibility! So no more stupid acts like today! Do you understand!?"

"Um, yes." Again responding instinctively, Saburo showed devotion.  
"... Good. Then, shall we go home?"

On the other hand, speaking out, Shiina felt better. As if an evil demon had disappeared from her, and she, as usual, smiled at Saburo.

## Chapter 3

The seventh of April, 2097, late evening after the First High entrance ceremony. Tatsuya visited the headquarters of the Independent Magic Equipped Battalion.

Last night he received a call. Despite the fact that Tatsuya openly complained about having a really tight schedule, Fujibayashi from the monitor screen said that there is an important conversation that cannot be transmitted over the telephone line and that he had to go there. Returning home from the admission ceremony, Tatsuya immediately went to Kasumigaura on his favorite electric bike.

The base of Kasumigaura was shrouded in an atmosphere of activity. Despite the late time, people and vehicles came and went.

Even in the usually crowded headquarters of the Independent Magic Equipped Battalion, on the way to the commander's office, he met several officers and soldiers. In addition to this, Tatsuya felt that people are actively moving around this building. As if preparing for an invasion is under way.

(No, it's clearly not "as if "), thought Tatsuya before asking permission to enter the commander's office.

"Please, come in."

(Not "enter", but "please, come in"?)

Perhaps there could be only another formulation, which has no deep meaning.

However, for some reason, Tatsuya was concerned about this insignificant difference.

"I'm sorry."

Tatsuya temporarily hid this feeling of apprehension, and went forward to Kazama.

"I'm sorry that at such a time, and so urgently. However, given the importance of this case, I found it necessary to explain everything personally."

"Explain?"

"Yes. First of all, please." Kazama pointed to the sofa pulled out from the storage state.

Tatsuya without hesitation sat on the edge of the three-seater sofa. Kazama stood up, walked around the table, went to Tatsuya and sat opposite him.

"Our battalion," without any entry, Kazama immediately moved on to the main topic, "tomorrow morning operates in Hokkaido."

*The impression of preparing for action was not a mistake*, Tatsuya thought, but refrained from interrupting Kazama's speech.

"We are an advanced group. Depending on the situation, all brigade troops can be sent."

But when he heard of such an inevitable situation, he could no longer remain silent. In addition, he thought that nothing would be inappropriate.

"Does that mean there are signs of an invasion?"

"That's right."

"Do you think that the case in Sado was a diversion?"

Under the case in Sado, Ichijou's wounded Gouki was trapped on a suspicious ship.

"Correct. We believe that this time the aim of the New Soviet Union is to invade Hokkaido."

"We?"

"As you thought, this is the opinion of Commander Saeki."

*Really*, Tatsuya agreed in his mind.

*The headquarters prediction for the purpose of the enemy was probably divided between Hokuriku and Hokkaido, so far Hokuriku is the majority? That is why the order to be nominated as support was issued not to the Tohoku division, but to the 1-0-1 Brigade with its strong mobile unit* Tatsuya understood.

"In this situation, we will lose contact with you for some time. If there is a situation like the Yokohama incident, then it will be difficult to help."

"I understand you."

Indeed, if something happens like what happened 2 years ago, without the help of Kazama it will be very painful. Tatsuya also agreed with this.

But Kazama would not call Tatsuya, only to warn him about it. Tatsuya understood this and expected the following words.

"In addition, depending on the situation change, it may be possible that we will ask for your cooperation."

In the words "there may be a possibility" Tatsuya felt some unnaturalness.

"Do you suggest that I go to Hokkaido?"

"No, I'm talking about the case when we ask you to give your power from here ."

On this phrase, he realized the reason why Kazama speaks with such caution.

"Are you talking about 'Material Burst'?"

"Not only about 'Material Burst'. Commander Saeki took into account the possibility of covering the attack with ultra-long magic with the help of the Third Eye."

"Got it."

This "understood" meant "awareness," not "consent." Tatsuya will not get help from the battalion. The battalion uses the power of Tatsuya. That's what happens if we simplify and generalize what Kazama said. In principle, this is the original essence of the army. However, now they were not in that position.

"Since I am also a member of the Independent Magic Equipped Battalion, I will act if I get the order."

Tatsuya stood up and saluted Kazama.

His words were not a lie. However, the phrase "at the moment" was omitted. Kazama, without getting up, nodded to Tatsuya. In the person looking at Tatsuya from the bottom of Kazama it was evident that he understood the missed phrase.

During the meeting between Kazama and Tatsuya, they were not alone. Behind Kazama, the commander's assistant Fujibayashi stood during the talking the whole time, without uttering a word. Conducting an outgoing Tatsuya, Fujibayashi hesitantly spoke only when the door completely closed, and there was no risk of being heard.

"...Commander, maybe it was worth explaining the situation to Tatsuya-kun? Now he may feel distrust of us."

"Do you mean that we betrayed Tatsuya?"

Such a radical approach of Kazama frightened Fujibayashi. But she did not stop.

"I do not think I was betrayed, but perhaps he feels that he can be abandoned."

"Abandoned? In general, you're right."

"Commander..."

There was a note of reproach in Fujibayashi's voice, because she believed that this rash remark would not be true.

"I'm sorry." Although no one else heard them, Kazama also thought that it was inappropriate. So he apologized. "However, this is the originally conceived distance between the army and the Ten Master Clans. Despite Tatsuya's return to the main ranks of the Yotuba family, our relations with him continued unchanged."

"I do not think there are any inconveniences here. He is an extremely valuable military force"

A Strategic Class Magician, which in Japan there are only two, and around the world, according to rough estimates, about fifty. Of course, its power is indispensable for the defense of Japan. That's why we need to keep extra distance.

The words of Kazama did not convince Fujibayashi. This was evident from her behavior. However, this topic was not raised for the first time in the current conversation between them. With Sanada, Yanagi and Yamanaka, this has already been discussed many times.

"We've become too close to Tatsuya. During the recent operation in Okinawa, the harmful influence was obvious. Since we are too close, we rely too much on Tatsuya's strength, which should be our joker. If he were not there, we would not have been able to easily find the enemy main forces and neutralize their agents."

"...And that's why we should not have friendly relations with Tatsuya-kun?"

"It was normal, while Tatsuya was just a guardian in the Yotsuba. However, since the Yotsuba family recognized Tatsuya as a main member, we could not ignore the possibility of "seceding" from Tatsuya. When the interests of the Yotsuba family and the army conflict, tell me, will Tatsuya choose the army?"

"...Even Yotsuba cannot do without state protection. Tatsuya-kun understands this. I do not think that he will choose that way to confront the state."

"If the interests of the state and the army will, as usual, coincide."

Fujibayashi realized that her reasoning was only a substitute for concepts. Therefore, when she was told this, the desire to object was lost.

"Take, for example, a preemptive strike by Strategic Class Magic. This, of course, can be realized in the interests of the army. But this will not necessarily be in the interest of the state. "Material Burst" is a weapon with absolute superiority not only in its strength, but also in speed and range, however, destroying enemy troops, we only worsen the situation around our country"

This is possible not only in theory. For example, in South America, despite the fact that the Brazilian army has defeated the armies of all surrounding countries, but even now, when all states except Brazil have disintegrated, it cannot avoid permanent regional conflicts. That is why it is said that the war that swept the whole world once, in South America, has not ended until now.

"The most terrible thing is that with the deepening of our friendship with Tatsuya, the army leadership increasingly harbors the illusion that "Material Burst" can be used at any time. With the use of "Synchronized Linear Fusion", the psychological barriers that inhibit the use of Strategic Class Magic have become even weaker. If we do not keep a distance from Tatsuya, then surely there will be those who want to use "Material Burst"."

Kazama spoke in a tone that resembled a teacher explaining to students.

"...But should not we at least tell Tatsuya-kun our real intentions?"

This was the only thing that Fujibayashi could object, because Kazama had the same concern about real intentions.

"To cause Tatsuya to distrust the army? I think it's a good idea that it's better to take it on than to give a bad impression about the whole army."

The conversation ended in the same place as those similar to him, which occurred during the last few days.

◇ ◇ ◇

At the same time, when Tatsuya visited the headquarters of the Independent Magic Equipped Battalion, Katsuto had a private conversation with Saegusa Tomokazu. The meeting place chosen was an elite restaurant in the center of Tokyo. It was an institution often used by big politicians and businessmen, but correct sitting on tatami in the room, Katsuto absolutely did not feel inappropriate. He waited at the ebony table for only one minute. Then Tomokazu appeared.

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting." Said Tomokazu, bowing, and sat opposite Katsuto. It seemed that he was uncomfortable, it seems, unlike Katsuto, he was unaccustomed to formal sitting on the floor.

"Please relax your legs and sit as comfortable." Immediately said Katsuto.

"Thank you. Then, I will take advantage of your proposal..."

Tomokazu got up from his knees and sat cross-legged. Katsuto himself remained in a formal pose on his knees. Because of the initial difference in physique, the figure of Katsuto towered over Tomokazu. However, neither Katsuto nor Tomokazu showed that they are worried about this.

After exchanging a few simple phrases and refreshing themselves with soft drinks, both immediately went into the discussion mode. This does not mean that they did it simultaneously. The first to begin was Katsuto.

"Saegusa-san. I heard from your younger sister that you want to discuss something with me."

"Really. Let's get down to business. Juumonji-san, how do you think, how do we deal with the current wave of hostility toward magicians?"

Katsuto expressed surprise at this delicate formulation of Tomokazu, slightly raised his eyebrows.

"Not just what I think about this, but how do I think about it? In other words, Saegusa-san, do you think that you need to actively combat the anti-magic movement?"

"Right." Tomokazu directly recognized this, not denying and not evading. It can be said that in this area he was not very similar to his father Koichi.

"When some damage is done, we lose position and can no longer catch up."

"You mean that irreparable things can happen if you turn a blind eye to aggressive propaganda against magicians? Which crisis in particular, do you think can happen?"

"I fear that, in addition to acts of terrorism superior to what happened in Hakone, kidnappings and murders of children who have not yet mastered magic can begin."

"Do you think that people who are not magicians will also be drawn into waves of crimes?"

"Yes." confirmed Tomokazu and again asked the same question Katsuto. "What should we do to avoid this?"

"...I cannot think straightaway. No, I do not think I can come up with a good countermeasure alone, even taking time to think it over."

Honestly, without pretense, Katsuto confessed. This was expected, given his character.

"Actually, I do not know either." However, the fact that Tomokazu surrendered so quickly and easily, even for Katsuto, who knew a little the temperament of Saegusa Tomokazu, was quite unexpected. "It will be too difficult to develop countermeasures alone. Even if you come up with a good idea, it will not be possible to implement it by the forces of one family."

"...Indeed, we cannot separately combat the current anti-magic movement."

Tomokazu showed relief on his face after hearing Katsuto's consent.

*It's not an actor's game, he's not as strong as his father Koichi, so unlike Koichi, he can be trusted ,* thought Katsuto.

"I think that to solve this problem, we need to bring together not only the Ten Master Clans, but also most other magicians, and join forces in response."

"Saegusa-san believes that we should organize a general meeting of the Japan Magic Association?"

"No." Tomokazu shook his head at Katsuto's question. "Even if we suddenly gather a large crowd, we cannot reach conclusions beyond the general theory. In addition, even if we gather people at the level of heads of families, it will be impossible to conduct a fruitful discussion without knowing each other's intentions."

"So, what are you talking about? I think if people representing the point of view of each of the families does not participate, the probability of ending the discussion with a simple idea will be higher."

In response to Katsuto's reasoning, Tomokazu nodded strongly, showing something like "I thought so."

"Therefore, I think, how about collecting not the heads of families or people of their age, but the youth of the age of the announced heirs? Starting, primarily with the "28 Houses", how about increasing the participants by connecting the "Numbers" from a hundred families?"

*Not a bad idea*, thought Katsuto.

From the position of the head of the family, Katsuto understood how his thinking style had changed. He realized that now he first thinks not about the optimality and the best outcome, but about whether realization is possible at all. Simply put, his flexibility of thinking has worsened.

The idealist's thinking can completely ignore the possibility of implementation, which will increase the risk of confusing the situation. Therefore, if we collect direct descendants of the main lines of families who, not being limited in thinking by the heads of their families, will be able to not be distracted by the possibility of implementation, then by combining their minds, they may be able to give constructive proposals for the Conference of the Master Clans. Although the idea was not bad, at the same time it seemed too vague.

"If it's about the next chapters of families, then I do not fit that requirement."

Tomokazu was very surprised at these words.

"No, since Juumonji-san is young, but if the essence is the gathering of young people..."

"So, you determine the acceptability of participation by age? Then, below what age do you plan to set a limit? Of course, Saegusa-san suits the requirements, do you not?"

"Y-yes. Indeed... For example, will we take those who are under 30 years of age?"

"If up to 30 years, then, for example, Mutsuzuka-dono has the right to participate, and Yatsushiro-dono no longer falls into the list?"

Sweating with a cold sweat, Tomokazu somehow managed to gather his thoughts.

"Somewhere there should be a restriction? Yatsushiro-dono has a younger brother-san in the next assistants, so I think there will be no problems."

"I believe that, of course, the restriction is necessary." Katsuto nodded with a serious face. But this answer did not help Tomokazu relieve tension. "I understood. I will help you as much as I can." However, after hearing the continuation, Tomokazu instantly relaxed.

◇ ◇ ◇

The day after the admission ceremony at First High was generally calm, but sometimes you could see the puzzled ignorance of the newcomers.

It would be a lie to say that he was not worried about the piercing looks of the new first-years who came to the school, because two years ago he himself was in that position. Thinking about this, Tatsuya kept self-control. Speaking of agitation, it was only for the time of waiting for a practical experiment, and it will naturally disappear when its turn comes.

It's been the second year since the founding of the Faculty of Magic Engineering, on which Tatsuya was registered. Last year, teachers were not appointed until the last moment, and the curriculum was not fully approved. Therefore, last year's first years during the period of class review (excursion) did not conduct a single lesson. Although this year and for the first time met visitors in this way... but even Tatsuya did not expect that he will meet so many newcomers.

First High was initially in good balance collecting candidates for magicians and magical engineers. It was a simple coincidence that in Mayumi's generation there were so few candidates for magical engineers. However, "good balance" in this case means "not a critical number in terms of the overall ratio," because the number of magical engineers in the total number of people with magical abilities is less than magicians who are considered "not magical engineers."

Even the first years who came to study, not all sought to become magical engineers. Nevertheless, the fact that the Faculty of Magic Engineering attracted this attention was undoubtedly for the most part due to the influence of the "Stellar Furnace" experiment conducted last year.

Thinking about this, Tatsuya waited his turn. The task of this practical lesson was to create a tin ball of the correct form with the help of a previously constructed sequence of magic, without changing it during execution. This is an exercise to create a sequence of magic that encompasses all processes from beginning to end.

Here is the sequence of creating the shape of the ball. Melt the tin, neutralize gravity, and with the help of surface tension, the shape of the ball is formed by itself. Without distorting the resulting spherical shape of the liquid tin, cool it until it hardens. Done.

However, gravity, which must be neutralized, is not only earthly gravitation. Although the gravity emanating from the mass of the experimenter and the observers can be ignored, one cannot ignore the attraction of the sun and the moon.

Since after a complete blockage of the Earth's attraction, the ball ceases to participate in the rotational motion, then we must also correct this moment, maintaining a relative shift in rotation around the Earth.

Also, to prevent distortion of the shape by air currents and other defects, it is necessary to make a vacuum around the liquid tin.

If the cooling process is not uniform, there will be a difference in the shrinkage coefficient, and here too, distortion may occur.

Instead of rewriting the information in "being a ball of the right form", recycling the substance into the shape of the right ball in a given sequence is advanced training that teaches magic control accuracy.

In total, there were five experimental setups. Each student was given 10 minutes each. During this time, you need to write an activation sequence in the editor, program the CAD, run the magic and complete the experiment. Composite modules are prepared for building the activation sequence, but students can freely choose to use or not use them.

Since the content of the assignment was previously reported, the students prepared their activation sequences in advance. However, it was forbidden to bring them to the practice room. Students must create magic by writing an activation sequence using their memory and mind.

Creating an activation sequence in the editor was displayed on a large screen hanging from the ceiling. But then you might think that this will help others cheat by spying, but the school thought this up, and organized the students in the order where those from whom the best results are expected are at the end of the list. Even if you try to imitate, having peeked at someone else's activation sequence, then as a result, magic is not activated due to a logical failure. If someone has the skills to be able to replicate the sequence, the idea of the school was to evaluate such an ability as excellent craftsmanship.

Tatsuya was in the very last group. He watched the actions of classmates 45 minutes from the beginning of the lesson.

Although this does not mean that the information from the students was not useful, but he prepared his activation sequence yesterday. Now, if you add new ideas, things can only get worse.

When the presentation of the metal balls made by the previous group was completed (the accuracy of the finished tin ball is the most significant in the scoring), Tatsuya went to the installation for the experiment. Unintentionally, he glanced around the location of the fact-finding exercise. Either the atmosphere was such, or the game of reason, but it seemed to him that the number of first years was constantly growing.

An electronic signal indicated the beginning of the task. If you finish within the allotted time, the speed does not affect the estimate, however, in order to ensure fairness, since a time limit is set, the editor is locked until a signal sounds.

Tatsuya began, as usual, to enter the activation sequence using only the keyboard. He was not in a hurry.

He knew that for today's task, the established ten minutes would be enough.

On the monitor, symbolic lines of the activation sequence floated before him. The same picture in real time was displayed on a large display suspended from the ceiling.

A little commotion began. Although among the newcomers there were no inconsiderate people who raised their voices too loud this behavior could not be called good manners. Also among the voices came the silent warning from the teacher.

In addition, among the whisperers were not only visited by a group of spectators. The voices of classmates were also mixed with this noise. Classmates, who had to have seen many times already, that like Tatsuya writes the activation sequence, apparently were tempted by the behavior of first years.

These slightly confused thoughts Tatsuya immediately threw out of his head. Eliminating unnecessary information from consciousness, he invested all his resources in the construction of magic.

Tatsuya's fingers on the keyboard stopped. A large display that controls its installation for the experiment showed the process of copying the activation sequence from the editor to the CAD, in the form of a 3D strip.

Tatsuya was the fastest of the last group of five people in achieving readiness for using the activation sequence. From the experimental installation one away from him, Tatsuya's profile drilled Hirakawa Chiaki's annoyed gaze, but he completely ignored it, and activated the CAD.

The skills required for this task (as well as for the tasks of the Faculty of Magic Engineering in general) are not speed, not power, and not the interference strength in an event. A ability to accurately build complex sequences of magic.

Of course, this does not mean that the power and interference strength is completely unnecessary, but they can only add the process of acceleration to the magic sequence. Although the magic sequence will be longer (not much), but since the theme of the task is not the speed of magic activation, therefore, the extra time spent should not be a problem.

The tin bar, lying two meters in front of Tatsuya, took off, began to melt and lose its shape. Becoming liquid, the metal immediately took a spherical shape. Beginners from the viewing spots stared at this process. The other four of the final group have also switched to the stage of magic activation, but the eyes of the freshmen were chained to Tatsuya's model.

From the table next to Tatsuya's experimental setup, there was a metallic echo - this tin, formed into a sphere, has already returned to the table. The first to complete the magic was Tomitsuka. Tatsuya's model was still in the process of cooling.

Even when the second person (Chiaki) finished, Tatsuya did not show impatience. This experiment originally assumed that you cannot change anything in the middle of the process. After activating the magic, the student who started it can only look. Tatsuya silently looked at the metal ball, hardening in a weightless vacuum.

The solidification of the tin ball completed, it returned to the stand on the table. There was no sound of falling. This indicated that the process was completely controlled by magic until the ball returned to the table.

Tatsuya finished today's task as the third in the last group of five, with the remaining time of one minute and thirty seconds.

◊ ◊ ◊

This year at class 3E, Jennifer Smith became the practice instructor again. The practice ended before the end of the allotted time, and Jennifer called Tatsuya into the teaching room.

"Shiba-kun is also in the school board, so I will speak briefly."

Now almost the end of the fifth lesson. Immediately after this, after classes, Tatsuya will have to go to the school boardroom. Jennifer was aware of this.

"It's still early for this, but what topic would Shiba-kun like to voice in the Thesis Competition this year?"

She was referring to the "National High School Magic Thesis Competition ", which is held on the last Sunday of October. This year it will be on October 27th. It is still very time-consuming, and a meeting for the representative of the school will be held only in June. Therefore, the question was not hasty.

"I have not decided yet." That's why Tatsuya was not at all surprised and answered so briefly. He had not even decide whether to participate at all in the Thesis, but now there was no need to mention it. Although with Magic already had to apply for a qualifying meeting, this did not mean that he could easily reject this proposal.

"Really? Great."

"Excellent?"

*Excellent, that I did not start, or what?* His question was completely justified, although he just asked again.

Jennifer did not show excitement, probably because, to some extent, she predicted that the meaning would be called into question. It would be nice if she explained everything in detail from the very beginning, however, she may have her own plans.

"Yes. In fact, I can say to Shiba-kun."

"This is due to the choice of topic for theses competition?"

"That's right."

Prior to this moment, Tatsuya's expectations had already been reduced to two options.

Either she will ask you to choose a specific question related to the "Stellar Furnace" (Magic sequences for a thermonuclear fusion reactor with constant gravity control), or ask not to touch the theme of the "Stellar Furnace" at the Competition altogether.

"Please, choose a topic other than "Stellar Furnace", as a theme for the Contest."

Waiting Tatsuya was at 50%.

"Got it."

Jennifer looked with suspicion on the quickly agreeing Tatsuya.

"...You do not even ask the reason?"

"I fully understand the danger of the Stellar Furnace. I thought that this would be an unacceptable topic for the Contest."

"Really? Apparently, my intervention was superfluous."

In fact, Tatsuya had other motives, but the current explanation convinced Jennifer.

It is unacceptable for dissertations announcements at the Competition. Tatsuya actually thought so. However, not because it is dangerous. "Stellar Furnace" was the central link in the plan for the release of magicians, on which Tatsuya was thinking. He was worried that imitators might appear and patent before him.

"By the way, it seems that Kento-kun was transferred to Magic Engineering, just as he wanted. Though late, but congratulations." In these words, Tatsuya did not have a deep meaning. He just wanted to change the subject. In addition, although he said "By the way", but having the authority as a member of the school board to see the list of students, Tatsuya knew about the transfer to Magic Engineering of Jennifer's son, Kento, back in early March, when the results of the transfer exam in Magic Engineering appeared.

"Thank you." Apparently, because it touched on Jennifer's son, she smiled, losing her usual unflappable expression. "Even this year there was a high passing score, and in the next exam competition will increase even more."

This unexpected speech by Jennifer contained information unfamiliar to Tatsuya. It was just chatter, but his curiosity was awakened.

"We've just finished the arrival ceremony, and there are already signs of this?"

On Jennifer's face surfaced a barely noticeable expression "here's the devil," apparently this was something that cannot be reported to students. However, she quickly changed her mind, deciding that "no need to keep it a secret." She answered Tatsuya's doubts as simply as she could.

"At the entrance examinations this year, compared to the results of the previous years, there were a lot of people who showed high scores for magic engineering. Among the newcomers are also many students with excellent skills in this direction, and their number is in much greater proportion, compared with previous years."

Tatsuya soon realized something. It seems his feeling that there were too many spectators in a practical lesson was not a mistake. The reason was illuminated by Jennifer before Tatsuya brought it up with her.

"As expected, last year's experiment "Stellar Furnace" had a big impact. It seems that the students who would normally choose Fourth High decided to enter our school. Therefore apparently this year the pass mark on the exams was raised."

"I see. To do something so bad... was inappropriate."

"You should take into account that the level of newcomers has risen."

After the return of the answer, which was either a joke or a serious one, Jennifer gave Tatsuya permission to leave with the words "the conversation is over."

◇ ◇ ◇

From an objective point of view, the conversation time with Jennifer was not long. When Tatsuya opened the door to the school boardroom, only Pixie was inside.

Connected to the security system of the school boardroom room (and not only her) Pixie must have noticed the entrance of Tatsuya. However, she did not greet Tatsuya. Of course, something, like "You have returned Master," was also not said.

Tatsuya took his seat and launched the terminal. The startup process was instantaneous, so he immediately went to work.

Having made sure that there are no instructions for it, Pixie moved and stood opposite the dining processor. The original function of 3H is the "wireless humanoid interface of home automation". They are usually used for centralized management of something like vacuum cleaners, kitchen stoves, air conditioners, etc. Automation for stores, having the same basic structure, but different scale, can also be controlled by updating the firmware. The dining processor, installed in the school board room, was a professional model for business use, but Pixie easily managed it remotely.

The lunch processor came into motion at the same moment that Pixie stood in front of him. Coffee was released from the depths of the dining processor for Pixie to Tatsuya. The coffee was heated automatically, but this machine could be called her third and fourth hands. The heated coffee had a taste that was finely adjusted in accordance with Tatsuya's preference. Tatsuya no longer ordered chilled coffee, so Pixie returned to the waiting chair.

Immediately after Pixie sat down, the school boardroom admitted second-year students Izumi and Minami. Izumi saw that Tatsuya was present, and, it seems, thought that Miyuki had also come. But when she saw the vacant seat of the president of the school board, she showed an undisguised disappointment on her face. On the other hand, Minami, seeing Tatsuya's coffee cup standing on the table, felt slight displeasure.

Fortunately, the complaints of both quickly evaporated.

"Tatsuya-san, are you here already?"

"Izumi-chan and Minami-chan also got here quickly."

Miyuki and Honoka arrived before Izumi and Minami managed to take their seats.

Minami, instead of starting her terminal, went to make tea. Pixie holds in her hands various devices in the room of the school board, except information equipment, but this does not mean that she blocks them. On request, manual operation is possible. Minami made black tea for four people, including herself. There were no ulterior motives that it was not coffee, probably.

Another member of the school board, just enrolled in the school and the school board of Shiina, seems a bit late.

◇ ◇ ◇

Shiina was late not because the classes were delayed. Today and tomorrow begins attending specialized courses (magic training and practice). Second course students who do not have teachers, can freely attend classes, and first course students do everything according to the instruction of the practice teacher. Although this was not an established rule, but at least among the first course students, there was no one willing to "get off the rails" immediately after the reception.

Since the teacher who controls the visit is in all classes A through D, they do not have such a thing as extended time or overlapping schedules. On the contrary, following from the idea that it takes time to learn what is seen with their own eyes, the students should return to classes from the overview classes before, after which they will have free time.

This principle was also used in the last lesson of the first day. In the case of class A, after the review tour there was still more than 10 minutes. The

lesson ended quickly, and the usual thought at this point is that you can quickly come to the school board room, however this excess of time resulted in a harmful effect.

Yesterday Shiina was invited to the school board room after the inauguration ceremony, and, after talking about joining the school board, they went home alone with Saburo. The classmates did not have the opportunity to talk quietly with Shiina. Today, at lunchtime, Shiina went to eat with her classmates, but they ate more than they talked, so they did not talk too much. It was also awkward to make noise under the eyes of high school students.

Classmates from Class A very much wanted to establish an "acquaintance" with Shiina.

A representative of this year's newcomers. The only person this year who is in direct relationship with the Ten Master Clans. However, despite all these titles, it seemed that the main reason that classmates of both sexes crowded around Shiina was that she was a beautiful girl, attractive even for her sex.

For first years, Miyuki's a third-year student, and besides being the next head of the Yotsuba family, was a woman whose outrageous beauty inspired fear. It was a level when you froze in fear, just met with glances. Around Kasumi and Izumi, there was also an atmosphere that they could not just be called. Especially Izumi, despite the fact that she looked affable, she felt some nervousness and shyness. And the direct descendant of the Mitsuya family, Shiina, did not have similar difficulties for rapprochement.

As soon as the teacher left the classroom, Shiina was immediately surrounded by classmates and could not move. This continued even after the end of the classes with the same strong pressure.

Shiina was troubled by the time. She did not forget that she should go to the school boardroom. But by nature, she is a company loving personality. It can be said that this is a rarity for a woman from the Ten Master Clans. Perhaps it is also influenced by the fact that she is the youngest child in the family, separated by age among seven brothers and sisters.

For Shiina, who was worried that she would be avoided because she was from the Ten Master Clans, this kind of environment by classmates was a pleasant situation. Honestly, she considered herself guilty, that she gathered all the attention of others, except for the moment that the current situation was close to how she imagined her daily life as a high school student, thinking: "It would be so good."

*I do not want to be avoided and have comments made off for the fact that I cannot read the situation,* thought Shiina and could not talk about the school board in any way. But her faithful childhood friend rescued her from this goodwill prison.

"Shiina-Ojou-sama!"

[note. Translated as "young lady" or "daughter of a wealthy family". Like any Onii-sama, left as is, as it is difficult to convey the Japanese mentality by translating this word.]

On a loud voice from the entrance to the classroom, with puzzled faces, not only the classmates of the A class that surrounded Shiina, turned around. Shiina herself looked inquiringly. No, Shiina looked just the most puzzled.

"It's time for you to go to the school board!"

Suddenly, Saburou's eccentric behavior aroused little interest, but the impatient voice of the other person made him realize that "it's time for her to go."

"The school board? Ah~, already so much time!"

Shiina's classmates also finally realized that they were delaying her.

"I'm sorry, Mitsuya-san. Hey guys! Let her pass!"

"Mitsuya-san, forgive us for this?"

They, too, did not have malicious intent, detaining Shiina. They were unconsciously engrossed in the conversation.

The first-formers simply did not have the courage to interfere with the activities of the school board immediately after entering the school, so classmates apologized one by one to Shiina.

"No, I'm also very sorry. I'll see you tomorrow."

Shiina waved her hand in a friendly way, left the ring of her classmates and walked briskly toward Saburou waiting at the open door.

Shiina quickly ran up the stairs, Saburou followed at her heels. On the way from the third floor to the next landing, Shiina started talking with Saburou.

"Saburou-kun, thank you."

"It's my pleasure. I know perfectly well that in such a situation Shiina cannot object to other people."

"Of course it is, but..." Saburou answered, Shiina was displeased. There was a feeling that her cheeks were puffed up. But, realizing that he was absolutely right, she did not object.

"...More than that, Saburou-kun, what was that?"

Although this was a direct translation of the topic, she was also curious about what it was like for Ojou-sama's unusual treatment.

"What, what was it?"

"Well, what, what did you say "Shiina-Ojou-sama" for..."

"And what's wrong with that?" Saburou did not pretend to be a fool. "Is not it an obvious fact that you are an "Ojou-sama"?"

For Saburou, the appeal of "Shiina-Ojou-sama" was as natural as the treatment of "Shiina" without nominal suffixes. Saburou's parents were not people who opposed friendly relations with the employer's daughter, but they taught the son to see the differences and not be irresponsible.

Shiina did not seem to agree with Saburou's answer, but she did not have any thoughts that could be refuted. She more than understood that in the company of magicians she is none other than "Ojou-sama." Because of the absence, than to object, the pressure on her cheeks increased even more.

However, she believed that it would be too childish, really pout, and refrained from doing so.

"...Anyway, thanks for that. That's enough about all this."

It seems, instead of demonstrating the complaint with an expression of a person, Shiina decided to show that she was offended by her voice and actions.

Having said this, reaching the fourth floor, she defiantly turned away from Saburo and went to the school board room, burned by his gaze.

Left behind by Shiina, Saburo stopped in the middle of the stairs and sighed.

Saburo thought that such a childlike behavior of Shiina is quite an attractive feature. Also, he was glad that, not showing such a trait to anyone but him, even to his family, she proved by this that she completely trusts him.

However, Saburo's was currently puzzled. Shiina went away without any instructions for him. In other words, left him free to act. But for Saburo, "freedom", in most cases, was a nuisance that he could not cope with without knowing what to do.

When you cannot do anything without an order, it's like being a slave or a robot. Even he knew it was bad. But this did not mean that he acts by following orders 24 hours a day. On the contrary, right up until a few days ago, he spent almost all the time in training, occasionally interrupting small-scale work.

Nevertheless, if Shiina is within sight, then there is nothing to worry about the time spent. Saburo always decided what to do to himself, on the basis of the fact that he is the guard of Shiina. It was the basis of his identity to be the protector of Shiina. ...Until half a year ago.

When he was informed that he had been removed from the post of guardian, due to lack of talent. He was not angry at anyone. At parents, too, there was no point in getting angry. First of all, he would not even know Shiina if he were born at another time, so it's completely illogical to be angry with his parents.

In addition, Saburou did not give up yet. He was aware of the lack of power at the moment, but he believed that talent and ability were not the same thing. If there is not enough strength, then we'll sharpen our skills to compensate for this. He decided so.

He did not know what, specifically, he should do. Perhaps it was teenage prejudice. It was worth noting that his heart was not broken when he was deprived of his identity. His parents also thought so and allowed him to go to First High .

But then it was just a conversation about the possibility. Now Saburou is not allowed to directly serve Shiina. Therefore, he committed a gross error yesterday, thinking that he must observe from afar.

Without ideas of what to do next, he by inertia went up the stairs. He did not even think about returning home early. Accompanying Shiina on her way to and from school is one of the few privileges that were left to him. In search of a place to kill time, Saburou went to the roof.

On the roof of First High was a real mini-garden. Various flowers and herbs (as a remedy against insects) grew in flower beds made in the form of steps, which were closed with a case for the winter, and benches were placed in the free space between the flower beds.

The weather today was clear and windless. Despite the fact that it was an April evening, the roof was quite warm. It was comfortable, as if immersed in warm, and not in hot or cold water.

Such weather caused drowsiness.

On a bench of the roof the thoroughbred cat was dozing. Saburou suddenly stopped and stared at the picture before him.

Slender relaxed body. Hair of medium length with a bizarre, slightly light color.

A beautiful face was visible, even if it was half hidden in her hand, used like a pillow, and her eyes were closed. This student was really like a thoroughbred cat.

She looked older than Shiina. Most likely, a high school student. On his shoulder, there was neither a logo with eight petals, nor emblems in the form of an eight-pointed gear. ...It was the same as Saburou himself.

In other words, it was sempai from the second course.

Saburou was fascinated by the look of a sleeping high school student for almost ten seconds before he could regain composure. The first thing he thought was, "Maybe it's better to wake her up?"



The season only changed in April. Although it's warm now, the air will cool down quickly in the evening. The wind can blow. If you sleep on the roof in such conditions, you can catch a cold.

However, when he was about to wake her up, it occurred to him that this situation could lead to a misunderstanding. Right now only he and this sempai were on the roof. When she wakes up, she may mistake him for some pervert. Or for a fetishist, who loves to spy on the sleeping schoolgirls. You cannot call this a 100% error (although only for 10 seconds, but Saburou was fascinated by the sight of this high school student), but if such a delusion emerges, it will be a big problem.

Saburou stopped the foot he had entered for a step and began to retreat very slowly and quietly back. To avoid the possible consideration of him as a pervert, he tore his eyes from the high school student and turned toward the door leading to the school staircase.

"No need to run away, it's okay."

On the side, from the bench to which he had just looked, a voice was heard. Caught unawares by a well-chosen moment, Saburou froze in place. At first, barely raising her head, now the high school student rose and sat.

Not caring about Saburou's suspicious behavior, the student stretched herself properly. In this, too, there was something feline. However, by lowering her raised arms while stretching, she looked at Saburou with a look that contained the power of a panther or a tigress, not a cat.

"I did not take you for a pervert. You were worried that I would catch a cold and want to wake up?"

"Y-yes, em..."

The explanation fell exactly on the target, why not only the language, but Saburou's whole body refused to obey.

"Hmm..."

Studying his gaze, the student nodded with a understanding sort of face.

Sabrou felt very uncomfortable. The senpai, who opened her eyes, was much prettier than he imagined when he saw the sleeping face. She was full of energy and full of cheerful charm. Although he was concerned about the reaction to just staring at such a beauty, this girl was not only a cutie, but she also had a gaze that pierced to the bone.

Not to the depths of my soul. It was the power of a master's look that you do not expect to see in a girl, and who at first sight sees the level of your strength and abilities, character, strengths and weaknesses.

(...She, if I'm not mistaken...)

The name suddenly arose in the mind of the reflecting Sabrou.

"Um..."

"Um, what?"

"I'm sorry if I make a mistake!" Tell me, and the name of the senpai case is not Chiba Erika-san !?"

Hearing Sabrou's question, Erika widened her eyes first, and then narrowed her interest.

"Ho-ho ... Do you know me, then? And your name?"

"I'm sorry!" Sabrou unconsciously straightened up. Not because of the fact that he is a high school student. Not the head, but the body ordered to treat Erika with utmost courtesy. "Class 1G, Yaguruma Sabrou."

"First-grader Yaguruma, then. As you have already said, I am Chiba Erika from class 3F. If you know about me, then you are keen on kenjutsu? I suppose you specialize in short weapons, such as a knife."

By Erika's explanation, Sabrou was more impressed than wary. He thought, if she really could see the learned techniques of the enemy with one glance, then it definitely was a level higher than his instructor, from whom he trained in hand-to-hand fighting. Sabrou, who had recognized the well-known Erika for a long time, only now understood this.

"Such insight, this one underestimated you. This one is fond of self-defense methods using folding knives and short clubs."

[note. He spoke in a very formal tone, belittling himself to such an extent that he speaks of himself in the third person.]

Hearing Saburo's too formal tone, Erika scratched her head awkwardly.

"These formalities... From such a way to talk to the interlocutor will be uncomfortable."

"Uh, it's... I'm sorry."

"You do not need to be so formal with me. And no need for any "this", "I" is just fine. What you usually use."

"Did you understand even this...?"

This time, what Saburo admired (about the "usually use"), was told by Erika at random. But Erika did not bother to correct Saburo's thoughts.

"By the way, you said you're working on self-defense skills, but... I do not think so."Even if your self-defense is really self-defense, it is not meant to protect you. Some dark skills that will become a shield that protects the master. Is it not?"

This question was asked confidently, almost in the affirmative.

"Did you grasp even this...?"

Saburo said the same words, but in a different tone. The previous words sounded simply with surprise, and this time it was a shock in the form of "I cannot believe it."

The stunned Saburo on the other hand, Erika frowned for a moment, but immediately made a face like "I do not care."

"Well, I also teach some techniques in my parents' house."

When Saburo heard this, a light appeared in his eyes. It was a light that could only be called a "burning flame."

"Chiba-senpai. Though this will be impertinent, but could you teach me?"

After reading in Saburou's eyes a strong thirst, no, thirsting for strength, Erika broke away from the back of the bench. It was worth it to straighten up, as the air filled the chilling atmosphere. Saburou stared at this change with wide eyes.

"What do you want me to teach you?"

The language of Saburou, who was shy from all these surprises, was already normal. Now the obstacle for Saburou was a dry throat. Having moistened his dry throat, swallowing saliva, Saburou, having collected all his willpower, answered Erika's question:

"...Ways how to become stronger."

"Why do you want to become stronger?"

The drying of the throat only intensified. Saburou, almost coughing from this dryness, again swallowed saliva and through his strength spoke in a hoarse voice.

"Because I want to be able to protect someone with my own hands."

"With your own hands, then?"

Erika closed her eyes and smiled cynically.

"It's not good, to be honest."

Opening her eyes, she looked at Saburou with a satisfied grin.

"Good. I'll keep you company."

Erika jumped up from the bench and headed for the exit from the roof.

"Follow me." Said Erika, looking back over his shoulder at Saburou, who was confused by her abrupt actions.

◊ ◊ ◊

The place where Erika was going was a small gym No. 2, the so-called "Arena". It had a wooden floor covering, and now there was a joint training of clubs kenjutsu and kendo.

"Hmm, well, here. Aizu-kun!"

The pupil Erika was looking for watched the whole picture from the corner of the room. She bowed and entered the wooden floor and walked along the wall to this pupil. Saburou did the same bow, and followed Erika uncertainly.

"Chiba-san."

The president of the kenjutsu club, Aizu Ikuo turned to Erika and bowed. And then he went back to watching the training.

"Can I distract you for a little while? I would like to borrow a part of the training hall."

"I do not mind, but, if possible, will you join us? If strangers are injured, club management and the disciplinary committee will make a fuss. With each passing day, it becomes increasingly difficult to hide such things."

"You will not need to hide anything."

"For Chiba-san, everything, maybe, is in order, but for the members of the club you cannot say that..."

"We'll talk about this another time. In addition, today I brought you to the club beginner."

With a cry of "Uh-huh?" in an elevated voice, Saburou intervened.

"...He himself, it seems, does not really agree."

"Um, no..."

Saburou was confused, looking at the head of the Kenjutsu club.

"Yaguruma, did you want to join another club?" These words of Erika carried a lot of pressure.

"No, but, family work..." This was not an excuse. The duties for the protection of Shiina were abolished, but being a subordinate of the Mitsuya family, he still had the possibility that some work would come about which it would be impossible to talk about.

"This is normal. His name is Yaguruma-kun, you say? First-year?"

"Ah, yes."

"In our club kenjutsu there are many same, as you, doing family work. If you properly inform about such things, then no one will be condemned for missing the club activities." However, when the head of the club said this, there was a feeling that you need to join this club. "Well, I do not mean that you need to immediately make the absolute decision to enter. After all, did Chiba-san bring you without explaining anything? You should make a decision by carefully thinking."

"...Thank you very much."

As a result, it seems that it was not coercion. Realizing that the head of the kenjutsu club was a sensible person, Saburou breathed a sigh of relief.

"Aizu-kun, you're too soft!" There was a voice that animated Saburou's alarm. The owner of these words was behind him. And it was not Erika, but someone close to her in strength.

Realizing that someone was hiding behind him unnoticed, Saburou turned nervously. There was a little girl, dressed in kendo gear. Looking at the panicking Saburou, she tilted her head inquisitively, as if asking: "Hmm?". No malice or hostility was felt at all. Perhaps that's why he did not notice her, but Saburou decided that he relaxed and clenched his teeth.

Surprisingly looking at the worried Saburou, this student looked at President Aizu.

"Aizu-kun, to miss the long-awaited beginner right from under the nose, this is unworthy for the president behavior!"

The student pressed Aizu not aggressively, but in a tone, a bit childish for the high school student.

"Saito, even if you say so, we cannot force."

Student... vice-president of the club kenjutsu and concurrently president of the female department, Saitou Yayoi shook her indexed finger, as if to say "you did not understand."

"Ts-ts-ts [\* clicks tongue \*], Aizu-kun, you do not understand."

No, not only "as if to say", she actually said it. At the same time accompanying shaking with onomatopoeia.

"Uwaa, as the page..."

"Erika! I'm not strictly speaking!"

Hearing Erika's words, repeating what was on the mind of the surrounding members of the club, Saitou Yayoi returned her gaze to Aizu.

"Aizu-kun, you must not force it, but ask! For example, cause a sense of weakness from what the sempai so persuasively convinces, and take advantage of this!"

"No, will it become of this..."

"It will!"

After interrupting Aizu's suggestion with a loud voice, Yayoi turned to Saburo. She did not hesitate to reduce the distance between them. Saburo could not retreat, behind was a wall.

"And so, beginner-kun! Uh ..."

"Yaguruma-kun." Aizu whispered the role of a prompter.

"Okay, Yaguruma-kun!"

Yayoi took Saburo's hand. Saburo for some reason did not shrink from either of Yayoi's hands, clinging to his right hand. ...Probably could not follow the developments.

Yayoi, in turn, clutching his hand tightly, gazing happily at him with wide-open eyes.

"Yaguruma-kun, are you good at this? You must enter the kenjutsu club by all means."

Yayoi's supporters, frankly speaking, looked out of control to Saburo. If there was an enemy before him, he could easily shake it and escape. However, he was ashamed of rude behavior towards a high school student, moreover, to a girl who does not show any malicious intent.

"Set in clubs will begin the day after tomorrow. It is necessary to follow the rules."

Erika wedged in between them. With one hand, she pressed Yayoi on both hands, clinging to Saburo's right hand. Yayoi easily released Saburo's hand.

Saburo did not understand what had happened. But Yayoi, it seems, did not interest this technique at all.

"Erika, hearing from you about the observance of the rules is a bit weird."

"Yes Yes. Now we will start training with Yaguruma, so you can postpone complaints and invitations for later?"

Erika responded with an appropriate way of looking at her with Yayoi's children's eyes.

"Training? You're from a tennis club! In addition, if you have time to play with the first year, then first ask permission for me!"

"I already received permission from President Aizu."

Yayoi immediately stared at Aizu, and then returned her gaze, which contained a dumb question "what's wrong?". Of course, it was already too late to make a problem out of the fact that Erika is so free to visit kenjutsu and kendo clubs.

"Besides, we did not come to play." Erika evenly interrupted glimpses of the president and vice-president of the club kenjutsu. From this voice, Saburo felt a cold shiver. Yayoi looked at Erika with a serious face, and Aizu twisted his eyebrows irritatedly.

"Chiba-san, I would like to ask that the matter does not reach hospitalization..."

"Maybe someone who will go to the ambulance, I will."

Not only Aizu and Yayoi, but other members of the club who overheard their conversation, simultaneously looked at Saburo. He, feeling that he had to refute something, but not understanding what exactly, in a hurry, waved his head in negative.

"What are you waiting for, Yaguruma? Start training faster."

Meanwhile, Erika had already taken off her socks and walked barefoot toward the empty seat in the corner of the room. On the way, she took a shinai from the wall. [bamboo sword]

Saburo also hurriedly took the shinai. It was about half the length of the usual shinai. Even this was a bit long for him, but, although his opponent was Erika, it was impossible to choose something better here.

"Yaguruma, would not it be better for you to take off your jacket?" Erika asked Eben, who was standing in front of her with Saburo's sword.

"I'm using a fighting style that does not need to take off my jacket ... And for your part, Chiba-sempai, will it be okay in a skirt?"

Saburo's answer was not a psychological attack, he asked seriously. The skirt of the female school uniform not only of First High, but in general of all senior schools of magic gets to the knees, and you cannot say that it can be moved easily and quickly. But these words were superfluous.

"Hmm... Do you think you have time to worry about me?"

Erika disappeared before the echo of the last letter "e" disappeared in her words. No, Saburo even caught sight of her silhouette. But, since the preparation for the movement was not read, his consciousness did not have time to react.

"Here." Erika's voice came from the left. Saburo hastily covered himself with a shinai. Saburo's block delivered by the shinai blocked a powerful blow. Instantly squeezing the joints, he tried to repel the blow.

It was a bad move.

However, the next moment Saburou felt a burning pain on his back and fell forward.

"Although it was a complicated technique, I think it is suitable for Yaguruma's battle style?"

Overcoming the pain, Saburou turned. Erika stood there with a shinai on her shoulder and looked at him.

"Will we finish on this?"

"No, more...!"

The pain in the back has already begun to pass. Saburou thought that Erika had struck so as to only hurt, but not damage. In the training center of the Mitsuya family, he already had a similar experience. If it was a real fight with a real weapon, then that blow would knock him out. He would with a high probability even be dead already.

*However, Saburou thought.*

(Right now, my weapon is a shinai, the enemy's weapon is a shinai.)

(Assumptions, like "If it was a real battle" are meaningless.)

(I can still fight, only this fact is enough!)

Saburou rushed to Erika straight from the reclining position, without getting up beforehand.

Jump!?"

"No!"

If you add meaning to the phrases of the people talking, they said: "Jumping magic?", "No, there were no signs of magic activation!". Besides, it was not a dialogue, they said it almost at the same time. Perhaps they thought about the same thing, accidentally creating the appearance of a conversation. All members of the kenjutsu club, both boys and girls, were able to analyze the situation and understand that "magic was not used."

As the high school students noticed, Saburou jumped at Erika with the help of strengthening the body of a type other than magic.

Instead of hurling himself from above, from the prone position, he jumped horizontally along the floor, aiming at the legs. An unexpected attack on an area that is almost never attacked even in kendo and kenjutsu of the old style.

However, Erika easily laid him down. In a literal sense.

A short and Saburou with him were thrown to the floor. This blow of Erika made me wonder where in such a fragile body is such power. Erika's shinai did not touch Saburou's body. Leaving the trajectory of the jump, she just hit the top of Saburou's short shinai.

Struck in this way that the impact of the blow has spread not only to the hands, but even reached the chest. Saburou "dived into the floor" just because he stubbornly did not release the shinai from his hands. In any case, there was not damage from a direct attack. Saburou immediately tried to get up to continue the battle.

However, as soon as he lifted his face, immediately before him was a shinai. He walked past and hit the floor lightly. But the meaning of this was obvious.

"...I lost."

Saburou interrupted his rising, and, bending his head to the floor, acknowledged his defeat. Erika led the shinai. Saburou stood up and bowed to Erika.

"Body control technique is very good." As if from heaven, Erika's voice came down. "But it's not good to use in combat."

Saburou looked up and looked into her eyes. These were harsh words. But Saburou had on his mind not a denial, nor disgust. He understood that the request for training came from him, because the opportunity to get advice from a strong opponent is very valuable. In a real battle there will be no guarantees to remain alive, having met with the enemy stronger than himself.

"Yaguruma, this is just a training session. You do not even understand this."

Erika's conversion changed from "kimi" to "anta". [different versions of the word "you"]. Saburou felt that her attitude toward him had improved.

"Of course, it's important to always take the fight seriously. However, it is necessary to distinguish when to lose - normally, and when - it is absolutely impossible to lose."

"...That is, I was too fixated on winning?"

"Looped on the duel."

Saburou was not stupid enough not to understand what was meant. His last sudden attack was a rather desperate step. It was a kind of attack, looking for ways to survive in battle with a superior opponent. As he was told, this is not the technique that should be used in training, in which you lose to try to become stronger.

"Even if it was a real fight, your attack would not work. You are not using the full potential of your body."

"...Sorry."

"You do not have to apologize to me."

Indeed, it was, but Saburou felt that he must somehow apologize. Saburou thought that it was necessary to start everything from the beginning. Honestly, he practically did not get anything out of this situation. Only I realized my weakness. However, having already shown his insignificant level, he did not have the arrogance to ask again "I want you to teach me how to become stronger."

"But it's quite an interesting material for work."

"Er?"

Saburou was ready to bow again with apologies, but could not understand the meaning of the words said.

"Yaguruma, do you have any hidden power? Depending on this hidden power ... Yes, you probably can become stronger."

The words of denial almost burst out of his mouth. Saburou certainly had skills that are not used by ordinary magicians.

However, it was a really dirty force that can only be used for sudden attacks and murders. She was not what he needed - to defend her power. That's why he abandoned this force and focused on honing his body management skills \*. [i.e. taijutsu, better known to us as "martial arts"]

"You want to become stronger, do not you?"

However, he could not resist the words of Erika, who had fallen into the vulnerable place of his mind. Tearing his thoughts of a bluff that "I'm not capable," was melted by these words and disappeared.

"Aizu-kun, please, could you train Yaguruma? I, too, will sometimes drop by to check the situation."

"It's natural for the president to look after the newcomers to the club, but... it's so unusual for Chibi-san to take care of someone.

"It's a whim... no, a little change in my state of mind. I have one rival to whom I want to make a surprise."

Aizu could not understand why she was training a beginner to surprise a strange opponent, but then he decided to convince himself that "this is Erika."

"Yaguruma-kun." Having looked with a pitying glance, he turned to Saburo, who did not understand at all what the conversation was about. "In our school, a set of clubs will begin the day after tomorrow and last one week. However, this rule does not apply to those who have decided to join the club on their own. If you decide to join the kenjutsu club, we are ready to receive you today."

"I... need to discuss this with someone at home."

Using this excuse, Saburo escaped an immediate response. Before the chance meeting with Erika on the roof, he was completely unprepared for something like that. And before discussing with someone, he wanted a little time to think things through.

"Then, today let's have a trial at the club." However, Erika did not care about Saburou's hesitations. "Let Aizu-kun teach you a little. Because, I think, for the current Yaguruma, of course, there are still many things that can be learned, instead of being engaged with me."

These words Saburou had nothing to protest.

"Okay, I have everything."

"Hey, wait, Erika! How about a match against me!"

"Next time."

Erika turned her back to Yayoi.

"Next time, you say !?" Great, we agreed! Without looking back, Erika waved and left the gym.

◆◆◆

Erika was not particularly aware that she was a beautiful girl competing in this for 2nd to 3rd place in First High. ...Not for the 1st to 2nd place, because there was one person in a special situation.

Naturally, it attracted the attention of the male part of the students. The rumors that Erika "staked out" the newcomer guy, dashed across First High.

"Onii-sama. Have you heard of Erika?"

This was said even at the dinner table in Shiba's house.

"Yes. You're talking about the fact that Erika had a fight with Yaguruma-kun in the small gym No. 2? From the president of the club kenjutsu Aizu came an explanatory that 'it was not molestation.'"

"Already? Aizu-kun is so punctual."

Aizu Ikuo was not selected as a participant in the Nine Schools Competition because of his habit of using his favorite magic, but he was a famous participant in the kenjutsu tournaments, consistently ranked highly.

These two were naturally familiar, and Tatsuya to some extent also had an acquaintance with him through Erika.

"Really. If the Vice-President helps a little more, then he will be able to breathe a sigh of relief..."

Hearing Tatsuya mutter with sympathy, Miyuki showed a smile, behind which was a small giggle. Two members of the school board were also familiar with Saitou Yayoi. Tatsuya and Miyuki had not had much interaction with her, because problem children are the concern of the local disciplinary committee. Salvation was still possible, because there were no malicious violations of school rules that are subject to control by the disciplinary committee.

"Nevertheless, it's unusual for Erika to take care of a particular person."

*So it is, but it does not seem like a frivolous interest,* Tatsuya thought.

"Maybe she felt some special talent in Yaguruma-kun."

"A special talent...? Did Onii-sama see anything in him?"

Yesterday Tatsuya caught Saburo on unauthorized use of magic. Knowing Tatsuya's "eye", it was not strange for Miyuki to think that if he had an outstanding talent, he would have noticed him then.

"He's really well trained, but I did not notice anything outstanding, except for psychokinesis."

"Does Yaguruma-kun own psychokinesis?"

"Yes. Part of the magic calculation zone is occupied by Movement Systematic-type Magic, intended for direct control. In this situation, problems arise with the use of other magic. As a person with the same flaw, I cannot suppress compassion."

"...Partially occupied?"

"As far as I could see."

"...Compared to Onii-sama himself, who has the entire zone occupied, this is not such a problem."

Although Miyuki said so, even when this is only a part, there is no difference in incompetence with limited abilities.

"That's right."

However, Tatsuya agreed, without saying too much, to reassure Miyuki looking at him with worried eyes.

"Then, what could this Chiba-senpai notice in Yaguruma-kun?"

It was unusual for Minami to interfere with the conversation of the two, but she had no choice, and she did it to distract Miyuki from Tatsuya's shortage.

"With a skillful combination with taijutsu, psychokinesis can be an excellent weapon. Because of the additional "invisible hand", which increases the chances of winning in close combat."

Miyuki, it seems, did not quite understand the meaning, but Minami, who had undergone heavy training in the main house of Yotsuba, heard about the "extra hand", nodded heavily.

"I do not know how much Erika is aware of the psychokinesis of Yagurumai-kun. But this is Erika. I do not doubt that she feels something intuitively. There is something in Yaguruma-kuna, she could feel and want to train."

This time, Miyuki also nodded confidently. She felt that the phrase about "Intuitively" was exactly about Erika. At that moment, as if waiting for the end of their conversation, a bell rang.

He did not report the arrival of the guest. I did not notify you of an incoming call or message. It was a delivery service signal.

"I'll take a look."

Minami stood up before Miyuki stopped her. Tatsuya and Miyuki for some reason stopped eating, waiting for the return of Minami.

"...This letter. The recipient in the address is Tatsuya-sama and Miyuki-sama."

In times of actively progressive electronic information networks, paper letters were to disappear as a species. This was predicted by many experts, but at the moment, this prediction has not yet come true. As the logistics network developed as well as electronic networks, or even better than them, mail delivery occurred in less than 24 hours throughout the country.

Staff costs were reduced due to intensive automation. This allowed us to obtain a level that is acceptable for practical use in terms of speed and cost. The postal service has existed up to now as an active service mainly for ceremonial needs.

"Who is the sender?"

After Tatsuya's question, Minami turned the envelope in her hands. Prior to this, according to the rules of decency, she did not look at anything other than the name of the recipient.

"It's from Juumonji-sama."

"From Juumonji-senpai...?" Miyuki asked in a puzzled voice. Driven by this voice, Minami tried to give Miyuki the envelope, but Miyuki gave the command to her eyes. "Give it to Tatsuya." Minami, without showing any displeasure, handed Tatsuya an envelope and a paper knife.

They have not finished eating yet. Tatsuya was puzzled if it was worth discovering it now. However, seeing that Miyuki and Minami want to quickly find out the contents, he cut the envelope with a knife.

The letter did not say much. Quickly reading, Tatsuya briefly retold the text:

"It seems that Miyuki and I are invited to a meeting to discuss measures against the anti-magic movement."

"For a meeting to discuss measures against the anti-magic movement ... us? Not both?"

The question posed by Miyuki was quite natural.

"It seems that this is a meeting for young people from the '28 Houses'."

In the future, it is planned to expand the scope beyond the "Numbers" and create something like the Youth Branch of the Japan Magic Association.

"...Is this what Juumonji-senpai says? No, I do not think I'll say it rudely, but it seems to me that Juumonji sempai does not look like someone who will plan such things."

Tatsuya showed a bitter smile, because the word "plan" used by Miyuki seemed to him amusing. It seems that she too succumbed to the bad influence of the world of conspiracies and intrigues.

"There will not be decided any bad things. Perhaps this will be a place, exclusively as a forum for exchanging views."

"Planning" \* was usually understood as a term used for adverse plans. Realizing this from this indirect explanation, Miyuki blushed embarrassedly.[For the word "plan", the Japanese have several different words. The word used by Miyuki has a meaning that is closest to the "weave of intrigue."]

"That's how... Sempai may be trying to create a community of magicians who will be responsible for the next generatio ..."

"Although, this time, most likely, Juumonji-senpai does not plan anything."

"Well..."

"Well, Onii-sama," Miyuki wanted to say playfully, but stopped short. The meaning of Tatsuya's words penetrated her mind with a slight delay in time.

"...It was not a thought of Juumonji-senpai?"

"As you said, Miyuki. This proposal is not at all like the sempai." Tatsuya picked up soft words, but his tone was confident.

"Then, who..."

"You can think of the Saegusa family, but, in my opinion, Mr. Koichi's methods are not like that." Tatsuya did not show modesty in words about the head of the Saegusa family, who was of age similar to his father, because he was not here as an interlocutor.

"Well, it's an arbitrary guess. There is nothing to check it, and there is no choice but to assume so."

Tatsuya gave Miyuki a letter... that is an invitation. It meant "read?". Miyuki waved her head slightly.

"So, Onii-sama, what are we going to do?"

Regardless of what was written in the letter, for Miyuki it only meant "what will Tatsuya do."

"I will attend this meeting." Answered Tatsuya without hesitation.

"You alone?"

"It's better for Miyuki not to appear there." Tatsuya did not explain the reason for this.

"I understand."

Miyuki also did not ask for an explanation. Instead, Minami had a person asking for explanation.

"The meeting will begin next Sunday at 9 o'clock. The venue is a branch of the Kanto Magic Association. On this day, Miyuki will stay at home. Minami, you remain an escort for Miyuki. I rely on you."

"Yes."

However, there were no objections to Tatsuya's orders. Miyuki and Minami responded synchronously.

◊ ◊ ◊

Needless to say, the invitation from Katsuto was sent not only to the Shiba family. The letters moved at about the same speed, so Mitsuya's family in Tokyo received a letter from Katsuto almost at the same time as Tatsuya.

Shiina, who had six older brothers and sisters, did not have anything to do with this. Shiina was rarely attracted to official interaction with 28 houses.

The eldest sister and the three older brothers who hurriedly gathered to give an answer, this time also did not include Shiina in the discussion.

Shiina was the only one among brothers and sisters, so distant in age. The nearest triplets-twins were 8 years older than her. Everyone is used to not taking her into account at such moments. The feeling of alienation was small, because this time it was not the only one left unattended.

After dinner, while enjoying free time (or simply speaking, sitting around) Shiina, decided to take up magical practice.

The mansion of the Mitsuya family and the still functioning Third Research Institute were at a distance from each other. Although the car ride would not take long, but the time was later, and instead of the Third Research Institute, Shiina went to the training hall of the mansion.

The Mitsuya family, which, together with the Mikazuki family, operates the current Third Magician Development Laboratory, also has the most modern training equipment in its mansion. Although this equipment did not have the latest experimental prototypes, its quality and equipment were no worse than in magic schools.

Needless to say, the training rooms of the mansion were used only by the inhabitants of this mansion. Of course, the priority was with the Mitsuya family. Many employees often preferred to use the Third Lab for training. As a result, the training hall was idle without use quite often. Seeing this vacant place, Shiina often thought that it was a waste, that such a wonderful equipment was worthless, but that night there was a visitor.

aburou was falling on mats for practice.

"...Sabrou-kun, what are you doing?"

Hearing the voice of Shiina, standing up from the mat, Sabrou froze.

"Look and you will understand."

He looked at her and quickly resumed the mysterious (for Shiina) movement. Leaping up, he fell on his back. Immediately standing up, he fell again, but after making a half-turn, landed on his stomach. At the time of the fall, a groan was heard, it seems, it was painful.

"...I do not understand anything at all." Shiina immediately raised the white flag. She did not lag behind her childhood friend in eccentricity, and simply refused to think. Saburo stood up and sat on the floor, cross-legged, then looked up at Shiina.

"It's a practice of falling. Shiina was also studying aikido, and she must understand."

"Even if you say I was still in elementary school..."

She studied aikido until she was ten years old, while she was still able to withstand sound without closing her ears. But with headphones on her head she could not engage in martial arts.

"Besides, Saburo-kun, was this really ukemi?"

[The technique of safe falling in martial arts, called ukemi, is used to get minimal damage from falling and grouped for further action.]

Although she had no experience at all, she often saw the training of her brothers and Saburo, so she knew such things. Saburo did not deny the remark of Shiina.

"It is not always possible to reduce the situation to ukemi. Using mats to avoid worrying about injuries, I'm studying how to reduce the damage from falling."

"Why did you suddenly start doing something like that?"

To Shiina's astonished question, Saburo suddenly twisted the face in anger.

"Today I was trained by the president of the club kenjutsu, Aizu..."

Shiina thought that looking irritated, Saburo was really pleased.

"I was attacked, dropping to the floor, I did not have the opportunity even to think about a counterattack. The instructor also often said that in the open air the damage from shots is more than from punches and kicks, and today I realized it."

"Kenjutsu, then ..?" Sinyin muttered in a thoughtful voice. She was interested in the question "Does the kenjutsu club practice throws?".

Saburou knew that it was normal to think so, so there was no hesitation in his reply.

"Among the combat skills that use the sword, Iaijutsu \* seems to contain a relatively large number of skills taken from advanced jujutsu techniques \*. They say that the style of "Sekiguchi Shinsin-ryu" of the Tokugawa clan from the Principality of Kisyu is a school that unites jujutsu, kenjutsu and Iaijutsu. Given this, the use of throw techniques by members of the kenjutsu club does not look strange. In particular, President Aizu seems to be familiar with Iaijutsu."

Iaijutsu is the technique of attack, starting from the position with the sword sheathed. Jujutsu is the original Japanese name for what came to us through America under the name Jiu-Jitsu.]

Saburou enthusiastically explained this to Shiina. But, unfortunately, Shiina was not very interested. For her, it would be sufficient only to deduce "shots for kenjutsu - it's not strange". Listening to Saburou's story, Shiina reflected on something else.

"Saburou-kun."

As soon as Saburou had finished, Shiina called his name, as if she wanted to ask something.

"Shiina, what is it?" However, this important question was difficult to ask. Naturally, Saburou looked at the nervous Shiina for some reason. "Is it something that's hard to say? Do not worry about restraint for me."

"Is it true that you were sticking to Chiba-senpai and you had a date during club activities?"

"...Ha?"

For Saburou, perhaps it was luck that he was sitting right on the floor. If he was sitting on a chair he probably would have fallen off.

"No, no, wait, wait! From whom did you hear this error? Did Shiina not spend all her time today after school in the school boardroom?"

"Yes..." She nodded. "Kasumi-san and Izumi-san told me."

She easily betrayed the perpetrators.

"...These harmful little devil."

Saburo was also familiar with the twins of the Saegusa family across the Shiina. Presenting these two with a surreptitious grin, Saburo seized his head.

"Saburo-kun, do not talk about Izumi-san and Kasumi-san. They, if anything, are your seniors."

Saburo, in truth, wanted to say "Shiina, these two have deceived you!". But it was impossible to say such things. He knew well that Shiina, distant in age from her real sisters and brothers, was very attached to Kasumi and Izumi as to two other sisters.

"...In any case, this story is nonsense."

Instead, Saburo calmed down and decided to say only what was to correct the situation. However, unfortunately, this answer was unconvincing for Shiina.

"But you trained in the small gym 2?"

"...It was not a "training", but a duel. And President Aizu-senpai coached me, as I said earlier."

Explaining Saburo looked away from Shiina. This behavior only fueled her doubts. In this case, no matter how truthfully he spoke, it would be impossible to convince her.

"But is it true that you were there with Chiba-senpai?"

"...True."

"And I heard that you came to the gym together."

"...That is true."But it definitely was not a date!"

As if noticing his stupidity in looking away, Saburou looked at Shiina, loudly denying this second-class hearing. A smile sprang up on Shiina's face, filled with the feeling that she had overdone a little.

"Well, do not get me wrong. I'm not against Saburou-kun's association with Chiba-sempai. I think it was too sudden, but, in my opinion, with proper rules, two years of difference will not be a big problem."

"I'm saying, you understood wrong..."

Saburou wanted to fall exhausted on mats. But if you surrender at this place, then it will be impossible to recover. He did not realize that it would be "impossible to recover," but this feeling in him somehow persisted. Gathering his willpower, Saburou looked Shiina straight in the eye. And now it's Shiina's turn to look away.

"...Then, why did it happen that you came to the gym with Chiba-sempai? Saburou-kun, you should not have any connection with Chiba-sempai?"

However, after this question Saburou again balanced on the verge of error.

"It's... we met by chance, on the roof..."

"You were invited to a training session, just by accident?"

"No, this is..."

A picture with a guy justified for treason before his beloved. The fact that it looked like that, did not notice not only Saburou, but also Shiina.

"It's not like the character of Chiba-sempai, who is being talked about in rumors."

Erika herself does not know... or does not care, but after the Yokohama incident, the name "Chiba Erika" also spread far beyond the Chiba family.

Erika's martial skill, which literally crushed the mechanized troops with a huge sword, backed by the reputation of the "daughter of the Chiba family", was highly appreciated by high-ranking military and security personnel who had access to the details of the incident.

On the other hand, Chiba's family, including the head Jouichirou, passively refer to Erika's fame, or even vice versa, make attempts to hide it. Therefore, among the people there were many half-joking rumors about Erika as the "secret weapon of the Chiba family", "Princess of the illusive sword of Chiba", etc.

The Ten Master Clans were also among "those who have access to the details of the Yokohama incident." Very fond of his youngest daughter (this can be said about any father) Mitsuya Gen shared some knowledge about Erika with his daughter entering First High . Saburou also listened to this story along with her, because he was expected to follow Shiina. In fact, it's Shiina who went there with him.

After all, Shiina's source of information was not only her father. She had the opportunity to listen to stories not only by Kasumi and Izumi, but also by Mayumi. Mayumi took care of Shiina as a friend of her sisters.

She also had interlocutors for close communication not only among the Ten Master Clans, but also among the Stam Semey. Although it looked like a departure from the formalities of high society, but in the conversational network of girls from the "Numbers", Shiina learned much more information than she heard from her father.

From the fact that Shiina heard about Erika, her temperament did not belong to the type, which itself will help junior high school students. This is the type that, pretending to be indifferent, finally agrees, if you rely on it.

"...This I asked of her."

Said Saburou, after which Shiina looked at him with a cold look, saying "I knew..." .

"But I did not stick to it! Knowing her skill, I asked her to train me!"

"But after all, Chiba-sempai is quite beautiful."

Well, maybe she is! But now we are talking about something else  
"Hmm..."

Saburou continued to despair, but Shiina's eyes remained cold.

◇ ◇ ◇

Even after entering the third year, Tatsuya continued to visit the Yakumo temple almost every morning. In fights in which he always lost during admission to high school, at the moment the number of victories has reached 50%.

However, Tatsuya did not think that his skills were equal to Yakumo. Initially, the strengths of Tatsuya and Yakumo were different, and Tatsuya knew that in useful areas, such as gathering information, reconnaissance and fighting, his ability was much inferior to Yakumo.

Even if we limit the comparison by one-on-one combat, Tatsuya can compete on a par with Yakumo only in cases when the battle started from a position where they see each other, and the team is "prepared, started." If the battle was to the death, Tatsuya would have won, but with many great losses. But in victory, just killing an opponent does not make sense.

Nevertheless, Tatsuya did not go to the disciples of Yakumo in the hope of mastering any technique that would deprive the battle of this meaning.

Tatsuya is not a student of Yakumo, but a partner in training. While Tatsuya was weaker, he only trained with Yakumo, but now that the sparring skills are balanced, we can say that their exercises have become mutually beneficial.

After completing the last fight of this morning defeat, Tatsuya said goodbye and was about to leave.

"Ah, Tatsuya-kun. Wait a minute." Yakumo stopped him.

"What is it?"

Tatsuya felt that immediately after his answer, the surrounding atmosphere had changed.

Not in a figurative sense. Tatsuya and Yakumo wrapped a wall of air, interfering with the passage of sound.

"Soundproof barrier... It differs from the technique I know."

Involuntarily wanting to learn the sequence of magic, Tatsuya took himself in hand and switched attention to the words of Yakumo.

"Have you already received an invitation from the Juumonji family? Who will attend?"

"Do you already know this...?"

Tatsuya received the invitation last night. Not even half a day has passed. Nevertheless, he was not surprised by this, knowing the incredible ability of Yakumo to gather information. He was just impressed.

"Because I'm a shinobi."

Yakumo's favorite phrase as usual did not explain anything, but Tatsuya did not begin to ask further, knowing that he would only waste time.

"Until it's determined, because I have not yet received permission from the head of the family, but in general, I'm going to go alone."

"Perfect. It will be better so."

Hearing Tatsuya's answer, Yakumo somehow agreed contentedly.

"Are there any signs of a threat?"

"At the moment, it seems, there is no planned activity of this kind, when direct damage can be caused."

Apparently, Yakumo already had some clues.

"Does this mean that someone started an indirect attack?"

Knowing that he would not get the right answer, Tatsuya tried to get information anyway.

"I'm not saying that attacks are not planned."

"Really?"

Feeling that he somehow understands what Yakumo wants to say, Tatsuya stopped building unreasonable and vague guesses. He feared the risk of erroneous bias.

"If there is any danger, it will be only after the end of the meeting."

"I understand you. I'll be on my guard."

If the attack is against Tatsuya himself, he will not need to be afraid to attack the attacker. Tatsuya thought that for this time, it might be necessary to ask for help from the main house to strengthen Miyuki's protection.

"Tatsuya-kun, you should not be so light-minded about this. A monster, called a society, does not have fangs or claws, but it will easily devour one single person." Yakumo suddenly warned him. Tatsuya suddenly felt as if he had been poured with icy water.

"...I will remember it." He answered in a half-reflex, not fully understanding the meaning of Yakumo's words.

◇ ◇ ◇

Yotuba Maya's morning began not so early. Thanks to the spread of free working hours and working at home, even office workers were not so stupid as to rise early, but even compared to office plankton, she had a carefree morning.

Today she got up quite late, at 8:30, and after an hour she finished breakfast. Picking up the right time behind Mei Khayyam spoke to her in a polite tone.

"Mistress, a video message from Tatsuya-sama came."

"From Tatsuya-san? So early in the morning?" Her eyes narrowed slightly, Maya asked Hayama. Of course, Hayama did not allow himself such rudeness as to clarify that "it's not so early."

"It came last night, after the lady went to bed."

"I hope this is not an urgent matter?"

"Yes. Tatsuya-sama said: 'I do not mind if they look at them the next morning.'"

Hearing this answer, Maya, on the contrary, became interested.

"I got it. I'll take a look here."

"As you wish."

Hayama signaled to the maid waiting in the corner of the room. Experienced maids engaged in cleaning dishes, and prepared the screen in front of Maya. Having finished all the affairs, the maids were lined up in front of Maya and bowed. Seeing the nod of Maya, Hayama instructed everyone to leave.

Hayama, closing all the doors, pressed the switch, lowering the soundproof partitions. Then he inserted the memory card with the decrypted message into the standalone player.

The video message was short, less than three minutes. After inspecting to the end, Maya gave a slight laugh: "Hu-huh-hu."

"Tatsuya-san can also do such nice things, like asking my permission for such trifles."

Maya looked at Hayama with a look that required agreement.

"I know that it is preferable for the lady that it is so."

"That is true." But Maya easily agreed with Hayama's words, which could be called a warning. "But, after introducing Tatsuya-san as my son, I wanted to give him more freedom. Did it not reach him?" Maya said with an innocent face, bowing her head in an inquiring manner.

"My opinion is that Tatsuya-sama adheres to the natural order established for the people of the Yotuba family."

"It is possible and so to say." Murmured Maya in a lively tone. It seems that today Hayama was not in the mood, and his usual jokes were not there.

"By the way, lady. What do you say to Tatsuya-sama on his request?"

"Of course, I will. I give Tatsuya-san the permission to act freely as my son."

With this justification, Maya gave Tatsuya permission to attend the meeting organized by Katsuto.

"In that case, I'll tell him that."

"Yes, and more, please add that in the future there is no need to ask my permission in such cases."

"Yes, I shall." Having bowed in deference, Hayama showed his agreement with Maya's words about Tatsuya's permission for freedom of action.

◇ ◇ ◇

A letter from the head of the family Juumonji arrived at the house of the Kudo family shortly before noon the day after Tatsuya received the same. Kudo Minoru watched indifferently, as if behind a TV screen, as his brothers fussed over an unexpected invitation.

Today, on a weekday, at this time he had to be at school. However, Minoru was fevered from yesterday evening, and today he missed classes at school. The condition of the vice-president of the Second High School Board, Minoru, worsened due to the accumulated fatigue from the busy days associated with the entrance ceremony.

Minoru was unhappy that he, a member of the school board, had to be absent at the very beginning of the new school year. Minoru, who did not know the truth, was convinced that no one was to blame for his weak body, including himself. He did not blame anyone, because he did not know why he was born unhealthy. He just could not blame.

However, Minoru reproached himself for not being able to transfer responsibility to others. Having magical power, suitable for the Ten Master Clans, he could not demonstrate this power due to the predisposition to bed rest.

For Minoru this seemed worse than not having the magical power of the level of the Ten Master Clans.

And the fact that the Kudo family left the Ten Master Clans only spurred his self-loathing. Minoru was not involved in the loss of status of one of the Ten Master Clans. He did not bear any responsibility at all. However, being the heir of the Kudo family, Minoru thought that if he could participate in notable events, such as the Nine Schools Competition, they would not have left the Ten Master Clans.

Despite his self-sacrifice, he also looked with contempt on his brothers and sisters. Brothers, sisters and father, whose pure magical power was inferior to the strength of his grandfather, Kudo Retsu, his cousin, Fujibayashi Kyoko, and also his own strength.

He loved Kyoko Fujibayashi like a real sister, and was sure that she was looking for a method to heal his body, but so far there has been no progress. He himself could not even join in important discussions on which, perhaps, the future of the Kudo family was being decided. He did not need to become an opponent in a dispute to his brothers and sisters who had a mediocre magical power, and it remained only to sit slowly in a warm place...

Minoru did not notice that this despair weakens him.

He did not say anything (in fact, they did not ask his opinions), and it was decided to send Minoru's brother, slightly older than him, to the meeting, which was received by the invitation from the head of the Juumonji family. Although they say a little older, the difference between them was 7 years old.

At that moment, Minoru wondered what his brothers were doing here. The older brothers should be at work, and the two older sisters have already married and are sitting with the children. Only he had to stay at home.

Then, what is he doing here? With such vague thoughts, Minoru remembered what he was eating. As his condition improved slightly, he asked the servants to arrange dinner for him in the dining room. When everything was ready, and he came, he found the brothers and sisters at the table.

Before them on the table was set a lot of varied hearty dishes. On the other hand, Minoru was given rice porridge with a lot of dietary supplements for patients. Kashi was initially small, and Minoru already finished eating. Deciding that there was no longer any need to stay in the dining room, he stood up.

Paying attention to the sound of the chair moving away, the next brother in the seniority looked at Minoru.

"Minoru, are you coming back?" This voice belonged to the one who first responded to the greeting of the younger brother who appeared in the dining room.

"How are you feeling?" For the first time today, his second sister started talking with Minoru.

"I still have more of a fever, so I'm thinking of resting." Answered Minoru who stood up, openly showing his desire to return to his room as quickly as possible.

"Really? Very sorry. If it were not for your health problems, I was thinking of taking you with me to Tokyo."

However, this intention did not reach the elder brother. Minoru remained helplessly in place.

"Does Minoru know the next head of the Yotsuba? If your health improves, you need to renew your old friendship."

"Right. If there is an opportunity, of course, I will." Said Minoru, and, bowing slightly, left the dining room. The thoughts of his elder brother were obvious. It is clear that the Kudo family, after losing the status of one of the Ten Clans, wanted to regain its strength, and for this, it seems, they wanted to bring the Yotsuba family to their side. And they thought to use Minoru for this. However, from such a naive plan, Minoru was suddenly nostalgic.

He met the brother and sister (now the bride and groom) from Yotsuba six months ago, in the autumn of last year. They spent together only a few days.

Since there were days when they acted separately or he was lying in bed because of the worsened condition, then one can say that in reality they spent together only 2 days.

However, the memory of these two days was a ray of light in Minoru's memory.

How he showed them the city of Nara and how at the foot of the mountain Kasuga helped to resist the opponents who turned out to be the pawns of a foreign magician. As they walked around Kyoto in search of this foreign magician, Zhou Gongjin.

Those two days were for him the time when he was exactly what a magician should be. After that, he collided with Zhou Gongjin himself and prevented his escape, and it was a simple job. He was not a difficult opponent, and for Minoru it was commonplace.

Now these were good memories, despite the shame of the day when he had to lie in bed in the hotel room under the supervision of Minami. Minoru, frankly, envied Tatsuya and Miyuki, who had friends like Minami.

After traveling to Tokyo, he again meets Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami. It was very pleasant, even taking into account the stupid calculations of the older brothers. Such a thought originated in Minoru.

◊ ◊ ◊

Masaki learned of the invitation when he returned home from school.

"I'm sorry."

Returning home, Masaki first went to the room where his father lay. The head of the Ichijou family, Ichijou Gouki, who was in a state of exhaustion of unknown origin, was not hospitalized, but was being restored at home. Hospitalization was not required, because there were no visible injuries, and no abnormalities were found with bones and internal organs. However, this was not the only reason.

"Masaki? Come in."

Gouki, who received damage in the battle, was not able to rise on his own, but he was conscious. He slept longer than usual, but in a waking state his thinking was clear. Therefore, Gouki himself hoped that he would be restored at home.

"Father, is it normal that you are not sleeping?"

Gouki had a bent bed with an electric drive, and he adjusted it to a semi-sitting position.

"Yes. Today, strength has largely returned to the hands and feet."

After answering Masaki, Gouki ordered "We continue" standing next to the bed of the subordinate. He, with the help of the remote, moved the page of the electronic paper attached to the bed. Gouki used his waking time to manage the subordinates of the Ichijou family. He usually left it to the nearest helper, but now there were signs of an invasion of Tohoku and Hokuriku. So he gave instructions straight from the bed to prepare for this.

"Father, did not the ship of the New Soviet Union disappear?"

Hearing in conversation with the subordinate the affected topic of the suspicious ship, which caused Gouki's weakness, Masaki involuntarily wedged into the conversation.

"Belonging to a suspicious ship... It was not confirmed that it belongs to the New Soviet Union."

Gouki's answer to Masaki's question did not make much sense.

"This is not an official conversation, so it's okay. Or, father, do you seriously believe that this ship could belong to someone other than the New Soviet Union?"

"...The suspicious ship is missing. Perhaps it was flooded."

"Destroying evidence? I heard you were talking about searching... Do you want to search for debris at the bottom of the sea?"

"Maybe I will."

Recently, Gouki's responses have become somehow meaningless. Since it did not look like he could not find the words, he had the impression that he avoided certain statements.

As if he was afraid of the ears of third parties...

When this thought occurred to him, Masaki realized his own oversight. He was not particularly interested in asking about the abandoned ship, but he also had previously prepared other questions. Finishing the conversation with his father with a short "Really," Masaki spoke with the "third party" who came to the hospital today.

"Tsukuba-san, thanks again for today."

"It's my pleasure. The state of the mind itself is gradually improving, but for me it is also a relief, because as a result this did not show my incompetence."

Tsukuba Yuuka in a joking manner answered Masaki, who bowed with gratitude. This was the last reason for choosing a home care for a patient instead of hospitalization.

On the day when Gouki was brought to the hospital, and there was no way to diagnose the cause of the weakness, the family was overwhelmed with anxiety. His daughters, Akane and Ruri became emotionally unstable and cried from time to time. Gouki's wife Midori behaved staunchly, but for the rest it was obvious that it was a pretense to cheer the daughters. Masaki also pretended to be cold-blooded, but in his mind could not restrain the excitement.

Those who extended a helping hand to them were surprisingly the Yotsuba family.

Forgetting even the surprise that they found out about the symptoms of the Gouki on the same day, they could not but accept the offer to send a specialist to Gouki, who at that time did not even know what to do.

And it all turned out that now this young woman, Tsukuba Yuuka, stood before Masaki. He heard that she is a graduate student at the Magic University, but she has no medical qualification.

At present, the magic calculation zone is not an object of medicine. However, considering the goal "to restore a healthy state to a weakened person," what Yuuka does isn't all that different, otherwise you cannot call it "treatment."

But if the fact that the treatment is handled by an unqualified person, would be disclosed, it would cause problems in various aspects. Such judgments were also present.

"Will my father... recover?"

The day before yesterday he was in a position that he could not even stir his head and it was difficult to talk. Until yesterday, he could not keep his position immobile when the bed bent. Given this, although still he could not get up himself, the ability to keep in this position was a great step forward.

However, despite the fact that outwardly he was on the mend, from time to time he heard that in reality the condition is deteriorating. Masaki could not calm down, just seeing it with his own eyes.

"Yes. As for the treatment, there are still a lot of incomprehensible parts, so I cannot say when he will recover, but the condition is steadily improving. Everything will be all right, he will recover."

Yuuka assured in the restoration of Gouki, without removing the smile from her face.

"Do not worry, Masaki. I will not stay forever. I'll be better soon."

Hearing not only from Yuuka, but from Gouki himself a vigorous promise to "be healed," Masaki seems to have calmed down a little.

"Then .. for today, please forgive me. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Ah, I'll see you off."

"Thank you so much. But do not bother."

After politely declining Masaki's offer, Yuuka, bowing to Gouki, left the room. The subordinate Gouki followed Yuuka to accompany her to the exit. When they were left alone, Masaki immediately wiped a polite smile from his face.

"Father... in reality, how is it?"

"What do you mean?"

Laying his head on the pillow, relaxing his neck, Gouki asked. It seems that it was rather difficult for him to climb so far. Masaki hurried to the switch and led the bent bed back to the reclining position.

"Can I trust her?"

Overlapping the faint noise of the motor lowering the bed, Masaki's serious voice reached Gouki's ears.

"There is no doubt that my condition is improving. There are no guarantees that it would improve if we did nothing. I have no choice but to believe it."

"It is so, but..."

On an emotional level, Masaki found it difficult to convince himself that one can entrust his helpless father to a person under the auspices of the Yotsuba family.

Although this is called a cure, in fact it is exposed without any resistance to the Mental Interference magic. Even if it successfully restores from the current state, it is not known what "bombs" can be installed.

"Masaki, if you start to suspect, it will take longer."

"Really..."

As Gouki himself said, this risk was worth it.

"Since there are no other options, it remains only to believe...?"

With regard to the treatment of the Gouki, they did not have absolutely no clues what can be done.

"Such are these cases. By the way, Masaki."

"What is it, Father?"

"You see the envelope over there? It's addressed to you."

The sudden change of theme of Gouki was designed to prevent the son from plunging into a bottomless abyss of suspicion.

"Open it."

It was not a personal letter, so he asked to open it here.

"Okay..."

Masaki did not understand what this request was to, but, deciding that there was no point in refusing, took a letter lying on the table from the side. His face immediately tensed.

"A letter from Juumonji-dono ..?" He read the name of the sender on the back of the envelope.

Taking a paper opener into his hand, Masaki carefully opened the envelope. The other party that sent the letter was their partner. It was necessary to avoid even the unlikely event that the document inside will be damaged, that it will not be possible to read it.

Seeing how Masaki's eyes reading the letter stopped, Gouki turned his head to him and asked:

"...What is written there?"

"...it is an invitation."

"Where?"

"Juumonji-dono proposes to collect magicians under 30 from "the 28 houses" and discuss the issue of countering the anti-magic movement. The time is next Sunday, the place is the branch of the Kanto Magic Association."

"Next Sunday? That's pretty soon."

Masaki felt the same thing that Gouki expressed aloud. It seems that because of the difference in experience, Gouki was faster, but Masaki also thought so.

"It seems that Juumonji-dono does not want to be interrupted."

"Disturbed? Who can do this?"

Kichijouji, for example, would quickly understand the so-called duty of Gouki. However, Masaki has not yet reached such a level (in the sphere of conspiracies and intrigues).

"For example, the defense forces. Or the police."

"...Does the government intervene in the affairs of the Ten Master Clans?"

"That possibility is also there."

Explaining to his puzzled son, Gouki did not try to convince him. This was the educational policy of Gouki, in which Masaki must independently understand everything and come to an agreement.

"By the way, what are you going to do?"

Gouki asked instead of explaining. Masaki was not so stupid as to not understand what he was talking about.

"I will participate. I'm worried about the possibility of an attack, but that does not mean that I can skip this event."

"That's right."

Gouki approved Masaki's decision. He also did not think that he would receive objections, but now the alarm of uncertainty was clearly dispelled. Instead, another alarm arose in Masaki's mind.

"Father... In such cases, you must also respond with a letter?"

"Of course." Gouki replied briefly, however, unfortunately, Masaki never worked on drafting official documents for communication in the circle of the Ten Master Clans.

"...What should I write?"

At the son who asked with a lost voice, Gouki looked with pity.

◇ ◇ ◇

The evening of the ninth of April.

Back home from the University of Katsuto received a report that he was waiting for a guest. He asked the housekeeper, who reported this, how long she was waiting. She replied that it was about half an hour. Hearing this, Katsuto hurried into the living room, not changing clothes. Despite the fact that the visitor came without an invitation, Katsuto was not a person who would be rude about dealing with partners.

"Sorry for the wait."

A woman in a business suit stood up and bowed to Katsuto, who had entered the drawing room and apologized.

"For my part, I also apologize for coming during your absence."

"Nothing wrong. But if you'd let me know, I'd have come home earlier."

At the criticizing words of Katsuto, the woman showed an apologetic look. With Katsuto calling back to the sofa, they sat down at the same time.

"Long time no see. I'm late, but I congratulate you on the succession of the Juumonji family rule."

"Thank you. I thought we'd see each other at the Master Clans Conference in February."

"Ara, I apologize for that. As you should know, according to the policy of my family, I focus on military service... And my younger brother deals with the affairs of the Tooyama family."

As she herself said, she was from the Tooyama family of Eighteen Replacement Families. Its name is Tooyama Tsukasa. But in the army she is known as Tooyama Tsukasa.

[Last name in the first case is written 十山, in the second 遠山. It is read alike by ear. About the fact that the Japanese are not surprised by the equally sounding names, knowing that they can be written in different ways, was told in the first volumes.

I will use the writing of Tooyama for the real name with the Number "10" (十) and the writing of Tooyama for the "fake" name. In the text, both names will meet repeatedly.]

You do not even need to say that this is nothing more than hiding a real name, but in her case, her boss is also aware of this. Thanks to the secret agreement of the Tooyama family and influential personalities who were pulling strings in the secret information sphere, as well as managers of the army's intelligence department, she concealed her social status and engaged in activities that were outlawed.

"In that case, do you have any business today concerning defense forces?"

"No, I did not mean that."

Tooyama Tsukasa briefly answered by denying Katsuto's question, without any gestures and with a smile, in which there was absolutely no emotion.

"Then, what's your business?"

Tsukasa did not show disgust on her face about this impatient behavior of Katsuto in a formal conversation. Tsukasa this year is 24 years old. She is 4 years older than Katsuto. However, despite the age difference, it was difficult to maintain the usual calm before Katsuto. She, undoubtedly, was also brought up with manners suitable to the wearer of the number "10" [十] in the surname.

"It's about the invitation received from Katsuto-san."I'm really sorry, but in a situation in which, as you know, the Tooyama family is located, we are forced to ask for our absence."

"That's it... Sorry, there's nothing to be done."

"The situation of the Tooyama family", about which Tsukasa said, was the connection between the Tooyama family and the army.

The Tooyama family was established by the Tenth Laboratory (Tenth Magician Design Institute) as the last line of defense of the capital region. Unlike the Juumonji family set up to intercept missile and mechanized forces, the Tooyama family was aimed at defending key points and escorting important individuals after the breakthrough of primary defense.

The Tooyama family are magicians not to protect citizens, but to protect the functions of the state. Their relationship with the key figures of the army is the strongest among the "28 families". They will assist in the preservation of key people at the time of the state of emergency. This is the task of the Tooyama family. Because of this nature, the Tooyama family is considered a shadow, or even a "dark" part of the defense forces.

"Ten Master Clans" was the mechanism that magicians did not become a "used and thrown out" political tool. They were created as an organization that can adequately respond to a country called Japan. However, the Tooyama family, being part of the "Ten Master Clans" system, will never become one of these Ten, because it is forbidden to defend the interests of magicians from the state, as one of the Ten Master Clans.

"And what about the reason for the absence?"

This fact was known only by the Juumonji family made in the same Tenth Laboratory. Perhaps there were other families who knew about this, but pretended to be ignorant. However, the only partner that the Tooyama family could reveal their position to was the Juumonji family. If the Tooyama family is absent from the meeting, its position as a member of the "28 families" may deteriorate.

"That's what I wanted to talk about. I want to borrow Katsuto-san's wisdom by any means."

Even having the power of the army behind him, it would be a great omission to be expelled from the society created by magicians in the same laboratories. Therefore, Tsukasa asked him to help her with an excuse not to do this. ...But even in this case, she did not look worried.

"Even if you said wisdom, I'm not so gifted in such matters..."

Katsuto also felt it. There was no zeal in response to the response. And yet, Tsukasa was not bothered by this frankness of Katsuto.

"In addition to the Tooyama family, were there other families who reported they were unavailable?

For Katsuto, who only just took the post of head of the Juumonji family, this was the first collection of magicians from 28 families, and the first attempt to gather everyone at the meeting. Refusing to participate was quite difficult psychologically. In addition, they could not get rid of the worry that they would miss important conversations and that any decisions could be made without them.

However, in any case, this was a hasty conversation. *Are there any other families that refused to participate, except us?* Naturally, such a question arose in the mind of Tsukasa.

"So far, only a few answers have come, but... I already received a letter with apologies about the absence from the Tanabata family."

"For what reason?"

Katsuto frowned reflexively at Tsukasa's bullet-ridden question. It's hard to say that the desire to know the contents of other people's letters conformed to the rules of etiquette.

"Is it not the reason that the heir-donor visits the Defense Academy?"

However, while Katsuto hesitated with an answer, Tsukasa answered herself.

"...Exactly."

Her reasoning was absolutely correct, and Katsuto had only to reluctantly agree.

"'Exactly,' then, the same student of the Defense Academy, the son of the family of Issiki, as well as the sons of the families Goto and Hassak, also involved in the affairs of the army, will also be absent?"

"...Tsukasa-san, I would ask you not to talk about it with such joy."

Having said this, Katsuto showed Tsukasa his passive consent.

"What a relief. Then, perhaps, my family Tooyama will be absent for the same reason."

"...I understand."

Katsuto agreed with an upset face that contrasted with the smiling Tsukasa. He did not like the attitude of Tsukasa, with a smile that gave a kick to his invitation, but because he knew about the circumstances of the connection between the Tooyama family and the army, he could not force them to take part.

Katsuto gradually grew tired of the company Tsukasa.

This was different from the ever-present feeling of discomfort in conversations with Mayumi. Mayumi does not have malicious intent, even if it looks bad. She is inherently a good person.

Tsukasa, in turn, lacks malice, but there are no good intentions either. She does not have such a point of view that someone may be dissatisfied with her ideas. Although her own feelings and emotions are well organized, she easily ignores other people's feelings.

However, while this does not prevent the task, this is much worse, because it does not contradict the rules and morals. She is not a robot without emotions, and not even a stranger with other values. But to get results without any inconvenience, in conversation with her fatigue will accumulate at a fast pace.

*But her business is already over, only the exchange of farewells has been left,* thought Katsuto.

"By the way."

This turned out to be a false conclusion, based on observation and desire.

"Will the heir of the Yotsuba family Shiba Miyuki-san and her fiancé Shiba Tatsuya-san attend the meeting?"

"...I have not received an answer yet, but I think they will visit."

"Katsuto-san is familiar with these two, are you not?"

"They are Kohai from First High ."

With a friendly smile on her face, Tsukasa looked into Katsuto's eyes. Instead of bright light, there was an obscure abyss in my eyes.

"What kind of people are they?"

"I was not close with them, so I do not know the details of the character."

"Can you just tell me everything you know? Despite the fact that they are people of the secretive Yotsuba family, how can they understand that they want to show up at this meeting?"

(Clearly, is that her goal?)

Only now Katsuto realized the true purpose of Tsukasa.

If you think about it, although there was a purpose to find out what to justify, but it is impossible for Tsukasa to visit him only for the reason to report absence. She is a member of an organization that is tirelessly fighting internecine strife on the shadow side of society. She is also an important person, playing an important role. As an envoy of the Tooyama family, there is another suitable person.

Katsuto realized that she came to him to get information about the magicians of Yotsuba, under the guise of apologies for the absence.

Katsuto could also reject her request. He did not have to answer to her question in detail.

"As for the heir, I'm not very sure."

As a result, considering that he cannot remain silent, Katsuto started talking.

"But the groom, in matters of loyalty is a strict man."

"Is strict?"

Tsukasa's doubt was natural for a normal person. But in her voice she heard that she was asking, already knowing the meaning of Katsuto's words.

"Entering into an alliance, he will never betray. But he will also betray the betrayal. I think that Shiba Tatsuya-dono is such a person."

"That's how..."

Tsukasa pondered briefly, suspending the conversation.

"...And if he is betrayed by the government, no, the army, do you think it will be the same?"

"He will not help the enemy by going against the state."

"Is it only to show hostility to the military leadership and government leaders?"

"He's not a stupid man who will show hostility on his part."

Katsuto responded in a calm, but strong-willed tone to Tsukasa's question, which seemed to be trying to talk in an alarming direction.

"So, still, there is no absolute loyalty?"

"In the end, it's just what I see in Shiba Tatsuya-dono. I think, even if there is no loyalty to people, there is loyalty to the country."

"I believe that the self-righteous patriot is as bad as a fanatical pacifist."

"Neither patriots nor pacifists are evil. If they really do not hurt, they will not interfere with internal affairs."

Katsuto's sharp gaze collided with the soft gaze of Tsukasa.

"No, really. The Tooyama family will have no business with the Yotuba family."

Katsuto frowned. With clearly pretending face Tsukasa finished her long-cooled tea.

## *Chapter 4*

USNA, neighborhood of Roswell, local time is 10 April 16:00. Time in Japan: April 11 at 7:00.

Lina finally returned to the base from a mission lasting a week. The initial mission of the mission was to save the Wiz Guard squad (a squad of magicians who had not been selected for use on the Stars for domestic use and under the command of a common alliance government), surrounded by rebels who had caused riots in the territory of the former Mexico.

However, it is not easy to carry out such a feat as evacuation from a zone occupied by armed groups exhibiting hostile actions, while avoiding serious hostilities so that the crowd does not receive significant damage. Arriving on the morning of April 2, three squads under the command of Lina, the Second, Fourth and Fifth Corps of Stars, using the authority of the headquarters and the formidable name of the Stars (swinging them, as a flag, roughly), they successfully suppressed the riot and returned the Wiz Guard to Houston headquarters, after which, today she finally returned to Roswell.

Eventually, in order to complete the task, they had to deal with the riot itself, and Lina and her squad had to suppress it, without actually using force against the crowd. Lina was beside herself with anger, thinking that it might be true that the General Staff planned it from the very beginning.

In this mission, where the ability to conduct political negotiations was needed, Lina was useless.

In fact, this Fourth Corps, having a reliable female leader, persuaded the national army fighters who had joined the crowd. Lina could only look from the side to the confrontation of the Wiz Guard and the soldiers of the national army. Moreover, the commander of the Fourth Corps, Vega, was not very well acquainted with Lina (in fact, Lina could not do anything about the image of the "elder sister" radiated by Vega).

Tired from all this, Lina, having finished the report on the successful fulfillment of the mission to the command of the base, finally got time to pay attention to the environment.

*Why did I notice just now?*, she thought, looking at the busy atmosphere, not different from the one that was before shipping. Thinking about this, Lina questioned \*tilted her head. [The Japanese gesture is a head inclined to the side. In the text they just write "bent over the head", because the Japanese understand what it means. And for the ignorant is an expression of puzzlement. In the anime, even the question marks need to be drawn by the heads.]

Despite the fact that it was partly only nominally, but she was the Commander in Chief of this unit. Lina doubted she remembered: if the Stars receive an order to sally, then even if she does not participate in it, she must report it.

Leaning her luggage into her room, Lina went to Sylvia's room.

When it comes to the whole unit, it's better, of course, to listen to Canopus, but Sylvia was an interlocutor, which is the easiest to talk with. Fortunately, Sylvia was here. Lina knocked and received permission to enter. Seeing the suitcase already prepared for departure, Lina rounded her eyes.

"Sylvie, it's not a personal trip, is it?"

Sylvia showed Lina a smile, as if she were praising the child with the words "how intelligent you are with us."

"Yes. There was an order for a mission of covert penetration for a detachment of the Planetary class."

The planetary class consists of wards of support from the rear. The strength of Sylvia, as a magician, is also the collection and transmission of information. If the Planetary class is the basis of the operation, it means that the leadership does not think about the direct use of force at the moment.

"But I have not heard anything about it..."

"This mission is not entrusted to the Stars, as such. The intelligence department selects magicians suitable for operation individually.

"What a ridiculous..."

Involuntarily, Lina mumbled under her breath, realizing that even if she complained, this would not help at all. In particular, the intelligence department is not the opponent from whom something will be achieved even by the right arguments. Lina also knew this feature.

"...And what is the task of the operation? And where are you going?"

Sylvia hesitated a little with the answer. Still, this mission was secret. But Lina showed no signs of withdrawing the question. Sylvia had no choice but to convince herself that this was "an order from a superior officer."

"Operation area - Japan. The operation to determine the Strategic Class Magician that used the Great Bomb was resumed."

Lina's face was distorted, as if she tried too strong tea.

"...That operation was resumed?"

Lina was sent to Japan from December 2095 to March 2096. The main purpose of the mission was to identify the Strategic Class Magician, responsible for "Scorched Halloween", and if not, then to guarantee the inability to use Strategic Class Magic, which was temporarily called "The Great Bomb" (this magician also received the "explosive" nickname "Great Bomber") . However, in full swing, the mission changed the goal to eliminate the magicians who had been deserted by the monsters. Having dealt with the deserters, Lina was ordered to return.

During Lina's return home, other agents who had penetrated into magic-related institutions, such as the Magic University and magic high schools others other than First, were also recalled, so the mission to identify the Strategic Class Magician naturally ended.

But the Pentagon has not forgotten about the threat of a strategic class magician hiding by Japan.

Thus, now the search will be restarted with the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) as the main executive force for the creation and security of the search network inside Japan.

Undoubtedly, the fact that Strategic Class Magic was again used in real combat had a great influence on the reason why the secret penetration into a friendly country was approved right now.

This was due to the use of Strategic Class Magic "Synchronized Linear Fusion" in South America. There is no guarantee that the "Great Bomb" will not be used in the Pacific region at this time. Not surprisingly, priorities were raised when the threat began to look more realistic.

"But why exactly Sylvie..."

But to agree with the need for an operation and to agree with a specific method of conducting it are different things.

"Is it not obvious that this is due to the fact that I participated in penetration mission into Japan last time?"

"But did not Sylvie spend the whole time in Japan in search of parasites last time? Moreover, you returned home even before solving the issue of parasites. In the search for "Great Bomber," your terms do not differ in any way from the conditions of other people being sent out for the first time."

In fact, Lina's words for Sylvia were not far from the truth. Therefore, Sylvia listened to Lina's honest speech with a bitter smile.

"Besides... with the combat capabilities of Japanese magicians, Sylvie will not be able to cope."

And then Sylvia's bitter smile froze.

"The fighting abilities of Japanese magicians are abnormal. And the magicians of the Star class are not involved! Well, Tatsuya and Miyuki turned out to be from that Yotsuba, maybe my penetration was a special case..."

"Are they so strong...?"

Sylvia had already heard enough from Lina about the abilities of Japanese magicians even during her last stay in Japan. However, now, seriously worried, the alarm flared up in her heart again.

"Yotuba's infamous reputation is not an exaggeration, that's what I think, every time I remember Miyuki and Tatsuya. The magical power of Miyuki stands on an equal footing with my power of Sirius. Tatsuya also surpasses my strength, if I confine myself to one-on-one combat."

"Really...?"

"Sylvie. Do you have a list of participants in this mission?"

"Well, if only informally..."

Keeping a rigid face, Sylvia opened her own folding terminal to answer Lina's request. Revealed from a folded six-state state, the screen displayed the names of approximately 50 people, shown as a list with portraits.

Only when she saw this list did Lina frown. She scanned the list, and changed her expression from serious to frightened.

"...I already understood that there is no Star class among them, but I do not see anyone even of the Constellation class. Does the intelligence department plan to get rid of the magicians?"

Stars are classified in the following way in descending order of strength: the class of Stars of the First magnitude, the class of Stars of the Second magnitude, the Class of Constellations, the class of Planets, the class of Satellites.

Among them, Stars of the First and Second magnitude, and also Constellations play the role of regular combat forces.

Naturally, this does not mean that the classes of the planets and satellites do not fight at all, because among the class of satellites, engaged primarily in illegal espionage missions, there are also combat-power owners that exceed the Constellation class and are on par with the Second Star magnitude class. But on the whole, the division into classes is made by force, therefore the combat power of magicians of the Planet class is lower in comparison with the Star class (the combined name for classes of the First and Second Star magnitude) and the class of Constellations. Most of the Satellites class will also lose to the Constellation class if they collide with them in battle.

If you just want to collect information, then the class of the planets and satellites, accompanied by enhanced Starfury magicians, will suffice. But in Japan, and even more so in Tokyo, where they are waiting for those two, Lina would not want to send magicians specializing in gathering information without the accompaniment of battle magicians.

Realizing that Lina's muttering is not an exaggeration, but true feelings, Sylvia briefly lost her speech. A naive thought ran through her head, "In any case, it's a duty to the whole nation," which made her anxiety suddenly worse.

"Since the official order has already been given, there's nothing to be done, therefore... Sylvie, please be careful. Do not do foolish things. I'll recommend the headquarters to send someone else at least from the Constellation class."

"...I understand."

"The intelligence department can try to get the "Great Bomber" to appear, having organized a sabotage by the forces of Satellites and Stardust. At this moment, you can order them to support them, but please do not take part in it. Classes Sputnik and Star Dust never win against the Japanese Ten Master Clans."

Before Sylvia could answer, Lina continued with a hard voice.

"If this situation arises, you can use my name to reject the order."

After returning from Japan, Lina did not know how much weight the name of Sirius now has. However, if not by name, then her reputation as "the strongest magician in the United States," she hoped she could protect one of her trusted subordinates. In her thoughts, Lina assured herself with these words.

◊ ◊ ◊

Friday evening, April 12th. It's been 3 days since the beginning of the week of recruiting to clubs in First High at the National Magic University.

However, in this wild turmoil in First High , no major incidents occurred. Because Tatsuya and Miyuki looked after everything.

The two joined in monitoring the violations of school rules the same way as last year. Although the year before last, still not having the authority of Tatsuya, also caught a lot of violators.

But this year these two had other titles. And it's not about the president of the school board and the chief secretary, but about the next head of the Yotsuba family and the son of the current head. Yotsuba's name could not be ignored not only by students already doing family work, as full-fledged magicians, but also by ordinary carefree students. For the young inhabitants of the magical world, who are fledgling chicks \*, the existence of Yotsuba was such a terrible thing. [In the original there is something about an egg and a hatched chick. Perhaps from some Japanese proverb.]

Of course, not only the nervousness of the pupils of First High was transferred to Tatsuya and the rest. Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami in these last few days also learned and practiced as ordinary students of the school of magic.

The serenity of evening rest after supper was interrupted by a phone call.

"I apologize for the unseemly appearance."

With these words, Tatsuya bowed to the videophone camera.

"Do not worry about it, Tatsuya-san."

From the screen of the videophone, Maya smiled at him.

"Ara, is Miyuki-san already asleep?"

"Right now, I sent Minami to call her."

When it became clear that they were calling from the main house of Yotsuba, she went to change clothes. Perhaps Maya also understood this, as expressed by translating the conversation into another topic.

"I see. Then, I have enough Tatsuya-san. Because from the very beginning I phoned the case for Tatsuya-san.

"Thank you."

Tatsuya bowed again to the cell. Despite the change in his position in the family of Yotsuba, Maya is still making all decisions. Therefore, he did not know when all this could turn into her whim. Tatsuya did not trust very much the stability of his current situation.

"Will the scheduled meeting take place soon on Sunday morning?"

"That's right."

At that moment, Miyuki returned to the living room. Leaving her lacy blouse from above, from the bottom, she changed the light miniskirt to a safe long skirt in dark tones.

"Both-sama, I'm very sorry."

"It's okay. It's because I suddenly called."

"Thank you."

Looking at Miyuki, who bowed cautiously, Maya with disinterested eyes returned to the interrupted conversation.

"So, come here Sunday afternoon. I would like to hear a detailed account of the case in Kumedzim."

Maya did not repeat what Miyuki had missed, but for Miyuki there was enough sense in what she heard to understand what the conversation was about.

"I'm listening."

Without hesitation, Tatsuya showed consent, bowing. Departure to the main house with a report in early April was planned from the very beginning. Maya, even with her egoism, did not demand the impossible.

But the problem was what to do if the meeting lasted until late at night. From Yokohama to the main house of Yotsuba is not so far away, but it will take some time. The next day, you need to go to school. Tatsuya, Miyuki and Minami cannot all three be absent. In this case, Tatsuya will have no choice but to act separately from Miyuki."

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"But before that,"

However, Maya has not yet finished on this.

"You may be assigned work."

From the manner of Maya's speech, Tatsuya felt discomfort.

"The decision has not been made yet?"

"The job request will not be from me."

Tatsuya frowned slightly in suspicion.

"This means that there will be a mission for me from the army? But why are both taking care of such things?"

In addition to Yotuba, Tatsuya's work is also provided by the national defense forces. Work in FLT is under the direct control of Tatsuya, and there is no place for surprise.

Then why did Maya talk about the mission of the military? Does she really want the work not to be accepted? Despite this expectation Tatsuya...

"Because I also do not want foreign troops to land on our land."

With this answer, he realized that his assessment was rather naive.

"Is the situation in Hokkaido so bad?"

"The situation does not seem bad. On the contrary, I am curious why the army of the New Soviet Union is so confident in itself with such a level of strength."

It seems that Miyuki and Minami did not understand what was bothering Maya. But Tatsuya quickly realized what a terrible forecast for this lies.

"Does this mean that the New Soviet Union can use "Tuman Bomba"?"

"When Tatsuya said this, the faces of Miyuki and Minami turned pale."

"Yes. Tatsuya-san, I believe that Ichijou-dono that was struck by magic was also "Tuman Bomba", but of a truncated scale."

"So, the true essence of "Tuman Bomba" is to magically create a large amount of explosive gas and then simultaneously ignite the whole mass?"

"A gas bomb filled with vibrating gas? But its basic mechanism, I do not understand..."

Tatsuya thought about the magic that is necessary for this. First of all, how to get the required amount of oxygen and hydrogen for the required power? Is a real gas created, or is its state fixed only for a moment? Reflecting on this, Tatsuya did not find an answer.

"If they used "Tuman Bomba" in the waters of Sado, it would be unnatural to hesitate to use it in the Soya Strait."

"And I need to resist this? But the "Material Burst" cannot be used when friendly forces are not far from the enemy. If that magic is intended to ignite the explosive gas, then it is not difficult to adjust the required power, while the mass transforming the energy of the "Material Burst" has a limit of narrowing the size of the transformed object."

In response to Tatsuya's uncharacteristic complaints, a smile appeared on Maya's face, which, in his imagination, or indeed, seemed slightly sadistic.

"It's all right. Because the army also does not ask to use the "Material Burst" near the coast of Japan. I wonder if the task entrusted to Tatsuya-san will consist in detaining the enemy fleet with attacks on an ultra-long range? Or destroy enemy magic."

With this last sentence, Tatsuya felt he understood why Maya cares about supporting the army.

"Do you need me to analyze the Strategic Class Magic "Tuman Bomba"?"

"I do not think that even Tatsuya-san can understand everything at first sight. It will be enough to get a few tips. To receive any minor trifle is already good."

"I understand you."

Maya smiled rather at Tatsuya's answer.

"I look forward to meeting you on Sunday."

"Very well."

Tatsuya bowed his head, after which Maya completed the call.

Confirming that the video screen went out, Tatsuya rudely flopped on the sofa.

"Onii-sama, it's... you did a good job."

Miyuki, looking anxiously at Tatsuya, crouched, but not next to him, but opposite him on his knees on the floor.

Tatsuya, with a smile, raised himself and stroked Miyuki on the head, then again returned to the sofa.

"Suddenly, so much trouble has been piling up."

"Really... Uh, I still need to attend the meeting Juumonji-senpai?"

Miyuki shyly laid her hand on Tatsuya's knee.

"No. It's all right."

Tatsuya put his hand over Miyuki's palm. It seems that Miyuki's act was not the result of deep thought. Recognizing, she opened her eyes wide and took off her hand in a panic.

"...I'm very sorry."

With a strong embarrassment on her face, Miyuki looked away from Tatsuya.

"...You must also excuse me."

Tatsuya, it seems, found himself in the same situation, not realizing what he was doing, and looked in surprise at his hand, which had touched Miyuki's hands recently. Seeing this unusual state of his brother, Miyuki's excitement became even more intense.

"No! This does not mean that I hate Tatsuya-sama's touch! I'm glad of the unexpected opportunity to hold Onii-sama by the hand, but it was so suddenly..."

It seems that the boundaries of doubt, how to call Tatsuya, Onii-sama or Tatsuya-sama, were erased in these instants of oblivion. Looking at the panic-stricken Miyuki, Tatsuya regained his composure.

"Miyuki, calm down."

"Yes, no, but..."

"Calm down... It's good."

Looking up, Miyuki saw Tatsuya's expression. He nodded slightly, his whole appearance showing that "I do not mind." Miyuki again, greatly embarrassed, pulled her hand to Tatsuya's knee. When she laid her hand, Tatsuya covered her palm again.

Miyuki's hand did not even twitch. She did not have any reflex, automatically withdrawing her hand.

"...It is strange. Why did my heart tremble a little earlier?"

"But are you okay now?"

"Yes... No."

Tatsuya did not ask for an explanation for such a contradictory answer. Eventually, after a while, Miyuki's charming lips moved slowly.

"My heart is also in turmoil. My heart is beating violently in my chest, and my breathing has gone too."

Saying this, Miyuki was calm.

"I should not remain calm, touching Tatsuya-sama. But why? The current me and the recent me, are we anything different? The heart beats in confusion, but this tremor is even, its rhythm is regular, and even with this difficulty of breathing I do not feel any discomfort."

Miyuki carefully put her head on the interlacing of them with Tatsuya hands.

"Despite the fact that my heart is beating harder than when I call you Onii-most... I'm comfortable anyway. As if such a behavior of the heart, this is what should be its normal behavior."

Narrowing his eyes and looking at Miyuki, Tatsuya, suddenly sensing the changes in the atmosphere, raised his head. When he had time to translate, there was only a figure of Minami escaping into the kitchen, whose reddened ears were visible from the lumina of her hair.

◊ ◊ ◊

An ominous prediction and a happy prediction. If people ask which of them will come true, the majority will reply that this is an "ominous prediction."

Unfortunately, Maya's prediction on Tatsuya's call became a reality.

Saturday, April 13th. Right in the middle of the lesson, an emergency message from the school appeared on the screen of the Tatsuya educational terminal. According to the instructions read, Tatsuya suspended individual training at the terminal and left the classroom. Classmates spent it with the expression "What's that?" on their faces, but quickly returned their views to their terminals.

Tatsuya was heading to the waiting room. There Sanada was dressed in a costume.

Standing before Sanada, Tatsuya did not salute, but bowed. Sanada glanced at the school staff. They, obviously reluctantly, left the waiting room.

After that, the reception area was surrounded by a soundproof field created by the magic of Sanada. Confirming this, Tatsuya spoke first.

"Major Sanada, did you not go to Hokkaido?"

"I had to hurry back. We need your strength."

The facial expression was no different, but Sanada was clearly in a hurry. The manner of speech was clearly out of place.

"I got it. Explain the situation at the base."

Therefore, Tatsuya did not waste time on unnecessary questions. No matter how sound is isolated, it is better not to disclose the details of the operation within the walls of the school.

"Are we going to Kasumigauru?"

"That's right. How soon can you go?"

Tatsuya replied "Already ready" for the impatient question of Sanada. As a member of the school board, Tatsuya did not need to deposit his CAD for storage, and, unlike the girls, he did not have personal things with him, other than the information terminal.

"Then let's go faster."

"I got it. I will only inform you of my early care, please wait here."

Having said this, as if reproaching Sanada's impatience, Tatsuya left the waiting room.

Sitting in a helicopter at the nearest Tachikawa base, they went to Kasumigau. An hour after leaving school, Tatsuya was in the control room in the brigade headquarters of 1-0-1.

As well as the observation room on the basis of Tsushima, this room had equipment creating an observation field in the form of a three-dimensional image obtained as a result of processing information from a spy satellite and stratospheric cameras. Among the equipment in the chair was Tatsuya, holding in his hands a specialized CAD in the form of a rifle, "The Third Eye."

He was wearing glasses connected to the Third Eye, just as it was done in the helmet of the Mobile Suit. Material Burst was unavailable without de-pledging, but it was already ready for an ordinary ultra-long attack.

The third eye is a CAD, designed specifically for "Material Burst". However, this does not mean that it can only be used for an Material Burst. The main purpose of the Third Eye is to help with aiming at an ultra-long range.

Naturally, it is useless if the user does not know how to handle it. The third eye will perform its functions only if the user has the ability to process information from a spy satellite and stratospheric cameras as easily as ordinary visual information.

Tatsuya possessed this ability. With the Third Eye, he could use Mist Dispersion and Gram Dispersion in a place distant a few hundred kilometers away.

"Special officer of Ooguro."

Tatsuya got up when he heard this voice.

"There are no changes in the operation."

Tatsuya was not under the command of Kazama today. It was a woman who received the nickname "Silver Fox", brigadier commander, Lieutenant-General Saeki Hiromi, for her blond hair with a silver hue.

On the screen, a real-time image of the Soya Strait, also known under the international name Strait of La Perouse, was displayed from the stratospheric camera.

"Task number one - to nullify the enemy magic. If this is not possible, then prevent the advance of the enemy fleet."

"Yes."

"Special officer, are you ready?"

"Preparations are complete. The enemy magic summoning is already under observation."

"Good. Then, I ask you to return to your place."

Tatsuya sat down again. Saeki is not one who makes waiting orders, standing up, or something like that. All she wants is maximum performance.

The screen displayed many small vessels heading south from Karafuto.  
[Japanese name for Sakhalin]

Although at first glance they looked like fishing boats, the sensors of the stratospheric chamber showed that most of them are warships. Perhaps they are trying to hide their ships among real fishing vessels, so that we sink them, and then use this as a pretext for false accusations?

Possessing such skills, Tatsuya, in fact, was summoned as a magician, able to stop them without flooding, in order to avoid these accusations.

For magic, physical distance is not an obstacle. Even if you are in thousands, tens of thousands of kilometers from the goal, if you approach the information objective, you can use magic.

Speaking of the enemy, the magician is only able to understand the information distance and direction about where another magician activated magic. Therefore, even if you could feel the magic, you still cannot understand where it will be activated geographically. If the physical distance is small, then it is not difficult to compare the information coordinates with the coordinates of the relative position. But ordinary magicians will not be able to recognize from which point magic is released, even from a distance of several hundred meters.

On the other hand, hardware sensors are directly sensitive to the physical distance. Long-distance sensors feel further than ordinary magicians and are able to determine the place where the magic-activated magician is located. But when the distance reaches several tens of kilometers, it becomes difficult to connect magic with a certain magician. With the current level of technology, one can only learn that at the same time, when magic was activated in a certain place, the magician in another place used the same magic. Although it is possible to evaluate the cause-effect relationships, but this cannot be confirmed accurately.

It is almost impossible to even estimate at least where the magic was used, if the distance between the magician and the place of activation of magic is at the level of several hundred kilometers. And Tatsuya was capable of such magic beyond the longest distance.

Tatsuya continued to sit, staring at the screen. The third eye put by the butt on the floor was even now connected to the equipment in this room. His glasses displayed some numeric data, not shown on the big screen.

Among them, one of the values, showing the amplitude of psion waves, began to oscillate unnaturally. The amplitude has repeatedly increased and dropped for a short time.

Tatsuya got up and prepared the Third Eye. No one around was surprised at this sudden behavior. The consoles in front of the seated officers displayed the same information as in Tatsuya's glasses.

"Activity of psion waves located!" The voice of the operator was heard. The image on the screen was scrolled, and the place where the activity of psion waves was seen rose to the center of the screen. It was a place, one might say, at a stone throw from the Japanese fleet that was being intercepted.

Using the support of the Third Eye, Tatsuya directed an Elemental Sight look at the specified coordinates. There emerged a sequence of small scale magic. Not only was the scale of event rewriting small, but also the amount of information in the sequence of magic after its completion was small. Judging from the information received, it was magic, decomposing water to oxygen and hydrogen, after which it ignited them, but it only had the power of a ground anti-personnel mine.

The time Tatsuya spent reading and processing this information, without exaggeration, was one moment. The next moment, he already pulled the CAD trigger. Based on the information received, he built in his zone of calculation the sequence of magic "Gram Dispersion" and was about to launch it.

However, he interrupted the activation of "Gram Dispersion". Because there was an unknown component in the enemy magic sequence.

Even now, he could destroy the sequence module of magic, which decomposes water into a detonating gas and ignites it. He interrupted his magic, because he noticed a module that he had not seen before.

The added component was two. The first of them was responsible for the delayed launch and there were no problems with its decoding.

However, another component strongly attracted Tatsuya's attention.

(Copying a sequence of magic?)

(...No, it's not just copying, instead of duplicating the same magic sequence, a new magic sequence is automatically created with new projection coordinates and activation time?)

The sequence of magic is something that is created within the magic calculation zone. This is something taken for granted for modern magic, but this does not mean that this applies to all magic. For example, using ancient talisman to record the final version of the magic sequence on the talisman surface.

Many styles of ancient magic also inflict a sequence of magic on things such as an "altar", "spellbook", "magic wand" and other "tools", thereby making them "mediums of magic."

However, what he now "saw" was different from all this.

In the sequence of magic was included the function of constructing a sequence of magic.

Although it was like a cyclic challenge that gave a sequence of magic the function of creating an activation sequence in the magic calculation area, but this module allowed a sequence of magic to create a sequence of magic on Eidos, which is the goal of magic activation. Moreover, while the cyclic call only duplicates the same activation sequence, this module has the function of automatically introducing a value of a variable different from the value entered in the original magic sequence.

For a moment he wondered how the enemy's sequence of magic had multiplied and covered the surface of the sea in the same instant.

(This is why the activation delay!)

Having slightly adjusted the delay when copying magic sequences, activate them all at once and get the effect of simultaneous creation and ignition of the entire volume of rattling gas.

(This is Tuman Bomba!?)

It was impossible to be sure that this is a complete picture of the Strategic Class Magic "Tuman Bomba".

However, he did not have time to doubt either.

Tatsuya canceled Gram Dispersion and switched to the sequence of Mist Dispersion.

The effect of modification of the event was the decomposition of water. Its separation into oxygen and hydrogen.

Burning of explosive gas is... Binding of hydrogen and oxygen. Synthesis of water.

He realized that the enemy's sequence of magic to generate heat does not burn hydrogen, but directly binds hydrogen to oxygen.

Synthesis of water by magic and the decomposition of water by magic.

The magic that modifies the event with the opposite effect forced the "competing" forces to cancel each other!

"Confirmation of cancellation of enemy magic."

Not reacting to Sanada's voice, Tatsuya directed his gaze to the enemy ships. He managed at the last moment, but there was no guarantee that he could do it next time. In addition, if they increase the activation scale, Tatsuya's magic will not be able to cover it. It can grow to uncontrolled scales, if you do not prevent the enemy from completing the copying of the sequences of magic. Moreover, the original sequence of magic with which copying begins can be released several times in a row.

"What troublesome magic."

Thus, it will not be possible to quickly come up with concrete countermeasures.

Instead, he decided to move the enemy into a state of immobility.

Tatsuya's Mist Dispersion decomposed the propellers of enemy ships one by one. They stopped one by one, starting with the ones leading the way, thus the armada of ships coming from Karafuto, got into something that could be called a cork. After about a third of the enemy ships were stopped, he lowered his arms holding the Third Eye.

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Vladivostok, Academy of Sciences of the New Soviet Union, Far Eastern headquarters. In one corner of the building without windows, from a cabin in the shape of a cube with a side of about 3 meters, stood a chair resembling a throne of modern palaces.

In this chair sat the official Strategic Class Magician of the New Soviet Union, Igor Andreivitch Bezobrazzoff.

Slowly removing the helmet from the top of his face, he shook his head and stood up.

"The magic, is this 'decay'...?" Muttered Bezobrazzoff in a room where, beside him, there was no one, and he looked around. In this research building there were no windows. Everything in this building had a high degree of secrecy.

For example, the cubic cabin behind Bezobrazzoff was a supercomputer that helped in calculating the magic of the magician placed inside.

Roughly speaking, it was a device that, when compared with conventional CAD, helped in the activation of large scale magics. The magician can activate magic of a scale that cannot be reached by them without conscious assistance in the form of calculating all factors and obtaining the optimal activation sequence.

Where you can not look, you will see only the walls. But Bezobrazzoff, as if ignoring thick walls, stared east-north-east.

To the place where the retreat began after the failed invasion of Japan.

If Bezobrazzoff continued his support, there would still be a chance.

However, this operation was not really intended to invade Japan. It was necessary for ordinary soldiers to release steam.

The recently concluded major conflict with the Grand Asian Alliance of Japan does not have the resources to retaliate. On this, in fact, this strategy is calculated.

"Well, this premonition did not fail us..."

Although it was not yet determined, but as far as he could see, in the pursuit of the Japanese army there was no desire to continue the pursuit to Karafuto.

What he did not expect was the existence of a magician capable of annihilating his magic.

"Who the hell is...? Maybe the same one, transforming the mass into energy, the Strategic Class Magician who destroyed the fleet of the Great Asian Alliance...?"

Mentally muttering Bezobrazzoff, talking to himself. The first guess he came very close to the truth.

## *Chapter 5*

Sunday, April 14th. Today is the day of the meeting of the young representatives of 28 houses organized by Katsuto, but Tatsuya, as usual, went first to training in the Yakumo temple. The meeting of the Ten Master Clans was not for Tatsuya something that would make the daily routine change.

However, if we say that today it was not different from the usual, it is also not true. Yesterday's confrontation with the supposedly Strategic Class Magician, Bezobrazzoff, left Tatsuya very concerned.

Tatsuya could not interrupt the magic supposedly being Tuman Bomba with the help of Gram Dispersion.

Yesterday he himself canceled his Gram Dispersion, but without a doubt, if the confrontation is serious, canceling that magic will be a difficult task.

It was a first of a kind experience for Tatsuya. He cannot use such powerful defensive magic as Katsuto or Minami. If you need to protect someone but yourself, then destroy the enemy magic. This is his style.

How to resist this magic, in which the magic sequence automatically self-replicated, spreading in different directions? What can he do?

These were his unconscious thoughts, in which he now plunged.

It was very unusual for Tatsuya to get distracted from what he had before his eyes.

As expected, during the sparring with Yakumo, he did not have time to distract himself. But, returning home, he completely relaxed.

Even taking a shower to wash away sweat, even wiping the body, his mind was completely occupied with the question "How to resist yesterday's magic." To the extent that before him there was no noise and signs of the presence of other people, which he usually notices even without consciousness.

(If it was a single sequence of magic, then no matter what scale it had, Gram Dispersion could cope with it.)

(If the content was the same, it does not matter how many hundreds, how many thousands of magic sequences, they could be treated as one object.)

(But yesterday's magic was a collection of magic sequences that differed from each other by small shifts in the values of the variables.)

(Regardless of the fact that only the values of coordinates / positions change, it is impossible to process the information as the same, because of the shift in activation time.)

(Magic that spreads through a chain, thanks to this self-replicating... Hmm, should I call it the "Chain call"? At the moment I do not even know what to do when the Chain call is completely over.)

(Destroy the starting sequence of magic before the spread begins, it's most effective, but...)

(...This will not be so easy, the enemy must also have countermeasures for such a case.)

(Each of those magic sequences in itself was not very strong, although the area of damage can be very large, but there were no places that could be called an epicenter with increased temperature or pressure. like a gas bomb.)

(Then barrier magic with a large output power, undoubtedly, will be able to resist this.)

(So, from the very beginning, is the problem that I cannot use barrier magic at the right level?)

(To program Ancient barrier magic? No... Ancient analysis already has progress, but it's not enough to be used in real combat.)

(Can Pixie learn barrier magic?)

(It's impossible to keep Minami nearby...)

These are just about thoughts now intertwined in his mind.

Suddenly, the bathroom door opened. As expected, no matter how much he was absorbed in his thoughts, he noticed this sound. When Tatsuya's wiping head turned, he saw through the opening in the towel that Minami was standing behind the open door, staring in a stupor and with wide eyes.

Tatsuya was also surprised. However, he immediately recovered from the shock. After he finished taking a shower, in unconscious action, which could be called good manners, he wrapped the towel around the lower part of the body, hiding some important parts.

So now only the upper part of the body was exposed.

"Minami."

He spoke as calmly as he could without meeting Minami's eyes.

But there was no answer. It was impossible to say that Tatsuya could not see her. Because Minami's face was now boiling bright red.



"Minami, close the door."

This time he spoke in a more harsh tone.

".....!"

With a delay of a few seconds,

+I-, and-, I'm sorry-e!

Minami screamed loudly and slammed the door to the bathroom. After that, there was a loud sound, it seems, Minami fell in the corridor. With a bad premonition, Tatsuya quickly put on his clothes.

Cooked breakfast was waiting in the dining room on the table. And on the floor, in a formal pose on her knees and in a deep bow to the floor, trembling, sat Minami.

Tatsuya glanced at the already occupied Miyuki. Miyuki shook her head with a face saying "I do not understand anything." Minami's Dogeza it seems, was not caused by Miyuki's anger.

"Minami. Do not worry about it."

"This is not the case! To see the body of Tatsuya-sama, to someone other than Miyuki-sama... this is unworthy for a maid's rudeness!"

"Except .. What...?" - Maimi's muttering did not reach Minami's ears.

"Anything, but give me a punishment!"

"No... I did not lock the door, so you do not have to blame yourself."

"No! It's 100 percent my fault that I did not notice that Tatsuya-sama is in the bathroom! So this useless maid should receive the appropriate punishment!"

"Punishment, then."

It seems that a switch has worked in Minami's mind. Puzzled, Tatsuya looked at Miyuki with a look of prayer for help.

"Minami-chan, it's all so similar to a love story with a story about modern Europe..."

With a bitter smile, Miyuki gave Tatsuya advice.

Indeed, this was advice. Thanks to this, Tatsuya's former doubts have disappeared. But, unfortunately, the issue was not solved yet.

*Nothing can be done*, Tatsuya thought. Do not blame Minami, this can be a problem for future plans. Tatsuya decided to briefly turn into a demon, discarding pity.

"...Minami, I must go to an important meeting soon. You know this."

"...Yes." Minami answered loudly, without raising her forehead from the floor.

"After the meeting, we must go to the main house. Naturally, you will have to go with us, as Miyuki's guard."

"I know about it."

"So, today is far too busy. We do not have time for your punishment. Do you understand what I mean?"

"...Yes."

"Then, get up. First, finish breakfast, and then do your usual business. I think if you get any punishment, then you cannot do your job."

"...I am obeying."

With a confused face, Minami sat down at the table. Recalling his own mistakes, Tatsuya was seized with a strong sense of guilt.

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This morning's incident dealt a strong blow to Tatsuya's morale, but at the same time allowed him to distract and take away to the distant regiment of reason thinking over the measures against the Chain call.

Tatsuya's mood changed when, at the entrance to the Bay Hills Tower of Yokohama, where the branch office of the Kanto Magic Association is located, he accidentally noticed well-known three sisters to him.

They also noticed Tatsuya, and the first conversation was started by one of them.

"Ara, Tatsuya-kun. Long time no see."

Mayumi, in a bright colorful suit, not suitable for the role of dresses for formal events, waved to him. This behavior did not fit the image of the "adult woman", created by a tight suit, emphasizing an elegant and slender figure.

However, it could also be said that this is just like Mayumi.

"Long time no see. Saegusa-sempai will also attend the meeting?"

Tatsuya thought that the elder son, Tomokazu, would be present from the Saegusa family at today's meeting. But the number of participants was not limited. Although if you are five or ten men, many will probably be shocked, but bringing 2-3 people was a sensible decision.

"No. We are here for help."

However, Tatsuya was mistaken. It seems that not only Mayumi, but Kasumi and Izumi dressed up in more adult clothes to help administrators and guides.

"But why exactly, senpai?" I thought that today's meeting is organized by the Juumonji family."

The Tatsuya question was only a superficial check.

"Today's meeting of Juumonji-kun was offered by our brother, so it's quite natural for us to help."

However, Mayumi easily revealed hidden facts.

"... This is normal? To reveal such things."

"Is that a problem? After all, our father did not stop us when we went to help."

If a non-participant in the meeting Mayumi and her sisters appear here as organizers, then there must be fears that various hidden circumstances may be revealed by various interrogations. Since she recognized this, it means their logic was that they do not mind it.

"I think this conclusion is too reckless, but..."

Although Tatsuya almost understood that there are some disagreements between Mayumi and the head of the Saegusa family, Koichi, he felt that it was not like Mayumi. Despite feelings for her father, she should take care of the interests of the Saegusa family.

"Sempai, do you not like the fact that Juumonji-senpai was used?"

Tatsuya's unexpected assumption, Kasumi and Izumi made surprised faces simultaneously.

"T-this just cannot be! This has nothing to do!"

The language of Mayumi did not depend on Tatsuya's question, but rather on the sight of the rounded eyes of younger sisters. Tatsuya was also surprised by this panic that arose from his question.

"....."

"What a look! Juumonji-kun and I are not in such a relationship!"

"...I did not mean that, but..."

"Why, "but"!? This is really not true!"

She did not look so uptight, but Tatsuya decided not to say too much.

"Sempai, we attract attention."

This advice fell into the category of "unnecessary" rather than "superfluous".

Not knowing what to say to this, Mayumi froze.

"Then, I'll go. I know where to go."

*It's not necessary to show the way*, he had in mind. Then he turned and walked to the elevator.

To no longer create problems for Mayumi, Tatsuya decided to go to the floor of the meeting.

The meeting is scheduled for 9:00 in the morning. Up to this time, there were still 20 minutes. But before the conference hall a lot of magicians had already gathered. The entrance was already open, but it looks like there were a lot of people trying to collect information in advance, in conversations, without taking up space.

Among them, Tatsuya found a man in a familiar school uniform.

"Shippou."

"Ah, Shiba-senpai."

The person in the form of First High was none other than a pupil a year younger, Shippou Takuma. He himself would never admit this, but he did not look at ease in the group of adults he was not familiar with.

Hearing Tatsuya's voice, he walked towards him with relief on his face.

"Why are you not going inside?" Tatsuya asked. He did not ask "Are you involved?".

He knew that Takuma was the only child in the family, without even looking at his personal data provided to the school. Despite the fact that early weddings are encouraged among magicians, they are not forced to have many children. They're not breeding livestock. No one will be forced to be healed unless they can give birth to a second.

Since Takuma is the only child, it was quite obvious to Tatsuya that he would come to the meeting as a representative of the Shippou family.

Takuma, it seems, also saw that Tatsuya, having appeared in this place, does not feel any discomfort, but in his case it was possible to say that he could not afford it.

"It seems that you can already go in, but apparently the places are not yet distributed..." Takuma replied to Tatsuya's question, not hiding his nervousness. In other words, he did not seem to know where to sit.

"Let's go together?"

"Thank you!"

*And he is pretty straightforward,* Tomitsuka would have thought, if he were here. But Tatsuya did not feel any particular change in his mood towards Takuma. Tatsuya entered the conference room, leading Takuma behind him, just like his kohai from school.

In the conference hall, a square with a void in the middle was drawn from long tables.

Each side had 6 seats. In addition to the one with which there were 5 seats, because the total number of participants was 23.

Tatsuya sat in the right row. In particular, he did not realize where the "leading" and "lower" places are. He chose this place, simply because his friend was there.

"Ichijou, long time no see."

"Only a month has passed." At Tatsuya's greeting, Masaki wearing the uniform of Third High, answered with a slightly upset expression. Remembering what he had experienced, he had a feeling that he did not know what kind of person to actually do instead. "Are you alone?"

"One is enough."

Tatsuya answered this question with a serious face. Of course, Masaki hoped that Miyuki would come, but apparently realizing that Tatsuya would not take her to such a place, he did not show much disappointment.

"By the way, Ichijou." Tatsuya leaned toward Masaki and lowered his voice.

"How is your father's health?"

Takuma did not seem to have heard this question. Masaki reflexively frowned, but realized that Tatsuya was worried.

"...He's much better now. Shiba, I must say thank you."

Masaki's gratitude was that Yotsuba's family sent to them to Yuka. Tatsuya immediately realized this, and did not joke with phrases like "what for?".

"We are all equal before one disaster, the family only found a specialist. We understand your feelings."

Tatsuya did not forget to hide Yuka's connection with the Yotsuba.  
"It's clear."

Masaki decided that it would be rude to add something else to this topic. He bowed slightly and fell silent. Tatsuya also straightened up.

Seeing that the greetings of these two were over, Takuma stood up and spoke with Masaki.

"Ichijou-san. My name is Shippou Takuma. It's a pity we did not have the opportunity to speak last month, when you attended First High .  
Nice to meet you."

"Ichijou Masaki. It is mutual."

Masaki responded laconically and bowed, preserving the image of the older man.

Last year's Takuma might have become angry with Masaki's behavior. But the current Takuma took it as something self-evident. On the contrary, Takuma, most likely, was aware of some similarity to Masaki.

"Ichijou-san is also in school uniform..."

Feeling this similarity, these were just words to support the conversation.

"The school uniform is for formal events."

Masaki briefly expressed his thoughts, as if to say "this is natural," from which Tatsuya's face was involuntarily raised with a bitter grin.

Almost five minutes before the scheduled time of the beginning of the meeting, almost all the seats were already occupied. There were still people talking in the corridor, so, no doubt, most of the planned participants should be here. In this "majority" one person was not included. The minute hand managed to make three turns before this woman finally entered the conference hall, undoubtedly, attracting a lot of attention.

The height was too tall for a woman. The features of the face under the short brown hair, although not masculine, but also cannot be called feminine. Although the figure, dressed in a jacket and trousers, clearly shouted that it was a "woman."

Age - 29 years. Probably the oldest at this meeting.

"Shiba Tatsuya-kun. Hmm, or Yotuba Tatsuya-kun?"

"Shiba Tatsuya. This is our first direct conversation. Nice to meet you, Mutsuzuka-san."

"Nice to meet you. As you said, I am Mutsuzuka Atsuko."

Mutsuzuka Atsuko, who entered the conference hall, the head of the Mutsuzuka family of the Ten Master Clans, spoke to Tatsuya for some reason. The fact that Mutsuzuka Atsuko admires Yotuba Maya was widely known among the 28 houses. It seems that she first approached Tatsuya and spoke, because he was the son of Yotuba Maya. Although in fact he is a nephew, but even if it were officially announced in this way, Atsuko would probably still choose Tatsuya as the first person to meet at this meeting.

"Mutsuzuka-san, we have not seen each other for a long time."

Following Tatsuya's example, Masaki stood up and spoke to Atsuko. Masaki, involved almost since birth in the Ten Master Clans was familiar with Atsuko.

"I have not seen you for a long time, Masaki-kun. By the way..."

"Already almost recovered."

Understanding with a half-word, what Atsuko wants to ask, Masaki immediately answered.

"Really? That is good."

After that, standing up simultaneously with Masaki, Takuma also said his first meeting greetings.

The Shippou family became part of the Ten Master Clans in February this year. Since the head of the Shippou family, Shippou Takumi hardly ever communicated with families that did not have "seven" and "three" in their surnames. So Takuma had little information about those of the 28 families that lived outside of Kanto.

Atsuko responded in a friendly tone to the present Takuma and went to her place. It seems that her place was pre-appointed at the head of the table, next to Katsuto and Tomokazu.

At exactly 9 am, Katsuto and Tomokazu entered the conference room simultaneously.

Thus, all the seats were occupied.

Katsuto expressed his gratitude to all those present for coming here and taking his place at the main table.

"You all came here, despite your busy schedule. Therefore, I would like to go straight to the matter, without wasting time."

There were no objections. Most of the participants in this meeting were more than 20 years old. There were only four younger than 20: Katsuto, Tatsuya, Masaki and Takuma. Therefore, here there was no deep-seated need like in the pupils of junior and secondary schools for things like "let's first introduce each other."

"What I would like to discuss today is the question that we, magicians, should oppose to the intensifying anti-magic movement. This month, major incidents occurred not only in Japan, but throughout the world.

Although it was not officially reported, but I heard that there were cases when the problem flowed into a mutiny or civil war. How should we act in such a harsh situation? I would like to get a lot of frank opinions.

Waiting until Katsuto finished his speech, Masaki raised his hand.

"I'm Ichijou Masaki." Masaki said, making sure that Katsuto nodded.  
"Before expressing my opinion, I would like to confirm the nature of this meeting. Despite the fact that confrontation with anti-magic activists is an important issue, but is the established restriction in 30 years an attempt to exclude most heads of families?"

Almost half of the participants nodded after Masaki's question. Katsuto looked from Masaki to Tomokazu. Thus, people sitting at the table realized that this meeting was really organized by the Saegusa family, and not by Juumonji. For the majority of those present, this was not a surprise.

Without fearing the incredulous looks of twenty people, Tomokazu stood up. Those who did not shoot glances at him with were: Tomokazu himself, Katsuto, and also Tatsuya.

"I'm Saegusa Tomokazu. In truth, the organization of this meeting came to our mind when Juumonji-san and I discussed measures to counter the movement advocating a magician boycott. Therefore, I believe that Ichijou-san's question will be answered better."

Tomokazu looked around everyone. It was not wishing to interfere. The atmosphere prevailed in the hall was the desire to hear what Tomokazu would say now.

"Measures against radical strengthening of the movement against magicians were also discussed at the Master Clans Conference, which became the target of the terrorist attack of anti-magic activists. However, as I heard, the result was only passive measures to increase surveillance."

Tomokazu paused. There were two people present at the Master Clans Conference, Atsuko and Katsuto.

"It was so." Atsuko confirmed Tomokazu's words even before her eyes met her.

Tomokazu bowed slightly to Atsuko and continued the explanation.

"However, there are limits to what we just silently observe. During the search for terrorists, I fully realized this."

"Wait a bit." Suddenly, someone's voice interrupted Tomokazu's speech.

"I'm sorry. My name is Kudo Soshi from the Kudo family. I apologize for interrupting your speech, but what about the search for terrorists? I'm ashamed to say, but I have not heard any mention of the Ten Master Clans taking part in the search for terrorists in the Hakone incident."

After the words of Soshi, representatives of the Eighteen Substituting Families heard approval voices.

"The police announced that the investigation is ongoing, and the terrorist incident of Hakone has not yet been resolved. It is not true? If the Ten Master Clans seized on a decision, why did not they tell us about it?"

*What does he want?*, Tatsuya thought silently, listening to Soshi's protest.

Until February, the Kudo family was one of the Ten Master Clans. Then, having closed the problems of the Saegusa family, more precisely by wedging into the personal quarrel between Yotuba Maya and Saegusa Koichi, they were demoted to the status of the Eighteen Assistant Houses.

Having the pride of those who have long maintained the status of one of the Ten Clan Clans, they cannot accept the fact that they are out of work.

Tatsuya wondered how difficult it must be for Minoru to have such a family.

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Immediately after the beginning of the meeting, the turmoil on the first floor of the Bay Hills Tower of Yokohama subsided. With the appearance of a young man with beauty, as if not from this world, not only women, but even men, forgot about restraint and good manners.

Seeing these impolite looks, the young man frowned. But even this discontented person did not help get rid of annoying looks.

"Ara, is not that Minoru-kun?"

Frustrated by this depressing attention, Minoru, recognizing the owner of this voice, finally relaxed his tense face.

"Mayumi-san. And also Kasumi-san and Izumi-san."

Minoru and three beautiful girls approached each other. And then the surrounding depressive atmosphere dissipated. Men, looking at the beauty of Minoru, and women, combating the attractiveness of each of the three sisters, could not help surrendering.

"Long time no see, Minoru-kun."

"Yes, Minoru and I have not seen each other since the Thesis Competition... half a year ago?"

Izumi, you can tell, we saw Minoru in the middle of February, but it was through the videophone's communication line during communication between the school boards. But as Kasumi said, we last spoke with Minoru behind the scenes of the Stage of the Thesis Competition in Kyoto, where she came to support her.

Minoru, being the same age as Kasumi and Izumi, has crossed with them since quite a long time, although this has not happened so often. These two, not frightened by Minoru's beauty, were one of his few friends.

"By the way, Minoru-kun. If you are going to the meeting, do you know that it has already begun?"

"The meeting is entrusted to Soshi-nisan." Answered Minoru to Mayumi's question.

"Err? I think Minoru would have been better suited."

"Hey! Kasumi-chan. Tsyts."

Mayumi excitedly reproached Kasumi for her unrestrained thoughts.

However, she also did not deny the very content of the words of the younger sister. Minoru, unable to comment on this, could only show a bitter smile on his face.

"Onee-sama. Since we're talking, maybe we'll go elsewhere? It seems that there are no latecomers, therefore, I think we do not need to remain here as guides." Having picked up a good time, Izumi intervened in the conversation.

"Exactly. Let's go somewhere where you can sit down?"

Mayumi, too, having understood the idea of her younger sister, immediately went somewhere. Minoru realized that this was a kind of care for his mental state due to poor health, so he, without resistance, obediently followed Mayumi.

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"We did not notify you of the facts of the Hakone incident, because it ended with a bad result. You can call this a shame."

Those who answered Kudo Soshi's question were Katsuto.

"Under a bad result, do you mean that the terrorists managed to escape?"

Despite his discouraged look under the powerful voice of Katsuto, Soshi found the strength to continue asking.

"The leader of the terrorists is undoubtedly dead."

"But then what's the problem..."

"However, we could not get the corpse of this leader."

From these words of Katsuto, Masaki clenched his teeth almost to the point of grinding. And Tatsuya listened to this as if it did not concern him.

"The ship carrying the terrorists was sunk by the intervening USNA army."

"The USNA Army intervened...?"

From unexpected details provided by Katsuto, Soshi hesitated and could no longer speak.

"The attack of the USNA army hit the body of the terrorist leader with a direct blow in such a way that nothing remained from the corpse."

Katsuto personally did not confirm the death of Gu Jie, responsible for the terrorist attack in Hakone. However, here and now, honestly this claim was not necessary.

"We cannot prove that the terrorist leader is dead, if we do not show him the corpse. It is impossible to declare an incident resolved without material evidence."

"...Now the reason why the police are still investigating is understandable." Soshi finally reconsidered his attitude.

"And yet, was it necessary to keep this a secret from us?"

There was no longer any zeal in his voice. The sharp tone disappeared.

"We did not plan to keep it a secret. I admit that we did not pay enough attention to this, so why do not we discuss this another time?"

Tomokazu's instant response reflected Soshi's protest.

Intervention by Soshi interrupted the answer to Masaki's question. If he continues in the same spirit, he can be perceived as interfering with the answer to this question. The atmosphere "we are tired of it" began to form in this room.

"I understand. But please let us know this important information as soon as possible."

"Everything will be in the best possible way."

Tomokazu responded with ease to the words of the defeated Soshi. Soshi, feeling humiliated, clasped his hands tightly. However, Tomokazu, ignoring this (or ignoring), looked around the conference room.

"The problem is not limited to terrorists. It is simply necessary to co-operate with people living in this society in order to search for hidden elements in society. However, our investigation failed to enlist the help of civilians."

At this moment, Tatsuya first showed interest in the speech of Tomokazu. He and Masaki just pursued Gu Jie from the very beginning. However, Tomokazu, more precisely the Saegusa family, tried to collect information from local residents.

When conducting an investigation of this kind, it is best to use the police for this. But then why did the Saegusa family decide to pretend to be inexperienced with the police? Perhaps the Saegusa family does not control itself from within?

Tatsuya thought that all these thoughts are useless at the moment and have nothing to do with anything.

"But not all the locals were hostile to magicians. There were some who really understand us. And people with this attitude are not few."

"Really?"

The voice of one of the participants, interrupting this speech, seemed unintentional.

"I apologize. My name is Itsuwa Hirofumi from the Itsuwa family."

Being for some time the candidate for Mayumi's groom, Hirofumi, undoubtedly, was familiar with Tomokazu. He introduced himself to the other participants in the meeting to observe the rules of decency.

"If this is true, what is the meaning of all this?"

Hirofumi raised this question with doubt, because even for the Ten Master Clans this was first time it's been told.

"I think that people who sympathize with magicians are frightened."

"Are frightened by the cruelty of those who are against magicians?"

"Right. I do not think that anti-magic activists make up the majority of the population."

But their activities are very visible. Therefore, people are afraid that they will become targets of this reckless cruelty, if they openly show sympathy for magicians... That's my opinion."

The same logic came to mind for many of those present now, so there was no objection.

"I believe that anti-magic activists are a noisy minority, while a quiet majority sympathizes or at least slightly sympathizes with magicians. However, in fact, we could not fulfill the goal of capturing terrorists because of their oppression, we did not receive support from the population."

"Excuse me. I am Yatsushiro Takara." This time Tomokazu was interrupted by the younger brother of the head of the family Yatsushiro from the Ten Master Clans. "Even if the civilians cooperated, this would not guarantee the capture of terrorists."

"Of course, that's true. But the reverse is also true: having received help from the population, we, probably, would find out much more quickly where the terrorists hid. Then, perhaps, such an outcome would not have happened, where there was not even a corpse left."

"These are already assumptions."

"It's about the fact that it was possible."

Yatsushiro Takara bowed and sat down. Having received a refutation, he considered that it was not worthwhile to get involved in an endless war in which he had no arguments.

"So I believe that those sympathetic to magicians are in a position where they cannot say anything in fear of those who are hostile to magicians."

Pausing and carefully selecting the words, Tomokazu continued, softening the tone.

"However, I understand that this is my personal impression, so I want you all to think about it. We thought about the fact that the strength of the opponents of magicians is growing, while the supporters of magicians do not give a vote, and we, the magicians, passively watch it."

"I apologize, but is it not too radical a judgment that there is no help from the supporters of magicians?" Mutsuzuka Atsuko inserted her remark. None of the present did not complain that she did not introduce herself. Atsuko is the head of the Mutsuzuka family of the Ten Master Clans. Naturally, all those present knew the names and faces of the heads of the Ten Master Clans.

"In fact, there are even politicians who protect magicians. As far as I know, Congressman Ueno closely interacts with the Saegusa family."

"Right. As you say." Tomokazu understood that it was useless to deny, and he directly acknowledged Atsuko's point of view. "However, it is also an indisputable fact that his voice is insignificant, and he is under the constant pressure of the opposition."

"You are right, of course. But what is the connection between this and the fact that this meeting has an age limit of up to 30 years?"

Atsuko returned to the initial question, arguing that the conversation had deviated from the topic. As if he was ready for this, Tomokazu did not seem to be puzzled by Atsuko's sudden question.

"The opinion of the head of the family leads directly to the actions. Therefore, negotiations between heads of families will be too cautious. Is it not?"

"...Of course, there is such a tendency."

"So we thought, if a young generation with a free point of view shared their thoughts with each other, then some wise decision could be born."

"This meeting is not something where something will be decided." Choosing the right time, before listening to Katsuto silently began to speak.

"Although I am the head of the family Juumonji, but until now I cannot solve the family's affairs alone. Even if we come to an agreement here, it will still be impossible to apply this in practice. However, the exchange of views here will not be completely meaningless."

"In other words, this meeting is the place where the ideal solution is sought, what to do with the anti-magic movement?"

"I think that you exaggerate the concept of "ideal" a bit."

Katsuto shook his head with a bitter smile, not showing a drop of dislike of the question Takara had asked.

"So if we can come up with a plan here and come to some sort of agreement, then we'll take it up for discussion at the next Master Clans Conference."

It seems that Takara convinced that. From the side of Masaki, Hirofumi, Soshi and Atsuko, there were no objections either.

Only Tatsuya felt the inconsistency here. It consisted in the fact that Katsuto, saying that nothing was being decided, after that he said that it was necessary to come to a "general agreement". For the further development of events at the meeting, he decided to follow with caution.

◇ ◇ ◇

Mayumi led Minoru to the tea room of the Magic Association. The choice was made on the grounds that they (especially Minoru) would cause confusion by coming to a regular fast food restaurant.

Kasumi, Izumi, and especially Minoru, did not even think of complaining about it. Comparing the taste and variety of available things, the tea room was inferior to cafes and restaurants. However, these annoying views, under which one must maintain self-control, far outweighed the scales.

Stopping the tea room employee, Mayumi chose the tea leaves herself, took the kettle and made the black tea.

Despite the fact that this tea room was paid for, and everyone could do for them, no one complained, because everyone in this room knew about Mayumi's passion for tea ceremonies. The employees of the branch and the tea room were also aware of the selfish nature of Mayumi. Moreover, all the employees of the tea room are acquaintances of her.

"Here, I ask."

"Thank you."

Mayumi placed a cup of tea in front of Minoru, which he bowed with gratitude.

Even behaving like an "ordinary boy", Minoru looked like he had descended from a masterpiece-painting. After the actions of Mayumi, the female employee who brought the cakes and biscuits to the tea (it was all paid for in advance), froze next to the table.

With a bitter smile showing that "there's nothing you can do about it," Kasumi (by force) snatched a basket of cookies and a plate of cakes from her hand.

"However, it's unusual to see Minoru-kun here." Remained alone, not in business Izumi spoke with Minoru.

"Probably, it will be correct to call it... is to be the escort of Soshinisan."

Although Izumi only wanted to support a simple secular conversation, but Minoru's answer was evasive and made little sense.

"Do you have an assignment?"

"The task...? Hoping for the skin of a bear..."

Minoru was answered by Izumi, shortening the saying "to share the skin of an unfortunate bear." [In the Japanese original there is another, but about the bear - the closest in meaning, though it sounds silly.]

"...And can I hear of the details?"

Somehow sensing in the eyes of the guy an inexorable craving for "someone to pour complaints", Izumi with her question as if she said "go ahead, do it."

"In short, I'm required to meet with Shiba Tatsuya-san and Miyuki-san to strengthen our friendship. Of course, I was disappointed when I found out that it would not be a visit to their house."

"Uwaa... Onii-san Minoru does not change at all."

"Hey, Kasumi-chan!"

"Everything is fine."

Mayumi again commented on Kasumi, but Minoru shook his head with a smile.

"I also think that the approach of san and nye-san is rather naive."

"In other words, do they want to establish friendly relations with the Yotsuba family through Minoru-kun?" Closing the subject of Minoru's domestic family affairs, Izumi shifted the conversation to the subject of speculation of the Kudo family.

"It is probably so." Minoru also realized that her words did not carry malicious intent towards his brothers and sisters, and sent a grateful look at Izumi.

"I do not think I'll be mistaken if I say that the Kudo family does this for the sake of returning to the Ten Master Clans."

"Here, Izumi did not blush and lost her speech, because she was accustomed to the fact that she always drills Miyuki with her gaze."

"But unfortunately. Very sorry!"

From the sudden, energetic voice of Izumi, Minoru's eyes widened. "What does that mean," he asked Mayumi. She only smiled bitterly in reply.

"Only Shiba-senpai came to today's meeting."

"And when Izumi was told by Shiba-senpai, she meant ony-san, that is, the groom." Kasumi added a remark to avoid confusion. Izumi did not care that she was interrupted. Or maybe she did not hear.

"Miyuki-senpai can still appear after noon."

Izumi, the worshiper of Miyuki, as a goddess, tried to use words with double politeness. [Feature of the Japanese language. For example, saying that Miyuki can appear, she uses the expression "to go out," meaning the appearance of famous people in public.]

"I was so waiting for a meeting in a place where there will be no Shiba-senpai! I would never have come to this place, knowing that Miyuki-senpai does not even plan to come!"

Thinking about something, Izumi reached for the handkerchief.

"...Did you not say that you can only see each other in the morning?"

"What are you saying, Kasumi-chan! Is it possible to disturb Miyuki-senpai, undoubtedly, now busy preparing for the exit!"

"...Ah, that's it."

Minoru looked away from the overexcited Izumi. Mayumi could only watch Izumi, and on her face was an expression showing a headache.

"Em, Izumi-san..."

Minoru could not continue to talk, not understanding what could happen.

"Do not pay attention. This is a kind of small delirious fit."

"Ha..."

With pity in her voice, Mayumi answered an unasked question to Minoru, showing that she was already used to it.

"Moreover, Minoru-kun."

"Yes?"

Do you want to visit us at home? I do not know how valuable this is compared to the Yotsuba family, but maybe your brothers will not complain if instead you tell me that you have strengthened your old friendship with the Saegusa family."

Minoru was touched by Mayumi's proposal. Indeed, instead of just waiting, he disturbed the Saegusa family, he was helped to get rid of annoying glances and he had a good time.

"...This will not be a problem?"

"Not at all. Then, let's go."

"Er, right now?"

"Yes. As Izumi-chan already said, our role of guides has already ended. Hey, Izumi-chan! Kasumi-chan, you too help me."

Mayumi stood up, trying to return Izumi to this world.

◇ ◇ ◇

The topic of the meeting finally turned to the discussion of what Tomokazu wanted - countermeasures.

"...In other words, Saegusa-san believes that it is necessary to increase popularity among the public masses?"

On the question of the next head of the Mitsuya family, Mitsuya Motoharu,

"Although the word "popularity" is not particularly suitable, but everything is approximately the way you say."

Saegusa Tomokazu replied with a smile on his face, a bit like his father Koichi.

"Speaking on TV? Unfortunately, I cannot sing and dance."

Atsuko's joke aroused laughter among many. Especially among young women participants.

"I think if Mutsuzuka san sings on TV, she will be very popular."

Tomokazu, similar, also could not restrain himself and keep his face unmoved after this joke. He could do nothing with a bitter smile on his face, but still, it did not become a hindrance, and he continued.

"We believe that we need to show more clearly the fact that we are useful to society."

"Do you want to create a department of the Magic Association for Public Relations?"

This remark came from the family of Ichinokura from the Eighteen Assistant Houses. The meeting moved in the direction of supporting the opinion of Saegusa Tomokazu.

"I think it will be effective too. In addition to simple propaganda, it is also necessary to distribute photos and video scenes showing our active useful actions."

Despite the fact that Tomokazu did not strongly insist on his opinion, around him, one after another, he began to receive support.

"Show actions? With radio channels, most likely, it will be difficult, but among the satellite and cable channels, it may be possible to find someone ready for cooperation."

"But with a deliberate increase in the impact on the media, will it not matter how you look? Appearing on the screen of video clips, it will be better to have a good appearance."

The discussion flowed so shallowly and frivolously, because it was not burdened by the opinions of older people. Perhaps the Saegusa family planned this meeting, foreseeing that it will be so.

It was Tatsuya's reasoning, which was still silent at that moment.

"And if you have to deal with major catastrophes or atrocities, then abilities also cannot be neglected."

"A magician who combines good looks and abilities...? Exactly! Saegusa-san, then this is exactly about your little sister?"

Katsuto and Masaki almost raised their eyebrows almost synchronously when they heard this.

"You mean Mayumi? Well, the ability of the magician, I think, by themselves, suitable, but..."

Tatsuya listened to Tomokazu, who, with his eyes closed and a disappointed face, looked resigned.

"No no. This is the famous "Elven Princess". I think Mayumi-jo will be very popular on TV."

"I think she'll be happy to hear this. But if you look at it objectively, then I think you'll notice that there is someone who is much more suitable from the point of view of both appearance and magic."

"Objectively, you say? You are pretty harsh to your own relatives. But who is this, who surpasses in appearance Mayumi-jo?"

After that, voices of exclamations were heard from different sides of the conference hall.

"Then, what about the heiress-dono of the Yotuba family? I think this princess can be a suitable symbol for us."

Said by the archaic words, the phrase may have been half presented as a joke. However, the remaining half accurately read the severity.

A bright light burned in Tomokazu's eyes. It seems that he reached the point where he was ready to say the most important thing at this meeting.

"Juumonji-san."

However, ahead of the opponent only for a moment, for the first time at this meeting, Tatsuya spoke.

"What?" Katsuto briefly answered Tatsuya.

"Earlier I heard that 'this meeting does not solve anything.'"

Tatsuya did not introduce himself, despite the fact that he spoke for the first time. He did not consider it necessary. Because his words were not meant for the representatives of 28 families gathered here, but only for the organizer of this meeting, Katsuto.

"That's right."

"Then you must understand. Whatever you decide at this meeting, the Yotuba family does not have to follow this."

Even if he spoke in modest words, it looked like a speech, inciting a quarrel and "pouring fuel onto the fire."

"This is not a problem."

But this was not an attempt at a quarrel. There were other people who tried to bypass the rules.

"Yotuba-dono, this..." With a face discouraged, Itsuwa Hirofumi began to speak hesitantly with Tatsuya.

"I'm sorry. My name is Shiba Tatsuya."

Tatsuya's answer to these words sounded as if he were saying that it was better not to contact him. Mutsuzuka Atsuko and Yatsushiro Takara looked at Tatsuya with glances in which "curiosity" was read. Seated next to Masaki, although surprised, he looked at Tatsuya with understanding, sympathetic eyes. When the topic moved to Mayumi, Masaki also feared that the conversation could reach Miyuki.

Katsuto's gaze on Tatsuya probably contained a bit of reproach. Not because of the fact that such a smoothly reached agreement was destroyed. "Do something with this frozen atmosphere," Katsuto said in silence.

"...Actively contribute to the society and actively attract attention. A great idea."

Realizing that he himself was the culprit, who intervened in the discussion, Tatsuya decided that an answer to Katsuto's request would be inevitable.

"However, many magicians work in the police and in the fire department. In the army there is also a huge number of magicians. Intervention in their work will look like your own achievement?"

However, the atmosphere in the conference room only froze harder. To Tatsuya's remark, there was not a single objection.



But there was no vote of support either. To the side of the friendly general mood that broke this, Tatsuya was directed a lot of hostility. But Tatsuya did not add another word after that either.

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Unaware of the snowstorm that broke out right now in the conference room of the Bay Hills Tower in Yokohama, where her older brother is now, Shiina was heading for training at the Third Lab.

The Third Research Institute, that is, the Third Magician Development and Improvement Institute, is one of five laboratories that remain unchanged from the original ten laboratories.

It is said that out of these still remaining five laboratories, the Third one is the most active one.

The topic of the Third Research Institute study is to improve the abilities of the Multi Casting. They search for opportunities to increase the limit of the number of simultaneously activated spells. And also make these abilities available to magicians not only from the Ten Master Clans. In particular, it was aimed at increasing the combat power of military magicians, both using the techniques of the Chiba family, and other soldiers who achieved similar results individually.

And as a natural consequence of this, the Third Research Institute was frequented by a large number of military magicians. There were many army researchers, but there were also a large number of combat magicians.

Therefore, since childhood, attending training in such a situation, Shiina, despite her innocent appearance, had a rather high fighting power. If not a problem with hearing, then she would become the best martial artist of the Mitsuya family. In the person of her father, Mitsuya Gena, this was not a disappointment, but, on the contrary, relief. Of course, there was no disappointment, because there was less concern that Shiina would follow the path of becoming a war magician.

Shiina also had many opportunities to get acquainted with the military who often visit the Third Research Institute. One of the especially close such acquaintances was with a woman from the same 28 families that she herself was.

"Ah~, Tsukasa-san."

"Ara, Shiina-chan. Today, too you came to do training?"

National Defense Army, intelligence department, foreman Tooyama Tsukasa. Although here it was represented as Tooyama, Shiina had known for a long time that Tsukasa was actually Tooyama.

"And Saburou-kun is not with you?"

On this phrase, which sounds quite ordinary, Shiina has made her face inflated.

"Saburou-kun went to the Chiba family's dojo."

"Chiba's family?"

"Yes. It seems that he wants to become a student there."

Restraining herself so as not to laugh, Tsukasa again looked at Shiina in the face with sincerity on her face.

"Given the features of Saburou-kun, I think the Kenju of the Chiba family will suit him. Only this is not training, but the training of a warrior \*."

[Here an expression is used, which sometimes can mean something like "a journey to improve your skills". Sometimes it is used with sarcasm, meaning "quixotism", i.e. useless actions.]

"...And how are they different?"

"Ara, there is almost no difference. Tsukasa winked with a playful smile." She smiled back. "By the way, Shiina-chan, how is your magic high school? Probably, it's hard for you there?"

"Not as hard as I thought. But from now on, it may be harder..."

"And the president of the school council is really from that family of Yotsuba?"

"Ah~, that's all right. There is tension from the fact that she is so beautiful, but I did not experience the "fear" that I imagined before our first meeting."

"Here it is. Okay, let's go, can I ask you to help a little with my work?"

Having created a friendly atmosphere of candor, Tsukasa, as if at ease said her request.

"Uh, the work of Tsukasa-san... you mean the intelligence department?"

"Yes. But there's nothing so complicated. I'm looking for someone to take the role of hostage, to train for the release of an important person."

".. Does the intelligence department deal with such matters?"



"The task of the post that I occupy in the department is counterintelligence. This includes the return of kidnapped important people in order to prevent information leakage."

"And I'll come up for this?"

Shiina looked puzzled, but, truth be told, it aroused her interest. In fact, she was very curious.

Everything is fine. But in time it will take about half a day. Tsukasa noticed the curiosity of Shiina.

"Yeah, just let me think a little."

"Yes OK. Then we'll talk about the details when you decide. "

"Er, but you cannot tell in advance?"

"These are the rules."

Shiina was already close to losing to her curiosity. At such a rate, it will soon take hold of it.

If "he" hears that a pupil of the same school, moreover, a first-grader from the same school board, became a hostage, he too cannot ignore it. She got a good reason to check "him."

With a kind smile on her face, Tsukasa wondered what a nice little sister she could turn out from Shiina.

◇ ◇ ◇

Edward Clark of the National Science Agency (NSA) of the USNA was a large-scale information system specialist.

And also he was the developer of Echelon III, the latest version of the interception system used by the National Security Agency, which has the same NSA cut.

The words that Edward Clark designed the Echelon III alone were a delusion. However, no one argued with the fact that he is a key figure in improving the Echelon system as a whole. However, since the process of assembling the Echelon III was extremely secretive, very few people knew about Clark's accomplishments.

He usually worked to further improve the information interception system in his personal office in the California branch of the National Science Agency.

But in reality he was simply left on the post to keep the Echelon III a secret. Clark himself understood this too.

However, it did not bother him. On the contrary, he positively perceived this situation.

In his hands was information. One that neither the director of the National Science Agency nor the director of the NSA, the defense minister, the secretary of state, or even the president himself knew.

He could get free access to information around the world. This addition of the system was built imperceptible from all.

Clark shared this secret with a very limited number of people. With those whom he recognized as his partners, worthy of knowing this secret. And this was not limited to the Americans alone.

But Edward Clark did not intend to betray the USNA. You could even say that he is a passionate patriot. But his loyalty was not directed to the government, but to the country as such.

He believed. The fact that it is information that controls the world.

He believed. The fact that only his motherland and its allies are able to control the world.

So today he was also busy searching, browsing and analyzing information to make the world the way it should be.

"Is it 10 in the morning in Japan?"

Most branch employees have already gone home. But Clark did not even show signs of wanting to get up from the table.

Oh... "He" is isolated? The Japanese are also so stupid.

At its terminal, by simultaneous translation, the content of the discussion in the conference hall was displayed, which, according to the idea, was impossible to listen to. This was the power built into the Echelon III backdoor system.

"Our citizens cannot say too much... But this can be a great opportunity. If this happens, the biggest threat to our country will be eliminated."

Reflecting, Clark spoke to himself. In the terminal of Edward Clark, the text of Tatsuya's conversations and other participants of the meeting in the conference hall in the Tower of Bay Hills of Yokohama was displayed.

[To be continued]

(Grammar and structure edited by englishmuffins10)

## AFTERWORD

So the 21st volume of the series, "The Prologue of Disturbance (Part 1)", was released. " How do you like it?

Finally, "The Irregular at Magic High" reached the third year of study. Initially, we planned to complete the arch for one volume ... But the volume of information increased, and the arch became a two-volume.

One of the reasons for the error in the calculations is that initially it was not planned to show the world situation.

In the original plot it was planned to tell only about the episode of "Synchronized Linear Fusion", and the situation in Mexico, Ukraine and Germany to mention in the next arch. However, with the addition of the arch "Zavarushka in the South Sea," the aforementioned episodes had to be written at an accelerated pace, which is not very good. Therefore, the magic of the New Soviet Union also debuted earlier ... but I think that as a result, the overall picture of the series has become more impressive.

But the series has increased not only by 1 volume. The biggest difference in the calculations were two new first years.

This inflating of information about these characters was a big surprise. I intended to write even more, but suddenly the idea came: did not they make them the main characters of one of the next series arches?

Although it is rare for school stories, when someone in the center of attention is 2 years younger than the main characters. ... But regardless of whether this series falls into the category of "school stories" or not, we try to move the plot forward. Both Shiina and Saburo will still show themselves in the next volume.

This series also enters the stage of disclosing the secrets of many things. This volume also reveals details about the 2 Strategic Class Magic, about part of the reasons for hiding the Strategic Class Magicians , except for the 13 Apostles, and also reveals the identity of the creator of that system. But among other things, I would like to mention something that I should have told you about for a long time.

In the original plan, the title of the entire series, "The Unlucky Apprentice at Magic High " [Another option: Mediocrity in the Magic High] was just the headline for the arch "Enrollment in School." You might think that this is about someone you know.

In fact, this would mean that from the arch "Nine Schools Competition" and onwards there had to be another name for the entire series. However, for such a cheap reason that readers might miss the continuation with a different name, we had to continue to use the "Bad Boy in the School of Magic" for the entire series.

Therefore, it is worth mentioning that this phrase "The unlucky disciple (mediocrity) in the school of magic" was not about the main character. To be precise, we can say that not only Tatsuya can be considered the main character. And it mostly did not point to him.

"Mediocrity" of the arch "Enrollment in the school" is Mibu Sayaka.

"Mediocrity" of the arch "Nine Schools Competition", for which another

name was planned is Yoshida Mikihiko.

"Mediocrity" of the arch "Riots in Yokohama" is Hirakawa Chiaki.

In the arch "Guest" Lina, despite her magnificent abilities, eventually had a "mediocre" result.

In the arch "Two Seven" ["Twins Saegusa" at the helm], the inferiority complex ("mediocrity") was in the representative of the newcomers, Shippou Takuma.

Thus, in this series, emphasis is placed on a contrast comparison between the "unlucky disciple" of each arch and Tatsuya, who was "mediocre" evaluated. Well, this combo was still violated in the arch "Cross with obstacles."

So, further goes "The beginning of the unrest (part 2)". Although this is the "Beginning", but after a long editing the arch became a two-volume. Thus, until the meeting in volume 22 of the series, "The Beginning of the Unrest (Part 2)."