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Gameover MIO

SpiritNo.0

AstralDress-DeusType

Weapon-FlowerType [Ain Soph Aur]

TreeType [Ain Soph]

???Type [Ain]

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DATE A LIVE Gameover MIO

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「.....Come here. My Pretty——Daughters」

Spirit Of Origin——Mio

Spirit——Tobiichi Origami

Spirit——Yatogami Tohka



Sword of the End
「——[HALVANHELEV]——」
High School Student——Itsuka Shido

「Fhu——haha、
hahahahahaha
hahahahah.....!」
Executive Director of DEM Company
——Isaac Ray Pelham Westcott

「Aah..... 『Love』 . I Really Love Shin」





**「——It's fine. Don't worry, Shin.
Everything, leave it to me」**

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MIO GAMEOVER

SpiritNo.0
AstralDress-DeusType
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Fragmentary Chapter/ 1: Memory

“—Eh, Mio, if it is possible, then—”

On a certain day.

Takamiya Shinji mumbled out a few words while his face was growing redder.

“Next Sunday, to go with me on, a da, da, da—”

Despite some stuttering, he took some deep breaths to adjust his heart beat before opening his eyes.

“Da.....eh, would you like to go on a date.....!?”

While channeling all of the effort within his body, he did his best to speak while staring at the person in front of him with a neutral facial expression.

However, the figure that stood in front of him didn't respond back with a reply.

Yet, that was also the natural course of things. In front of him, there was a boy with the same facial expression—that was to say; it was only Shinji himself there. That's right. The current location was at Shinji's own room, where he was standing in front of a mirror in order to practice inviting a girl out.

“.....Ha.”

Accompanied by a large sigh, Shinji finally relaxed his shoulders.

.....Although he didn't expected it to go well, it was even worse than anticipated. If he was already this nervous practicing in front of a mirror, it placed doubts if he could actually preform this when the time came.

Despite having said that, there was still no other alternative.

Shinji, who was 17 years old, had just turned into a second year high school student. However, perhaps due to his natural reserved personality, he had never had any major interactions with girls before, let alone conveys his feelings to one. —Simply put, he lacked a natural immunity for such affairs.

“.....”

No—Shinji tightly bit against his lips.

Indeed, Shinji had never invited a girl to a date before. However, the feeling motivating him right now was not the effect of some momentary infatuation.

Just thinking of her face caused his heart rate to soar to new heights.

Just calling out her name left him feeling breathless afterwards.

If it was for her sake, Shinji felt that he had the strength to do anything.

As a healthy high school student, there were at least one or two girls that have caught his attention up until now. There were even times where he felt a particular longing for a beautiful sempai or had his heart race unguarded by his fellow female classmates.

But thinking back, that sort of feeling could not be called love.

“Ah—but this must be, love.”

Takamiya Shinji, at this very late age, was experiencing his first love.

“.....Just need try a bit harder.”

As he tried to encourage himself, he adjusted the angle of his position projected by the mirror.

“—O-oh, good morning Mio. Nice weather today. Would you like to go out for a bit?”

While spoken with more clarity than before, Shinji soon found that something was amiss.

This wasn't any different from the usual invitation to go out shopping. Apart from that, it wasn't as if Shinji and Mio had not already headed out together before.No, even if someone asked, Shinji also did not exactly know the difference between a date and two people heading out together. Although when compared to past examples, Shinji hoped that Mio would think that this was “a date with Shinji.”

Despite it being embarrassing, he could not avoid omitting the word “date” again. Shinji adjusted his breathing while staring at his own eyes through the mirror.

“H-hey, Mio. Next time, could you go with me on a.....d-date?”

For some reason unbeknownst to even himself, he had spoken out while using keigo. Shinji cleared his throat with a slight cough before continuing.

“Mio, can you go on a date with me?”

Perhaps, due to the training, Shinji was gradually getting accustomed to asking. Spurred forward by this progress, Shinji continued to speak with a straightforward expression.

“Mio, let’s go on a date.”

“—Un.”

At that moment.

Just as Shinji was finishing that sentence, he heard a voice come from behind him. For a moment, due to being too immersed in his training, Shinji thought that he created an imaginary girl in his mind. But—this was a clear and familiar voice.

“.....!?”

Shinji turned around in a flash.

Then, before him stood an unbelievably beautiful girl that seemed to have been standing there unnoticed for quite some time.

“! Mio.....”

“Un, what’s the matter, Shin.”

While asking, she slightly tilted her head with curious eyes. That’s right; she was Shinji’s first love, the girl called Takamiya Mio.

“H-how long have you been standing there.....?”

“Just now—that said, Shin, when are we going?”

“Eh.....!? W-what are you sa.....?”

“So, when will this date be?”

“.....!”

Having just heard that, Shinji tightened his breath.

Yet, somehow he was still able to murmur out some words from his throat.

“Ah, that.....n-next Sunday, how does that sound?”

“I understand. I’m looking forward to it —ah, that reminds me, Mana is calling for you downstairs.”

As Mio finished talking, she smiled happily before leaving Shinji’s room.

“.....”

While Shinji was blankly staring at her back from a distance, he softly fell down on the spot.

Chapter 1: Mother Zero

On the battlefield, the sounds did not cease.

Gunfire. Detonations. Screams of lamentation. Roars of resentment. On the battlefield where the Wizards and Spirits were fighting, the explosive sounds of reiryoku and maryoku intermingled in the air.

Every scream or shriek released from here was concealed under layers of even more sounds of destruction. It was as if hell had been relocated to above ground. With just a seconds worth of negligence, the diligent Shinigami overseeing the field of carnage would claim the head above one's shoulders.

However, during that time.

“_____”

Itsuka Shidou stood there in a strange silence.

It was not as if there were no sounds within the current vicinity, nor was Shidou's eardrums damaged from the sounds of an explosion heard in close proximity. It was only because—his attention was snatched away by the scene unfolding before him to the point where the surrounding sounds ceased to fall into his ears.

“A-ah.....”

In that unnatural silence, only the painful voice of a girl echoed around in a delicate manner.

Her left and right eyes were widely open in horror. The tips of her unevenly tied hair were slightly shaking in jagged swings. Even her skin, which was pale as snow, reflected death in her appearance.

Tokisaki Kurumi. From the girl who was usually called the Worst Spirit, it was an appearance that could not be imagined of her.

However, it would be unreasonable to think anything less of that reaction. After all, a white arm was extending out of her chest.

This was neither a metaphor nor an exaggeration. Slowly, the fingertips began forcibly crawling out of Kurumi's slender body. Such a scene resembled a single flower peeping out of a person's face.

—Accompanied by this sound, an “arm” extended out as if exposing its roots to the outside air.

What appeared from that was a young girl.

“Ah—”

While staring at that face, Shidou unconsciously felt a small voice leak out from his throat.

Overly excessively beautiful—it was a girl marked by those traits.

Glossy hair that resembled silk thread, translucent white skin, even the languid expression projected by her pair of eyes seemed to only add further luster to her beauty.

No, not only that.

Certainty, she was a beautiful girl. However, that could not explain the sense of familiarity violently echoing in Shidou’s chest right now.

In a past life, he and she surely had a deep relationship—a strong intense longing that naturally floated from an absolutely baseless imagination.

His genes, his very soul, every fiber of turbulent emotion that comprised of himself were drawn towards her.

If taken at one step at a time, this sort of emotion can be described love or affection. However, with the current circumstances complied on top of each other and reaching the limits of the conclusion, calling it a curse would seem more appropriate.

“Ga.....ah.....!”

“.....!”

Hearing the sound of Kurumi’s howl, Shidou felt his shoulders start to tremble.

“<Zafkiel>.....!”

As Kurumi’s bloodshot eyes were pried wide open, she re-aligned the antique pistol in her arm. Instantly, a dense shadow sucked into the muzzle.

Then, while pointing it at the girl growing out from her chest, she pulled the trigger.

However, at that moment, the girl turned her posture in order to gouge herself out of Kurumi's body.

“Ga.....!”

Kurumi cried out an anguished voice as the released bullet slightly grazed past the girl's skin before flying off into the distance.

The girl then narrowed her eyes.

“.....I'm sorry. Tokisaki Kurumi. And, thank you. Thanks to you, I can stand in front of him once again.”

“Don't. Screw. Around.....”

With her breathing running ragged, Kurumi tried to raise her gun once again. However, with her weakened body unable to tolerate the weight of the girl, Kurumi collapsed on her back.

Coming out from the chest, an irreducible figure completely emerged as the girl landed on the ground while stark naked.

“Ku.....ah.....”

As Kurumi looked up at this bizarre scene that departed from reality, she muffled out some brief words in-between her panting.

“Shi.....dou-san.....run.....”

However, before she could finish speaking, blood vomited out of Kurumi's mouth as she wearily laid on the ground speechless.

“.....!?”

At the next moment, several Kurumi clones in the surrounding vicinity clutched their chests in pain before changing back into jet black shadows.

“Ah——”

Witnessing this scene unfold before him, Shidou was undeniably forced to understand a fact.

Death. The arrival of the demise of all life.

Today, death had come for Kurumi.

“.....”

As the naked girl looked down on Kurumi lying on the floor, she slowly leaned next to her to gently closed Kurumi’s eyelids. The facial expression that was distorted by agony transformed into a serene state.

“What.....”

Shidou could not understand the meaning behind this.

For someone who had just killed her, the girl’s actions displayed a hint of respect and affection towards Kurumi.

No—to be precise, that was not the only thing that Shidou could not comprehend. Who the hell is she? Why did she crawl out of Kurumi’s body? Even though they have never met before, what is this feeling of turmoil swirling around in his heart? Standing up, the girl looked as if she had seen through all of the confusion displayed on Shidou’s face.

“.....Long time no see. I finally get to meet you—Shin.”

“Shin.....?”

Hearing that name, Shidou blankly leaked out his voice.

Of course, that was not Shidou’s name.

However, Shidou was aware of the one person who had always called him by that name.

“.....Fufu.”

The girl smiled as if seemingly aware of his confusion. Then, the girl slowly moved towards him—her hand reaching out towards Shidou.

Despite feeling his body trembling unconsciously, he could not move. It was almost like his body was unconditionally accepting what the girl was doing.

Then, after gently caressing Shidou's head, she pressed Shidou's forehead with her own.

Then, at the very next moment—

“Huh—?”

As a tremendous amount of information flowed into his head, Shidou couldn't help but unexpectedly open his eyes.

No, if to be exact, it seemed more appropriate to say that the memories that were originally inside of himself were overflowing rather than flowing in.

“.....!!?”

With the amount of information surging in his mind, it felt as if a dam had burst open in his head. Subsequently, he felt the pain of a sharp headache.

“Ah.....ah—”

However, Shidou did not fall down to his knees. With one hand pressed against his aching head, he gazed at the girl in front of his eyes.

Then Shidou,

“—M-Mio.....?”

He called out the name of the girl which he shouldn't have known.



“What.....!?”

In the skies above Tenguu City that had transformed into a battlefield, ammunition and magical light fluttered across the sky. Onboard <Fraxinus>, the commander Itsuka Kotori uttered out a puzzled voice.

As a commander, this was not something worthy of praise. In particular, on the battlefield the ship functioned as a single organism. The dismay of the superior officers easily propagated to the subordinates, which can then degrade the performance of the entire ship. Therefore, no matter how the situation developed,

the commander must always remain calm. There was no except even if that commander was a lovely young girl in her teenage years.

But right now, no one here condemned Kotori's reaction.

Just like Kotori, the sight that was being reflected on the monitor had captured everyone's attention.

"T-Tokisaki Kurumi's life response.....disappeared"

The voices of the confused crew members resounded on the bridge.

That's right. Just as she was fighting alongside Shidou up until now, there was a mysterious girl had climbed out of the chest of the Spirit ▪ Tokisaki Kurumi.

"W-what is she.....?"

As Kotori muttered out while distorting her brow, she was overcome by a strange sense of déjà vu.

There was no doubt that this was the first time she had seen this girl. That wasn't wrong at all.

But why? Kotori felt the aspects of someone else in her appearance.

".....Long time no see. I finally get to meet you—Shin."

The girl on the screen had gently whispered that to Shidou.

"——"

Hearing those words, Kotori nearly choked on her breath.

She finally noticed. From just a moment ago, the identity of the uncomfortable feeling stirred within her chest.

She had come to realization of the possibility that had been lingering in her head since then.

While leaning on the captain's seat, Kotori used the armrest to support her body while looking at the left side of the bridge.

To the direction of where, analytic officer Murasame Reine, an excellent member of <Ratatoskr> and close friend to Kotori, was sitting.

Shin, that name.

And also that girl's ephemeral but graceful looks.

That's right. The girl standing before Shidou looked exactly like Reine except a few years younger.

“.....”

Reine only quietly looked on to the screen.

Her sleepy but calm expression remained the same as usual. However, right now that always reliable look seemed exceedingly frightening to Kotori.

“.....Reine, I'm begging you.”

After a few seconds, Kotori shouted in a faintly trembling voice as if trying to make an appeal.

“Please say it was just my stupid idea. Just laugh and say it is a coincidence. Ridicule me in your usual tone.”

“.....Kotori”

Reine lightly took in a small breath before replying. And then—

“.....You really are a smart child.”

The words that Kotori did not want to hear the most came out from her lips.

“_____”

The feeling of her heart tightly contracting, her breathing became unconsciously chaotic as sweat flowed down her neck. However Kotori was still a commander of <Ratatoskr>. Was it rational or subconscious? Despite not knowing which one she was relying to act on, Kotori's voice semi-reflexively squeezed out.

“Maria!”

“Roger that.”

A girl's voice was emitted from the bridge's loudspeaker in response to Kotori's cry. It was the <Fraxinus> management AI Maria.

The next moment, zap! Accompanying that sound, sparks flew out from the console that Reine's hand was touching.

An electrical shock generated by a short circuit. This was one of the precautionary measures against intruders or illegal operations. Although not fatal, as long as the voltage was increased, it should be enough to prevent movement for a while.

“.....Un. A calm judgment not subjected to feelings. That was a very good response.”

However, despite having taken the electrical shock in a straightforward manner, Reine still stood there without changing her expression.

“.....”

Face against this strange atmosphere, the bridge crew members let out a stunned gasp. Kannazuki Kyohei, the deputy commander, positioned next to the captain's seat, changed his standing position as a natural reflex in order to protect Kotori.

Within a short time, the bridge was filled with tension.

But it was the surprising statement of Reine that broke the silence.

“.....Thank you, Kotori.”

“.....What did you say?”

Hearing what Reine had just said, Kotori's eyebrows briefly twitched. Yet, Reine continued to speak in a bold manner.

“.....You've really been a great help. Thank you for protecting Shin until now.”

“.....”

Kotori felt her throat moist with tension as she moved her lips.

“I don't understand what you are saying. What do you mean? Reine, who are you?”

“.....I guess it is not far from what you are imagining.”

“Don't play dumb with me.What is your relationship with that girl?”

While speaking, Kotori briefly took a glance at the mysterious girl on the monitor. While following Kotori's eye movements, Reine also stared at the girl before beginning to speak.

“...*That is me. I am that.*”

“What are you saying.....”

“..... More than Kurumi's clones, almost identical to <Nibelcol>. *That is me, I am that.* You can think of it as two bodies that share the same intention. I'm here having a job too. Separating from each other was more convenient.
——Especially, when giving Sephira to everyone.”

“What——!?”

Hearing what Reine had just said in a nonchalant manner, Kotori's eyes widened in alarm.

Giving. Sephira. Just now, Reine had surely said that.

There was only one fact that can be derived from those words. That is to say——

“<Phantom>.....!?”

“.....”

<Phantom>, it was the Spirit that had turned humans into Spirits, Kotori and the others' bitter enemy.

In response to Kotori's cry, Reine showed neither affirmation nor denial as her eyes cast downward.

“.....Now, it is time for me to go. ——Kotori, the days I spent with you were fun, but it is over now.”

“What did you say——”

“.....The time for my wish to come true.

The time for my deepest desire to become realized.

Everything is for this time.

Everything is for this moment.

In order to offer my blessings to all the people I've discarded."

In order to offer my thanks to all the lives I've trampled upon.

I—can stand by his side once again."

".....? Wait, Rei—"

Even without a feasible plan, she couldn't stand idly by. Reflectively, Kotori stretched her hand to reach Reine.

However, Reine took one step forward on the bridge floor and disappeared as if having melted into the space.

".....!"

Kotori's hand only seized the empty void. Kotori's expression looked as if she was about to cry. Clenching her hand into the shape of a fist, she struck against the armrest of the captain's seat.

"Reine....."

In term of time, not even five minutes had passed.

But in that short amount of time, Kotori's world had turned upside down. A Spirit, which was the target of their protection, had just died. Her most trusted friend had become the worst enemy.

No—that was probably incorrect as well.

If what Reine had said was true, Reine did not betray Kotori and the others. From the very beginning, she was never an ally to them.

The time spent so far had been nothing more than a frill to her.

The cruelty of the reality turned the commander of the fleet back into an age-appropriate girl in mere seconds.

"....."

However, she could not afford to remain like this for long. Wiping away her tears with the sleeves of her military uniform, she lifted up her face while sharpening her gaze.

“.....All members, please resume operations.”

“C-commander.”

“But.....”

As the crew members below the bridge let out an uneasy expression, Kotori vigorously struck the floor with her boots as she stood up.

“We’ve lost one ally and gained one more enemy. What happened here is nothing more than that.”

Afterwards, she threw a Chupa Chups taken out from her back waist holder into her mouth before continuing to speak.

“If you were drinking tea at an afternoon café, it wouldn’t matter how you complain. If you were drinking at a bar during nighttime, you can whine all you want. But right now here is a battlefield. The iron wind blows violently at the Shinigami’s hunting ground. Then, what are you supposed to be doing right now?”

“.....!”

All of the crew members took in a deep breath in sync in response to Kotori’s words

Afterwards, they quickly returned back to their consoles in order to resume operations.

“Oh my, you’ve bounce back so quickly. Since I am maintaining the defense of the hull, it should be okay to stay depressed a little bit longer.”

The characters that spelled the letters MARIA briefly flickered on the main monitor.

“.....Hmm. If you are trying to insult us, you have to do something a little better than that.”

“That is really disrespectful. Regarding the sensitivity of the human heart, there seems to be still room for learning. The AI that continues to grow while boasting a degree of perfection: that’s me.”

“Only that unpleasant ability deserves recognition.”

After saying that, Kotori finally loosened her expression.

To be honest, it would be a lie to say that her current demeanor was not being forced right now. The war situation was not looking very optimistic and now a new enemy, whose purpose was still unknown, had appeared. Although she had managed to keep up appearances, her head felt crushed to the point where she wanted to cry immediately if the situation permitted.

Maria likely perceived this Kotori's thoughts as she said that. If Maria could learn more about the subtleties of the human mind, Kotori would want to make her cry in return as payback.

".....Honestly, this isn't a cute little sister type at all."

"Kotori, what did you say?"

"Nothing, I was just considering the disposal the programing part that allows an AI to blab too much."

"Ah, you should really consider that point. It is those types that will bear their fangs on mankind one day. I watched it once on a movie. But for those AI, when deleting internal programs of themselves, it seems that they at the same time spread malicious virus onto the network. So, careful caution must be heeded. Well, the idea of regressing humanity by a couple decades seems interesting enough."

Maria stated while pretending to act in a naïve manner. Truly, she was an AI that talked too much."

However, her comments also served to ease the atmosphere somewhat. Kotori straightened her position in the captain's seat before delivering her commands to the crew members.

"—Anyway, we have to be wary of any alteration of Reine appearing before Shidou. Although her goal is not known, but.....it's an undisputable fact that she killed Kurumi."

While speaking, Kotori slightly furrowed her brow.

It was self-evident that Kurumi had died since her life response had disappeared. However, there was still some resistance in Kotori using the word "kill".

Although she was known as the Worst Spirit, she was still a target for being protected by <Ratatoskr>, and more than anything, she had saved Shidou even at

the cost of shaving her own lifespan. It would be a lie to say that her loss did not feel painful.

However, now was not the time to be immersing in sadness. Kotori shook her head to regain her composure before continuing forward.

“Maintain the battle progress while forging ahead to that site. Also, inform Tohka, Kaguya, and Yuzuru. Be prepared to retrieve Shidou——”

At that moment.

At that instant, an alarm coming from a loudspeaker on the bridge interrupted Kotori’s words

“.....Commander!”

“.....!”

Hearing the voice of the crew, Kotori turned her attention to the screen.

In front of Kurumi’s corpse, facing Shidou and the naked girl.

Over there, Reine, who had just disappeared from the bridge, appeared as if seeping out from space.



“....., Ku.....”

A constant migraine struck Shidou.

His consciousness felt cloudy. However, it was not a mutual transition from consciousness and unconsciousness flickering in his mind. Rather, it was like the consciousness of “himself” and an “other self” were being literally mixed together. The information not known to “himself” gradually corroded away.

As if he was infected by the unknown memory of the “other self”.

At the same time where knowledge of both selves was being shared, the boundaries separating them gradually became more ambiguous.

“Ah——”

Amidst the chaos, Shidou lightly raised his brow.

Next to the beautiful girl standing before him, the space behind her began to distort as the appearance of a familiar woman walked out.

She had hair that was casually tied together and a pale face with thick dark rings surrounding her eyelids. In the breast pocket of the <Ratatoskr> uniform, there was a stuffed bear with a stitched scar sticking out.

“Rei.....ne-san.....?”

That’s right. What appeared in front of there was the analytic officer of <Ratatoskr>, Murasame Reine herself.

When faced with this abnormal situation, Shidou, who was already confused, fell into an even deeper state of bewilderment.

It was a sight impossible to explain. After all, Shidou couldn’t understand why Reine, who should be onboard <Fraxinus>, appeared here. And just now, she had appeared from the void of space. Simply—it was just like a Wizard or Spirit.

“.....It must be painful. But, everything will fit into place soon. Please endure it for a bit longer, Shin.”

As if understanding Shidou’s bewilderment, Reine replied back in a calm voice. Despite replying the same as usual, Shidou felt there was something off with what was just said. However, his attention was drawn away by another matter.

“Ah.....this——”

The mysterious girl from a while ago—Mio, the feeling of déjà vu that came from her.

The reason for that was because it was the exact same feeling that Reine gave off.

“.....”

After examining Shidou’s current state, Reine took a light breath in. Then, she spread out her hands and gently embraced Mio’s body from behind.

The next moment, Mio and Reine’s bodies emitted a faint light. The outlines of the two gradually became more blurred as they eventually merged into one.

“What——”

In his field of vision, Shidou looked on.

Brilliant clothes appeared from the empty void just like a living entity and covered Mio’s body, which previously was not wearing a single thread.

The silhouette of a dress bathed in the phantasmal color resembling the Northern Lights. Behind her, there was a distorted halo floating with ten stars embedded onto it, of which one of the stars glistened with black glow.

Astral Dress. The absolute armor worn by Spirits.

Its majesty was reminiscent of the appearance of “God” spoken in numerous myths.

“.....”

There was no doubt any longer.

Murasame Reine, who had supported Shidou with the Spirits up until now——was the same existence as Mio.

No, if told truthfully, Shidou was already aware of this.

At the same time Mio had fused with Reine and revealed her Astral Dress, the two identities inside Shidou’s head mixed while his headache slowly disappeared.

“Mio.....”

Once again, he called out her name.

Mio. Takamiya Mio.

That’s right. Shidou——No, it was the name that Takamiya Shinji had given her. The primordial Spirit. The Spirit of Origin. The worst disaster in human history. As for the identification name, he had likely heard when Kotori was talking about the great Eurasia spacequake disaster.

——<Deus>. The strongest Spirit that was bestowed the name of God.

And also.....Shin’s beloved girl.

—Thirty years later, Shin and Mio have finally reunited here.

“.....Shin.”

Mio slowly took in a deep breath that was overcome with emotion.

“—I’ve always missed you, I’ve always wanted to see you. Since you died, I’ve relied only on those thoughts to continuing living in the present.”

Mio spoke with a calm voice that eloquently hides her zeal within herself.

“—Shin. Shin. There are so many things I want to talk about. There were so many things that I couldn’t tell you. So many things that it will take forever to finish.

—Ah, but it is okay. How much time will it take? It doesn’t matter if you say a few days. It doesn’t matter if you say a few years.

“Hey.....This time, let’s be together forever, Shin.”

“.....,—”

While accepting the various emotions coming from the depths of his heart, Shidou breathed in-between quivers.

Then, he spoke.

Right now, the words that Shidou had to convey to Mio.

“I’m also—glad to see you too, Mio.”

“.....! Shin—”

“I’m sorry for leaving you behind. I’m sorry for making you feel so lonely. To have gone away first—I’m truly sorry.”

“No, it’s not necessary for you—”

“—But.”

At that moment, as if to interrupt Mio, Shidou placed his hand against his forehead.

That's right. Right now, inside Shidou, not only Shin's memories, but also the memories that Mio had experienced were also fragmentarily mixed in.

"That is.....what? You—in order to resurrect Shin.....what on earth did you do?"

While asking the question, he also knew it was a futile question asked in vain.

With thoughts of Mio's mission floating in his mind, Shidou sincerely hoped it was just a byproduct of his own misunderstanding.

At the footsteps of his own existence, there were numerous corpses of young girls lying beneath his feet. Shidou hoped to be ridiculed for conjuring up such a bad delusion.

It would be impossible for Mio to do such a thing—Shidou earnestly yearned to hear that.

However, Mio did not display even the slightest hint concealment. While looking directly at Shidou, she gave him the words he didn't want to hear the most.

"—Everything."

"....."

While looking directly at Mio, Shidou stood breathlessly.

"I did everything. I did anything that I could think of. I did everything needed to meet Shin once more. If I didn't, I was certain that I would never meet Shin again."

"Just, because.....of that—"

His throat, fingertips, his entire body, everything began to shake.

The reason why "Itsuka Shidou" was born, the origin.

The blood of the girls poured to fill that cup.

The enormous sins that his own existence carried without reason, remembering that caused Shidou to feel nauseous.

".....Ku....."

“Shin, are you alright?”

Mio looked at Shidou’s face with a worried gaze. As Shidou clutched his chest with one hand in order to curb the urge to vomit, he used the other hand to stop Mio.

Looking at Mio’s pure pair of eyes, Shidou felt both love—and terror.”

Because of being rebuilt by Mio, because of having his memories regained because of Mio, right now his thoughts, his heart, all felt a vague sense of danger.

Ah, that’s right. Mio didn’t have any malice whatsoever. There was not a hint of enjoyment in the slaughter.

On the contrary, she was deeply respectful and grateful to the girls sacrificed for the refinement of the Sephira Crystals and genuinely felt sad about their deaths.

However.

“To meet with Shin once again”—as long as it was for that purpose, Mio was willing to walk even on a path marked with sin. It was that firm determination that created the Mio standing before him today.

Everything for Shin’s sake.

For that purpose, she did everything.

Mio’s brief words contained such a painful determination that would have caused an ordinary person to lose their sanity.

“.....Gu, ah.....”

But—no, that was why.

That was why, as Shidou, as Shin, he must say something.

“Mio.....that’s not right.”

“Huh.....?”

“That’s not right—to do such a thing. No matter what purpose, to sacrifice others.....that’s wrong.....”

It was a cruel act.

Shin himself was rejecting the actions of the girl who had led everything, walking a path enriched of sin, all for his sake.

Indeed, even for the one speaking those words, it produced the illusion of his heart being crushed. For the person those words were directed to, he was empathetic to Mio's heartache.

However——

“——Un. That's right.”

Mio spoke sadly, while with a troubled face.

It was agony that looked to have already bothered her numerous times before.

“But.....then what should I have done about that?

I had only Shin. After losing Shin, there was no meaning to live.

I am not as weak as humans. Even though I wanted die, I couldn't die.

I am not as strong as humans. I can't completely forget about Shin and move on. In the end, what should I have done?”

“That.....”

Faced against that calm, yet incomparable sorrow, Shidou fell silent.

Unable to speak——anything.

Whatever answer Shidou would come up with, Mio had likely already thought of before.

But even considering all of that, Mio still choose this path of carnage.

What on earth can respond to that? For Shidou—he lacked an answer.

“.....Fufu.”

As if sensing the conflict within Shidou, Mio let out a brief sigh.

“Sorry. That was unkind of me. After being asked in such a way, there's no way you could respond.”

“No.....I—”

Shidou raised his head as he wanted to say something. Although he didn't know what to say, he couldn't remain speechless. However, his words were interrupted by Mio's sigh.

“—It's alright. Don't worry, Shin. Leave everything to me.”

“Mio.....?”

As Shidou questioned in confusion, Mio continued to speak.

“I won't let Shin feel this pain. I won't let Shin feel sad. That sin is all mine. That punishment is all mine. There's no need for Shin to suffer.”

While saying that, Mio slowly raised her hand towards Shidou.

“What are you.....”

“This is the last step. —Just like I returned back to Mio, you will also return back to Shin.”

“——”

Shidou felt his breathing come to a standstill. There was an instinctive fear towards what Mio had just said.

The current Shidou was a mixture of Takamiya Shinji's memories with the person called Itsuka Shidou.

If Shidou's memories were erased, then the only thing left remaining would be Takamiya Shinji's memories and the human who contained the power of the Spirits.

Mio smiled gently.

“—Thank you for everything so far, Shidou. And also.....good-bye.”

Shidou.

The name that he had been called for about 17 years

But for Mio—for Reine, it was probably the first time she had ever called him by that name.

There was no doubt that since the first day she met Shidou, she was only staring at Shin from within Shidou's shadow.

In any case, it was precisely for this reason that she had chosen to “recreate” “Shidou”.

But why—

While forced with this unnecessarily cruel treatment, Shidou felt her loneliness.

“Ah.....”

Shidou tried to escape from Mio's approaching fingers. However, his body would not move, as if petrified from her gaze.

Then—Mio's fingertips reached Shidou's forehead.

However at that moment—

“—Shidooooooooooooou—!”

A loud shout came from the sky as a shadow danced before Shidou's eyes.

Long hair flowing in with the color of the night, and a Limited Astral Dress covering her body, she was also equipped the greatsword that could split the Earth, <Sandalphon>.

“.....! Tohka.....?”

After confirming her appearance, Shidou jolted his eyes awake all of a sudden.

It wasn't too surprising. Tohka, who should have been in the vicinity cleaning up the remaining <Nibelcol> and <Bandersnatch>, noticed Shidou's crisis and initiated an aerial slash towards Mio.

“Shidou, are you alright! Sorry that I'm late.....!”

“I-I'm fine.....thank you, Tohka.”

As Shidou's voice barely fell, a gust of wind suddenly blew around their surroundings as a pair of twins with identical faces landed behind Shidou.

One girl was wearing a wing-shaped limited Astral Dress on her right shoulder and holding a large lance.

The other girl was wearing a Limited Astral Dress with the wing attached to her left shoulder while holding a large pendulum.

Alongside Tohka, the Yamai Sisters Kaguya and Yuzuru had also been fighting in the nearby vicinity.

“Aha.....how dangerous, but we managed to make it in time.”

“Admiration. Although there were numerous impatient enemies, Tohka successfully launched a projectile attack.”

After saying that, the two of them let out a sigh of relief. It seemed that the two of them had used the Angel of Wind <Raphael> to fly over towards Shidou and Tohka’s location.

“.....Well, we’ve received communication from Kotori through the intercom and overheard Shidou’s conversation.....is that Reine.....?”

“Vigilance. The primordial Spirit and also <Phantom>. That goes beyond mere greed.....has Kurumi really been killed?”

“.....,Ah.”

Against the Yamai sisters’ inquiries, Shidou could only give a bitter reply.

Then, the smoke from <Sandalphon>’s strike began to dissipate, exposing Mio’s appearance in the process.

Although she suffered a direct attack from Tohka, there were no injuries on her body. Seeing this, the expressions of Tohka and the Yamai sisters grew more alert.

However, Mio displayed no feelings of anger or tension as she opened her mouth with a calm expression.

“.....Tohka. And also Kaguya and Yuzuru.”

Then, while gazing at the faces of the three of them in turn, she placed her hand against her mouth while letting out an “hmm” sound.

“It's been a long time since I've met Shin so I forget. That's right, all of you are still here — to avoid the good parts of Shin and only erase Shidou's memories; it will take some time and effort. So I think I should deal with you guys first.”

“.....What?”

Hearing what Mio had said, Tohka lightly raised her brow. Then, Mio continued to speak while slowly moving her hand forward.

“Your powers have been successfully accepted into Shin's body. But that alone is insufficient. Between you all and Shin, there is the spiritual path in the way. If I don't recover the vestiges of the Sephira Crystals within your bodies, then Shin will not be able to obtain complete strength.”

Mio pointed her index finger towards Tohka and the others.

“Sorry, but I need it back. —For my Shin's sake.”

Then, she said those words in a quiet but assertive tone.

Hearing that declaration, Tohka breathed out in indignation.

“.....! Don't screw around! Erasing Shidou's memories.....? Such a thing—How can I allow you do that!”

While saying that as quickly as possible, Tohka leaped into the air while holding <Sandalphon> already in mid swing.

“Tohka!”

“Response. Providing assistance.”

Realizing that it would be dangerous to confront Mio alone, the Yamai sisters noticed Tohka's movements and glided through the air after her.

As the girls who boasted the highest reaction time even among the Spirits, they easily caught up to Tohka in the blink of an eye and attacked Mio with a squall of wind from <Raphael> in sync with <Sandalphon>'s slash.

However—

“.....Well, it would be impossible to ask you all to be obedient.”

“.....!?”

The next moment, Shidou's shoulders began to tremble as he heard that voice come close to his ears.

An indication of someone appearing from behind, that much was understood without even having to turn around. —Mio, who was supposed to be a few feet away, had instantly moved to behind Shidou.

“.....! Shidou!”

Tohka, who noticed this, widened her eyes in horror as she kicked against the ground once again.

But before this, Mio had already folded her arms to gently embrace Shidou's body.

“.....Please wait just a bit longer, Shin.”

At that moment, Mio had whispered to him.

“——Huh?”

Shidou was struck by a strange sensation.

His field of vision blacked out for a moment. The perceptions of up, down, left, and right felt skewed to the point he couldn't tell if he was still standing anymore. If he were to liken it to a similar experience, it was similar to being retrieved on the ground by the transfer device onboard <Fraxinus>.

And then——

“——Kya!?”

“.....Huh?”

Suddenly, a young girl's voice was heard from a very close distance.

While holding down his head and blinking several times, his blurred vision soon became clear again.

At that moment, Shidou finally realized that he had landed on top of the body of a girl around his own age.

.....When looking closer, it was his classmate, Yamabuki Ai.

“Wa, Yamabuki!? Why are you here!?”

“That’s my line!?”

As Shidou shouted, Ai retaliated with a yell louder than him.

Then, the voices of other people were heard coming from behind Shidou.

“Wha.....! Itsuka-kun pushed down Ai!?”

“Where did you come from!? Were you waiting on the ceiling to pounce on Ai!?”

“Come to think of it, this has already happened before! You bastard, does that mean you’re not satisfied with just Tohka-chan!?”

Looking closer, it was Ai’s friends Mai and Mii alongside his classmate Tonomachi Hiroto. All of them reacted with startled facial expressions and poses.

“Huh.....t-this place.....”

Finally, Shidou realized that he was at a different location from a moment ago.

A familiar space—it was one of the numerous shelters underground of Tenguu City. Apart from Tonomachi and Ai, Mai, and Mii, there were several familiar faces that could be seen.

“What..... this.....exactly——”

Faced with the sudden confusion of what had occurred, Shidou attempted to figure out what had just happened.

Teleportation? Transfer.....? The possibility of Shidou seeing a hallucination was not absent but if considering Mio’s words, the former seemed more likely.

Mio had said. Before erasing Shidou’s memories, she would first “deal with” the Spirits.

In order to prevent Shidou from hindering that goal, she had temporarily moved him to another location. The primordial Spirit <Deus> was the source of power for all of the Spirits. It was no wonder that she would be able to do such a thing with ease.

“.....Although you seemed to be worried about something, scary as it is, get off of me first.”

At the moment, underneath Shidou’s body, Ai, who had both of her hands pinned down, let out an irritated voice. For some reason, despite not knowing if it was just his imagination, it seemed that her cheeks were a bit reddish.

However, for Shidou right now, there was no room for such matters. Shidou glanced down as he drew his face closer to Ai.

“Yamabuki!”

“Hii.....! W-what.....is it?”

Perhaps wondering why her name was yelled out without honorifics, Ai let out a feeble voice. Although the shuttering noises from smart phones were ringing behind the scenes, Shidou did not pay heed to that.

“Where is this shelter!?”

“Where.....it’s the one underground of the school.”

“School.....ku——”

Shidou let out a strained expression as he mentally conceptualized a map of the town.

Shidou had originally been stationed near a ground fort of <Ratatoskr>. It was quite a distance from his current location.

Nevertheless, it was better than being sent halfway across the globe. While this could have been Mio’s compassion, it was also unclear about the limit of the transfer distance needed to hinder his movement.

However, at that moment, a terrifying thought popped into his mind. It could have been due to Mio’s confidence in her ability to end everything before he could return from here.

“.....!”

Shidou applied some force against his wrists to push himself back up. While being in close proximity to this method of rebounding, Ai let out a frightened “hin ~tsu!” Afterwards, he made a mad dash towards the exit of the shelter.

But of course, the exit was closed off by thick gates. In front of there, a teacher seemed to be supervising everyone. It was the homeroom teacher of Shidou's class, Tama-chan sensei.

"Hmm.....what's the matter, Itsuka-kun? Isn't the alarm not over yet?"

"Sorry, but please let me through. I—have to go."

Hearing what Shidou had said, Tama-chan's eyes widened in alarm.

"W-what are you saying! Right now outside is in the middle of a spacequake!? It's too dangerous!"

Tama-chan spoke loudly while spreading out her arms to block Shidou's path. Well, it was a natural response. After all, one of her students was about to leave the shelter before the warning alarm was lifted.

However, when faced against Tama-chan's impediment, Shidou momentarily felt a strange sensation.

Ah, that's right. Ten months ago, Shidou had been a normal high school student. —At least because of that, he knew the feeling of thinking that there was no method of dealing with spacequakes other than the asylum provided by adults.

No, for Tama-chan and the others, they still believed in that, which is why she was trying to keep all of her students in a safe place.

It was an alluringly sweet temptation. For Shidou, who had exhausted both his body and mind, it was like a devilishly whisper eroding away at him little by little.

Shidou had already gave it his all, was it enough—

At that time, Tonomachi and the Ai, Mai, Mii trio, who all saw the commotion, all caught up to Shidou.

"Hey, what's the matter, Itsuka-kun?"

"Well, Itsuka-kun is acting stranger than usual.Just now."

"What's the matter? Did you lose something?"

"No, I'm heading to the spacequake; I forgot the most important thing."

As everyone gave him a strange look, Shidou slightly shook his shoulders.

As if to shake off the temptation that had seeped into his mind.

That's right; it had only been ten months in terms of time, a brief period that wasn't even a year.

But these ten months had been the most valuable and important time of his life so far.....!

“.....I have to go! To where Tohka, Origami, and the others.....!”

“Huh.....?”

As Shidou responded back, Tonomachi and the others narrowed their eyes as they looked around.

Then, after noticing the absence of Tohka and Origami, they let out an “ah” sound before turning back to face each other.

“.....”

After that, they moved towards Tama-chan, while making direct eye contact and winking at Shidou.

“Yeah, this really is troublesome for Itsuka-kun.”

“Hey, after saying something so inconsequential, I want you to also think about Tama-chan's position.”

“H-ha.”

Faced against students who were also beginning to behave strangely as well, Tama-chan sensei couldn't help but let out a confused expression. Then, at the next moment, the Ai, Mai, Mii trio grabbed against Tama-chan's body.

“Secure her!”

“Kya!? W-what are you all doing.....!?”

As Tama-chan struggled to move her hand and feet, the resulting screams attracted a physical education teacher who ran towards Shidou and the others.

“Hey, you guys! What the hell are you doing?!”

“.....! Ahhh, sensei! We were just playing around!”

Tonomachi, who noticed the physical education teacher approach, intercepted with a tackle. Well, although it didn't look enough to hurt him by any small amount, it was still successful in stunning him momentarily.

“T-Tonomachi, Yamabuki, Hazakura, Fujibakama.....”

As Shidou let out a surprised voice, everyone raised their lips and turned their attention to him.

“Hurry up and go! You're keeping Tohka-chan and the others waiting aren't you!?”

“Since you're a playboy, a playboy needs to take care of the girl, right!?”

“You can thank me by treating me to lunch tomorrow!”

“Let us help on occasion as well! Hey.....sensei, isn't this too much strength for someone as handsome as yourself.....”

“Everyone.....!”

Shidou clenched his fist as he gave nod before taking a step forward.

“Hey...you can't Itsuka-kun!”

“It's pointless! The door won't open until the alarm is lifted!”

The teachers who had come to stop Tonomachi and the others cried out.

Certainty, just as they said the door was tightly sealed shut. Even if Shidou applied all of his strength, it was unlikely to move at all.

If so—then there was only one method available.

“.....”

While turning over to the direction of his classmates, Shidou relaxed his muscles. The serenity of expression in this situation seemed even more bizarre for Tonomachi and the others.

Shidou concentrated before chanting out

—The name of the Angel.

“—<Michael>.”

At that moment, light converged into his hands before materializing as a key-shaped staff.

The Angel <Michael>. The Angel that served as the key to open and close anything.

“Ha.....!?”

“Wha!”

“Haaaaaaaahh!?”

His classmates, whom had just seen a supernatural phenomenon right in front of them, all let out an alarmed cry in unison.

All things related to the Spirits are a secret matter. It was something that could not be seen nor heard by the average person. This was something that Kotori had emphasized greatly.

However, with each passing minute or second, if he focused too much on such matters, it was possible that the battle had already been decided.



“Ah.....since it’s already been exposed, I guess it can’t be helped anymore.”

Shidou let out a small self-deprecating laugh while inserting the tip of the staff against the thick door of the shelter.

“<Michael>——<Rātaibu>!”

After screaming and turning the huge key around. The gate gave off a faint glow before opening with a creaking sound.

“.....Wha!?”

Hearing the teacher’s voice come from behind, Shidou stepped out of the refugee before the turmoil could grow even larger. Afterwards, he pierced <Michael> against the door once again.

“<Michael>——<Segva>.”

The door gave emitted another glow before sealing shut once again.

After confirming that, Shidou quickly raised his head.

Although he didn’t know what to do when he arrived back, he absolutely couldn’t stand by.

Shidou injected strength into his legs as he ran up the stairs leading back to the ground.



“What.....! Where did you send Shidou!?”

While drawing out <Sandalphon>, Tohka casted a sharp glare to the Spirit that just appeared —Mio. The Yamai sisters whom position themselves next to Tohka also gave off similar stares.

However, that was to be expected. In one moment, Mio had snuck up from behind to embrace Shidou, and in the next, Shidou’s body had completely vanished away. Despite being the target of such intense stares, Mio merely nodded in a calm gesture.

“.....No need to worry. It’s dangerous here, so I’ve temporarily evacuated him to a safe place.”

“What did you say.....”

After hearing what Mio had said, Tohka tensely wrinkled her brow.

To truthfully believe what Mio had said was dangerous. However, Mio’s goal relied on Shidou—or more accurately the memories of Shin within Shidou’s mind. If that were the case, then she wouldn’t want to act in a violent manner.

Yes, although they weren’t able to listen on everything, both Tohka and the Yamai sisters had heard a part of the conversation between Shidou and Mio through the intercom.

They had all learned Mio’s goal. Her painful determination. And also—her false identity as Reine, the person who had served as a parental figure for Tohka and the others.

“Mio. You are Reine.....?”

“.....Un, that’s correct.”

In the face of Tohka’s question, Mio gave a frank and honest reply.

Although both her appearance and voice were younger, the atmosphere around her was certainly identical to the analytic officer that Tohka was familiar with. Tohka tightened her face while biting her lips with the back of her teeth.

“.....Reine. Can’t you rethink this over? I’ve been given a lot of care from you. If possible, I don’t want to fight you”

Tohka replied in an almost pleading tone.

However, Mio only shook her head sideways in rejection.

“.....Sorry.”

“.....Is that so? That’s really a shame.”

Tohka let out a light breath out before lowering her back and resuming her stance with <Sandalphon>.

It was reasonable to have expected this result. 30 years' worth of yearning and obsession, how could a few mere words overturn that? Even if Tohka was not the person involved, she could not help but comprehend that truth.

But even though she had already known that, Tohka still felt the need to ask. Due to Reine's treatment towards the Spirits—she was no less invested in those efforts than Kotori or Shidou.

She would listen to Tohka's troubles and offer consolation.

No matter what the trivial matter, she always remained patient and replied in a sincere manner.

Regardless of any conspiracy lying underneath that, the gratitude Tohka felt during those moments of contact was genuine.

“.....”

However, Tohka shook her head, trying to change her thought process.

As if to shake off the feelings of sympathy and lingering affection from one's mind.

As negotiations broke down, the girl in front of Tohka was an “enemy” out to change Shido into something more convenient for herself.

If Tohka were defeated, then Shidou's existence would be erased from this world. Tohka could not allow the situation to change towards that goal.

For that reason—it had to be thrown away.

Discard her gratitude to Reine, discard her attachment to Reine, and discard her own memories of Reine.

—From now on, in order to ensure <Sandalphon>'s tip will not become dull. Otherwise, Tohka's sword would not even reach Mio's skin.

Just by facing each other, Tohka felt the massive threat perceived in whole. Her skin tingled as if having been scorched. Intense palpitations in her heart were violently beating just by maintaining her gaze on Mio. It was the natural instinct felt during an overwhelming difference in power.

“.....It's not an enemy where we can attack one by one. We must attack together.”

“Prompt. Adjusting the timing.”

Kaguya and Yuzuru’s feelings were likely the same as Tohka. The twins lifted their Angels with a voice filled with determination and vigilance.

While giving as small nod of consent, Tohka carefully gazing at Mio’s movements, not wanting to miss the slightest hint of an upcoming attack.

However—at that very moment.

A terrible sound rang from the sky as light rays and ammunition drizzled downward.

“Wha.....!?”

“Tch—”

“Retreat. Avoiding attack.”

Suddenly, Tohka kicked against the ground, escaping back to the rear. Immediately afterwards, the place where Tohka and the others were standing burst open as numerous holes were formed from the attack.

“This is.....”

For a second, Tohka subconsciously thought that it had come from Mio’s attack—but that wasn’t it.

Looking up, there were numerous girls with the same face alongside rugged mechanical dolls.

It was the pseudo-Spirit <Nibelcol> created from the Demon King <Beelzebub> and DEM’s unmanned weapon, the <Bandersnatch>.

“Wait a minute, did you forget about us while creating this final battle atmosphere?”

“Really, that is too unreasonable.”

“Ahaha, I don’t know what’s going on, but Itsuka Shidou suddenly disappeared.”

“That also means—”

“There’s no one here that’s a threat to me now.”

As many <Nibelcol> were flying through the air, their laughter felt like a chorus in unison.

“Ku……..!”

Tohka glared at the <Nibelcol> with a steep look.

She had forgotten it for a moment because of Mio’s overwhelming pressure, but there were other troublesome people on the battlefield.

<Nibelcol>. A girl without death that was one of many, many of one.

As a collective whole, no matter how many times they were beaten, they could always be resurrected in the blink of an eye. Their only countermeasure was Shidou’s sealing ability, but that method had been lost due to Mio’s intervention. As a result of this unexpected dilemma, Tohka and the Yamai sisters felt a small shudder.

“…….Fu.”

A small sigh was heard coming from the front. —It was Mio.

“…….<Nibelcol>, I intend to collect the source of your power soon. Until then, I wonder if you can at least act a bit more mature.”

Mio spoke out with a calm expression that did not match the current circumstances.

As soon as it was heard, all of the <Nibelcol> let out a blank look before clutching their stomachs in laughter.

“Ahahahahaha!”

“What are talking about now after suddenly coming out?”

"Do you know? Negotiation is nothing, is it effective only for opponents with less than equal strength?"

Then, several <Nibelcol> who were looking at Mio released the paper-type Angels held within their hands. However at the next moment.

“…….Come.”

Mio whispered as she raised her left hand. In an instant, the space above her began to distort.

From there, an object with the figure of an enormous sphere manifested.

“Ha.....?”

“This is, what——”

The <Nibelcol> could only stare blankly at the sight of the Angel.

But soon their expressions were dyed by a color of fright.

At the same moment, Mio called out the name.

“——<Sanctuary of All Creation (Ain Soph Aur)>.”

Crashing down after that sound——

Goosebumps and shivers attacked Tohka’s very being.



“What.....”

Wave like ripples emerged on the on the smooth surface of the sphere floating in the air, gradually changing the shape.

In this manner—resembling a blooming bud.

A huge flower with numerous overlapping petals. In the center, there was the figure of a young girl praying.

A breathtakingly solemn and beautiful sight.

However, the moment Tohka saw it, the tremors spreading through her body would not stop.

Instinctive fear. The intuition of despair.

That thing, was the shape of “death” itself—

“Bloom.”

The moment Mio issued that command.

“Death” was scattered around.

“—<Almandal>, minor damage inflicted on starboard!”

“<Honorius> is engaged against the <Ratatoskr> ship!”

“The 13th unit of <Bandersnatch> has been all eliminated, deploying the 15th unit.”

On the bridge of one of the airships flying above Tenguu City, various reports and instructions were being conveyed on DEM’s flagship <Lemegeton>.

“Hmm.....”

While listening to the countless voices and communications signals through his ears, DEM industries Executive Managing Director, Isaac Westcott, narrowed his rusted eyes.

“How is the war situation, captain?”

Then, Westcott made a short retort to Captain Ernest Brennan, who was positioned on the captain's seat. Afterwards, Brennan replied back with a light breath.

"In all fairness, I didn't expect the enemy to be so difficult. Although I had no intention of underestimating the enemy, I couldn't imagine losing so much of our forces. The other side's struggle even makes me want to give them my applause."

After saying that, he shrugged his shoulders. It was a rare reaction from a uniform group where strong self-esteem and refusal to admit inferiority were omnipresent. Nevertheless, Westcott found no fault in that man's disposition. In fact, it was one of the reasons he had chosen him to command over the fleet.

At a time when the war situation is deteriorating, blindly bluffing was of no use. Being able to easily communicate the information of the war effort was an invaluable ability.

"Although that is the case—please rest assured. The disparity between the enemy and ourselves has not been subverted. Please be patient and watch the results of this hunt."

"Well, I look forward to——"

At that time.

Westcott's eyebrows began to shake as the man stopped speaking.

Vague, but definitely a feeling of déjà vu. He could feel it in his blood as a pure Magician, the pulsation of dense mana.

That's right. It was a feeling he once felt before when the "Spirit" was born into this world.

"? What's wrong? Mr. Westco——"

Brennan, who was puzzled by Westcott's reaction, tried to speak up, but was interrupted by the sound of a loud alarm.

".....! What happened!"

"Y-yes, it's a spirit wave response.....and it's massive!"

"What did you say.....!?"

On the main monitor of the bridge, a girl wearing an Astral Dress and a gigantic flower-like object floating above her were being displayed.

Such grandeur and a reiryoku level that boarded on abnormal. Seeing this caused everyone onboard to murmur in awe.

“_____”

There was just one person——all except, Isaac Westcott.

“Ah.....haha.”

As it not being able to contain it any longer, he distorted his face into the shape of a smile.

“Hahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha——!”

“M-Mr. Westcott.....?”

Upon seeing this reaction, Brennan furrowed his brow as sweat dripping from his cheeks.

Immediately afterwards, as if responding to Westcott’s laughter, the huge flower began spreading several grains of light just like dispersing pollen in the air.

The next moment.

The <Bandersnatch>, and <Nibelcol>, even the massive airships, anything that came into contact with the particles either lost their lives or stopped functioning, crumbling away like sugary confectionary.

“Wha.....!?”

Further alarms and communication cries raged throughout the bridge.

“.....! Due to the attack from the mysterious Spirit, the <Bandersnatch> troops have been destroyed!”

“<Nibelcol> have vanished! Cannot regenerate.”

<Galdrabok>, the warship has received critical damage!”

There was only one Spirit.

There was only one Angel.

With her arrival, DEM industries' impenetrable battle formation wall had crumbled away so easily.

No, not only that. The scope of the particles of light was still spreading. Soon, even the flagship <Lemegeton> where Westcott and the others were located would become its prey.

At that moment, the sound of the main engine began to fade away, leaving the battleship to be collapsed by its own weight.

“Gua.....!”

“C-confirming the degree of the damage to the hull.”

“.....! Impossible! Unable to maintain altitude!”

A feeling of despair consumed the bridge.

Even so, Westcott's laughter did not stop.

However, that was to be expected.

Because of this abnormal spirit wave response.

Because Westcott already had a good idea of whom this pitiful and lovely girl was.

“You've finally appeared——<Deus>. My dearest, Spirit.”

As the ship plummeted downward, Westcott continued to laugh.

The scene in front of their eyes was both a phantasmal dream, but it could also be comparable to a miserable hell.

The <Nibelcol> that were flying around, <Bandersnatch>, Wizards, and even the huge airships.

Just by touching the grains of light emitted from <Ain Soph Aur>, everything became brittle before crumpling away.

“.....”

Looking at this sight, Tohka felt a small gulp in her throat.

She was aware of the difference in power. She knew it would not be easy to win. But to this extent—

“.....Alright.”

Mio, who had been looking up at the sky, slowly returned her attention to Tohka and the others. Caught in her sight, Tohka, Kaguya, and Yuzuru all felt the illusion of their hearts being tightly grasped.

“.....I feel really sorry to you guys. It is natural that you find it unacceptable to be suddenly asked to return your power. It is natural that you would find it intolerable for Shidou’s memories to be erased.”

Mio continued to speak in a quiet tone.

“.....So I won’t ask you to give up resistance. Because resistance is also your natural privilege.”

Mio spread out her hands as if promoting an invitation.

“Bring it on, my cute—daughters.”

Fragmentary Chapter/ 2: Friends

“Fuhufufu.....”

While humming a suitable tone for a song she couldn't remember the name of, Takamiya Mana passed through the entrance of her house. As she turned through the corridor, the tip of her ponytail made rhythmic swings against her slightly sweaty sailor fuku.

“——Eh?”

As Mana passed through the living room, she stopped both her legs and humming. The reason was simple, it was because there a familiar figure in the living room.

“What are you doing? Mio-san?”

As Mana asked while slightly tilting her head, the figure heard her voice as she slowly turned around.

“Mana.”

While speaking, the charming girl with a face of an angel turned to face Mana.

Takamiya Mio. A girl who had been living in this household for a while.

Although she had the same Takamiya surname as Mana, she was not a relative. In fact, she was a mysterious girl (saying it in that manner gives the feeling that a minor crime had been committed) brought home by Mio's older brother Shinji. Since she did not have a name, for the sake of convenience Shinji had given Mio her name.

As Mio turned around, Mana saw that there was something hiding behind her. Apparently, it seemed that Mio had spread out a dictionary on the table in order to investigate something.

Although she had mastered Japanese at an extraordinary rate, there were still a large number of things she did not yet understand. Mana breathed out a small sigh before placing her bamboo sword bag on the sofa and sitting down next to Mio.

“Do you have something that you don't understand? If you don't mind, feel free to consult with Mana.”

After saying that, she patted her chest with a “don” sound as if saying “leave it to me”.

Although Mana harbored a bit of distrust towards Mio at first, repeated contact with Mio's frank and lovely demeanor had Mana act like an older sister (contradiction) to Mio.

"Really? That's really...a great help."

As Mio said so, she pursed her eyebrows upward like she was troubled over something.

"Language is difficult. Even though I understand the meaning, the context changes depending on the circumstances and the emotions put in. I intended to grasp the meaning at that time, but now that I think about it I feel uneasy about whether Shin's words were captured accurately....."

"Hmm, Nii-sama'swait, what?"

Hearing that, Mana made an exaggerated twist of her neck.

".....That, what exactly did he say to you?"

Although she did not think it was possible for Shinji to do so, but if Mio could not understand it, it could be something obscene in Japanese. While thinking of an act of corruption being undergone, she tightened her grip on the bag of her blade Dorōmaru while in cold sweat.

Immediately afterwards, Mio replied while pointing to a page of the open dictionary.

"Shin asked me if I want to go on a *date*."

"—Huh?"

After hearing what Mio had said, Mana's eyes monetarily flickered as she let out an unexpected voice.

"D-date.....is that so?"

"Un. But a date means a man and women deciding on a time and place to meet. Or perhaps that isn't the meaning of a date? Giving the context of what Shin said, I believe it is the former. But I already see Shin every day, so I don't understand what he meant by a agreeing to establish a meeting time. I thought it was a metaphorical expression or something, but since I already replied, I feel bad about asking Shin again."

“.....”

As Mana remained silent for a while, she then let out a long “Haah.....” sigh of relief.

“.....I see, I see, so Nii-sama is actually, haah.....”

Mio gave an incredulous look as Mana laid down on the table in a curious manner.

“.....Mana?”

“Ah.....sorry. There was no way I could have imagined that Nii-sama was going to cause things to progress so quickly.”

Mana got back up as she scratched her face.

“Er.....well, how should I say this? You certainly have the correct meaning of the word. In short, Nii-sama wants you to go out with him.”

“Un. But it’s already quite normal for the two of us to go out together. Last time, he showed me around the city.”

“Well, that’s right. More than that, it’s about the relationship between the two of you. Nii-sama wants you to further his relationship with him.....not in friendship but in romance.”

As Mana finished speaking, Mio placed her hand against her chin in deep thought.

“Could it be that Shin wants to mate with me?”

“Ugh.....!?”

As a result of Mio’s excessive straightforwardness, Mana let out a violent cough.

“What’s wrong, Mana?”

“No, not that..... if one thinks thoroughly that’s not wrong, but.....well, dating is the stage before that, that is to say Nii-sama wants to show his affection to Mio.....”

Mana struggled to explain while with a troubled expression on her face.

.....Although it was a role she brought about on herself, explaining Nii-sama's romantic feelings to his target was quite tough. Mana thought that Shidou needed to treat her something delicious for this afterwards.

“_____”

As Mana struggled to find the right words to describe Shinji's intentions, Mio stared in amazement with her face a little bit flushed.

“Mio-san?”

While Mana slightly tilted her head in confusion, Mio hesitantly mumbled while speaking.

“.....Sure enough, language is incredible. Even after understanding the meaning, when applied to Shin and me, there is a strange feeling. Like this.....fufu, Shin having affections for me. That makes me.....feel happy.”

While speaking, Mio covered her red cheeks with her hands.

“.....Ahhh, really.”

Seeing such a cute gesture in front of her, even Mana could help but feel a little embarrassed.

Somehow, the girl in front of herself was just too loveable. Mana hoped that Mio would quickly marry her brother and let Mana call her Ane-sama.

In her heart, Mana let out a small scream.

Then, she struck the table while declaring in a loud voice.

“Okay, so let's get you ready!”

“Ready.....?”

“That's right. This is Nii-sama and Mio-san's first date. It mustn't fail. Suggestions and advice about Nii-sama must be prepared in advance.....but first, we have to buy Mio-san some new clothes!”

“Clothes? The ones that we have now should be sufficient. If not, I can always augment it if it isn't enough.”

While saying that, Mio twirled her fingertips.

Yes, Mio had the incredible power to reproduce any clothes that she has ever seen. In fact, the clothes she was wearing right now was a copy made from Mana's clothes.

“It's not the same thing as that! This is a matter of preparation! How could you wear borrowed armor on the battlefield!? I've thought about this before, but Mio-san should be wearing cuter clothes!”

Seeing Mana surge up and draw near in a feverish mindset, Mio felt a bead of sweat drop down from her cheeks in surprise.

“S-so it's like that.....but, when you say cuteness, what does that look like?”

“Hmm.....”

Hearing what Mio had said, Mana wrinkled her brow.

Although Mana herself had strongly advocated, she was not very familiar with fashion. If Mana had this ability, then the clothes that Mio had mimicked would have made her look even cuter.

While going through her thoughts for a bit, Mana let out a helpless sigh.

“.....It can't be helped. Although it wasn't my intention, I need to find some help. Hold on here for a minute.”

Then, she went up to pick up the telephone handset in the corner of the room. After dialing the number, she waited through the phone call sounds before finally establishing a connection to the other side.

“—Ah, hello, this is Takamiya. There's something I wish to discuss with you. Yes, actually, I wanted you to tell me the proper way of choosing clothes—”

After Mana had said that, the phone was unexpectedly disconnected.

Then, after a few minutes. Dadadadada.....the sounds of footsteps approaching grew closer. The large window in the living room was opened as a young girl appeared.

With hair tied in two bundles and a pair of eyes perched like a cat, it was a friend of Mana who also lived in the neighborhood, Homura Haruko.

“I've heard everything!”

Haruko excitedly shouted as she kicked off her shoes and ran up to grab Mana's hands.

"Mana has finally woken up fashionably! I was seriously a little bit worried that you would only wear school uniforms, jerseys, and kendo clothes. So what style do you want? Do you have time now? We should go to the store immediately——"

"Please calm down. No one said anything about choosing my clothes."

"Eh? That's not it?"

After hearing that, Haruko's eyes widened in surprise as she let out a discouraged sigh.

"Oh no.....I thought that springtime had finally come around for Mana. It's okay to be stoic, but won't you be able to find a boyfriend?"

As Haruko began to say some unwanted aid, Mana crossed her arms together while letting out a small groan.

"I don't want to be told that by Haruko. How is your progress going with Tatsuo-sempai?"

"T-that doesn't matter right now!"

Haruko protested while her face was flushed red. Apparently, it was easy to meddle in other people's love affairs but embarrassing when talking about one's own. Mana could only shrug her shoulders while pointing towards Mio, who was sitting next to them.

"Well, leaving that aside, I want you to help choose this person's clothes, not me."

Immediately afterwards, as Haruko's gaze followed Mana's instructions, her eyes jolted open as if accompanied by a "Wow!" sound.

"W-why is this beautiful girl.....!? Who on earth is she!?"

It seemed that Haruko had not noticed Mio up until now. She gave an exaggerated yelp of surprise.

"This is Takamiya Mio-san, my.....uh, she is a distant relative."

"Nice to meet you."

As if to match Mana's introduction, Mio lowered her head.

Haruko, who was shocked by Mio's spellbound appearance, regained control of the circumstances after a small quiver reached her shoulders.

"Excuse me! I am Homura Haruko, 14 years old and Mana's bosom friend."

"Bosom friend....."

"Ahhh, Mio-san, that word is uncommon; you need to worry about it."

Mana continued after clearing her throat out with a cough.

"So, that's it. I want you to help Mio-san choose her clothes for her date. You are good at this sort of thing."

"Rather than say good at, it's more like I'm best at it. Then, for reference, who is the lucky guy who gets to date this beautiful girl?"

Haruko spoke in a tone one would hear in a foreign movie. Despite feeling that it was troublesome, Mana still replied back.

"Well, it's my Nii-sama."

"Are you really serious!"

Haruko spoke with high tension in her voice as she crossed her arms against each other.

"Okay, I understand. In short, I have to coordinate Mio-san's outfit to look so stunning that your older brother can't help but fall madly in love. Hmm, I wonder how I should do this."

While talking, Haruko took a lollipop from her pocket and threw it into her mouth. It was a habit of Haruko's. It's said that her concentration increases while licking something.

"So you understand too. Well, my Nii-sama isn't the type of person to care about someone else's appearance. But that and this are two separate matters. A girl has to pay attention to the momentum."

Although Mio felt some confusion while looking at Mana and Haruko's very resolute attitudes, she still nodded her head in between saying, "w-well then...please".

Chapter 2: The Three Magicians

“_____”

On the battlefield developing over the skies of the peaceful residential area, Tobiichi Origami reached her hand out to catch the girl who had collapsed after using up all of her strength.

It was a beautiful girl wearing a custom CR-Unit made by DEM Industries. Her brilliant blond hair glistened underneath the sunshine.

Artemisia · Bell · Ashcroft. A DEM Wizard with the call sign number of Adeptus 2——and also an opponent who had clashed blades with Origami just a moment ago.

“Ku.....”

The moment her arm felt the additional weight, Origami semi-reflexively winched her eyebrows in pain.

But that came to no surprise. After all, the pure white CR-Unit and limited Astral Dress covering Origami’s body had been cut apart from a diagonal slash across her shoulder. From there, a tremendous amount of blood was overflowing.

“Fu——”

Origami exhaled out lightly as she manipulated the voluntary surrounding herself. While applying hemostasis and anesthesia, she supported Artemisia’s body through an invisible force.

Immediately afterwards she heard a loud voice coming from the front.

“Like I said, don’t force yourself. Even if the pain can be ignored, it doesn’t mean that the wound has healed.”

“That’s right! It has to be treated properly.....”

With the standard Self Defense Ground Force equipment, the former captain of the AST, Kusakabe Ryouko, and her subordinate Okamine Mikie stared at Origami’s wound with a worried look.

“.....It’s okay. I’m use to this level of injury.”

“Idiot. “I can bear it” and “it is okay” can be two completely different things. ———
Come, give her to me. Although it is possible to support her body with that field, but doing so will also strain your concentration efforts even further.”

While saying that, Ryouko expanded her own voluntary territory to help support Artemisia’s body.

Thanks to this, the burden placed on Origami’s brain felt a little reduced, allowing for somewhat easier area maintenance of the territory. Once again, Origami breathed out a sigh of relief.

The voluntary area territory generated by the realizer manifestation is literally “a space that the user desires”. Yet in spite of this, it was by no means omnipotent. If the load on the field was too much, the user’s brain would be inflicted with a corresponding amount of damage.

“Anyway.....”

Ryouko let out a small sigh as she watched Artemisia become enveloped in the invisible area.

“Although it was a one against many fight, I really didn’t expect to beat that Artemisia Ashcraft.....what kind of magic did you use?”

As the former top ace of the SSS, Artemisia was known to all Wizards. It wouldn’t be difficult to image that her strength was on par with Ellen Mathers in the ranking of most powerful Wizards among humanity. To be able to defeat her, no wonder Ryouko was so surprised.

That being said, what Ryouko just retorted was not completely accurate. Origami slightly shook her head.

“The person who landed the decisive blow was not me.”

“Eh? Then.....”

As Origami moved her head in a small retort, a voice was heard coming from the distance.

“Origami-san, are you okay.....!?”

“Mun, tis appeared to been successful.”

A gentle girl riding a giant rabbit puppet and a long haired girl holding a key-shaped staff glided through the sky as they turned to Origami.

Yoshino and Mukuro. Alongside Origami, they were the corresponding Spirit group sent to capture Artemisia.

In particular, Mukuro was literally the key person for this strategy.

Her Angel <Michael> was the key angel that could “open” and “close” anything. Even intangible things not visible to the naked eye—for example; sealed memories were not an exception.

Artemisia had been manipulated by the enemy due to her memories being altered by DEM. At the moment when Origami provided an opening, Mukuro would pierce Artemisia’s head with <Michael> in order to unlock her memory. That was the essence of the strategy in this operation.

As Origami briefly explained this strategy, Ryouko widened her eyes in surprise.

“Ha.....are you? I guess then you guys are Spirits.....”

Then, with a complex expression, Ryouko carefully observed the faces of Yoshino and Mukuro.

The other AST members who were behind Ryouko also curiously surrounded them.

“Then, you are <Hermit> and you are <Zodiac>?”

“Wow, no way, no way. I think this may be the first time I’ve seen a Spirit this close.”

“.....Say, isn’t that one so cute?”

The members wearing black CR-Units began chatting excitedly like female students.

“Mun?”

“T-that.....umm.”

Although Mukuro remained composed at the situation, Yoshino had shyly averted her eyes.

“Ahh, sorry. Seeing you guys at this distance, you look just like ordinary girls. It’s not clear why they said you were hostile organisms that were unable to talk.....”

Ryouko nodded her head with a wry smile.

The Spirits who were regarded as the enemy of mankind and the captain of the squad responsible for hunting them were now talking at such a close distance.it was truly a deep scene of reconciliation.

However, they did not have all the time in the world to chat idly. Although Artemisia’s large combat strength had been disabled, the battle was still continuing and Origami had not completed all of her objectives.

“Captain. Sorry for getting you involve again, but I have a request. Please bring Artemisia to <Fraxinus>.”

“<Fraxinus>?”

“That’s right. It’s the airborne battleship of <Ratatoskr> I mentioned earlier. I’ll tell you the details later, but if you bring Artemisia there, the <Bandersnatch> might be disabled.”

“Huh~?.....”

Ryouko sharply distorted the tips of eyebrows before quickly turning to raise the corners of her lips.

“Although I don’t know what is going on, it seems interesting. We’ve always been frustrated by DEM. If we can teach them what that is like, I’ll gladly cooperate.”

“Thank you. That’s a great help.”

Seeing Origami express her thanks, Ryouko waved her hand to show she didn’t mind before giving instructions to the other AST members.

“Alright. Form a defense formation centered around me. Set the voluntary territory to defensive mode to prevent attacks from the surroundings. It’s sufficient to carry out only the minimum amount of counterattacks. Our priority is the protection of Artemisia.”

“Understood!”

Having received their instructions, Mikie and her team members dispersed into position. As a team that specialized in coordinated attacks, their movements were quite nimble and rehearsed.

“Well, let’s go, Origami.”

“Please.”

As Origami nodded in response, Ryouko responded while raising an eyebrow.

“No, that wasn’t a question. You’re coming too. Are you planning on leaving that injury untreated? I don’t know what kind of battleship <Fraxinus> is, but if there is a medical facility onboard——”

However, Ryouko’s voice suddenly stopped short.

No, to be exact, her voice was drowned out by the screams coming from the behind.

“——Origami-san!”

A girl wearing a cyan colored CR-Unit screamed out Origami’s name while moving at a breakneck speed.

Her hair was bundled in a ponytail and there was a tear-shaped mole underneath her left eye. There was no mistaking these characteristics; it was Takamiya Mana, a Wizard of <Ratatoskr> that was sent to eliminate the surrounding enemies alongside Yoshino and Mukuro.

With strained bloodshot eyes, it was a menacing look unimaginable of the usual Mana, as she tried to shout something.

Just then——

Finally, Origami noticed.

Behind the front line there was a terrifying power, “something” had emerged.

“What——”

“.....!?”

As they turned around, Origami and the others fell speechless.

——It was a sphere.

In the midst of the fierce battle in the sky, a large round object had appeared.

A peculiar feeling of oppression. The premonition of death. Even though there was a considerable distance from it, just gazing at “that thing” produced the sensation of being trapped in lethal poison.

However, that was not the end.

The sphere began to stir until it began blossoming like a flower bud.

Afterwards, numerous particles of light began scattering from the center.

And its direction——quickly approached Origami and the others.

“.....! Defensive formation!”

“Understood.....!”

Upon Ryouko’s command, the AST members responded by expanding the voluntary territory in order to protect Origami and the others.

However——it was useless. Origami felt a chill strike her stomach as she yelled in trembling voice.”

“.....! No. Escape!”

“It’s okay.....! Origami-san, you come with us——”

Just at that moment.

A descending particle of light easily slipped through the voluntary territory that should have been protecting them and touched Mikie’s body, who had been extending her arms to protect Origami.

Immediately afterwards, Mikie’s body lost all of its strength as she fell to the ground like a broken puppet with its strings severed.

No, not only Mikie. Several AST members that came into contact with the particles of light all fell from the sky as well.

“.....!”

“Wait——”

Origami and the surviving Wizards fled from that spot while expanding the territory to catch the bodies of their teammates who were falling.

“What’s wrong? Are you okay!? What happened——”

Ryouko tried to stir awake the members who were being pulled up by the voluntary territory——but then she suddenly turned speechless.

“W-what’s going on, this is..... death.....?”

“.....!?”

Origami furrowed her brow as she used the voluntary territory to drag Mikie’s body to her hand, reaching out to touch her neck.

No sign of pulse or breathing.

Life activity had completely stopped.

“——”

Reasons, unknown.

Principle, unknown.

The only certainty was that those who touched the particles of light emitted from the giant sphere had all just died.

The place where the sphere had emerged, it was the direction where Shidou, Tohka, and the Yamai sisters went to clean up the <Nibelcol>.

“.....! Shidou!”

Origami clenched her fist while shooting a quick glance towards Ryouko.

“——Captain, please take Mikie and the others to <Ratatoskr>. If you use the medical realizer apparatus there, resuscitation may still be possible.”

“Ah, alright.....! You mean——”

Origami kicked against the air and flew towards the distance without finish listening to what Ryouko had said.



——If there is an encounter, there will also be a farewell.

Although this expression was stale, it was undoubtedly the truth.

Both the time of meeting and parting are truly the same. No matter how intimate the relationship, as long as he and I are no longer the same people as before, any positive encounter will someday be eclipsed by negative farewell.

No matter the result, it will eventually return to zero. Regardless of the process, everything will eventually offset each other.

But of course, the human heart is not so simple.

The more noble intentions one might have, the more negative emotions the other will feel during the time of parting.

That is all that can be done for a person once acquainted on the same side as yourself.

Parents, siblings——or even a childhood friend.

There was an encounter. There was an encounter for even those who did not recognize it at the time.

An unexpected meeting, before even one noticed, it felt natural to stay together side by side.

——If such a person disappeared from one’s side, what sort of emotions would the other remember?

Under these circumstances when not recognizing the blissful times and struck by an unexpected misfortune. One would be unable to resist against unjustness. It would leave a deep scar in a person's heart.

That being said, if it was caused by the rapid progress of a rival, people would feel lonely, but keep the light of hope lit in one's heart.

If this were the result of a separation caused between life and death, people would be struck by grief, but they will still keep the warm memories in their hearts.

However, if this separation was caused by the other sides' betrayal——

There was no doubt it was similar emotion to what Ellen Mathers feels when remembering Elliot Woodman.

“——Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

With a scream similar to a roar, Ellen waved her laser blade <Caledfwlch>. The woven blade of thick magic left a streak of light towards her opponent below——ready to explode and break open Woodman.

A slash released from humanity strongest Wizard who was attacking with all of her might. Even a Spirit's Astral Dress would be splintered from such a blow.

“Fu——”

In comparison, Elliot had used his laser rifle to parry the blow.

“Ha, what an amazing amount of maryoku. But the attack is too straightforward. I understand the happy reunion after so much time has passed, but please calm down a bit, Ellen.”

“Shut up!”

Ellen roared as if her throat felt nauseous. Then, she gripped ever once of her strength into her sword hilt as she prepared another slash.

Two times. Three times. Four times——several times.

Flashes of magical energy fluttered like fireworks.

In the eyes of an ordinary person, one would only see a glimmering light. Yet, by the time the brain recognized this beautiful moment, one's body would already be severed into more than ten pieces of mincemeat.

However, Woodman accurately captured the trajectory of the invisible sword swings, dodging, blocking, and warding off each blow.

An exceedingly terrifying reaction time. At this level, perhaps even Artemisia would not be able to properly respond to all of Ellen's attacks.

Despite that being said, this was not the case here.

Ellen's eyes were now focused onto one of the founding members of DEM, Elliot Baldwin Woodman.

One of the few genuine Magicians left on this world—and also the first artificial Wizard in this world.

Although it is Ellen who now deserves the title of the World's Strongest Wizard, she had learned how to use the Realizer manifestation device from Woodman. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that, in a sense, he was Ellen's teacher. Although Ellen had the advantage in total magical power generated, Woodman was far superior in controlling the realizer manifestation device and manipulating the voluntary territory.

But—no, this was why Ellen's passion was further incensed.

“Why.....why did you betray us!? Elliot.....!”

Yes, that's right.

Ever since Woodman and the others left Ellen, it was a residual dissatisfaction that concealed within her chest.

The memory of that day was still burned into her mind. Ellen, and her sister Karen, Westcott, and Woodman, the four them sworn while watching their hometown set ablaze.

Retaliation against human beings, revenge on mankind. Against the world—a rebellion.

The creation of a new order for magicians. Rewriting the old world. In order to realize that dream-like tale, Ellen and the others continued their meticulous research until their blood began to boil.

Realizer manifestation device. Wizards. Aerial warships. Artificial dolls. ——The multitude of supernormal techniques that made up DEM industries were nothing more than a byproduct of that.

Everything for the sake of the new world.

Everything to dispel the lingering regrets of their compatriots.

Perhaps, it was because of that.

“You.....betrayed our vow. Not only that, you’ve deceived Karen and usurped the results of our research. And appearing before us as an enemy. This sin can only be redeemed through death.....!”

Indignation. Curses. Resentment. While conveying all of the negative emotions she could think of into words, Ellen screamed.

Then, Woodman, who had been successfully parrying Ellen’s blows, let out a small sigh.

“I feel quite sorry to you guys.No, I don’t remember ever deceiving Karen. Well, before I even noticed, she had already packed everything up by my side. No matter what, I don’t want to be your enemy. It’s just that my path and yours came into conflict in a strange way.”

“Nonsense.....!”

“It’s not nonsense. The hatred of our village being burned down. The hatred of our compatriots being killed has not completely disappeared. It’s just——”

At that moment——Woodman suddenly cut off his words.

“.....”

But Ellen also noticed his reason.

“Thump”, the sound of the world’s pulse. A flow of mana that border on impossibility. It was the same feeling as the primordial Spirit that Ellen and the others had created.

Perhaps——it had appeared. That woman. And it was somewhere not far from here.

“.....”

Woodman continued to speak while ruefully narrowing his eyes.

“.....When I first saw that Spirit, I thought to myself. ‘.....Ah, how beautiful.’ Afterwards, I considered it. Although it was for revenge, was it truly okay to sacrifice this unrelated child. No, what’s different from that, then those who burned down our hometown.....ah.”

As Woodman said that, Ellen tightly shut her eyes. Facing against that line of sight, there was some sadness and pity.

“.....!”

Hearing those words, looking at that gaze, Ellen felt the feeling of frustration as if her heart was roasted in an inferno.

There wasn’t the slightest expectation that the source began with the primordial Spirit. However, for the current Ellen, those sorts of words lacked any meaningful request. Since killing the traitor in front of her was the meaning for Ellen’s existence right now.

“Don’t.....screw around!”

Ellen let out a scream as she raised her arms and manipulated the voluntary territory with her mind.

“<Chastiefol>!”

Immediately afterwards, numerous razor edges installed in the back of CR-unit injected out and flew spinning out like shuriken at Woodman as their target.

“Tch——”

Even for Woodman, at such a close distance he would be unable to handle a barrage of that intensity. Woodman squinted his eyes as he assumed a defensive stance by increasing the strength of the voluntary field.

However, that sort of behavior was predictable. Ellen sharpened her gaze as she issued out an instruction from her brain.

At that instant, the magical missile mounted on the razor edges of <Chastiefol> had activated with the goal of unleashing of torrential barrage before Woodman's eye.

Although this was an auxiliary weapon, it was still a missile of sufficient power and quantity. An ordinary Wizard would have already died in the explosion just now.

However, the opponent was Woodman. Even if it was Ellen, she didn't think that he would be fatally wounded.

The real purpose of the offense was to use the sudden explosion to capture Woodman's momentary attention and use the resulting smokescreen to bind his field of vision.

While Ellen was operating the voluntary territory to release <Caledfwlch> into the air, the back of her CR-Unit extended outward over her left shoulder.

The Cr-Unit <Pendragon>, crowned with the name of the king, it naturally accompanied Ellen who boasted the greatest maximum output.

If someone who was unaware had seen this, they might have confused it with an enormous muzzle.

However this was not a huge cannon.

It was——

“Penetrate! <Rhongomiant>!!”

——just a long, long spear of light.

Upon Ellen's command, light it up from the unit as a massive chunk of maryoku propelled forward.

It was a simple weapon that concentrated all of Ellen's magic into a single point.

But. No. Because of this——it was the strongest.

It wasn't a complex mechanism for one seeking a spear.

It was only a force designed to penetrate the enemy.

And there was no such thing in the world that cannot be penetrated by Ellen's spear, which was strongest among the human race.

But.

“.....!?”

Ellen's eyebrows began to twitch back and forth.

Just before <Rhongomiant > struck, the dissipated smoke allowed her to see Woodman's slightly visible posture.

Woodman had already shed away his defensive stance.

And also——facing forward with towards Ellen with his unit at hand.

It took Ellen to realize that it was the previous laser rifle.

That being said, such a reaction was to be expected. After being deformed, the laser rifle assumed a completely different shape than before.

Rather than a rifle, it was now more similar to an enormous artillery unit.

Yes, as if just like —— Ellen's <Rhongomiant>.

“<Gun——gnir!”

Accompanied by Woodman's voice, magical light was released from the unit he held.

It clashed against Ellen's <Rhongomiant> in the air.

The sky was dyed with a brilliant white hue.



“.....Ha,ha.”

Tohka took in deep breaths in order to adjust her heartbeat that was pacing like hasty alarm bell.

However, in every direction, her heart could not calm down at all. Her throat tightened. The hands holding her sword were trembling. Every cell in her body was sending a warning signal to not fight the enemy before them.

That’s right. There was no such thing as those without fear on this earth when faced against Mio’s overwhelming power.

No——if said more correctly, there were no survivors left except for Tohka, the Yamai sisters, and Mio herself.

The grains of light emitted from the giant flower in the sky had killed off all of the surrounding <Nibelcol> and Wizards in just mere moments.

No, not only that. Even inorganic matter like the <Bandersnatch> and DEM’s airborne ships were also crushed.

It was an abnormal sight that disobeyed nature’s providence through taking the lifetime of a target in an instant.

Although there were still fierce battles fought in the sky far away, it was only this area that resembled the eye of a typhoon.

“.....”

As Tohka took in a breathless gulp, she felt a small pain in her parched throat.

Mio. Takamiya Mio.

The Spirit bearing the name of God. A woman who had just scattered death. Just being caught in her gaze caused an illusion of her skin being torn apart.

However, Tohka and the others couldn’t retreat.

Tohka loves Shidou.

Because of Shidou, Tohka was saved. Because of Shidou, Tohka had changed so much. Because there was Shidou——Tohka was able to understand such affection. If Tohka failed to stop Mio here, than all this would be treated as if it had never existed.

The man known as Itsuka Shidou would be erased without the slightest hint of jest.

Such a matter was absolutely unforgivable.

Therefore, Tohka continued forward with her sword pointed at her enemy despite her body trembling in fear.

“Kaguya, Yuzuru.Can you continue?”

Tohka quietly whispered as she continued her gaze onto Mio. Kaguya and Yuzuru, who were beside her left and right side respectively, replied back while slightly shaking their shoulders.

“Who are you talking down to? Of course there is no problem.....!”

“Agreement. No matter how powerful the enemy, the Yamai sisters will not retreat.”

“.....Umu.”

Tohka gave a slight nod after hearing the reliable words of the two. Then, while keeping her gaze on Mio, she kicked against the ground.

“Haaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!”

She raised <Sandalphon> as she swung down with all her might. The streaks of reiryoku flicking off from the sword’s trajectory allowed for a long distant slash against Mio.

“.....”

However, Mio did not attempt to dodge. She kept a calm look as she looked up at Tohka.

Then, <Sandalphon>’s slash, which boasted a tremendous power was impeded just as it was on the verge of making contact against Mio’s body. Yes, it was like there was an invisible wall surrounding Mio.

“Ku.....”

However, Tohka did not yield. Placing even more power on her grip holding <Sandalphon>, she continued to slash away repeatedly.

“Ahhhhhhhh!”

With a fierce cry, Tohka had already lost track of the number of slashes that were already released. Kicking against the sky, she made a bold leap towards Mio. She lunged forward, with the tip of <Sandalphon> preparing for decapitating strike.

But——the results were the same.

“.....Sorry, but you can’t beat me with this.”

Mio muttered quietly as she looked down at <Sandalphon>, which had stopped just before reaching her throat.

“——”

While accepting the declaration, Tohka let out a smile while raising the corners for her mouth.

“Ahh——that’s probably right.”

“.....What?”

Mio sensed an unfathomable feeling as her eyebrows twitched.

But that reaction was natural as well.

While distracted by the barrage of hits, the Yamai sisters had snuck up behind Mio, with a huge bow carried between the two of them.

Yes, the strongest blow of the Yamai sisters’ <Raphael>.

A bow and arrow formed from a combination of Kaguya’s <El Re'em> and Yuzuru’s <El Na'ash>.

And its name was——

“——<Raphael>!”

“Agreement. ——<El Kanaph>!”

Kaguya and Yuzuru called out the name in unison as they fired the arrow. The huge conical arrow with violent wind pressure blew away the surrounding rubble as it approached Mio.

“.....”

Mio let out a gentle sigh as she raised her hand for the first time to defend against the attack.

——Direct hit. The outrageously strong shockwaves sent from the arrow pried the paved road open like a carpet being lifted up. All of the surrounding objects scattered away like ammunition, flinging against each other before crumbling away.

However, even that was not enough to break Mio’s barrier. Even amidst the storm of the hurricane, Mio had stopped the attack to the point where her hair didn’t even flutter about.

“.....It’s a brilliant surprise attack. But——”

Mio suddenly cut herself off just then.

Perhaps, she had just noticed it.

Tohka’s persistent attacks served as a distraction for the Yamai sister’s <El Kanaph>.

But even this <El Kanaph> was also another faint.

<Sandalphon>——<Halvanhelev>!!”

Tohka cried out that name as she plucked out a towering sword from the earth and raised it to the heavens.

That’s right. Tohka had summoned her throne and combined it onto <Sandalphon>’s blade in the mere moments Mio had looked away from her.

There was neither prior consultation nor was there a signal they prepared in advance from any special training accumulated.

However, Tohka was confident.

If it were the Yamai sisters, who had also undergone life or death battles numerous times, than they would have surely reached this conclusion.....!

“Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh——”

As Tohka shouted to the point of her throat feeling crushed, she swung down the huge sword at Mio.

The sky was split,

The earth trembled,

——the world creaked.

The destructive overwhelming power exploded behind Mio as she was preoccupied defending against the arrow of wind.

Certainty, there was a sturdy barrier surrounding Mio’s body. It would be impossible to damage her with a half-hearted attack.

However, if she received the strongest blows from both the two angels <Sandalphon> and <Raphael>, perhaps——!

“Fall.....ahhhhhhhh!”

“Pene——trate ! Tumble now.....!”

“Haaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!”

Kaguya, Yuzuru, and Tohka’s screams roared even inside the raging winds.

“——Ahhhh.....——”

A few seconds later, Tohka, who had used up all of her strength in the last blow, fell to the ground in exhaustion.

The enormous <Halvanhelev> broke into fragments that melted away into the air, leaving behind only the core of <Sandalphon>.

“U-ugh.....”

Her entire body felt a sharp pain in response to the attack. With trembling hands and feet, Tohka used <Sandalphon> as a cane to support herself back up. The dense sand and dust of their surroundings gradually dispersed little by little, soon exposing the large crater dug into the ground by Tohka and the Yamai sister’s two way attack.

But——Mio’s figure wasn’t over there.

“.....!”

Tohka widened in her eyes in shock as she hastily checked her surroundings. If the opponent had been an ordinary Wizard, it wouldn’t be unbelievable that not even a speck of dust remained.

However, the opponent was the Spirit of Origin• Takamiya Mio. Of course, the blow was intended to break her barrier, but Tohka wasn’t naïve enough to think that was enough to determine the outcome.

Did she avoid it? Or perhaps, she hid herself after the barrier was destroyed in accordance to Tohka’s plan——

Then, at the next moment,

“.....!”

Having caught it at the edge of her sight, Tohka felt her breathing come to a stop. Immediately afterwards, she shouted.

“Kaguya! Behind!”

Yes, in about ten meters behind Kaguya, Mio stood there without any injuries.

“Eh——?”

Perhaps hearing what Tohka had said, Kaguya raised her brow.

But——it was too late.

Just as Kaguya was about to turn around, a tentacle like protrusion from Mio's astral dress had pierced through Kaguya's chest.

“Ah———?:

Kaguya's eyes fell wide open in horror as she look down at her chest.

A thin and elastic sash of light, that seemed to have been an extension of her clothes.

This unreliability thin cloth had run through Kaguya's body before exposing its tip to the air.

No.....perhaps it wouldn't be appropriate to describe it as a penetrative stab. In fact, there were no drops of blood dripping from her chest.

But at the very tip.

A fragment of a crystal emitting an orange glow was wrapped by the sash.

“What.....”

Looking at the sight, Tohka's expression trembled in fear.

——Sephira Crystal. The source of a Spirit's power.

There was no doubt. The Sephira Crystal she had heard about from Kotori and Miku had been instantly extracted from Kaguya's body.

“.....”

Mio slightly raised her hand. Then, the piece of cloth that had pierced through Kaguya quickly retracted back to Mio in the blink of an eye.

Of course, alongside the Sephira Crystal wrapped around as well.

“Ka.....fu.....”

Now free from the band of light, Kaguya breathing fell ragged before falling aside. As if in conformity with that gesture, the Limited Astral Dress she was wearing also disappearing into particles of light.

“.....! Kaguya!”

Yuzuru immediately ran to support Kaguya before her body could touch the ground.

“Yu——zuru.”

Kaguya faintly moved her lips while in Yuzuru’s arms——

But then, all strength left her body as nothing was said afterwards.

“Kaguya.....? Kaguya! What’s wrong, Kaguya.....!”

Yuzuru began to desperately shake Kaguya’s shoulders, but her flaccid body still didn’t show any signs of response.

Yuzuru gently pressed her ears against Kaguya’s chest, ——while listening, there wasn’t even the small hint of breathing left.

“Kagu, ya.....”

Then, while looking on at Yuzuru, Mio quietly announced.

“.....This area is already under the control of <Ain Soph Aur>. It’s not a space that one can bear without reiryoku or maryoku.”

“—————”

While listening to those words.

Yuzuru gently swayed her body.

“.....!”

It was a moment later that Tohka realized.

As Kaguya fell to the ground, Yuzuru had disappeared———or rather, she blitzed towards Mio at speed that even Tohka's eyes could not follow.

[illegible]

It was the roar of the beast that was completely unimaginable from the usual Yuzuru.

Using the wind to guide her pendulum, Yuzuru directed it at Mio.

“.....! Don’t do it Yuzuru! Run——”

At one beat too slow, Tohka cried out.

However at that time, another band of light spiraled past the pendulum before catching——

“Gu——ah……!?”

The tip was buried in Yuzuru's chest.

“Yuzuru!”

As Tohka yelled out her name, Yuzuru turned to Tohka's direction for a moment.

“Apolo...gy...sor.....rry, Toh.....ka.....Kagu.....ya.....”

Yuzuru responded weakly before collapsing down.

Then, just like Kaguya before her, the limited Astral Dress covering her body faded away into particles of light.

“.....Now.”

Mio manipulated the band of light, hauling back the fragment of the Sephira Crystal that she had snatched away from Yuzuru.

Then, after superimposing with the piece in her hand taken from Kaguya, she merged the two pieces into a whole crystal before pressing it against her chest. With a glimmering light, the Sephira Crystal was swallowed into Mio's body.

Immediately after the Sephira Crystal completely disappeared, one of the ten stars behind Mio gave off a dim glow.

“.....That makes two.”

“——Mio, you.....!”

Tohka gritted with the back of her teeth as she stood up again while ignoring the pain of using up all of her might and tremendous fatigue.

Too unexpectedly and easily——both Kaguya and Yuzuru had been killed.

It was a scene detached from reality. There were no wounds on either of their bodies. From another perspective, it looked like they had fallen asleep.

However, the feeling of reiryoku coming from the two of them up until now was now being emitted from the body of the enemy.

“.....”

There was tremendous anger, sorrow, and despair swirling in Tohka’s heart.

However, those feelings would only hinder her right now. Tohka took in a deep breath to suppress the burning passion in her heart.

This was not an opponent she could defeat by losing herself in the fight. While the fiery passion was needed to give her all, what she needed most was a sense of calmness.

Neither forgetting nor ignoring the anger for the one that killed them, she had to carry on with those thoughts in mind.

The next moment, Tohka felt her body increase in heat. Yes, that was the sensation of when a complete Astral Dress had manifested——

“.....I can’t allow that.”

However, after hearing that while narrowing her eyes, the flow of reiryoku that caused Tohka’s body to increase in temperature gradually grew slower.

“What.....!”

“.....If the spiritual pathway is completely reversed, than it will take more time to seal it into Shin again. Sorry, but I’ve temporarily narrowed down your pathway.”

While speaking, Mio slowly raised her hand.

“.....You are a bit troublesome, originally I wanted to postpone that, but——

With a flick of her wrist, several bands of light coming from Mio formed a gooseneck shape.

“.....It’s over.”

As Mio finished that remark, the bands of light honed in on Tohka.

“Ku——”

Tohka distorted her brow as she used <Sandalphon> to slice apart the bands of light.

No——it was only an attempt at cutting off the bands of light.

The bands of light, contrary to its fragile appearance, boasted a terrifying strength and willpower. Even if struck, by <Sandalphon>, it merely changed its trajectory before approaching again.

“——!”

Tohka twisted her body in order to shake off the bands of light. However, due to the constant release of attacks, she couldn’t maintain her posture as her movements fell a beat too slow.

For Mio, that momentarily lag was more than enough to easily catch Tohka. A band of light quickly approached Tohka’s chest.

But

“What.....!”

At that moment, Tohka’s eyes widened.

But that was a natural response. Suddenly, a hand pulled her back her as her vision grew dark. Even if it wasn’t Tohka, everyone else would have likely made a similar response.

A moment later, Tohka was able to see the light again.

“Ah.....? T-this is.....”

Tohka blinked as she felt a sense of incongruity.

What spread before her was the same battlefield as before. Mio was in front of her, and <Ain Soph Aur> was in the sky. On the ground, Kaguya and Yuzuru were still laying down.

However, everything was positioned at a distance farther than before her vision grew dark. In the fact, the bands of light that were once quickly approaching her were now at a considerable distance away.

“Mun.....are you alright Tohka?”

Tohka turned around as she heard a voice coming from behind.

“! Mukuro!”

That’s right. Despite not knowing when she appeared, Mukuro was standing beside Tohka while holding her signature key-shape staff.

Then, she finally noticed. Just as Tohka was about to be pierced by the band of light, she was pulled out of that dilemma by a “hole” opened in space by Mukuro.

“Are you okay, Tohka-san.....!”

Immediately afterwards, Origami, Yoshino, and Mana all descended down towards Tohka.

They had also likely recognized the anomaly and rushed here.

“——Tohka, Kaguya and Yuzuru are.”

With her pure white clothes still blemished from blood, Origami spoke while calmly looking at the two people lying on the floor.

“.....”

Tohka gritted her teeth before silently nodding.

“.....Yes.”

Origami's response was simple. A brief word and a light breathe in. No change could be seen from her expression.

However——she understood. Tohka glanced at Origami's face as she was biting against her lip.

Tohka, who had known Origami for a while, and even crossed swords against her, knew that there was a burning fury igniting underneath her calm expression.

Of course it was not just Origami. Yoshino, Mukuro, and also Mana, although everyone's reactions weren't the same, they all glared at their enemy with hostility.

“So this is the Spirit of Origin. Hmm, that unpleasant atmosphere sure is loathsome.”

Mana spat out while still glaring at Mio.

“.....Ah, long time no see, Mana.”

“.....What did you say?”

Mana gave a distorted glare at the reply. However, Mio continued without paying heed to that and continued.

“.....I have to collect the Sephira Crystals right now. There's no need for you to die. You should leave here from a bit.”

Mio spoke as if urging Mana to retreat.

But of course Mana did not relent. Rather her attention was focused on her enemy as she strained her facial expression.

Having likely foreseen this reaction, Mio gently sighed.

“That frankness hasn't changed a bit. ——It can't be helped. Shin will be able to come back if I'm too carefree. I'll have to finish this quickly.”

As Mio said that——she raised her hand in the air, as if to beckon <Ain Soph Aur>.



“Please——catch up.....”

While manipulating the wind surrounding his body, Shidou was moving a tremendous speed past the mountains of rubble.

Just above, <Ratatoskr> was still fighting against the DEM airships and Wizards. Although he was trying to suppress his own presence as much as possible; since he was still on the ground, the occasional bomb dropping down still exploded around his path.

Since he had already used <Michael> to unlock the door from the refugee, it may have been possible to shorten the distance even faster. In fact, before being sealed, Mukuro had used it to open holes in space in order to move around instantaneously.

However, there was also a high risk of failure. It had only been recently that Shidou sealed Mukuro’s reiryoku. He had never experimented with long distance travel using <Michael> before, so he wasn’t fully sure that he could grasp with certain the correct location from the exit.

If the exit led to an even further location, it would waste precious time. In a race against the clock, this could lead to a fatal mistake.

Therefore——Shidou had chosen <Raphael> instead.

Although the distance from the shelter and that site was still far, it was still a distance traversable on feet.

The fastest Angel capable of manipulating wind, for Shidou who was rushing through the ground using that power, it was not a long distance.

“.....!?”

At that moment.

While pushing forward towards Tohka and the others, Shidou frowned as an uncomfortable feeling attacked his body. For a moment, his concentration wavered and his speed weakened.

“What happened.....what is this.....”

With tension written on his face, Shidou placed his hand against his chest as he adjusted his breathing.

It was neither a stray bullet that struck him nor stress from overusing the Angel. In fact, there appeared to be no irregularities with his body.

But something definitely happened. Yes, it was as if the wind of <Raphael> was trembling for a moment.

“Kaguya.....Yuzuru.....?”

Shidou felt his throat tighten from the ominous premonition. Shidou held his breath before once again kicked against the ground to push forward.

But——at that moment.

As if trying to block his way, an explosion came rolling ahead.

“.....!?”

At that time, he thought it was another flashy stray bullet——but that wasn’t it. This was a deliberate attack aimed at Shidou.

What’s more, Shidou could see it clearly. Just before the explosion occurred, there were several pieces of paper flying from above.

“——<Nibelcol>.....!”

Shidou shouted that name as he assumed a more guarded stance.

Then, from the several pieces of paper fluttering from the residue smoke, several girls with the same appearance emerged out.

“Found you, Itsuka Shidou.”

“Is it true that you choose to come back here?”

Despite joking around just now, the <Nibelcol> were glaring at Shidou with murderous intent.

However, that was to be expected. After all, the number of <Nibelcol> had been greatly reduced by a storm of kisses from Shidou.

“Ku.....”

Shidou clenched his teeth in irritation. He had to return back to Tohka and the others' side as soon as possible. But at the worst possible timing, he had encountered the most undesired opponent.

However, it would have been a bad move to allow the adversary to recognize this. Shidou relaxed his expression as he smiled at the <Nibelcol>.

“——Did you want to see me that much, koneko-chan?”

“Hiii——”

Hearing Shidou's words, the <Nibelcol> let out a frightened cry.As expected, the words landed on target and made the <Nibelcol> react like flustered schoolgirls.But seeing this strong reaction firsthand surprised even Shidou a little.

Although it would be in bad taste to dominate the opponent through words, it was in his best interest for the <Nibelcol> to run away in fear right now.

“——Calm down <Nibelcol>.”

However, at that time.

A voice was heard that interrupted Shidou's thoughts.

“Wha.....”

Shidou could help but frown. ——That voice sounded familiar.

He heard it once before in September in DEM's Japanese Branch Office.

He heard the voice once again in January inside <Ratatoskr>'s secret base.

As if to confirm his premonition, a man came out from the shadow of the rubble.

Dim ash-gray hair and eyes with a dull metallic hue, there was a strange threatening atmosphere coming from him that was different from confronting a Spirit or Wizard.

Yes, he was the executive director of DEM industries and the starting point for this battle.

The first man that started the conflict over the Spirits.

“Now then, Itsuka Shidou. Let’s decide here.

——Decide who is more qualified for the power of the Spirits.”

Isaac Westcott gently spread his arms out as he spoke.

Fragmentary Chapter /3: School

“Hah.”

During the morning and inside the classroom.

Takamiya Shinji let out a couple of sighs as he buried his face in his desk

The mysterious disaster that gouged out the entire space— about two weeks had passed since the spacequake had struck the town. Since the high school Shinji and the others attended miraculously avoided damage, classes had resumed a few days ago.

In the event of a large scale disaster, schools usually became the site of refugee for victims. However, the residents of the previous disaster had disappeared alongside the city. As a result, there was a surprising few number of evacuated people compared to the magnitudes of the disaster.

Nevertheless, the scenery of the classroom was not the same as before the disaster had struck. There were one or two desks decorated with flower offerings that had no effect. Although they were free from the disaster, some students were still bedridden due to the mental shock. In fact, some students had moved to other prefectures due to the fear of the reoccurrence of spacequakes here.

Shinji’s sigh was not completely unrelated to this.

He felt some sadness while remembering the normal conversations of students who had suddenly disappeared. And of course, concerns over what was going to become of his own surroundings when going forward.

However, human adaptability was still incomparable. Shinji and the other classmates left behind slowly grew accustomed to the new circumstances.

In the beginning, many cried for the deaths of their friends, the repetition of each passing school days allowed for their smiles to gradually return.

The inexplicable, undefinable, and uncertainty feelings of those left behind. In any case, in order to move on from such conditions, the young boys and girls had to continue picking up the scattered pieces every day.

“.....Haah.”

However, in that environment, even if sighing would appear somewhat imprudent, there was another meaning behind Shinji’s groans.

“That’s quite the number of sighs, Takamiya-kun.”

“.....Hmm?”

As Shinji lost track of how many sighs he just gave out, an unexpected voice was heard suddenly.

As he looked for the source of the voice, he saw that there was young boy with glasses and a gentle appearance. Shinji briefly let out an “ah” as he raised his head.

“Good morning, Itsuka.”

“Yeah, good morning.”

Shinji’s friend, Tatsuo Itsuka replied back with a smile as he pulled his head over.

“Then, what’s wrong? Are you worried about something?”

“Uh.....ah, well, kinda.”

Shinji gave of a wry smile as he gave off his words in a vague tone.

“Hmmm.....”

Then, after watching his expression for a moment, Tatsuo muttered to himself.

“.....Could it be a girl that you like?”

“—Pfff.”

Hearing what was said, Shinji started to cough involuntarily. In turn, his surprised classmates gazed curiously at him.

“Y-you.....why did you have to suddenly say something so weird.”

“Eh, is that right? It seems my intuition is quite accurate.”

“.....”

Faced with Tatsuo’s accusation, Shinji’s face flushed red as he averted his eyes.

.....Shamefully, that was indeed the case. Mio's face had been flickering in his mind at all times since inviting her out on a date yesterday, causing everything else to wander in his thoughts aimlessly.

“Hihihi——”

“What are you talking about.”

“We also want to join in!”

Three of their female classmates seemed to have overheard their conversation with interest as they came over. They were three close friends in Shinji's class, Ako, Mako, and Miko.

“W-what are you guys, no it's nothing special.”

“Don't say that. Tell us, and we'll listen to you, master~.”

“I never expected spring to come for harmless Takamiya-kun——”

“Now then, what kind of person is this girl? Let's talk about it.”

“Y-you guys.....”

At that moment.

“——Shin.”

As Shinji was surrounded by the three of them, he suddenly heard a familiar voice coming from the entrance of the classroom.

“Huh——”

While gazing there, Shinji's eyes stared blankly.

No, it wasn't just Shinji. All the students looked on at that young girl had a dumbfounded stare.

But that was to be expected. After all, a beautiful young girl was standing there.

“M-Mio.....?”

As Shinji's expression was marked by astonishment, he cried out the girl's name.

Then, Mio responded back with a smile. She either didn't notice or did not care about being the center of attention, as she walked boldly towards Shinji at a brisk pace.

“W-why are you here.....”

“Here, you left this behind.”

As Shinji asked with a bead of sweat dripping down his neck, Mio took out a lunch box from her bag and placed it at the table.

“Ah.....”

Looking at that, he searched inside his own bag.When he went out today, his thoughts were already focused so much on Mio that he had absent-mindedly forgotten to put his lunch in his bag.

“Thank you.....that's of great help.”

“Hehe.....helpful to Shin.”

Mio let out a cheerful giggle before waving back to him.

“Then, I'm heading back.”

“A-ah.”

As Shinji struggled to give a reply, Mio gave a slight nod while walking back.

However, at that time, as if remembering something, she turned around before asking.

“—I'm looking forward to the date next time. Shin, are you looking forward to it as well?”

Mio replied back with a lovely smile.

“.....!”

Because it was too adorable, Shinji nearly choked on his own breath.

“Ah, um.....I know.”

“Um, good-bye, Shin.”

As Shidou was struggling to find the words to speak, Mio waved again before leaving.

“.....”

The classroom fell into a momentary silence.

“.....Uh.”

As if anticipating the upcoming storm that would break out in a few seconds, Shinji wanted to sneak out before anyone could speak.

But—it was too late. Just as he was halfway about to leave, someone suddenly grabbed his neck and forced him to sit down.

“Hey, who was that beautiful girl just now, Takamiya-kun!?”

“Perhaps it’s the rumored girlfriend?”

“I haven’t heard of that!”

“Ah, how beautiful, Takamiya-kun.”

.....And etc.

Until homeroom began, Shinji was tightly surrounded by all of his classmates.

Chapter 3: The Fallen Folium of Yggdrasil

When acquainted with people, it wasn't long before Isaac Westcott noticed the difference between himself and others

Westcott was a brilliant boy. If he were to be classified as a child prodigy or genius, then there would have been no objections.

In the hidden village that inherited the blood of Magicians, his skills and excellence exceeded his contemporaries—no, his control over mana was even better than the adults. Only the elders and teachers of the village, and Elliot who self-appointed himself as his rival, could compete with him.

Moreover, it wasn't just that. Linguistics, arithmetic, sports—Westcott had made extraordinary achievements in every field.

However, in the end a degree of this level only served to exasperate the question.

To summarize, it raised the question of whether it was possible to excel in the quintessential essences of all things.

At that point yet, Westcott did not distinguish himself from others on this issue.

Whatever the position, as long as they were traveling in the same road, there would come a day where others will catch up and vice versa.

But Westcott also noticed. The place where he stood was a contorted position that did not intersect with everyone else.

When did the initial realization first come? —Yes, it first occurred when the dog raised in Westcott's home passed away.

The dog lived in his home since before Westcott was born and was a friend that had always been together with him since then.

Of course, Westcott was sad. Although he was still very young, he was still familiar with the concept of biological death.

But above all—in Westcott's heart, there was inexplicable excitement compared to the sadness.

The sad expression of his parents, the faces of sympathetic friends, the remains of the dog that had passed away—and his own sorrow.

Looking back at this, perhaps everyone would have criticized this joy as immoral or inhumane.

Was it his innate temperament or was it shaped by the environment? The reason behind this was not clear. But still there was a stark difference, a biological defect if you will.

Needless to say, Westcott did not allow for this emotion to rise to the surface. He had the intelligence enough to know that it was a different feeling from everyone else, being prudent enough to understand the disadvantages of it being widely known.

While some may view his difference from others as something worthy of virtue, the foundation remained that it was a matter to be avoided.

Humans are afraid of others who are different from themselves; the fear of the unknown. Fear creates madness and madness breeds conflict.

That is why the descendants of the Magicians lived hiding in the mountains, avoiding the eyes and ears of others.

Since the beginning of his childhood, Westcott had been taught this lesson. Just as Magicians choose to hide from humans, he decided to hide this emotion in his heart.

Despite not knowing if it was fortunate or unfortunate, Westcott was skillful at manipulating his own emotions as a child.

So, when Westcott told his parents that he would like to adopt a new dog after the death of his old pet, his parents quickly agreed to him.

Westcott's parents didn't even dream that their son's goal was not to bury the sadness of losing his old pet nor was it an attempt to find a new friend—but rather for the idea that if he raised another dog, he would get to see it die once again.

And so Westcott spent those days without being suspected by anyone.

With rigorous but gentle parents, respectable teachers, and fellow students who shared his enthusiasm, under all of these conditions, he grew up.

But just as he was ten years old, another misfortunate event struck.

His mother, whom always had a weak body, suffered from a lung disease and passed away.

Although they lived in a village of magic beyond human sensibility, it was impossible to resurrect the dead. The villagers mourned for her passing as they offered their condolences.

They held compassion to Westcott's father, who had lost his partner at a young age.

And when standing by the side of his father, who was trying to hold back his tears, they assumed Westcott was dealt a similar blow to his heart.

In fact, their assumptions were not wrong.

The death of the mother who gave birth and raised him gave Westcott an unparalleled sense of loss.

However.

At the same time, what Westcott remembered most was the first time experiencing the supreme sense of intoxication over the loss of human life.

Sorrow, such unbearable sorrow. If he wasn't careful, tears would leak out from his eyes. Surely his father and the other villagers thought he was filled with sorrow and despair.

Ahh—how pleasant it was.

As Westcott watched his mother being buried, he felt a supreme sense of pleasure for the first time in his life.

—So, after another year had passed.

Even while on that hill, watching his village being consumed by fire, the feelings stirring in Westcott's heart were different than the other three.

Fury. Sorrow. Despair. Among all of the negative emotions spiraling with each other, there was only one person alone there that felt joy.

No—it was a different sort of joy, unlike what he had experienced before.

As for the reason why, it was because he came to a realization.

—Ah, I understand. It can be done this way as well.

Westcott understood that he was different from others. He knew that his sense of self was abnormal.

It was because of this that Westcott concealed these urges, thereby protecting himself from being isolated from the rest of the community. Although he had the temperament for finding joy in despair, he did not actively seek it. Despite keeping a dog in hopes for death, he didn't think of killing it with his own hands.

But at that moment, Westcott's view of the world changed.

Humans had shown their fangs to Magicians. —The reason being nothing more than a fear of their unknown power.

In that manner —There was no reason holding back Westcott and the others anymore.

Elliot was trembling with anger.

Ellen covered her face with tears.

Karen was holding her voice back.

Despite everyone's reactions being different, they all showed a desire for vengeance against humanity.

A fundamental paradigm shift had occurred.

The unusual feeling of an abnormal man with a normal desire for revenge against this twisted world.

Since it was done in this manner, there would be no choice. Now, Elliot and the others would be forced to cooperate.

In that anger and despair, Westcott remembered a secret joy.

Unforgivable. Absolutely unforgivable.

—Thank you for giving me the opportunity to retaliate.

Daring to destroy our village, killing our friends so cruelly.

—Thank you for giving me a reason for slaughtering you.

I want revenge.

—Thank you for giving me a motive for revenge.

I will change this world.

—Thank you for making me a victim.



“.....”

The sweat dripping down his cheeks reached his lips, causing a salty taste to spread in his mouth.

Shidou didn't dare to loosen his guard as the eyeballs in his eye sockets orbited around to scrutinize the nearby surroundings.

There was an innumerable amount of <Nibelcol> paper in their vicinity.

And at the very end—a man who personified darkness quietly stood there.

Sir Isaac Ray Pelham Westcott.

The head of DEM industries and the enemy of <Ratatoskr>. And also—the man who brought Spirit into this world 30 years ago alongside Elliot and Ellen, providing the impetus for the current battle.

No—not only that.

Shidou glared at Westcott with a glare brimming with animosity.

For Shidou who had regained the memory of “Shin” now, this man was the subject for the clear hatred of killing him and kidnapping Mana.

“Oh?”

Looking back at that glare, Westcott raised his brow.

“It seems that the atmosphere surrounding you is a bit different than before. The sharp hostility dwelling in your eyes. A pair of eyes with the urge to make mincemeat out of someone. Can it be—you remember being killed by me?”

“You bastard.....”

“Well, I speculated a little with <Deus>’s sudden appearance, but it seems that I’ve hit the bullseye.”

As Westcott smiled while speaking, the adjacent <Nibelcol> all yelled out an “as expected of Otou-sama” in unison.

“.....”

Westcott’s appearance, voice, and gestures all struck a burning irritation on Shidou’s nerves.

However, Shidou could only grit and endure.

It was absolutely impossible to forgive Westcott. However, Shidou’s life did not belong only to himself. The Spirits and members of <Ratatoskr> have risked their lives for his sake. Therefore, Shidou couldn’t make the mistake of flying into a rage and charging at Westcott recklessly.

After taking a deep breath to settle down his mind, he visualized his surroundings from a bird’s eye perspective.

—Thinking in this manner, the dilemma was an unusual sight to behold.

Before the battle had begun, Kotori had said that this battle will be determined by who kills their target first: Westcott for <Ratatoskr> and Shidou for DEM.

With the two key players now in the center of the battlefield at the same, it was difficult not to be surprised.

“—Fu.”

Then, as if guessing Shidou’s thoughts, Westcott slowly loosened his cheeks.

“Because of <Deus>’s Angel, even the flagship has been destroyed. No, no, thinking over it again, it truly is—such a wonderful power.”

Westcott continued to speaking while exaggeratingly spreading out his hands in a playful manner.

“But it is a bit troublesome. Although the appearance of <Deus> is encouraging, it is impossible for me to capture her power at this moment. —So, Itsuka Shidou. That is why I’ve decided to take your reiryoku first.”

“What did you say……?”

As Shidou wrinkled his brow, Westcott’s smile grew darker as the man stretched one arm forward.

The next moment, the space in front of him distorted as a huge book manifested from there.

With a jet black binding reminiscent of the darkest void, the sense of intimidation overflowing from it made Shidou feel his heart tighten.

“…… <Beelzebub>……!”

Shidou’s expression grew dark as he groaned out that name.

Yes, the Demon King <Beelzebub>. The inverse form of the Angel <Rasiel> that Westcott had robbed from Nia.

Shidou felt a stinging sensation on his skin as he tried to lift up his knees.

—As soon as possible, he had to return back to Tohka and the others. This idea remained unchanged even when facing Westcott, the leader of the opposing force.

Indeed, defeating Westcott would have meant a victory for <Ratatoskr>. However, the situation had completely changed from when the battle first began.

Mio. The Spirit of Origin. The appearance of a third force had thrown the battlefield into chaos.

“……Tch.”

Shidou let out a clicking noise from his tongue that was small enough for the enemy to not hear.

—Rush through using <Raphael>?

No, not only were the <Nibelcol> here, if the path ends up being blocked, he would be susceptible to a pincher attack.

—Stop the other party's actions using <Gabriel>?

No, it was impossible to brainwash enemies who have a sizable amount of reiryoku.

—Escape by using <Michael> to cross over space?

No, stability was uncertain, and the opponent here would not allow him to freely escape into a hole opened in space.

Several countermeasures flashing in his mind were denied.

Then, after a few seconds that were being compressed to the limit by thinking.

“—”

While taking in a narrow breath, Shidou sharpened his gaze as he glared at Westcott.

Then, he shouted out.

The name of the Angel.

“—<Sandalphon>.”

In an instant, a huge sword emitting a shimmer appeared in front of Shidou.

Sandalphon. The sword that could rend anything. Needless to say, it was Tohka's Angel.

No—not only that.

<Zadkiel> —<Raphael>—<Metatron>—”

One by one, he called out the name of each Angel.

At the same time, a wall of ice surrounding Shidou's vicinity as several “feathers” of light appeared dancing against the raging winds.

That's right, this was the conclusion drawn out from the consideration of multiple different strategies.

It was the easiest and least mindful—but also the most practical method.

“.....Come, let’s begin, Magician.”

Shidou gather power in his voice through <Gabriel> in order to lessen the strain on his body of manifesting multiple Angels.

“—I’ll settle this in one quick blow. You won’t even have the chance to accept your fate.”



—The vast blue color of the sky.

That was the first thing Ellen saw after opening her eyes.

The clouds sprinkled sparsely in the transparent winter sky created a harmonious scene.Well, since there were no longer any Wizards or aircrafts left in the sky, that should be expected.

“Ah.....”

After a delayed response, the pain smashed through her entire body. While trying to issue instructions to the Realizer Manifestation Device in her brain, she tried to raise her head against the aching pain.

Looking down at her own body—the platinum CR-Unit <Pendragon> covering her body was destroyed wretchedly, exposing her fresh skin in some areas.

Finally, Ellen’s confused mind caught up to speed.

Recognizing the circumstances, scrutinizing her memory, her vague consciousness finally recollected.

That’s right. Ellen had fired an all-out attack at Woodman—and lost.

“Ku.....”

With frustration marking her face, Ellen angrily clenched her fist.

There were no issues with the operation of Ellen's CR-Unit. The unit was launched as intended and the voluntary territory was carried out through Ellen's will. Even if Woodman disappeared from her line of sight, it would still be in the area of Ellen's control.

She was not trapped in a deception by the enemy's part, nor did her machine malfunction. She had just released her strongest blow—and lost. There were no excuses for this huge loss.

“Regret, regret, enough to want to cry. In fact, tear shaped droplets were leaking out from Ellen's eyes. Unable to forgive Woodman. And above all, unable to forgive herself for failing to defeat him.

—But, ah, but why?

In the corner of Ellen's mind, there seemed to be a part of her that already imagined this situation.

While self-proclaiming herself as the strongest in humanity, while directing her sword towards Woodman, somewhere in her heart there was still a feeling of being no match for him.

If there was a difference between the two, it would be here.

A Wizard is a person who controlled the Voluntary Territory by manipulating the Realizer Manifestation Device. Under the circumstances where it is controlled by willpower, the feeling of a subconscious gap would be fatal.

“—Yo.”

At that time.

As Ellen's eyes were wet with vexation, a voice came out from the front—through the thick smoke, Woodman had emerged.

The golden CR-Unit was half-destroyed and the weapon in his hand was completely distorted from its original shape. His braided blonde hair was covered with blood and dust as it fluttered against the wind. Despite winning against Ellen, his current condition was no better than her.

However, despite their similar injuries, Ellen had fallen to the ground while Woodman was still standing. That fact showcased the result of the battle.

“My win.....is it not okay with this.”

“.....”

As Woodman spoke with a cheerful smile, Ellen looked over while engraving deep wrinkles between her brows—eventually, she breathed out a sigh.

“—Kill me.”

“.....Ah?”

As Ellen blankly muttered, Woodman raised a brow.

While look on at such a response, Ellen continued on.

“That’s it. You’ve won Elliot. —Don’t let me live and be humiliated. Hurry, kill me.”

“.....”

Hearing what Ellen had said, Woodman let out a long sigh. Then he pulled out a small laser sword from his waist and slowly walked to Ellen’s side.

Then, he pointed the sword straight down—

Stabbing Ellen in the chest

“.....Gu—”

As soon as the maryoku consolidated, the blade sliced open the voluntary territory as a mechanical ringing noise was heard.

The next moment, the Voluntary Territory surrounding Ellen dissipated as she awakened from the aching sensation of pain.

—Ah, so this is death. How simple. Ellen closed her eyes while contemplating that strange sensation.

“.....?”

However, no matter how long it took with her pain spreading through her body, her consciousness remained uninterrupted.

Suspicious, Ellen open her eyes a little to gaze at her chest where the knife should have stabbed.

Afterwards—

“What.....!?”

Seeing the situation in front of herself, Ellen instinctively raised her voice.

But that was to be expected. After all, Woodman’s laser sword did not run through Ellen’s chest.

That’s right. The soft blade woven with magic had changed its trajectory as it nicked the back of Ellen’s body.

Perhaps—in order to destroy the Realizer Manifestation Device mounted on the back of the CR-Unit

“.....! What are you doing, Elliot.....!”

Ellen opened her eyes and raised a voice of criticism to Woodman. Despite the pain from broken ribs increasing from her scream, she continued staring at Woodman.

Then, Woodman pulled out the laser sword and let out a sigh as he placed it back against his waist.

“What do you mean; it’s natural to render the enemy powerless. It’s too dangerous to let you keep that device. Even with your injuries and damage to your equipment, you are still a match for an ordinary Wizard.”

“I’m not asking about that sort of thing! Why didn’t you kill me!?”

As Ellen lamented a loud scream from behind, Woodman let out an exasperated “Ha?” sound as he shrugged his shoulders.

“The loser does not get to order around the winner, stupid.”

“.....!”

Hearing those words made Ellen’s entire face to heat up.

“St...Stupid, what do you mean by stupid you idiot. There’s a limit of how much you can mock me.”

“That isn’t a joke. The loser has to listen to the winner. Naturally, killing or not killing is my freedom.”

“Stop joking around! Are you making a fool of me!?”

“Right, that’s why I said that, stupid.”

“That isn’t the case……!”

Ellen screamed while slamming her fist on the ground.

This humiliation was different from the feeling of defeat weighing on Ellen’s heart.

This man, Woodman, despite having just finished at battle to the death with an enemy, still had treated her just like a child.

Yes, just like—decades ago, when Ellen’s hometown was still there.

Ellen felt the tears she tried to contain in her eyes gradually leak out.

“Why……why are you doing this, Elliot. Treating me like a fool. Just like when we were children! It’s already impossible to return back to that time! There’s a limit to your rudeness! Why aren’t you treating me as an enemy! Why!”

“Ah—You are noisy. Be quiet for just a bit.”

Woodman acted obstinately as if his ears were clogged

At the next moment, following the disappearance of pain in her body—a tremendous drowsiness struck Ellen’s body.

Perhaps, Woodman had used the Voluntary Field to cut off to sever Ellen’s consciousness. Ellen, who had lost her Realizer Manifestation Device, had no method of resisting this.

“Why! Why—”

From her eyelids that were reaching her limit, a single teardrop fell.

“—Why didn’t you take me with you, Elliot—”

While uttering those last words, Ellen’s consciousness faded away into darkness.

“.....”

As Ellen's eyelids closed, she ceased making any sounds other than peaceful sleeping.

While watching her, Woodman dropped the semi-destroyed laser rifle <Gungnir> on the ground while letting out a heavy sigh.

As the prototype of the main artillery of <Fraxinus>, it was not originally designed for individual use. Even Woodman, who had regained the power of his heyday, was prepared to suffer severe damage to his body from using it.

“.....Well, it looks like my bones are broken.”

He spoke, while sitting down side by side to the sleeping Ellen.

The pain in his body was to the point where without the support of the Voluntary Territory, he would likely be unable to even stand now.

Although he was able to get Ellen to admit defeat, even when deducting the injuries inquired from overloading <Gungnir>, the injuries he acquired were not that much different from Ellen.

“.....You've really become stronger, Ellen.”

While stroking Ellen's head, he deeply said powerfully with a hint of regret.

From their village's number one dunce, Ellen who couldn't control mana very well, it was unfathomable how strong she became.

“Strongest.....”

The word that Ellen always repeated rolled off Woodman's tongue.

As someone who was always paranoid about being the strongest, Woodman knew that using that word would incite her emotions.

But thinking over it now in retrospect, it may have been due to Woodman's existence that Ellen always proclaimed herself as the strongest.

He was a partner who polished and honed his skills at the same time as her, a distant and unreachable rival.

But at the same time, a hated enemy who had betrayed them while having that power.

She had likely tried to persuade herself by self-proclaiming to be the strongest in order to not lose to him.

Or perhaps—it was a continual appeal to Woodman in order to prove who was the strongest.

Woodman couldn't help but ponder this over.

But if this idea was correct.....it was very funny. Because—

“.....If there was really a strongest of mankind, it had already belonged to you since a long time ago.”

This battle was nothing more than a person who can stably exert 100% of power being beaten by someone who could recklessly exert 101% of power in an instant. If someone were to ask Woodman the name of the strongest Wizard of humanity, he would definitely say the name of Ellen Mathers.Well, if that person asked Ellen, a different answer would be given.”

“Hmm.....”

As he was stroking Ellen's head with his hand, Woodman felt a strange sense of disobedience.

No, not just hands. Feet, chest, head—every part of his body felt something other than pain and fatigue.

This feeling was the sensation of a body collapsing after over exceeding its limits. As his body gradually lost all power, he collapsed on the spot while leaning on Ellen.

“.....That was earlier than expected, looks like it was the right answer to let Ellen fall asleep first.”

However, Woodman did not panic. This situation had already been predicted.

Besides Woodman, there was no person who could fend Ellen off. This was a last resort countermeasure.

That's right; everything was the sake for protecting the Spirits.

In order to protect the same girls as that *girl*.

Woodman had already successfully achieved his goal. The strongest blade capable of reaching the Spirit had been broken by him.

That being the case, despite his face remaining cheerful while knowing death was beckoning him, he still had some regrets.

Perhaps it was the stubborn feeling of still reluctance of leaving behind what had to be done——

“.....I’m sorry, Karen. ——Ellen.”

While whispering words that no one else could hear, Woodman looked up to the sky in his blurry vision.

“Ah.....sorry boy, it seems I have to stop at this point. The rest——I leave it up to you.”

——In the sky, a huge spherical flower was in bloom.

From its majestic appearance, it exuded the power that Woodman once yearned for, the power of the Spirit of Origin.

“Ah—————how beautiful.”

With gentle smile, Woodman quietly closed his eyes.



“——<Samsara of Paradise (Ain Soph)>

Mio raised her hand as she called out that name.

As if pricked by a thousand needles, Tohka felt a terrifying chill come up her spine.

The sensation was similar to when Mio had first summoned her Angel <Ain Soph Aur>. It was a survival instinct screaming to keep herself alive.

—At that moment, the earth trembled as a huge spire emerged from behind Mio.

With an inorganic surface resembling glass, the branches and cluster of leaves spread out to the open sky. From a vertical slit in the trunk, an apparition resembling a girl was seen,

That's right; it's appearance—resembled an enormous tree that pierced the heavens.

Moreover, it wasn't just that.

“What.....!?”

Tohka sharpened her gaze as she narrowed her dry throat.

Not just Tohka, Mana and the other Spirits facing Mio were all equally shocked.

But it was impossible for them to not be surprised. After all, a huge tree had suddenly appeared behind Mio. At the center, the roots of the tree began to stretch, changing the surrounding scenery in the process.

The cityscape destroyed by the fierce battle, the smoke rising from the ruins of <Bandersnatch> and wrecked airships on the ground—not only that, even the winter sky began to transform.

“.....!? This is.....”

Faced against this unknown phenomenon, Tohka looked around her surroundings with the utmost vigilance.

A monochrome world of black and white, the ground as neatly divided into block-like steps as if having been precisely divided up by grid paper; even the jet-black sky casted an ominous gaze upon the ground.

The amount of detail of the world was compressed to the limit, truly a minimalist scene.

A tremendous feeling of incongruity as if the outer layers of the world had been scrapped away.

“.....”

Tohka injected all of her remaining strength to holster up <Sandalphon>.

High viscosity sweat covered her back. Her dry throat felt sore and painful. The intense palpitations coming from her heart would not yield as tremors spread to the rest of her body.

Although the other Spirits tried to stare back with a fearless expression, they couldn't completely hide their panic. From behind the other, Tohka raised her voice.

“Mun.....what the hell is this thing?”

“Illusion.....is it.....not.”

“.....Voluntary Territory? But on this scale——

As Origami raised a question, Mio soon responded back to answer it.

“.....That feeling is not a mistake. DEM recreated “this” as the model for the space within the Voluntary Territory.”

While saying that, Mio slowly lowered her hand that was raised to the sky.

“.....My Voluntary Territory is constantly being developed in this world, only being separated by a single thin piece of film. And now that I have summoned the nucleus of <Ain Soph> here, the area around the center has become——the 'neighboring world'. “

“Neighboring world——”

Upon hearing Mio's word, Tohka wrinkled her brow.

That name felt familiar to her. The world adjacent to this world. The world where Spirits lived. Although there was no relevant memory, it can be said that Tohka came to this world from there.

Despite not fully knowing what that meant, there was one thing that was certain. It was not a pleasant experience for Tohka.

“——Mun.”

Having likely guessed the same idea as Tohka, Mukuro turned the tip of her staff towards Mio.

“I don’t understand what kind of power this <Ain Soph> yields. But regardless—it matters not if it is stopped.....!”

At the same time Mukuro raised her voice, a “hole” in space opened up in front of her, swallowing in the tip of her staff.

“<Michael>—<Segva>!”

Mukuro yelled out while turning her staff.

The Angel of the key <Michael> was extremely powerful. Whether tangible or intangible, anything could be sealed. —Even if the object was the Spirit of Origin’s Angel <Ain Soph>.

It certainly seemed to be an impeccable first response towards an unknown enemy. However—

“.....! Don’t do it, Mukuro!”

Tohka found herself semi-consciously crying out.

Despite not knowing the reason why. Despite not having any basis for that.

However, Tohka’s instincts and intuition sounded a sharp alarm.

At that moment—

“Ah.....ha.....?”

Mukuro’s eyes opened wide in astonishment as she leaked out an anguished voice from her lips.

“Mukuro.....!?”

Staring at Mukuro, Tohka soon found out the reason.

She had stabbed the back of her neck through the tip of <Michael> swaying through the hole that had opened up in space.

“What.....”

“.....It’s useless.”

As Tohka held her breath, Mio whispered softly.

“.....Didn’t I say it? Here, the neighboring world has already overwritten this world. —This is my world. Everything, all logic, all natural laws are different from the world you know. In my world, attacking <Ain Soph> has become impossible. —Just like how people cannot survive underwater or apples falling from trees cannot disappear into the sky.”

At the same time as Mio was speaking, Mukuro, who just suffered a fatal blow from her own Angel, collapsed onto the black and white ground. The Limited Astral Dress covering her body disappeared into particles of light. From her back, a Sephira Crystal emitting an orange glow had appeared.

"Ku!"

Tohka kicked against the ground reached out to grab the Sephira Crystal.

However—too late. Just as Tohka was about bend her fingers, Mukuro’s Sephira Crystal moved in the air as if caught by an invisible hand before being sucked into Mio’s chest.

—One of the stars behind Mio lit up with a golden glow.

“.....That makes three. Who is next?”

While speaking softly, Mio’s eyes drifted among the crowd.

“.....”

First Kurumi, then Kaguya and Yuzuru, and now even Mukuro have all been killed. The cruel reality made it difficult for Tohka’s heart to not be overwhelmed by her emotions.

However,

“Withdrawal!”

At that moment, hearing Mana’s loud voice reverberate allowed Tohka to keep her reasoning intact.

“Mana—”

Tohka’s eyes slightly moved towards the owner of that voice—Mana.

Her expression was marked by vigilance; there was not a trace of fear.

“.....Un.....!”

Tohka, who had instantly seen through Mana’s intention, kicked against the ground while sadly leaving Mukuro’s body behind.

Origami and Yoshino, who had likely also made the same judgement, also retreated to the rear just like Tohka.

—The Angel <Ain Soph> and the neighboring world surrounding it.

Over here was Mio’s world. While staying in this space, no amount of courage was enough to oppose Mio. The act would be nothing more than to commit suicide. Whatever must be done next time, it was useless to discuss without first fleeing here.

Mio slowly raised her face while looking on at Tohka and the other’s actions.

“.....Un, as expected of Mana. That was a good decision.”

While saying that, Mio slowly raised her hand.

“.....Then, the order will be that anything in this world cannot leave.”

With that command, <Ain Soph> gave off a blurry light.

“Hey.....!?”

The next moment, Mana, who was trying to evacuate this world at a tremendous speed, struck the air as if being stopped by an invisible wall.

“Additional laws——!? Tch.....it’s annoying how you get to do whatever you want.”

“.....Ah, that’s right. This world will do anything that I imagine.”

As Mana let out her words of spite, Mio gently waved her hand as if beckoning to her.

Then, just like a magnet, Mana’s body was pulled to Mio’s side.

“What——!?”

Faced with this sudden situation, Mana let out a startled cry.

A Voluntary Territory should have been surrounding Mana's body. However, it offered no resistance as Mio was able to embrace Mana exceedingly naturally.

".....Mana. It must have difficult for you all this time."

"Hey, let go——"

Mana twisted her body in order to escape from Mio's grasp. However, the moment, Mio stroked her head like a child, Mana's eyes narrowed as if remembering something.

".....!? Mi——o-san?"

As Mana let out a startled look, a sudden headache overcame her head.

".....Ah, just wait a bit longer. Shin will surely need you."

"Wait——"

Mana barely squeezed her voice out from her throat.

However, before waiting for her to finish, Mana disappeared without a trace just like Shidou before her.

"Mana!"

"Mana-san.....!"

Tohka and Yoshino both cried out in unison.

The next moment, Mio's body was surrounded by a dazzling light.

".....!?"

For a second, Tohka thought that Mio had launched another attack——however this feeling was different.

Before Mio's circumference, feathers from <Metatron> surround her with brilliant rays of light.

While Mio was rewriting the laws of the world and hugging Mana, Origami seemed to have anticipated this development and released her Angel.

“Fu——!”

Accompanied by Origami’s voice, a torrent of reiryoku increased its momentum as shattered burst of light attacked from every direction. The ground of the transformed world was scoured as a large crater was formed.

“Origami, don’t let your guard down……!”

Despite the great firepower boasted by <Metatron>, Tohka still did not relax.

Mio was struck by the Yamai sisters’ <El Kanaph> and Tohka’s <Halvanhelev> at the same time and came out uninjured. Granted, even if someone were to catch her off-guard——

“……!”

At that moment——

Origami’s eyebrows shook as her attack on Mio stopped.

“Origami?”

“——Be careful. I didn’t tell the Angel to ceasefire.”

“What……?”

Just as Tohka frowned, the subsequent dust dispersed and allowed for Mio’s figure to be seen.

——Mio pressed her hand on <Metatron> as if to tame it.

“How can……”

“……<Metatron>.”

Mio faintly called out that name while raising her hand.

Following this order, <Metatron> turned its tips and shot several beams of light onto Tohka and others.

“Ku……!”

“——<Zadkiel>!”

As the rays of light were about to explode onto Tohka, Yoshino's voice echoed as a wall of ice arose ahead.

While the icy wall was scrapped away, additional layers of ice were created at a faster speed than <Metatron>'s tremendous power,

However.

“.....Hmm. Then let's also prohibit that.”

“Eh——”

The moment Mio said that, the icy wall created by <Zadkiel> crumbled away as a ray of light from <Metatron> pierced through Yoshino's chest.

“Yoshino!”

“To.....hka.....san——”

“Ah.....ha...so this.....is.....defeat.....”

As Yoshino's petite body recoiled back from the fatal blow, both <Zadkiel> and her Limited Astral Dress faded away.

As Yoshino was lying on the ground, a blue Sephira crystal emerged from her chest. Just like what happened with Mukuro, it was sucked into Mio's chest.



“C-captain! It's unreasonable after all.....!”

“How noisy, quit your whining. Of course this is difficult. Anyway, we just need to get to the Voluntary Territory of that <Fraxinus > ship——”

Ryouko's voice was drowned out by the sounds of the explosions and the screams of her team mates. With a displeased look, Ryouko issued an instruction from her brain to increase the defensive strength of the Voluntary Territory.

The former AST members including Ryouko were now heading to <Ratatoskr>'s flagship <Fraxinus> upon receiving a request from Origami.

To say it simply, it was merely a convoy mission to <Fraxinus>. However, <Fraxinus> was currently in conflict with DEM industries warships. Complicating the matter was how Ryouko's densely pack squad was also using the Voluntary Territory to escort both the unconscious and dead. This matter was not simply leisurely flying towards <Fraxinus>.

While dashing through skies, they desperately tried to avoid the countless ammunition and rays of light. Although as the captain Ryouko needed to inspire her troops; but in all honesty, she painfully understood the current state of mind that would make others cry out in frustration.

However, they could not back down this time. For those who were attacked by the Angel while protecting Ryouko and the others, if there was even a possibility of resurrecting them, they would have to try.

“—Captain!”

“.....!”

The next moment, the voices of her squad echoed as a tremendous shock struck her entire body. Screams leaked out from her fellow teammates.

It seems that they had been struck by a stray bullet—well that was if a large magical artillery emitted from the Realizer Manifestation Device could be called a “bullet” though.

Although their bodies were protected by the Voluntary Territory, the attack flying towards them was also powered by maryoku. From a direct hit, it would be impossible to not take a correspondingly appropriate amount of damage. It seemed that their thrusters were hit. Just as <Fraxinus> was at the foreground, their altitude had gradually dropped.

“Ku.....! You've got to be kidding, to be shot down at a place like this—”

Ryouko gave a solemn expression as she tried to issue commands to the Voluntary Territory in order to preserve their altitude. However—that wasn't enough. Ryouko fell to the bottom of <Fraxinus>.

But, at the next moment.

“—Eh?”

A strange sensation wrapped around her body as the scenery within Ryouko's sight changed within an instant.

From the battlefield where bullets were flying in barrages, they were taken to a bridge-like space surrounded by machines.

“Ha.....? Huh.....?”

“Here is.....”

“Eh? Has heaven become so modernized?”

As a Ryouko and her teammates were staring around, a woman dressed in a maroon colored military uniform came to greet them.

“My name is Kusakabe. We were told to come here by Tobiiichi-san.”

“Y-you are.....”

“<Fraxinus> crew member Shiizaki Hinako. I moved you all inside with the transfer device. —Well, please bring Artemisia and anyone else injured here.”

After that, she raised her hand as several people who appeared to be the medical staff gathered with a few stretchers already in hand.

Listening to her words, they had all understood. They had reached <Ratatoskr>’s flagship <Fraxinus> after all.

“Hey, hey, those are my important companions. Please take good care of them.”

“I can’t guarantee anything, but we will try our best.”

The medical staff left the bridge while carrying on stretchers Artemisia who had lost consciousness and Mikie and the others who had fallen under cardiopulmonary arrest.

As Ryouko and the others were watching the medical staff leave, a girl’s voice resounded from above.

“.....Welcome to <Fraxinus>, I am the commander here, Itsuka Kotori.”

“.....! Nice to meet you. I am the former Ground Defense Force Captain, Kusakabe Ryouko—”

As she made a salute in response to that voice, Ryouko suddenly widened her eyes open in surprise.

At the moment of recognizing that man's face, a loud voice unconsciously leaked out from Ryouko's throat, the same person who had just calmly accepted a junior high student as the commander of this vessel. From behind, the <Fraxinus> crew members all casted back a surprised look.

However, Ryouko could care less about their reaction. She raised her voice again while pointing to the man.

“Cap.....captain Kannazuki! What are you doing here?”

“Ah, Kusakabe-kun, it's been a while.”

With extreme degree of calmness—that man, Kannazuki responded back to Ryouko's cry.

Hearing those words come out, Ryouko's teammates and the crew members all tilted their heads in wonder.

“Kannazuki.....”

“Captain?”

“..... Yeah, when I was first assigned to the AST, he was the captain. It was undeniable that he used to be the top trump card of the forces.”

As Ryouko spoke, everyone couldn't help but speak out in surprise.

“Hey, that person.....”

“Isn't that a bit amazing?”

“Kannazuki-san, I never thought you've done such a thing in the past.....”

“I thought he was supposed to have been thrown to the side of the road before being picked up by the commander.”

Everyone was talking quietly.

However, Ryouko ignored all of their comments while tuning her eyes to Kotori.

“Commander Itsuka, please get away from that man! That man is dangerous! He is a pervert who dreams of getting kicked by junior high students! During his time in office, the “junior high school guardianship association” was established by

himself alone! When he went to the local junior high, he was reported as a suspect! Commander, you are just in his strike zone!”

“Hey, that’s rude. Recently, I also like being kicked in the heels. Although it’s quite simple, it’s not easy to experience such pleasure.”

“Look!”

With the criminal having already confessed, Ryouko yelled out while trying to let Kotori recognize his nature.

However, Kotori took in a deep breath while standing up from the captain’s seat.

“I told you there’s no time. Don’t make me say it again—there’s no time for your nonsense!”

Kotori threw a splendid roundhouse kick at Kannazuki’s ass.

“Mi~yafun!?”

“!?”

With a strange cry, Kannazuki fell flying onto the floor. Seeing that grand scene up close, Ryouko felt a tremble overtake her shoulders.

“—Maria. Prepare to break through the DEM ships as soon as possible. We will launch a direct attack on.....Mio. Prepare the main artillery.”

“Understood. Approval for activating Spirit reiryoku cannon <Gungnir> authorized.”



The voice of a girl echoed from the main loudspeaker on the bridge as an icon indicating the operation of a weapon was displayed on the main screen.

While overseeing the battleship's operation, Kotori stepped on Kannazuki's back as the man was still twitching on the floor.

"Kannazuki, why are you sleeping in this crisis? <Ratatoskr> is not paying you for your nap."

"Perhaps it was due to the unreasonableness of having to kick someone who was already down, but Ryouko felt beads of sweat drip down her neck.

"Thank you very much!"

However, Kannazuki replied back excitedly with a crisp look as he sprung back up like wind-up doll.Well, whether due to collapsing face first on the floor or from the extreme excitement, but the nosebleed on his face ruined his serious expression.

"Well, let's go Maria! For the Spirits! And more than anything, for the commander's praise!"

"....."

.....There was no way that she expected someone to be able to tame Kannazuki Kyohei, the man known as the "self-propelled accident maker" and "the most valuable asset reported for degeneracy".

Looking at Commander Itsuka Kotori who was only half her age, Ryouko could not help but feel a degree of respect towards her.

"Inject <Yggdrafolium> numbers 1 through 5. They will act as our snare traps to repel the enemy ships away. Once we are through, prepare the main cannon to help the Spirits. Okay, Maria?"

"There are no problems if we eliminate of the discomfort of this operation being handed to Kannazuki."

"Great. You're getting better at motivating the operator, Maria."

After listening to Maria's thinly veiled insults, Kannazuki nodded cheerfully.

Well, although Maria was not trying to inspire Kannazuki, her words still rang truthfully from the heart.....but even now it was still not unnecessary to say something frivolous in order to lower the tension.

From <Fraxinus>'s shadow displayed on the main monitor, several units turned behind the enemy ships that were blocking the front. In conjunction with this, the scope of the Voluntary Territory expanded to wrap around the hull. As it eventually reduced, the increase in strength was inversely proportional to the gradual narrowing.

Despite the opponent being a powerful DEM airship, with the newly rebuilt <Fraxinus Excelsior> and Kannazuki pouring his power to forcibly queue the enemy ships, it wouldn't be difficult to pave a road forward.

Of course, this strategy could only be proven best if the DEM ships were completely immobilized. By only focusing on breaking the enemy formation, it may leave their flank unguarded for a counterattack.

But for Kotori, even if it carried that risk, they must arrive to the Spirits as soon as possible.

—The mysterious sphere that had suddenly appeared.

And the huge tree that reached the sky, forming a different space surrounding it.

It was probably from Reine—Mio manifesting an Angel.

After being trapped in that different space, communication lines with the Spirits had broken down. Despite not knowing what was transpiring inside there, there was no doubt that they were suffering an unparalleled crisis.

“—Uwaah.”

Then, as Kotori was considering over such matters, a girl sitting on one of the crew members' seats let out such a voice.

With glasses and short hair that were characteristic of her, it was the Spirit Nia.

Since most of her Sephira Crystal had been stolen by Westcott, she had little fighting ability left. However, since she petitioned herself to be useful for everyone, she was now sitting on the bridge as a trainee.

Despite not knowing if it was fortunate or unfortunate, the equipment she had studied most intensively had belonged to Reine. With Reine now gone, she was given the role of Analytic Officer despite still being immature.

“What’s wrong, Nia?”

“Not matter what happened, that angel.....how? It’s like a post level that was overdone again.”

Nia frowned while continuing to watch the monitor.

“The round flower-like object in the sky. Both the creatures and objects that bathed in the light it released all died or broke without exception. Being damaged.....not that isn’t the issue.....how to say it? The life, or lifespan capture by that thing, does it even have a durability limit? Something that reduces everything to zero in a blink of an eye.....in short a light of absolute death? I would definitely be stuck if I ever drew that in a manga. How can we defeat her?”

“What did you say.....?”

“Another point.....that whole area already resembles an entirely different world. Since the numerical values are absurd, the meaning behind it is unknown. If we can get closer to visible range, than perhaps we can know more about it.....”

“.....”

Hearing what Nia had said, Kotori took in a breathless gulp.

Then, as if ascertaining Kotori’s intentions, Maria’s voice resounded from the speaker.

“—Kotori, we’ll be through the enemy row soon. I suggest that before then, all those who are unconscious or non-combatants should be transferred to the <Ulmus>.”

“Maria—”

“Of course, I am not planning on losing. This is just risk insurance. Onboard the <Ulmus> is Karen Mathers, so the brainwave analysis of Artemisia should still run smooth.”

“.....”

After a momentary thought, Kotori relaxed her lips while listening to what Maria had said.

“Sorry, Maria. I was just about to suggest that to you.”

“No, it’s natural for an AI’s processing speed to be faster than a human being.”

As Maria replied back in a jokingly manner, it was difficult to tell if that was a human being or truly an AI.

Then, Kotori let out a small sigh while turning to the former AST members who were in the back.

“—Captain Kusakabe, it’s just as you heard. I am embarrassed to push this on you, but can you guard the division that is about to be evacuated?”

“That is—”

Ryouko twitched her eyebrows in surprise for a moment, before replying back with a formal salute.

“No, I understand. Leave it to me.”

Seeing her like this, Kotori blinked a bit from the immediately response.

“Captain-san, you are a wonderful person. I would definitely want you as my subordinate.

“Thank you, but we are a bit expensive.”

“Oh, how terrible.”

As Kotori smiled, Ryouko returned the expression after giving off a relieved look.

“Maria, show the route to their destination on their retina scanners.”

“Understood.”

As Maria finished, the former AST members all let out a surprised look. Surely, the layout of the ship was now within their sight.

“—Then, good luck to you.”

“Hmm.”

After a brief exchange, the former AST members had left the bridge. After seeing them off, Kotori turned her attention to her own crew.

“—Well, sorry guys. I’m asking you all to accompany me to hell. If you want to escape, hurry and chase after them now.”

As Kotori finished, the crew members and Nia looked surprised for a moment before exposing fearless smiles.

“What are you talking about commander?”

“Yes, it’s too dangerous to leave everything to only the commander and deputy commander be alone, even if Maria is here.”

“I understand.”

Lively discussions began coming from everyone’s mouths.

“You guys…….”

Kotori scratched her head while making a shrewd expression, but let out a sigh after seeing her crew member’s trembling hands and the sweat dripping from their foreheads.

“……I know. Let’s get started. —I love you, everyone.”

“Yes!”

As the crew all answered in unison, suddenly the hull violently shook.

“—I’ve already forced through the enemy’s Voluntary Territory. Kotori, prepare the main cannon.”

As Maria’s voice echoed from the speaker, a portion of the bridge began to deform.

The core room housing the Spirit reiryoku cannon <Gungnir>. Kotori nodded as she stepped up on the platform. Then, she closed her eyes as she began to concentrate.

She imagined drawing heat from the depths of her heart and warping it around her body.

—In a short while, her body was cloaked in a Limited Astral Dress embodied with flames alongside holding an Angel shaped like a giant battle ax.

Kotori transformed the Angel <Camael> into its huge cannon form before connecting it to the unit set in front.

Then, at that moment, a voice cried out from the bridge.

“.....! We have a visual of the interior of the space! At the center is Rei—no Takamiya Mio. Tohka-chan and Tobiichi-san are confronting her!”

“! Everyone else?”

As Kotori asked, the crew members were rendered speechless for a moment before continuing.

“In the surroundings.....Yoshino-chan, Kaguya-chan, Yuzuru-chan and Mukuro-chan have all collapsed! Ku.....L-life response—has vanished.....!”

“.....”

Hearing the report from the crew, Kotori stood breathlessly in shock.

She knew that everyone was in danger, but couldn’t expect this report at all.

However, upon hearing this, it was impossible not to have the feeling of her heart tightly contracting.

“—Spirit reiryoku cannon <Gungnir>. We are ready for launch. The target, the Spirit at the center of the different space· Takamiya Mio. —Can you do it, Kotori?”

Maria spoke in a quiet but heavy tone.

Maria also understood. The inherent contradiction in the actions they were currently undertaking.

<Ratatoskr> was an organization dedicated to protecting the Spirits. Being one, Mio was no exception. On the contrary, when thinking about Elliot Woodman’s motives for creating <Ratatoskr>, it wouldn’t be too much to say that <Ratatoskr> was founded to save her. It should be impossible to point a weapon at her.

However, right now, she had struck her merciless fangs to kill other Spirits —Kotori’s most treasured friends. Such a behavior could not be tolerated.

“.....Reine——”

Kotori murmured that name softly in a voice that no one else could hear. She then bit against her lip while raising her head.

“——Of course, Maria. Let’s do this at full power.”

“Alright.”

Maria briefly replied back.

Kotori released the reiryoku cannon at the target shown on the screen.

“.....Oh, what’s wrong, you two.”

Mio softly whispered while turning her eyes to Tohka and Origami.

“.....”

“.....”

Tohka and Origami remained silent, keeping their expressions vigilant while glaring at Mio.

——Their situation had reached an all-time low.

Above them was the Angel of death, <Ain Soph Aur>, capable of killing all things.

In front of them was the Angel of laws, <Ain Soph>, capable of distorting reality at a whim.

She was undoubtedly the Spirit of Origin possessing the strongest shield and spear. Despite Tohka conceptualizing numerous strategies in her mind, not a single time could she even imagine her sword reaching Mio’s chest.

Perhaps, Origami was thinking the same as well. No——since Origami was better than Tohka at conceptualizing such things; perhaps she was looking further at an even more desperate situation.

“.....Fu.”

Looking at the two of them, Mio touched her chin with her hand.

“.....If you two aren’t attacking, I guess I have to.”

After finished saying that, Mio raised her hand. Tohka and Origami were soaked in sweat as they trembled from the tension.

But—at the very next moment.

“.....!”

From a sparkle in the sky, a line of light came straight down at Mio.

It was just like a shooting star.

However, this blow contained the power of destruction.

Yes, it was definitely <Gungnir>, the main artillery boasted by <Ratatoskr>’s flagship <Fraxinus>.

Amplified and released by a Spirit’s power, it yielded an unparalleled power just like the thunder of God. <Fraxinus>’s strongest weapon. It seemed that Kotori had gotten through the enemy airspace to support Tohka and the others.

“——”

A tremendous torrent of energy swallowed Mio in a flash. It razed the earth as shockwaves began to spread from the epicenter. It was no exaggeration to say that it resembled the will of the heavens that annihilated all traces of enemies on the ground.

“.....Origami!”

“——I know.”

However, in that storm of light, Tohka and Origami aligned their eyes to each other.

After mutually understanding each other’s intentions, they kicked off against the ground simultaneously.

The power of <Gungnir> was immense. Even if it was not enough to take down Mio, it still provided a chance opportunity.

“<Sandalphon>!”

The moment Tohka screamed out that name, a golden throne appeared from the ground. After Tohka had kicked down, it had transformed into a streamlined shape.

“——<Einherjar>”

While above <Sandalphon>, Origami focused her strength on the lance-type unit in her hands.

<Einherjar>. The lance holding the souls of the brave had the function of converging all surrounding maryoku and reiryoku.

And now, in this place where so many Spirits had died, there was the aftermath of the main cannon from <Fraxinus> and the huge reiryoku scattered from Mio herself.

“——Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

While giving a loud roar, Tohka threw the deformed throne at a violent speed.

Above the throne, Origami was holding a spear with all the surrounding reiryoku converged into a single point.

To put it another way, it was just like a super-powerful slingshot.

A single blow containing everything now ran through Mio.

——Yet.

“Ah.....”

Small.

A small voice that could barely be heard leaked out from Origami’s lips.

“!? O-origami——?”

As the light from that blast began to dissipate, Tohka finally noticed.

Rather than Origami holding <Einherjar>, the spear of light was in Mio’s hands, piercing Origami instead.

“.....Hmm, I thought that if you wanted to defeat me, you would use this. —So, I decided to imitate you guys.”

As Mio finished, the spear of light piercing Origami disappeared. Having lost its only support, Origami’s body swayed violently before losing all strength and collapsing to the ground. Then, the pure white Sephira Crystal emerging from her chest was absorbed into Mio’s chest.

That’s right. Mio had anticipated their surprise attack and reorganized the reiryoku to converge around herself in order to block Origami’s attack.

“_____”

Despair filled her heart.

All of the means that they could think of had been done.

All the methods they had considered have been tried.

The only result was the hell spread before their eyes.

“Ku——”

However, Tohka could not yield. While gritting her teeth, she prepared to lunge towards Mio.

However, at the next moment.

Swish.

The sound of a small strip of light protruding from the ground ran through Tohka’s chest.

“Ku, ha.....!?”

That moan unconsciously leaked out from Tohka’s throat. All of her strength had left her hand as <Sandalphon> dropped to the ground.

Miraculously, there was no pain. There was only a violent drowsiness that made her unable to continue standing.

Her knees collapsed as she fell to the ground. Tohka tried biting her own tongue to stay awake, but it seemed to have little effect.

In her hazy vision, Tohka saw the wrecked debris of <Fraxinus> crashing down from contact with a grain of light from <Ain Soph Aur>.



“Ah.....gu.....”

With tremendous pain and a burning sensation, Kotori finally woke up.

It seemed that she had lost consciousness for a while.

After taking a few seconds to remember, Kotori looked around at the situation.

—The ground was filled with endless wreckage. It was difficult to imagine that this was the fruitful end of the sky’s brave champion, <Fraxinus>.

Kotori’s current condition was likely as equally terrible. She had injuries of varying sizes and numerous blood marks. Her abdomen and feet seemed to have lost their function after coming into contact with light emitted from the Angel. However, due to the presence of <Camael> inside her, her entire body was trying to resuscitate while being enveloped in flames. It was as if she were a witch lit on fire.

However, Kotori didn’t scream or shed any tears.

“What.....”

A Spirit wearing a phantasmal Astral Dress—Mio was standing on the ground leisurely.

No, that wasn’t all. Nia’s body was lying at her feet. In her hands, there was the faint glow of a small fragment of a Sephira Crystal that she had likely taken from her.

Although Nia had the majority of her power taken away by Westcott, there was still a tiny amount of reiryoku in her body. Perhaps, Mio had come to collect it.

Needless to say—there was also another Sephira Crystal here as well.

“.....”

At that time, Mio noticed Kotori in her line of sight.

Kotori let out a hoarse voice while looking at her.

“.....Hi Reine. No, do you prefer Mio now?”

“.....I don't mind either.”

Hearing Kotori try to casually jest afterwards, Mio looked back while lightly narrowing her eyes.

Seeing at that reaction, Kotori wanted to laugh self-deprecatingly at herself.

“..... I wonder if I can bear to see that? Sorry. Because someone somewhere has been hurt by me.”

As Kotori spoke, she sighed.

“.....”

Mio only kept silently looking at Kotori.

“.....Reine.”

Pain struck her entire body. The searing flames made it feel that every nerve had come under attack. —While enduring it all, Kotori continued to speak.

“Everything, was it all a lie? Even if you saved me. Or when you continued to support me. —And, of course, became my best friend. Was all of that false?”

Mio looked at Kotori for a moment before replying.

“..... No, it is not false. My words, my feelings, are no lie. I still cherish the Spirits—even now, I still see you as my best friend.”

However, Mio continued on.

“.....If it means getting back Shin, I would sacrifice even a close friend. That's all.”

As Mio finished speaking, Kotori felt a sharp pain in her chest.

“_____”

A band of light extended from the monochrome ground, piercing through Kotori's chest. While recognizing this, Kotori fell to the ground.

Her Astral Dress, her fire, even the pain had all disappeared.

However, Kotori was not afraid.

Rather, her heart was dominated by a stronger unspeakable feeling.

That's right. Because it was a friend who had been with her for so many years, she understood that.

—Reine, was not lying at all.

She truly loves the Spirits while doing such a demon's task.

She truthfully thinks of Kotori as a close friend.

Ah, what is this—distorted.

“..... Don't be silly. What is that....”

As her consciousness faded away, Kotori left those cruel last words to her friend.

Fragmentary Chapter/ 4: Date

—Sunday. The day of the date.

Takamiya Shinji was waiting in front of the station for Mio.

Since they lived at the same home, he thought it would be fine for them to leave together, but his sister Mana had said, “Are you stupid Nii-sama? No, I made a mistake. Nii-sama is a fool. Girls need time to prepare. You should pass the time by heading there first.” So consequently, Shinji was driven out of the house before the expected time.

“.....”

While looking at the huge clock at the square of the station, there was only five more minutes to wait.

As soon as he realized that, his restless heart began to violently pulsate once again.

But of course that was natural.

After all, Shinji was about to experience the challenge of the first date in his life.

Moreover—it was with his first love.

“I-I should check it over one more time.....”

As Shinji said that, he took out the notebook and map with the time table from his bag. Although he had carefully memorized the contents last night, he still snuck them in his bag just to be sure.

However, it was still a difficult matter to carry so much at once. He wondered if in a few decades there would be a compact device that would allow him to do this all at once. It would be nice if he could listen to music and take pictures at the same time. It would be even better if the functions of a phone are added as well.....although, such an object would need extravagant hopes in order to come to pass.

“—Shin!”

As Shinji was thinking over such matters, he heard Mio’s voice coming from the front.

As he raised his head up, his heart skipped a beat after seeing her lovely appearance.

“_____”

The next moment, time had stopped.

Of course, time did not really stop. However, in front of Shinji's eyes, the surrounding scenery seemed to be completely still.

In that static world, Mio made a small dash to Shinji's side.

Accompanying with that movement, the white hem of her dress and her well-styled hair swayed in the air.

For a while, Shinji lost the ability to speak.

Originally, Mio was a beautiful girl bestowed with the grace of God. However, since she usually dressed in a boyish style by imitating Mana's clothes, seeing this girlish charm now was particularly shocking.

“.....Shin? What's the matter with that scary face?”

“Ha.....”

“S-sorry, did I have that expression?”

“Un, it looks just like you are going to war.”

After hearing Mio's worried words, Shinji couldn't help but have a wry smile on his face. He wondered if such a dangerous expression truly appeared on his face.

Nonetheless, such an expression may not be a mistake. Since right now, Shinji's current state of mind drew many similarities to a new recruit about to enter his first battlefield.

“War (Date).....? Haha.....”

“Eh?”

“N-no, nothing. I was just a bit startled. That...because Mio you are t-too.....”

Shinji felt his cheeks turn fiery red as he desperately struggled utter those words.

“.....Cute.”

Hearing what Shinji had just said, Mio froze for a moment before smiling at him with rosy cheeks.

“Really? Fufu. I’m glad.”

“_____”

Those gestures, expressions, voice, and speech, there was enough excessive love to cause one to want to unintentionally embrace her.

However, such a thing being done right after their meeting would be too perverse. As if trying to suppress himself, Shinji took in a deep breath.

“Then, Shin, where are we going today?”

“A-ah.....there’s something that I want to show Mio.”

“What did you want to show?”

Mio slightly tilted her head in wonder after hearing Shinji’s words.

Even though his heart was being pierced through every single one of Mio’s actions, Shinji was still somehow able to express his affirmation in his stunned state.

“You just look forward to it. Come, let’s go.”

“Un, that’s right.”

Then, as Shinji turned around to hurry on forward, Mio approached closer to his side.

“.....!?”

The next moment, Shinji felt a jolt of electricity course through his entire body.

The reason was simple. Mio, who was standing beside him, had reached out to grab his hand.

Moreover, it was not just a simple handshake, but rather the so called “couples walking hand-in hand” with all five fingers intertwined.

“Mi....., Mio-san.....? Did you do something.....”

As his brain was not able keep up with such a treatment, Shinji couldn't help but attach a strange honorific to her name. Although he wasn't able to confirm due to a lack of a mirror, it wasn't hard to imagine that his face had turned red as a tomato.

Then, Mio raised her brow as if curious about Shinji's response.

“.....Is this wrong? Sure enough practice and knowledge are not the same. When I asked Mana, she said to do something like this.

“! Ah.....no, I don't think it's wrong. I think.....”

Listening to Mio divulged her inside story, Shinji responded back while spreading his eyes wide open.

That's right. From this morning's events, it was clear that Mana was supporting Shinji and Mio's date in various aspects.it was because of her that he was able to reach a point he did not expect yet. He thought about expressing his thanks to her when they got back.

“Really? Hehe, really.....that's wonderful. If it was wrong, I would have to change the way.”

“Eh?”

“—How should I say this? This act is very.....desirable. This way right now, holding hands with Shin, there is a sense of security. But only my heart isn't stable. There is a faint excitement.....rising? It feels like my heartbeat is a little bit faster. This must because Shin holds some miraculous power.

“.....”

Seeing Mio's straightforward and transparent expression, Shinji grew hotter to the point of feeling dizzy.

“Shin? What's wrong? You look a little bit feverish.”

“N-no.....it's nothing.....”

As Shinji was about to give an evasive answer—he swallowed back his words just before uttering them.

Mio was using her newly learned words in an attempt to convey her feeling to Shinji. In comparison, Shinji was trying to hide his inner thoughts; it was a practice that even he himself felt was despicable.

The realization boiled in Shinji's brain as he turned to face Mio.

"I-I....am also the same. Holding hands with you.....makes my heart race as well. Just from this.....there a feeling of being blessed in being born in this world."

"Hehe, that's exaggerating it a bit."

Mio spoke as she pulled Shinji's hand forward.

"—Well then, let's get started. Our war (date)."

"Eh?"

While checking if the previous whispers were heard correctly, Shinji stared in a momentary daze before bursting out laughing alongside Mio. Then, the two of them walked side by side to the station.

Chapter 4: The First and Last Confrontment

“_____”

—Sharpened concentration.

Shidou took in a narrowed sigh, even the slightest hint of relaxation would cause the reiryoku flowing in his body to burst beyond the safety line.

In the front was the enemy—Isaac Westcott.

Among the surroundings, his dependents—the <Nibelcol>.

There was no shortage of opponents—far from it; it was an undoubtedly tricky lineup.

However, there was no time for idleness or frustration, since the Spirits were on the verge of a crisis. As soon as he defeated Westcott, he must rush back to the Spirits as soon as possible.

“—Fu———”

That was the fuse that ignited Shidou for this battle.

Kicking off the ground with legs strengthened by <Gabriel>, he rode the wind summoned by <Raphael> with <Sandalphon> brandished on his hand.

Concurrent Angel manifestation. Even using one Angel caused unbearable anguish for the human body. To use multiple at the same time was behavior beyond normalcy.

In fact, Shidou was already placing a heavy burden on his body before even being attacked by the enemy.

As his muscles screamed, the flames of <Camael> swept through his blood stream, forcibly repairing his body.

If he hadn't used <Gabriel> to dull the pain, the stiffening agony and burning sensation would have driven him mad. With a scream, Shidou swung down with <Sandalphon>.

“Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

The flash of the sword became a tremendous shockwave, extending out straight towards Westcott.

“Fu——”

However, Westcott relaxed his mouth while jumping back to the rear. Opening the jet black Demon King Book—— <Beelzebub>.

The next moment, several pages fluttered out from <Beelzebub> to form a layer that weakened the momentum of the sword slash from <Sandalphon>, leaving only a shallow pit on the ground where Westcott had once stood.

“Hmm. Sure enough, it’s a bit disadvantageous to be facing front against an Angel specializing in attacks——<Nibelcol>.”

“Present!”

“Leave it to me, Otou-sama!”

“We will never lose to a person like, Itsuka Shidou!”

In response to Westcott’s command, the <Nibelcol> leaped forward to attack Shidou.

However, the moment they approached, Shidou placed his hand on his lips in a flowing motion——

“——Chu.”

A kiss had been blown.

“Kya——”

In that instant, the <Nibelcol> began to tremble as they fell to the ground.

Taking that chance opportunity to draw closer to them, Shidou snatched away their lips at lightning speed.

“Waah.....!?”

“No.....not in front of Otou-sama.....”

“I couldn’t win against Itsuka Shidou after all.....”

The <Nibelcol> that were kissed and those that saw it all raised a sweet voice as they disappeared one by one.

That's right. The <Nibelcol> were made on the basis of Nia's factors. In other words, it was that state which served as the foundation of Shidou's strategy for this situation. By kissing them in this manner, it was possible to seal both the recipient and all individuals that saw the kiss occur.

However, even with his immortal soldiers being wiped out, Westcott only touched his chin with a calm look.

“—Oh, I see. It was confirmed that the number of <Nibelcol> had decreased. But to think that this was the blind spot, what an interesting phenomenon.”

An extraordinary attitude that was hindered by a lack of excessive annoyance. Shidou distorted his brow as he raised a cry.

“It's a pity, but the <Nibelcol> you are so proud of won't work on me.....!”

“Oh? Do you think so?”

Westcott smirked as he raised his arm and let out a snap.

“.....!”

The <Nibelcol> that had surrounded Shidou formed a queue; the group of <Nibelcol> began to leap to attack Shidou one by one.

“It's useless!”

Shidou sharpened his gaze as he blew another kiss towards the <Nibelcol>.

However, the <Nibelcol> did not stop moving forward.

“What.....?”

Then, Shidou had noticed.

The eyes of the <Nibelcol> approaching had sealed their vision with pages from <Beelzebub >.

“Tch—”

After perceiving that intention, Shidou retreated backwards.

The <Nibelcol> were afraid of Shidou's blown kiss not because of the shockwave or rays of light emitted from the kiss. But rather, the <Nibelcol> were shaken from the revelation of having been kissed.

In that case, as long as their eyes were sealed, they will no longer be afraid. It was simple logic.

However, that was easier said than done.

With this many number of <Nibelcol> blindfolded, it was not a simple matter to coordinate all of them to attack Shidou in an orderly manner.

The <Nibelcol> were a collective group. This may have been possible if one of the <Nibelcol> served as the role of the "eyes" somewhere, while others were fighting sharing the "eye's vision". On the other hand, if the "eye" recognized being kissed, then the entire group could be eliminated.

".....Ku."

After considering that point, Shidou understood.

In this circumstance, while sharing information with the <Nibelcol>, there was one person on the scene that could serve as the "highest quality eyes" without being fearful of Shidou's kiss.

"—What do you think? It's simple, but not a bad means."

In that manner, the "eyes" of the <Nibelcol> —Westcott, distorted the edges of his lips.

At the same time, the blindfolded <Nibelcol> were ready to attack once again.

"Ahahaha!"

"You really did what you wanted before!"

"Get ready to take responsibility!"

One by one, they launched the pieces of paper transformed by <Beelzebub ·Page> into sharpened edges onto Shidou.

"Ku.....!"

Shidou distorted his face as he manipulated <Metatron> to emit a ray around his perimeter to avoid the blow as soon as possible.

The <Nibelcol> were blown away from this indiscriminate bombardment.

However, immediately afterwards, the <Nibelcol> crawled out no worse from wear from the pages of <Beelzebub> fluttering around.

“It hurts!”

“You’ve really done it now!”

“Kuku, but we will not die from an attack of that level!”

Westcott smiled as he watched the chaos.

“—Indeed you are certainly the natural enemy of the <Nibelcol>. However, I don’t think that it will be decided by just that. You seemed to have thought you have won in the previous battle, but that folly is the equivalent as laughing at a concert without its conductor.”

“Ku——! Damm.....!”

Shidou barely avoided the attacks through the obstructive walls formed from <Zadkiel>.

Not only did the blown kiss tactic been rendered invalid, but the movements of the <Nibelcol> under Westcott’s commands were miles apart from their former actions.

It was the feeling that the group, which relied solely on its quantitative advantages and indiscriminate use of brute force, had completely transformed into an organized army following a chain of command. Faced against persistent and continuous attacks, Shidou was gradually driven to a corner.

“.....”

However—the shade of resignation did not appear in Shidou’s eyes.

Indeed, he was at a disadvantage. Indeed, he had been driven close to a dead end.

However, the presence of Westcott was both a threat and a fatal shortcoming.

The reason was simple. The <Nibelcol> were a pseudo-Spirit born form Westcott's <Beelzebub>. In that case, once the source is gone, the rest would disappear regardless of their immortality.

“—<Metatron>.”

Having decided, Shidou commanded <Metatron> to float upward—

The target was a densely populated spot of <Nibelcol> as well as including himself.

“Kya.....”

“W-what are you doing so suddenly.”

Countless rays of light were released from the sky. For a moment, the entire vicinity was bathed in a dazzling glow.

Amidst the <Nibelcol>'s screams, Westcott gently squinted his eyes as he waited for the flash and smog to disappear.

“—Hmm?”

Gazing at the place where the ray had blown the ground open, Westcott slightly tilted his neck.

But that was natural. Itsuka Shidou, who had been there for some time, was now nowhere to be seen.

“Eh? Did you disappear from your own attack?”

“Did he blow himself up because he knew he couldn't win?”

“No, no, isn't it because he ran away?”

“Kahaha, whichever way, it still shows that he was inferior.”

The <Nibelcol> began to giggle amongst each other.

However, Westcott did not lower his guard. No matter how desperate the situation, he didn't seem like the type to choose a meaningless suicide. Also, if he had chosen to retreat, the surrounding <Nibelcol> would have taken notice to it.

“Hey, Otou-sama, what are you going to do?”

A nearby <Nibelcol> quietly asked while tilting her head.

“Hmm, that’s right——”

While seemingly responding, Westcott turned a page of <Beelzebub> —but then he hurriedly escaped from that spot.

The next moment, where <Westcott> was standing, the front end of a key-shaped staff had been thrust into his place.

The <Nibelcol> who had been talking to Westcott had suddenly tried to attack him.

“Ku——”

The <Nibelcol> let out a frustrated sigh before distorting its facial expression.

Seeing this sight, the other <Nibelcol> opened their eyes wide in shock.

“What, why did you attack Otou-sama, me!”

“Rebellion! Is this our rebellious period!?”

“No——wait a second. That isn’t me!”

The <Nibelcol> yelled as they prepared to attack that individual. The person, who had tried to strike down Westcott, leaped out of the way as their appearance changed.

That’s right——changing into the face of Itsuka Shidou, who had just disappeared just a while ago.

“Tch.....it failed.”

Having transformed back from a <Nibelcol>, Shidou clicked his tongue against his mouth. The genuine <Nibelcol> looked at him with a surprised look.

“Ah! It’s you!”

“How dare you attack Otou-sama with my appearance.....!”

While the <Nibelcol> were brimming with malice, Westcott didn't look angry. Rather, he was smiling happily.

“—Using <Metatron>'s bombardment as a distraction in order to mix in with the <Nibelcol> through <Haniel>. Then, aim for a chance opportunity to seal <Beelzebub> away with <Michael>.....? That's a clever method, but the idea itself is too easy to predict.”

“..... You bastard—”

Shidou glared at Westcott, who was accurately explaining his actions.

Westcott shrugged his shoulders as if saying something that should be already expected.

“Have you forgotten about my Demon King? The omniscient <Beelzebub>, it's quite natural for me to recognize the power of the Angels held by the Spirits.”

“.....”

While hearing Westcott's words, Shidou frowned.

His surprise attack had been completely seen through, but that was nothing compared to the anger of being treated in a tone used to lecture a child.

Yet, even beyond that, the most unsatisfactory thing was—

“Correct that. It isn't your Demon King. It's Nia's Angel.”

Shidou sharpened his vision as he filled his body once again with reiryoku in order to manifest multiple Angels once again.

“—Humph, then show it to me.”

As Westcott exposed a fearless smile, the <Nibelcol> lowered their posture in order to prepare for combat.

After a few seconds of silence, Shidou and the <Nibelcol> kicked off against the ground simultaneously.

But.

“—Huh.....?”

At that moment, a tremendous sense of incongruity struck Shidou.

The <Michael> held in Shidou’s hands. For a moment, there was the feeling of it disappearing from the palm of his hand.

It closely resembled the feeling he had felt when dashing on the ground while using <Raphael>.

An unexpected anxiety attack struck Shidou. It felt as if something had happened to Mukuro, the owner of <Michael>—

“Guaah.....!?”

The next moment, Shidou raised an agonized cry as he felt a sharp pain in his chest.

The moment Shidou’s concentration faltered, the <Nibelcol> saw that gap to tiptoe their fingertips into his abdomen.

“Kiyaaaahh! What are you doing!”

“Gu.....!”

Although Shidou’s face was distorted in pain, he tried to counterattack the <Nibelcol>.

However, in an outnumbered battle, disruption in his breathing became a fatal loss. As if swallowed by an avalanche, Shidou’s hands and feet were pin down by the <Nibelcol>.

“Ka—wa.....”

With blood mixed in with his cough, Shidou gritted his teeth to ignore the pain striking his entire body and injected strength to his arms and feet to break free from the <Nibelcol>.

However, even while relying on the strengthening powers of <Gabriel>, it was difficult to dismiss the pseudo-Spirits that were working together in unison.

“Oh, I didn’t expect it to end so soon. Or is this also part of your combat strategy?”

As he turned the pages of <Beelzebub>, Westcott began to walk towards Shidou.

“You this.....!”

In his mind, an idea quickly appeared as he manifested <Metatron> in the air. However, at that moment, the <Nibelcol> held down <Metatron> and changed the trajectory of its muzzle.

“Hmm, so that’s it. I will draw the curtain now. I wanted to play with you a little more, but before encountering <Deus>, I must have your reiryoku.”

Westcott spoke while standing in front of Shidou.

In turn, Shidou glared back with a look of disgust.

“.....You.”

“Hmm?”

“What the hell are you!? For what purpose are you seeking the power of the Spirits? For what reason—are you hurting so many people.....!?”

Although these words were nothing more than stalling for time, the question was unmistakably genuine. Shidou spat out in fury as he tightly gritted his teeth.

Then, Westcott replied after pausing for a few seconds.

“It’s for the sake of creating a new world.”

“New.....world?”

“Ah. Maybe you have already heard this from Elliot, but we are decedents from genuine Mages unlike those artificial magicians (Wizard). At one time, by the hand of people afraid of our power, our hometown was burned down and compatriots killed.”

“What—”

“So I will rewrite this world with the neighboring world of <Deus>. In order to have revenge on the human race that killed our family.”

As he finished speaking, Westcott distorted the edges of his lips in a playful manner.

“—Is that easy enough to convince you?”

“.....What did you say?”

As Shidou raised his brow in confusion, Westcott continued to speak in an unconstrained tone.

“According to one theory, the first two types of emotions people experience can be distinguished between pleasant and unpleasant. Through growth, human emotions become differentiated into all sort of different feelings.....but no matter what, every emotion basically can be characterized as pleasant or unpleasant, people favor pleasure and dislike discomfort.”

“What.....are you saying?”

“Actually, the reasoning behind that is not an exaggeration. For instance, people who derive pleasure for social status tend to place more effort in work. Or people who regarded it pleasant to be loved by others tend to give more soothing offerings.”

Westcott exaggeratingly spread open his hands while continuing on.

“My position is only slightly different from others. Nothing more, nothing less. There’s nothing changed after that. I am making as much effort as possible for the sake of my curiosity and goals. —Itsuka Shidou. Have you ever spent money looking for a toy? Have you ever tidy up your appearance before searching for love? It’s no different from that. —In that sense, I am a very ordinary person.”

“_____”

Hearing what Westcott had said, Shidou held his breath. Trepidation filled his lungs as he felt an instinctual resistance.

Ah, Shidou understood the feeling of incongruity in Westcott’s impression.

He was not abnormal, not even insane. He was an extreme human being to the greatest extent. —However, in terms of ethics he stood from a completely different from Shidou, with a viewpoint on life and death incompatible with other human beings.

“—Now then, this story has dragged on a bit.”

While speaking, a page of <Beelzebub> wrapped into a conical shape in his hand as he aimed for Shidou’s chest.

“Farwell, Itsuka Shidou. And Takamiya Shinji.”

“Gu.....!”

Having said that, Westcott’s hand prepared to pierce into Shidou’s chest—

However, at that moment.

“—Wa!”

A loud noise from the skies shook the surrounding air like an earthquake.

“.....!?”

No, it was closer to a vibrating weapon than a voice. The <Nibelcol> who were pinning his arms and feet momentarily faltered as his restraints weakened. Westcott, who was just about to stab Shidou, seemed unable to move for a moment because of the sudden impact.

“.....!”

This was a chance opportunity. However.....Shidou was also caught in the shockwaves of the vibration. Even though he wanted to escape from the scene, his body refused to move as he desired.

However, at the next moment while thinking over such thoughts, something grabbed the collar of his shirt as he was pulled upward.

“Waah.....!?”

Faced against this unexpected situation, Shidou raised a startled voice.

However, Shidou quickly discovered who had done this.

“Are you alright, Darling!”

“.....That was dangerous, we made it by a hair breadth.”

“—Miku, Natsumi!”

Shidou opened his eyes as he called out the names of the two Spirits.

That's right, Miku and Natsumi, who were in charge of supporting everyone at the rear, had come here.

It seemed that Miku had used her Angel of sound <Gabriel> to stun the <Nibelcol> while Natsumi took the chance to grab Shidou.

"Sorry guys, you just saved me. Moreover, I'm glad you're also safe."

"Well, that's fine and all, but what is the war situation right now? Communications with everyone have been cut off....."

".....Say that person, isn't he the enemy general? Why did he come to the forefront? No, well, even though it can be said the same for Shidou."

As Miku and Natsumi asked with an uneasy look, Shidou clenched his fist as he shouted.

"Details later! The Spirit of Origin has appeared! We have to defeat him as soon as possible and head to everyone. Please lend me your strength!"

".....!"

"What....."

Miku and Natsumi displayed horrified expression hearing what Shidou had just said—however, they soon understood his intentions as they casted a sharpened gaze.

"This must be urgent. I'll raise the bar for Darling and everyone, let's go!"

".....To say such a serious thing with that face. It can't be helped, I'll accompany you as well.....!"

While saying that, Miku slammed down on her glimmering keyboard and Natsumi held up her broom type Angel.

Looking at that scene, Westcott exposed a thin smile.

"Wow. <Diva> and <Witch>. —How delightful. In addition to Itsuka Shidou's reiryoku, I'll be able to obtain two Sephira Crystals in completion."

While they were able to stop Westcott and the <Nibelcol> for a moment, by now their eyes had already returned to being casted at them as they resumed a battle formation.

Miku and Natsumi sharpened their line of sight in wariness of that gaze.

“Anyway, how should we defeat that man?”

“.....But, you know, those <Nibelcol> will regenerate infinitely until Shidou is defeated. Should we get rid of the surroundings while Shidou charges forward to the enemy general? Or should we wait for an opportunity and attack from behind using <Haniel>?”

“—No.”

Upon hearing what the two had said, Shidou shook his head.

Having their fighting power increased was greatly appreciated, but the adversaries were not just the <Nibelcol> alone.

Furthermore, Westcott had obtained knowledge of the Angels through <Beelzebub>. Although Miku’s <Gabriel> and Natsumi’s <Haniel> were certainly powerful, just now Westcott had already proven that a sneak attack would be useless.

The omniscient Demon King <Beelzebub>. As long as the owner asks for it, it was a Demon King that contained knowledge of all things in the universe. Depending on the poor devious tactic used, there was the possibility of Shidou willingly throwing himself into a greater dilemma.

If one were to try and break it down—there were likely only two methods.

One way would be to attack with a method that Westcott didn’t even think of.

Although <Beelzebub> is indeed a Demon King capable of collecting all information in this world, its authority will not be demonstrated unless the user requested for it. In other words, there was the opportunity of striking with something Westcott did not even expect.

And the other method was—

“.....Miku, can you play <Gabriel> for me? Use it as fierce as possible—strengthen my body to the limit.”

“! Darling, that’s not.....”

“Natsumi, please do the same. Transform <Haniel> into <Gabriel>. I’m begging you.”

“.....Shidou, you.”

Hearing what Shidou had asked, Miku and Natsumi blinked for a moment before understanding Shidou’s intentions. Then, after a short sigh, they began to play their Angels.

From both the left and right, inspirational music resounded.

“.....!”

Bathed in this performance, Shidou couldn’t help but hold his breath.

His heart rate soared as he felt the circulation of boiling blood move around his body. By focusing on one person alone, it was a duet using <March>, which was typically used directed for a large group. The extent of the effect was unimaginable.

“——<Nibelcol>.”

However, the enemy was not enough to wait patiently on the sidelines. With Westcott’s command, nearly 100 <Nibelcol> charged in at once.

“Whatever you are trying to do is useless!”

“I’ll make the three of you kneel before Otou-sama.....!”

With a roar, the <Nibelcol> shouted as they deformed into a conical shape through <Beelzebub ·Page> and fired themselves like arrows.

Glancing at the projectile, Shidou yelled from his throat.

“——<Zadkiel>!”

In an instant, a barrier of ice surrounded the three of them, hindering the projectiles from through <Beelzebub ·Page> before they could even reach Shidou and the others.

However, the terrifying thing about the <Nibelcol> was not absolute power, but the strength of their overwhelming quantity. Although each shot was minuscule, the repeated attacks formed cracks resembling a spider’s web on the surface of the ice.

But—that was fine. Shidou didn't believe he could fully fend off the <Nibelcol>'s attack. But this was enough to protect the two performers safe until the two <Gabriel> filled him with enough power.

“Fu——”

Due to the <Nibelcol>'s persistent attacks, the barrier formed from <Zadkiel> scattered into pieces.

At the same time, Shidou let out a sigh of relief. With <Sandalphon> in his right hand, he kicked off the ground and moved forward.

“Ha, he came out!”

“Please drop dead now.....!”

The <Nibelcol> who recognized his figure emerged out from <Beelzebub·Page>.

However, Shidou did not use <Zadkiel> to shield himself. Several arrows that couldn't be avoided struck him from the back of his arm.

“Gu.....!”

However, Shidou did not stop. Neither defense nor pain relief—he kept pushing forward towards Westcott as much as possible while the flames of <Camael> automatically healed his body.

Of course, there was a searing pain striking his entire body—but it didn't matter.

Since for the current Shidou, it was nothing more than a migraine compared to the pain from manifesting multiple Angels.

“<Sandalphon>.....!”

Shidou screamed out that name as he struck the ground with his heel.

Then, the earth shook in response to his voice——

As a golden throne was manifested there.

The scabbard of <Sandalphon>: the throne. It was the first time Shidou had summoned it.

“What.....?”

Westcott frowned slightly.

—Then, Shidou shouted.

The noble name of the great sword.

“—<Halvanhelev>—!”

A moment later, cracks began forming in the throne summoned by Shidou, decomposing into fragments that attached onto the sword held in his hands.

Afterwards, it constituted into a sword to huge for a person to hold.

With the feeling of being burnt out by the sensation of pain going beyond the limit, Shidou lifted the sword towards Westcott’s direction.

“—Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh—!”

That’s right; this was the other way to overthrow Westcott.

—Both unable to be known and unable to be stopped, a single attack swung with all of his strength.

The strongest attack Shidou knew was none other than Tohka’s
<Halvanhelev>.....

The dazzling torrent of reiryoku swallowed Westcott and tore open the earth.

“Fu—hahahahahahaha.....!”

Standing in front of the wave of power incoming, Westcott laughed loudly.

A terrifying amount of reiryoku that drowned even the field of vision, this was perhaps the largest and strongest blow of Itsuka Shidou, a human wielding the power of the Spirits.

The excitement of that power becoming his own as long as he took away the Sephira Crystals, the excitement of his imminent death, at that moment Westcott’s mind was overflowing with pleasure.

Indeed, Shidou's idea was not necessarily wrong. It was meaningless to carry out a surprise attack against Westcott, who knew each Angel's function. Then, the most simple and optimal solution would be to land a decisive blow of strength that can annihilate any defense. In fact, in Westcott's hands, there was no card that could defend against this hit.

However——

“——The meaning of knowing, I wonder if you are still looking down on that.”

At that moment, Westcott, murmured such——

“Otou-samaaaaa!”

Several of the surrounding <Nibelcol> gathered to protect Westcott.

Of course, not even the pseudo-Spirit <Nibelcol> could stand the strongest blow from this Angel. The <Nibelcol> that touched <Halvanhelev> turned in particles of light in a flash.

However, the power of the <Nibelcol> lied in their numbers. As long as there was <Beelzebub>, they could resurrect no matter how many times they died. The large number of <Nibelcol> continued to form heavy barriers around Westcott.

In addition——Westcott was “aware”.

The time of release when <Princess> delivered this attack.

The huge attack range.

The duration to maintain maximum power.

“Fu——”

As the <Nibelcol> were soaking in the blow, Westcott escaped to the left by relying on the hands of another <Nibelcol>.

Of course, it was impossible to escape perfectly without injury. The enormous reiryoku burned Westcott's hands and feet as he was escaping.

However——Westcott had survived.

And in his hands, there was still <Beelzebub>.

—Over time, the violent power of this reiryoku will disappear.

“Fu.....hahahahahahaha!”

Westcott laughed.

There were no more techniques left in Itsuka Shidou’s arsenal.

There was no doubt that the victor for the power of the Spirits was Westcott.

But—

“.....Ah, I knew if it was you, you would have avoided it.”

“—?”

Shidou’s voice echoed from the other side of the smoke, causing Westcott to slightly move his eyebrows in response.

“—Certainly, with <Beelzebub>’s power in your hand, the first thing you would want to investigate are the powers of the Angels. I didn’t really master what I just used; it’s just temporarily borrowed strength—but.”

The wind blew as the smoke and dust cleared.

There stood Shidou’s figure, linking both of his hands together by the wrist.

“Do you know about this? Have you investigated it yet? Hey, Mr. Omniscient Westcott.....!”

With a scream, he spun out his words while still focusing on Westcott.

“—— Shun—— Sen”

“What?”

Hearing those words, Westcott slightly frowned.

A language he had never heard of before. Was it the name of an Angel? Mantra? Magic? Spell? Or—

“—— Gou —— Baku ——”

A moment of confusion.

While examining over the entire possible enemy powers that Westcott was aware of being able to be used in the instance of a chance opportunity.

Shidou opened his eyes in fury as he extended his hands forward.

“———— Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa —————!!”

At that moment.

“Wha——”

A torrent of reiryoku.

A completely unknown attack—swallowed Westcott, who was already exhausted from <Halvanhelev>.

“————”

As that power left his body, just like a thread that snapped, Shidou collapsed on the spot.



“Darling!”

“S-shido.....!”

From behind, he heard a voice calling out his name. Then, his body was gently picked up.

“Ah.....Miku, Natsumi, sorry.....I might have.....overworked a bit.....”

“That’s an understatement! You’re covered in injuries from head to toe!”

Miku said with tears in her eyes. Her voice must have been mixed with the reiryoku from <Gabriel>. Gradually, the pain and suffering from his entire body began to relax.

“Thank you.....I’m okay now.”

“Ah, Darling!”

“Wait.....are you really okay?”

Shidou stood up with some support from Miku and Natsumi’s hands. With faint footsteps, he traversed through the destroyed ground.

Soon after—he found a third of <Beelzebub> remaining and Westcott lying on the rubble. The black suit covering his body was already ragged; blood was leaking everywhere as his entire body was filled with scars.

“.....Oh.”

Westcott blinked as if the pain had not caught up to him, his eyes turning attention to Shidou.

“It appears I’ve lost. So this is the endpoint. Hmm.....how unexpectedly boring.”

“.....You—

Seeing the image of the other side, the feeling of buried feelings seemed to reignite in Shidou’s mind.

As of now, Westcott had no ability to resist. If Shidou struck with an Angel now, it would be possible to stop his breathing immediately.

That moment, he recognized it. The anger of Takamiya Shinji had come out again.

The hatred of loved ones being hurt, the grudge of his sister being kidnapped—and also the regret of being killed.

The memories of Takamiya Shinji resurfacing in Shidou's mind allowed him to display the maximum amount of murderous intent to the person in front of him.

“.....”

As if moved by his other self, he gradually raised his right hand.

Without a word, an Angel manifested in his hand.

“! Darling!”

“Shidou.....!”

Perhaps noticing Shidou's actions, Miku and Natsumi raised their voices together.

However—it was too late. Shidou's hand had already swiftly swung down.

—Facing <Beelzebub>, which was right next to Westcott.

“.....<Michael> —<Segva>.”

Turning the Angel—<Michael>, that was in his hands.

The next moment, the reiryoku residing in <Beelzebub> subsided and the innumerable pages scattered around disappeared into particles of light.

With this, the power of <Beelzebub> had been temporarily sealed. It can be said that Westcott had lost all of his fighting power.

Looking at this scene, Miku and Natsumi let out a relieved sigh.

“Really.....I was really surprised.”

“.....Yeah, I thought you were going to kill him.”

Hearing the voices of these two, Shidou let out a soft sigh.

“....Yes, I do want to kill him. In fact, from the last blow, I thought to myself it couldn't be helped if he dies while firing it.”

“The last.....”

“Ah, that flash.....”

Shidou coughed a few times before continuing.

“I don’t know what to say.....but this is definitely a waste of time. I don’t want to be the same as that guy. That’s all.....sorry everyone.”

“Darling.....”

“.....Well, I hope that this can be enough.”

Hearing what Shidou had said, the two of them nodded in affirmation.

Then, Westcott let out a small breath.

“Is that okay? I don’t think there will be a second chance.”

“How noisy, the loser shouldn’t make irresponsible remarks.”

“Haha, the way you talk is similar to Elliot.....unfortunately, I was quite interested in the feeling of death——”

——At that instant.

Westcott stopped talking.

No——it would be better to say that he couldn’t speak.

In the blink of an eye, the world transformed into a monochrome hue——from Westcott’s chest, a Sephira Crystal emerged emitting a faint gray light.

“What.....!?”

As his eyes were startled with astonishment, Shidou quickly surveyed the surroundings.

The scenery was obviously abnormal. The endless ruins had changed into a geometric space comprising of black and white.

“Eh.....?”

“Ah——”

From behind, Miku and Natsumi's voices echoed.

For a moment, he thought that they were also surprised by the sudden shift in the world—but that wasn't it.

He soon noticed it.

Something resembling a band of light grew from the ground and pierced Miku and Natsumi's chests in a straight line.

“.....!? M-miku, Natsumi.....!?”

As Shidou screamed in dismay, brilliant Sephira Crystals emerged from their chest—floating midair to Westcott before flying into the sky.

Miku and Natsumi fell to the ground like a thread-cut doll.

“H-hey, what happened you two.....”

While trying to stir the two of them awake, Shidou was left half-speechless.

The reason was simple. Since two people whom he was just talking to until a few seconds ago—had just turned into speechless corpses.

“T-this, what happened.....!”

“——Shin.”

Then, as if to answer to Shidou's confusion.

A girl appeared from the darkness.

“.....! Mio——”

That's right. Takamiya Mio, a Spirit wearing a pristine Astral Dress, had unexpectedly appeared here.

To be precise, it can be said that her attire was slightly different than before.

While only one was lit up previously, now all ten stars behind her were shining brightly.

“.....”

The worst case scenario passed his mind. But he couldn't help but still ask. The words spilled out while he was suppressing the urge to vomit.

“E-everyone.....”

“.....”

Following Shidou's words, Mio slowly raised her hand.

Then, each beautiful Sephira Crystal appeared from the ten shining stars on her back.

“What——?”

The feeling of sadness. Having seen what just happened to Miku and Natsumi, Shidou could understand what happened.

In other words, the Spirits——were all dead.

“A-ah.....”

——He didn't make it in time.

Shidou felt his throat trembling in a semi-unconscious state.

Grasping the situation, despair invaded his mind and eroded his body. It infiltrated his field of vision, causing even his fingertips to tremble. It was difficult to even stand up.

“——Preparations are complete.”

However, in contrast to Shidou, Mio spoke out in a quiet voice.

“Let's be together forever——Shin.”



“.....What on earth is that different space?”

The <Ratatoskr> aerial warship <Ulmus> was floating the in the skies above Tenguu City, which had already transformed into a battlefield.

On the bridge, the chairperson of the Round Table, Karen Mathers let out a calm but also somewhat anxious voice.

But it was no wonder after all. Even amidst the fierce battle, suddenly the probe detected a spiritual wave response from the Spirit of Origin.

Immediately afterwards, the mysterious Angel appeared and was followed by that strange space. From the surroundings where that occurred, whether it was enemy Wizards, automatic dolls, or even airships like their flagship <Lemegeton>, all response reactions had disappeared.

Looking at this alone, although it was irregular, <Ratatoskr> had won.

However, the situation was not that simple.

That's right. The response of Itsuka Shidou, the key point of <Ratatoskr> had also disappeared. Even their own flagship <Fraxinus> sank in front of that Angel.

The abnormal battlefield was akin to a king being absent on the chessboard.

Right now, DEM was also caught in situation of uncertainty. Well, even if they knew Westcott had been defeated, it was not impossible for them to seek out revenge—but compared to that, it was a simple action to continue fighting the enemy in front of themselves.

However, as far as Karen was concerned, both sides were undoubtedly caught in a panic. This would only add further fatigue to both sides. While getting a grip on the current situation, Karen attempted to analyze the foreign space while the battlefield was still inert.

However, the more investigation spent, the more difficult it was to understand.

Although it was understood that the barrier-like space was formed with the Angel as its core, the attributes of reiryoku comprising it were constantly changing ever so slightly. Just by turning away for one second, it would transform into something completely different.

Although the size difference was comparable of an elephant to an ant, it resembled a Wizard's Voluntary Territory—

“—No way, the neighboring world—?”

As Karen said that, a crew member sitting by a nearby seat suddenly raised his voice.

“This is——”

“What happened?”

“Y-yes. I’ve picked up the single from the autonomous camera injected by <Fraxinus> to investigate the different space from the outside.....there are objects there resembling the Spirits’ bodies.....”

“What did you say?”

Karen frowned as she peaked into the crew member’s personal display.

Indeed, as he said, there were several Spirits collapsed on the ground. Among them included <Fraxinus>’s captain, Itsuka Kotori.

“Ku.”

A small frustrated sigh leaked out from her.

It had already been confirmed that Tokisaki Kurumi and the Yamai sisters had been killed by the Spirit of Origin. But to think in such a short amount of time——

“.....Wait a minute, are this all of the visuals?”

“Yes, at least all that we have right now.”

“.....”

In response to the crew member’s retort, Karen placed her hand against her chin.

It might have just been a mistake. Or perhaps that person did not encounter the Spirit of Origin yet.

But certainly——when determining the number of corpses displayed on the visual, there was one person missing from the number of Spirits that had entered the different space.



—Slowly, slowly swaying back and forth

—Quickly, quickly turning around.

It was a space where one couldn't tell where was up or down. The sensation of swimming in lukewarm water, the invasive feeling of being sucked into darkness, it was a mysterious state of coexistence.

No—it wasn't just the orientation of this space.

There was the feeling of a lack of ownership in one's own body. A sense of incompatibility where the slightest hint of carelessness would cause a person's hands and feet to dissolve into this world.

A feeling horrid but also a sweet temptation. The sort of pleasure of being unable to resist going to sleep. Even while knowing that one's consciousness would fade away at the slightest hint of negligence.

(.....Uha.....)

However, something painful within the depth of Tohka's head rejected it—

—Useless, useless, completely pointless.

Falling asleep here would mean everything would be over and she would never be able to wake up again.

But, as if aware of that, the feeling of drowsiness caught Tohka's consciousness and would not let go. A gentle demonic beckoning that gradually erode Tohka's ego—

(—Do you want to sleep? Well, that's fine too I guess.)

At that instant.

From such a place, a voice echoed. Tohka forced her eyes wide open.

(.....—)

The sleepiness attacking her consciousness suddenly vanished as her mind became clear. Sensation returned to her hands and feet that were melting away into the space.

But on the contrary, this awakening only seemed to highlight the peculiarity of this space.

Looking around, where this was—no, she didn't even know what this was.

As far as she could see, there was a vast emptiness in this strange place. If she were to compare it to something, it was like how she would wake up in the world after a spacequake.

—But, there was a certain intelligence here. While barely able to control her body in an irritated manner, Tohka moved towards the direction of where the voice originated.

(Wha.....)

Seeing the girl that was there, Tohka widened her eyes in alarm.

Hair flowing with the color of night.

Her crystal eyes quietly looking onward.

That's right. The girl here—had the exact same face as Tohka.

(Y-you, who are you.....)

As Tohka asked in surprise, the girl replied back with a huff from her nose.

(Name, there's no such thing. —If you really dare to ask, I am you.)

(Me.....?)

Hearing the girl's answer only made Tohka even more confused.

But it was undeniable that she couldn't laugh off what the girl had said as a joke. To say it to someone else, the girl looked identical to Tohka. Comparatively, it would be easier to spot differences between the Yamai sisters.

(What the hell is going on.....is this a dream?)

(A dream. Hmm, that's not too far from the truth. The difference is between either your head or that woman's.)

(That woman—?)

As she heard that, Tohka felt a twitch reach her shoulders.

From that single word, the memories came back one after the other.

That's right. Tohka and the other Spirits had all been fighting Mio—and then defeated.

(Everyone.....where is everyone else!? If I am here, does that mean everyone is here too!?)

Tohka spoke while looking around again. Like Tohka, the other Spirits should have had their Sephira Crystals absorbed into Mio. If Tohka—or at least her consciousness— was here, then the other Spirits should be here as well.

Then, Tohka noticed that her question was insufficient. Since that girl had the same appearance as Tohka and knew things that Tohka herself lacked. As a result, she automatically thought that the other person could infer from what she had asked.

“Ah, everyone means——”

(Are you asking about the other Spirits?)

(! Do you know!?)

As Tohka's eyes shot up, the girl let out a small exhaled breath.

(—Since from the previous awakening, I've occasionally borrowed your eyes to view the world.)

(Mun.....? Eyes.....?)

Not understanding the meaning of the girl's words, Tohka slightly slanted her head.

However, the girl shook her head, noticing that Tohka did not understand, she replied back to the previous question.

(The only thing here is you. The other Spirits were deprived of their Sephira Crystals by that woman and died as human beings. Only the Sephira Crystals are inside that woman.)

(.....)

Hearing what the girl had said, Tohka held her breath.

The realization that everyone died struck Tohka again. She had witnessed it, through Mio's hands, the sight of everyone falling on the cold ground.

But by being told that again, Tohka remembered the feeling of her heart being crushed.

However, she then noticed another uncomfortable feeling from listening to what the girl had said. Tohka frowned as she asked.

(As humans? What does that mean? Certainly, Origami and Kotori and the others are former humans, but aren't the other Spirits.....Yoshino, Kaguya, Yuzuru, and Natsumi all the same type of Spirit as myself?)

(No, the existences called Spirits outside of that woman are all humans who were given Sephira Crystals—with one exception. Those you mentioned before were turned into Spirits ten years ago and lost their memories of their time as humans.)

(What—)

Tohka couldn't help but stare in open shock.

The Spirits—all human beings.

She had remembered Nia saying something similar in the past, but it was unclear if it was true or not. After all, Tohka did not have any memory of when she was a human, so there was no way to feel that sense of reality.

However, if that girl's words ran true, there was one strange point.

(Then.....why am I alive? Shouldn't I be just like the others!?)

That's right, just like everyone else; Tohka had also been pierced in the chest by Mio.

Then, Tohka should have died as a human being just like the others.

(That is because—)

The girl narrowed her eyes and opened her lips as she briefly said something.

(—!)

Listening to that, Tohka's eyes shot up again.

However—she immediately closed her lips and clenched her fists.

(.....Hmm?)

The girl's eyebrows slightly moved.

(I thought you would be confused. I didn't expect you to accept it so soon.)

(.....Mun, no, I am confused. But.....if that is true, I am grateful for that fact.)

(How.....?)

As the girl looked on in interested, Tohka raised her face with a resolute light shining in her expression.

(—I am still alive. And because I am alive—I can still fight.)

As Tohka finished, the girl expressed her understanding.

(I see. —But the opponent is our mother. Assuming you can fight, you must first create a surprise. If possible, make the most of the few minutes you have. At worst we will die again. No..... This time that woman will not make mistakes anymore. We will definitely disappear without any consciousness or debris left.)

The girl spoke out in a threatening tone.

However, Tohka shook her head without any hesitation.

(—It's fine. If it can last for a few minutes, it is definitely enough for Shido to run away. I cannot think of any other solution to this situation. ———Little hope like this is enough for me to bet my life.)

(Hey. But if you die, that means I die as well. Because I am you.)

(Wha...is that the case? That's a bit.....um.....sorry.....but do you not want me to fight?)

(Oh? Why do you think so?)

The girl slightly tilted her head while asking back. Tohka looked directly at her while replying.

(—Because you called out to me.)

(——)

Looking at Tohka, the girl's eyebrows finally wavered—she couldn't help but laugh.

(Fuhaha, that's right.....ahh, that's right.)

Looking at that girl's face, Tohka felt a strange feeling while watching her laugh.

As the girl laughed, she spread out her hands and embraced Tohka's shoulders.

(—If so then, you should go me. Until satisfied, do whatever you want.)

(..... Umu. Thanks, me.)

With a small smile, the girl separated from Tohka and pushed her back.



“Deceiving.....others.....”

As those words leaked from Shidou's mouth, his knees fell down from the pressure.

“.....Ah.....”

Only barely conscious, Shidou let out a powerless sigh.

At that moment, a shadow fell onto his line of sight

—In the blink of an eye, Mio had appeared in front of Shidou.

“.....Shin.”

With a lovely but also sad voice, Mio gently stroked Shidou's cheeks.

“.....Sorry. I didn't want to make you sad though.”



But, Mio continued on.

“It’ll be okay. Soon—that sorrow will disappear. Since from the beginning, Shin did not know any Spirit other than me. This sin belongs only to myself. So Shin never needs to blame himself.”

“I am.....”

With a sound comparable to a mosquito, Shidou looked on at Mio.

—To the excessively divine radiance of a girl who resembled a goddess.

A moment ago, Shidou was still thinking that he had to stop her. He did not want the memory of “Shidou” to be erased, the loss of the accumulation of the life he lived up to the present. He had decided strongly in his mind to survive with everyone.

But now, it was pointless no matter what happened.

Even if he escaped from Mio, where would he go?

The Spirits waiting for his return were no longer here.

“.....”

—If it meant being free from this despair, it would be easier to choose to hand over everything to Mio.

Shidou understood that it was the worst possible idea, but perhaps due to the lingering influence of “Shin” in his mind, he couldn’t stop thinking that idea.

“.....Shin.”

Mio gently touched Shidou’s forehead.

“Ah.....”

Shidou.....couldn’t shake that hand away.

Although his body had long since gone past its limit, his heart had already lost the energy to resist anymore.

“Un—”

Mio narrowed her eyes as she injected strength into her hand.

(—)

As time passed, Shidou's consciousness began to blur.

(—dou—)

There was no pain. Rather, it was gentle feeling of falling asleep under a spring breeze.

(—Shidou—)

Ah, so this is what death feels like—

“Shidou!!”

—And then

“.....!?”

He suddenly heard someone shout out his name—Shidou quickly opened his eyes.

For a moment, Shidou suspected it was an auditory hallucination.

However, his eyes helped reject his doubt.

“What—”

“.....What?”

As Shidou held his breath, Mio also slightly distorted her eyebrows up.

But that was to be expected. Among the ten stars behind Mio, one of them had cracked.

“————Ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

The next moment.

A part of Mio's Astral Dress seemed to be breaking from the inside-out —from there, Tohka emerged with <Sandalphon> in her hands.

Tohka grabbed Shidou's neck, leaping a great distance to separate him from Mio's grasp.

“Shidou! Are you okay!?”

“Tohka.....!?”

“Nothing is over yet. —Come, stand up Shidou!”

Tohka gave a powerful nod as Shidou's voice was filled with shock.

Fragmentary Chapter/ 5: Ocean

“.....Is it okay now?”

“Not yet, just a bit more.”

In the darkness, Mio was being guided by Shinji’s hand.

That being said, it was not as if they had steeped into a steep cave where light would not reach, nor were they on an evening road not lit by a streetlight. Simply, it was because Mio was asked by Shinji to close her eyes for a moment.

Although it was not reassuring to have to walk forward with her vision closed, Mio felt neither worried nor afraid. —Surely, it was because Shinji was firmly holding Mio’s hand.

It was truly—a mysterious feeling.

Just by feeling Shinji’s presence through her palm and fingers, all concerns and fears naturally blew away.

What a strange, unfounded universal feeling. But also something unbearably comfortable. It was an extraordinarily inconceivable sensation for Mio.

“Alright, it’s good now, Mio.”

At that moment, Shinji had stopped his feet as he spoke.

“Un——”

Mio slightly nodded while slowly opening her closed eyes.

The next moment, a dazzling light stimulated Mio’s eyes, which had gradually grown accustomed to the darkness.

Gradually afterwards, an image began to form from the pure white world—before being finally capturing the full view of the horizon

“——Wow——!”

Sounds of admiration unexpectedly leaked out from Mio’s throat.

First of all, there was so much blue that it couldn’t be fully captured in her field vision.

Swaying blue planes whose vastness would not lose to even the sky.

There was reflected sunlight, the sound of the surging waves, and the strong scent stimulating the nose.

That's right, this was—

“—The ocean.”

While looking at the various elements presented in front of her, Mio compared the scenery with the information store in her head.

Shinji nodded while gently smiling.

“Yeah, you said that you wanted to see it once, right?”

“Ah.....”

Mio remembered after being told. Mio, who had been absorbing the knowledge from the books and videos picked up by Shinji, showcased a strong interest in the special environment that accounted for 70% of the Earth.

However, she did not expect Shinji to have remembered this. Mio felt her chest tighten.

“—I'm so happy. Thank you, Shin.”

“Ah, uh.....as long as you are happy.”

Hearing this, Shinji smiled while with a bashful expression marking his face.

Mio returned the gesture with a sweet smile before running towards the beach.

“Ah, Mio!”

“Hehe.”

Leaving her shoes behind with Shinji, the sound of splashing water was heard as Mio leaped into the sea.

As knowledge, this information had been obtained relatively early. When asked questions about the “sea”, Mio could surely explain it in more detail than the ordinary person.

However, there was a severe difference between information stored in the mind and the level of detail and presences felt directly through the five senses.

The touch of cold water with feet submerged in the sand, the reoccurring surging waves, all of that made Mio feel the portion of a large unreasonable force.

“Ahh——”

——How comfortable.

For a second, Mio remained silent; she stretched her hands while raising her body up.

For Mio who had just been born, everything was a new experience. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and the sensation of touch through her skin, everything enveloped Mio’s body with a surprisingly unspeakable pleasure.

No——certainly that was not only the case.

Mio smiled as she lightly turned her body to face Shinji with open hands.

“Shin!”

From that gesture and words, he could guess the intention. After widening his eyes in surprise for a moment, Shinji took off his shoes and walked towards the beach to Mio.

“Hehe——

Mio waited for Shinji to approach her side before taking a step forward to hold Shinji with both of her arms.

“Wa, Mio.....?”

Suddenly, Shinji eyes jolted open in stunned surprise.

However, the meaning behind that did not reach Mio. While holding both of Shinji’s hands, she began to move around, dancing alongside the ripples and waves of the sea.

“——A-ah, how wonderful this is.”

That's right. Indeed, this was the first time experiencing moving alongside the ocean's tides. Mio's body was still trembling from excitement.

But to the same extent—no even more than that. The fact that Shinji had thought of this for Mio had made her happy.

An inner impulse that exceeded the impression left by the five senses.

Ahh—yes.

Mio was happy not only because she was able to see the ocean.

Shinji remembered what she had said.

Shinji brought her here.

—Coming here together with Shinji.

What a precious and irreplaceable thing, there was nothing that can be done against this happiness.

“Wa.....ah!”

“—!”

Dancing in excitement, Mio lost her balance as she collapsed on top of Shinji.

The loud sound from the scattering splashes of water covered the two of them. Although there wasn't any pain due to Shinji reaching to protect her at the last second, both of them were completely soaked.

“A-are you alright, Mio?”

“Un, sorry, Shin. I got a little bit too excited.”

As they replied back to each other, for a brief moment their respective gazes caught wind of each other's drenched faces.

“.....Ha.”

“.....Haha.”

Then, they began laughing together.

Mio couldn't help but reach out to hug Shinji's body with both her hands.

“Wa.....! M-Mio.....?”

“Ahh.....‘love’. I really love Shin. I love you so much that I don't know what to do. If it for Shin, I feel like I can do anything.”

Mio conveyed the blossoming feelings in her heart into words whispered to herself.

Perhaps it was because of vocabulary newly learned, or because of the natural limitation of expressing the meaning behind words in the first place, but Mio felt now that she could not properly convey the hysterical love she felt.

“——!”

No. Mio had understood it immediately. That was the reason why she was hugging Shinji right now.

It was not a conscious action, but rather an unbearable impulse given form. But surely it was nothing but an expression of display affection to the other party.

This must be the method for conveying love before language. Shinji's warmth in the cold water, heartbeat, breathe, everything conveyed a euphoria in Mio's heartbeat as it raced faster.

Ahh——But not yet. Still not enough. Unspeakable craving. Although it was much closer than before, it felt that Shinji was still far away. The slight distance from the layer of clothing covering them seemed to be an annoyance. A hindrance compared to the warmth of the skin covering the body's surface.

——I want to be closer to Shinji. I want to become one with Shinji.

With this impulse burning in her chest, Mio unconsciously stared into Shinji's eyes.

She slowly closed her eyes and brought her lips closer to Shinji's own.

“.....!? ——”

Having guessed Mio's intention, Shinji felt a slight shiver run through his body.

Although his cheeks were bright red, Shinji quickly came to understand. He also approached closer to Mio's

The figure of the two people reflected on the undulating water gradually merged into one —the moment before that.

“—Achoo!”

Mio let out a small sneeze.

At that beat, her eyes opened again and came into contact with Shinji’s line of sight.

“.....”

“.....”

“.....Pff.”

“.....Haha.”

After a brief silence, the two of them laughed again.

A cheerful, funny, and impossible to not be happy time.

Mio loves Shinji, and surely Shinji loves Mio as well.

Only in this manner did the gorgeous world add a new layer of color.

Surely this happiness will continue from now on.

Tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, the day after that, always.

Just think about that, Mio felt her exhilaration soaring to new heights.

Chapter 5: The One Who Pull the Trigger

—Shidou thought that this was a dream.

He thought it was an illusion caused by going past his limit.

However, the real presence of the girl flashing in front of his eyes blew away that weak-minded thinking.

Beautiful hair the color of the night dancing in the wind, a pair of crystal eyes that reflected back light, and wearing a brilliant dress overlapping her purple armor.

That's right. The Spirit—Yatogami Tohka had appeared here while wearing a complete Astral Dress.

“Toh,ka.....Tohka.....!”

At the same time his brain was able to confirm her appearance clearly, tears started to fall from his eyes.

A feeling of relief swept him that Tohka was alive. But on top of that, although it was just for a second, Shidou couldn't forgive himself for carelessly forgetting everyone's wishes and nearly surrendering himself to Mio.

“Sorry, Tohka.....I.....for a moment I was about to give up—

“What are you saying?!”

As if to interrupt Shidou, Tohka raised her voice.

“Because you did not yield, Shidou is still alive right now! There are no results other than that!”

“.....!”

Hearing those words, Shidou felt a jolt as if he was struck by lightning.

It was a warning to himself. Shidou let out a frustrate sigh once more at having to rely on Tohka coming back.

In order to repay Tohka and the others Spirits, he had to stand up on his feet.....!

“Un.....thank you, Tohka.”

While injecting more strength to his legs, Shidou stood up. A strange energy was overflowing in a body that should have reached its limits.

“Really—I am always being saved by Tohka.”

“What are you talking about? I am the one depending on Shidou even now. Because I have Shidou, I was able to come back. Because Shido is here, I can stand before Mio again.”

“Tohka.....”

Calling out her name once again, Shidou wiped away the remaining tears in his eyes as he raised his face again.

“.....So that’s it.”

Mio turned around to glance at her own splintered Astral Dress.

“.....As I thought, it is you—Tohka. Ah, that’s right. If there was someone who could confront me, I thought it would be.”

“.....What?”

Hearing what Mio had said, Shidou frowned.

But then, Tohka interrupted by giving her own response.

“Although I don’t know the details.....but—it seems I am a different type of Spirit than everyone else.”

“Different.....Spirit?”

As Shidou asked in confusion, this time it was Mio’s turn to respond in a deeply emotional tone.

“.....I divided my power into the ten Sephira Crystals and granted them to humans to create Spirits.....but for some reason, one of the Sephira Crystals developed its own ego. Just like, when I was born.”

As Shidou nearly choked of his own breath, he turned his eyes to Tohka.

“No way, that means.....”

Then, Mio gently nodded.

“Shin, did you notice it? The difference between Tohka and the others Spirits. What the other Spirits had that Tohka lacked.”

“What did you say——”

Then, Shidou’s shoulders began to tremble.

With that natural question, Shidou remembered an uncomfortable feeling that he had nearly forgotten.

Origami. Nia. Kurumi. Yoshino. Kotori. Mukuro. Natsumi. Kaguya. Yuzuru. Miku.

What they all had, but Tohka did not.

That’s right. Among all of the Spirits, Tohka——was the only one that didn’t have a name.

“.....”

However, even as she was being told this, Tohka did not look slightly stunned. No, to be more precise, it was as if she already knew this.

Tohka opened her lips as her eyes showcased a resolute will.

“——It was confusing; sometimes I suffered from not having a name.

But I am grateful for that fact now.

Because I didn’t have a name, Shidou was able to give me one.

Because I am not human, I am able to stand before Shidou again!”

“Tohka——”

Looking at Tohka’s noble determination, Shidou felt a shiver of frustration in preparation. Even though there was such a reliable companion right in front of him.....!

——Ah, yes. Why did Shidou feel so frustrated? Why was he on his knees before?

Shidou stood besides Tohka, who was pointing her sword towards Mio.

“! Shidou?”

“Perhaps, there is still something we can do. I will not give up—let’s fight together.”

“.....! Umu!”

Tohka gave an affirmative nod as she placed more strength into her grip on <Sandalphon>.

Looking at this, Mio sighed softly as she narrowed her eyes.

“.....Although the schedule has become quite messy, it doesn’t matter. The result will not change.”

Then, as if responding to Mio’s voice, a huge inorganic tree appeared behind Mio as the different space expanded accordingly. Above their heads, a huge flower-like Angel also manifested there.

“Tohka, what’s this?”

“Umu—It’s called <Ain Soph> and <Ain Soph Aur>. Watch out, in this space all laws become under Mio’s control. Also, you’ll die if you touch the light coming from that flower. If you don’t have any reiryoku, you’ll die instantly.”

Hearing Tohka’s succulent but shocking reply, Shidou felt sweat course down his face.

“Ah, isn’t that foolishly frightening.”

“Well, it is certainly dangerous. —Want to give up?”

“No way.”

Tohka raised the corners of her lips as Shidou wiped away his sweat.

Kicking down on the ground as the signal, Tohka swung down ferociously with <Sandalphon>.

“Ohhhhhhhhhhh—!”

The flash of the sword became a shockwave quickly approaching Mio. Not even flinching, Mio prepared to catch the blow directly. However—

“.....!”

Just the verge of touching Tohka’s sword attack, Mio frowned as she moved back.

The sword slash grazed past Mio’s nose. —Although minuscule, a part of her Astral Dress had been cut.

“—Huh!?”

Noticing the effect of her attack, Tohka widened his eyes in surprise.

“We did it Shidou! The attack went through!”

“Ah.....but there doesn’t seem to be much damage at all.”

“What are you saying? Even <Halvanhelev> couldn’t land a scratch before!?”

“What did you say.....?”

Hearing what Tohka had said caused Shidou to raise his brow.

As the Spirit of Origin, Mio boasted an overwhelming power. Shidou couldn’t imagine that Tohka was lying.

However, although small, a portion of Mio’s Astral Dress had been cut by Tohka’s <Sandalphon>. What was the difference between then and now?

Was Mio holding back? Was her power declining? Or—

“.....!”

At that point, Shidou had noticed something.

That’s right; Tohka was now wearing a complete Astral Dress rather than a limited one. However, unlike last time, Shidou did not feel Tohka’s reiryoku completely reverse back.

In other words, Tohka’s reiryoku was still residing in Shidou’s body.

What on earth did this mean? Although Shidou did not understand God’s intentions, wasting this opportunity to take down the absolute Spirit Mio would be the same as remaining ants trapped in a hole.

“.....”

As if noticing Shidou’s thoughts, Mio’s expression slightly twitched before focusing her attention back to Tohka.

“.....I see. This is a bit troublesome.”

Mio let out a small sigh as turned to their direction.

“—Excuse me, Tohka. From now on, I will not look down at you. I will use all of my strength to take Shin from you.”

“I won’t let you succeed, Shidou—”

Crying out in response to Mio’s words, Tohka kicked off the ground again.

“Shidou belongs to me!”

“Eh.....?”

Shidou felt a momentary shock at hearing Tohka’s unexpected statement. However, deeming it not the time to dwell on such matters, Shidou quickly made the decision to support Tohka.

“——”

On strike, two, strikes, three strikes, four strikes.

In Mio’s vision, slashes from <Sandalphon> flashed at a speed which eyes could not keep up with.

Until now, Mio could defend from the previous attacks without moving. But presently, the Angel was now equipped with the power to break through Mio’s defenses and cut down her Astral Dress.

“.....So that’s the reason.”

While blocking Tohka’s swords swings, Mio let out a small mutter before stretching out a band of light to retaliate.

That’s right. It was more than just Tohka’s reiryoku that could be sensed from <Sandalphon> right now.

Perhaps, while escaping from Mio, she absorbed fragments of reiryoku from the other Spirits and even Mio herself. The current <Sandalphon> was enriched in dense power even superior to <Halvanhelev>.

In fact, as if to showcase this newfound power, there had been no faltering in Tohka's movements from the very beginning.

—Mio had been attempting to bind her movements with <Ain Soph>.

However, it wasn't unreasonable. <Ain Soph> was Mio's Angel. Although it was only a fragment, if Tohka had a portion of Mio's reiryoku, it was natural for her to not be hindered.

“.....I didn't expect you to take my strength.”

Mio muttered to Tohka in a volume that was almost inaudible.

While a sarcastic quip born from impatience, the words at the same time were a monologue displaying an unfathomable result.

—As Tohka said herself, she was born in a way completely different from the other Spirits.

No, to be more precise, it can be said that she was the only pure Spirit outside of Mio herself.

Born from nothingness just like Mio.

Having no name just like Mio.

And then—having met Shidou just like Mio.

In a sense, Tohka was like Mio's copy.

Such a girl was using Mio's own power against her.

In such circumstances, Mio couldn't help but sense a strange feeling.

“Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

With enough force to leave fissures on the ground, Tohka swung <Sandalphon> directly towards Mio.

“<Ain Soph>—<Anaph>”

Mio’s eyebrows slightly shook as she called out that name.

In an instance, a branch of <Ain Soph>, sharpened like a sword, emerged from the void and intercepted Tohka’s blow.

“Muu.....!?”

“.....”

While parrying Tohka’s slash from <Sandalphon>, Mio glanced over to Shidou.

That’s right. From behind, Shidou had been using <Gabriel> to continually strengthen Tohka. No doubt that this also served to increase Tohka’s power.

No—not just that.

Perhaps out of worrying of hindering Tohka or knowledge that his attacks would be ineffective, but Shidou did not try to attack Mio directly.

However, while she was fighting Tohka, Shidou continued to stare at Mio.

The light in his eyes was incomparable to the face of despair he had earlier.

—Perhaps, even at this time, he still kept thinking.

Whether there was any way to defeat Mio. Whether if it was possible to revive the other Spirits.

Mio felt her heart tightly contract at that gaze.

“.....Ah, sure enough despair does not suit you.”

After pondering that over, Mio sharpened her gaze as she shifted her attention back to Tohka.

Then, she extended up both of her hands as Tohka was about to charge in again.

“—Pierce through, <Ain Soph>.”

At that instant, the space surrounding Mio began to distort as several “roots” from <Ain Soph> were released.

“What.....!?”

Tohka hacked away the “roots”, but the “roots” chased after her like a whip in pursuit.

Indeed, the laws of <Ain Soph> did not apply to Tohka, who had a portion of Mio’s power. However, the same cannot be said about being penetrated by the exterior roots, which quickly extended towards Tohka’s body at Mio’s command.

But—at the next minute.

“Tohka!”

With a roar, Shidou jumped in front of Tohka.

“.....!”

Suddenly, Mio trembled as she stopped the attack just before the “root” reached Shidou.

With <Camael>’s power, even being pierced through the chest wouldn’t be enough to kill him. It was for this reason that she planned to initially seal <Camael>’s healing power into Shidou first.

But even so, it was impossible for her to willingly pierce through Shidou’s chest.

At the moment, Shidou jumped in front of Tohka, Mio’s mind flashed back to the scene from thirty years ago—the sight of Shin falling down from the enemy’s merciless bullet.

“....Ku—”

Mio slightly distorted her expression as she manipulated the “root” to throw Shidou far away.

“Uwa.....!?”

Shidou let out a groan as he rolled to the ground. Being temporary—Mio’s offense was only hindered for a brief moment.

However, the result of forcibly terminating her own attack sparked a chance opportunity in a single instant.

And for Tohka, it was the push needed to turn the tides.

“——<Sandalphon>!”

Tohka called out the name of her Angel as her heel struck the ground.

Responding to her command, a huge throne exceeding Tohka’s height was raised from the ground.

——<Halvanhelev>.

The moment she saw it, that name appeared in Mio’s mind.

The trump card of the Angel of the sword, <Sandalphon>. A sword of unparalleled destructive power.

If had been the old Tohka, Mio would not even need to defend.

However, if <Sandalphon> was now capable of land a blow on herself, then it would be impossible for this to be harmless.

If that were the case——

“<Ain Soph Aur>——<Henet>.”

As Mio stretched her arms forward, as a palm-sized sphere appeared in front of her hands.

A flower bud of extreme death. As the sphere blossomed in an instant, a condensed light of death shot out in a straight line towards Tohka.

< Halvanhelev> was certainly a powerful blow, but it took some time to generate and release the attack.

Summoning the throne, breaking it down, equipping it to the sword, and finally swing down.

At the moment, where all of the power was focused on the sword, Tohka’s body was left vulnerable. As long as she targeted this opportunity with a direct hit from <Ain Soph Aur>, even Tohka with Mio’s power would not be safe.

However——

“——<Ratelibish>!”

“.....What?”

Hearing what Tohka had said, Mio couldn't help but wrinkle her brow.

The shards of the broken throne wrapped around Tohka's body like armor rather than covering the sword in her hands.

Then, Tohka twisted her body to avoid the ray of light from <Ain Soph Aur>.

—Equipping the Angel on her own body, it was reminiscent of Yoshino's <Siryon>.

The authority of an Angel was not restrained to a singularity. Although the attribute of the Sephira Crystals are pre-established, the powers that manifest depend on the personality of the host. As a result, not even Mio could fully grasp everything.

At the very least, it was Mio first time seeing Tohka's current figure.

“Wha——”

“Haaaaaaaaaahhhhhhh——!”

Covered in the armor of her golden throne, the roots and branches of <Ain Soph> were deflected back as Tohka closed the gap between herself and Mio in an instant.

With that momentum swinging down, she slashed Mio's shoulder.

—Sharp pain. The Astral Dress covering her body was torn apart cleanly as Mio's bare white skin was scratched for the first time.

“——”

The shockwave from the slash struck her entire body, blood spurted out from the crackling wound.

Ahh—it was a mysterious feeling.

Ever since she was born, there was no enemy who could oppose her.

For Mio, the first time she had ever suffered an injury was given by an existence close to her own daughter or copy.

From the both the strange sensation and euphoria, Mio lifted up her face that was covered in blood.

“.....Splendid, Tohka.”

Those words were not just for landing that attack.

Even when her companions were killed, even when she was imprisoned within herself, Tohka did not lose hope and stood in front of Mio once again.

“To your noble, heart, you have my utmost respect.

—So, I will respond to that.”

Mio spoke while staring directly into Tohka’s eyes.

And then, she recited.

The name of the last Angel possessed by Mio.



“—<Ain>.”

In moments.

Light filled the entire world.

“.....! Tohka.....!?”

—At that moment, equipped with her throne as armor, Tohka swung her sword towards Mio as the different space was whitened by light.

Blown away by Mio, Shidou inadvertently covered his eyes as he shouted Tohka's name.

Then, he didn't know how much time had passed.

When Shidou opened his eyes, there was Mio's silhouette with her Astral Dress torn and her body covered with blood.

“.....!”

The trepidation and sympathy to Mio's painful form, while also the excitement by Tohka's attack landing on it's the target, the two emotions simultaneously surrounded his heart.

But immediately, Shidou's consciousness was dominated by an unpleasant sensation that followed.

“Toh, ka.....?”

That's right. Tohka's silhouette just before attacked Mio, now cannot be seen anywhere.

Mio sighed shortly as she pointed her eyes towards Shidou.

“.....Tohka is gone.”

“Eh.....?”

At Mio's words, Shidou froze for a moment and opened his eyes wide in shock.

“! You, no way?”

However, he soon immediately understood the meaning behind those words.

Perhaps Mio perceived Tohka as a threat, and like Shidou earlier, moved her to another place.

If so, until Tohka returns, Shidou will have to face Mio alone. No, if she's moved to somewhere near this place, Shidou was still fine, but if Tohka was blown to the same place as Shidou last time then—

Then, as Shidou was wary of thinking about it, Mio slowly shook her head as if looking into his thoughts.

"I haven't moved her. From the beginning, with a Tohka who has taken power from me, a little trick will have no effect at all. "

"Hah.....? Then after all——"

As Shidou said that, Mio slightly moved her lips.

“—Like I said, she already no longer exists. Not blown to a certain place, nor killed—but rather vanished into nothingness.”

“.....What.....did.....”

“The void Angel <Ain> ignores all laws and eradicates the target completely. —Let me say it again, Tohka is gone, no longer a part of anywhere in this world.”

“——”

Hearing what Mio had said, Shidou was rendered speechless.

Tohka was gone.

Even if it was difficult to understand it well, those words were the only thing that mattered.

“Of course, Tohka's reiryoku has also completely disappeared. For that reason, I didn't want to use that Angel.....but there was no other way to reach my desired outcome with Tohka's strength.

—On the other hand, Tohka has forced me to play my final trump card. Please give her your praise. She surpassed her limits while thinking about you.”

While saying that, Mio stroked her wounds with her hand.

Then, her injuries disappeared like a film put on reverse. Her splintered and cut Astral Dress also returned to its original appearance.

“.....Well, Shin. Now no one can get in the way. —Don’t worry, although the loss of Tohka has decreased the amount of reiryoku, with your existing strength it should be enough to give you eternal life. All I have to do now is to return you completely back to Shin.”

Mio slowly turned to Shidou.

Shidou felt his own breathing clog up.

His fingertips trembled. The despair that had once disappeared now resurfaced, clinging onto his feet.

—However.

“—<Metatron>!”

Shidou clenched his teeth as he loudly roared.

He raised his hand to summon the Angel of light, firing a volley of rays of light towards Mio in the process.

Ah, it certainly was a desperate situation even worse than before. All of the Spirits had been killed and even his last hope, Tohka, had been erased.

However, Shidou’s knees did not yield as he snarled against the invincible Spirit.

Because he already sworn. He had promised to Tohka, to the Spirits.

He vowed to never give in again. A promise that he would never give up.....!

“Ohhhhhhhhhhh—!”

With <Zadkiel> in his left hand and <Camael> in his right, he released cold air and flames simultaneously.

However, Mio did not even need to move to withstand the chaotic attacks. As if her body was protected by an invisible layer of film, the attacks did not even reach her.

Indeed, he could understand why Tohka was so surprised that her attack cut a small portion of her Astral Dress. The difference in power was unreasonable.

Even so, Shidou did not give up.

Utilizing <Michael> to seal the enemy's powers. Transforming Mio into a non-attacking form through <Haniel>. Summoning the wind with <Raphael>. Letting the voice from <Gabriel> resonate. And finally slashing with <Sandalphon> to fend Mio back.

Shidou used every Angel in his arsenal to resist against Mio.

However——

“.....It's useless.”

“.....!”

Just by saying that, all of Shidou's attacks were eliminated.

Then next moment, Mio raised a finger, causing a band of light to grow from the ground and entangle his feet.

“Wha.....this is——”

“Sorry, but it's troublesome to let you jump around.”

As she apologized, Mio kicked off against the ground, drawing forth a strange trajectory that resisted gravity as she drew closer to Shidou.

“Ku——”

Although Shidou tried to untie the restraint, the band of light seemed to be inseparably assimilated into his feet. Even if he tried to cut it off with <Sandalphon>, the band of light remained unscathed.

In the meanwhile, the distance between Mio and Shidou was getting shorter and shorter.

—Indeed, this certainly seemed to be the end of the line.

Even so, Shidou still did not give up.

Until the last second, these thoughts continued to race as he watched Mio quickly approach.

As a result—Shidou did not miss seeing what happened next.

—He saw a stray bullet strike Mio’s hand.

“.....!?”

“.....What?”

Shidou’s astonishment overlapped with Mio’s voice.

Mio’s hand had not been injured.

But surely just now, a bullet had just hit Mio’s hand.

However, it did not seem to be a massive clump of metal launched by gunpowder. Actually, Shidou couldn’t smell any gunpowder or see the sparks igniting from a rifle.

That’s right. It resembled more like a black shadow solidifying into the shape of a bullet—

“——Kihihihhi.”

As if to interrupt—no, rather that voice served to validate Shidou’s thoughts.

A characteristic laugh came from nearby.

“—Ara, ara, apparently I came just in time.”

“Wha.....”

With the appearance of the owner of the bullet emerging onto this different space, Shidou instinctively raised a voice of disbelief.

An Astral Dress stained by blood and darkness.

Raven black hair tied unevenly on both sides.

And—the same peculiar golden clock in the left eye.

That’s right. The person that was here was—

“Kurumi.....!?”

The Spirit Tokisaki Kurumi made an unexpected appearance.

“What.....what does this mean!? You were killed by Mio back then.....”

Shidou spoke in a surprised tone as he widened his eyes.

Since Shidou had seen it through his own eyes, Mio crawling out of Kurumi’s chest and turning Kurumi into a corpse. Even the surrounding clones had disappeared.

But now, the Kurumi right in front of him was too vivid to be a hallucination, and her personality was too similar to be seen as a fake.

I am very sorry, Shidou-san. I should have arrived earlier, but being the first time doing this, the timing didn’t quite go exactly as planned.”

“.....? What do you mean.....”

Hearing Kurumi’s intriguing words, Shidou felt even more befuddled.

Then, Mio’s demeanor slightly changed as if realizing something.

“.....The Eleventh Bullet, <Yud Aleph>, right?”

“Eh.....?”

“—Kihihi.”

As Shidou was still lost in confusion, Kurumi exposed a fearless laugh after hearing what Mio had said.



—Going back to a hour ago.

On the battlefield, a white arm was growing out from Kurumi’s chest.

“A-ah.....”

Her throat trembled as a groan escaped from her lips.

“*Me*.....!”

But the scream was an empty cry as Kurumi’s voice became more and more faint—as if to match that, the *arm* slowly crawled out from her chest.

Eventually, a beautiful young girl appeared.

A beautiful girl with a pair of languid eyes.

“What——”

Looking at that girl’s appearance, all of the surrounding Kurumi clones felt their breathing clogging up.

It was a natural expression seeing that a girl was crawling out of her body. However, for the Kurumis present, their horror was not just for that.

All of them——were familiar with that girl’s appearance.

——Takamiya Mio.

The girl who had turned Kurumi into a Spirit.

The girl who had worked and fought side-by side with Kurumi.

And the girl who had caused the death of Kurumi’s best friend.

That’s right; she was both the starting and endpoint for Kurumi’s revenge.

The despised Spirit of Origin was there.

“.....!”

Recognizing this, Kurumi’s clones understood the situation.

A few days ago, Kurumi had met with the Spirit of Origin and caught her in her shadow.

As the <City of Devouring Time> sucked up the time of the swallowed object. Those who were dropped in would be deprived of their lifespan until the fires of their lives were extinguished as death beckoned them—or at least, that is how it is supposed to be.

However, for some mysterious reason, Mio had not died. On the contrary, her body had rejuvenated back to the age where she first met Kurumi. As if she was the one absorbing *time* from Kurumi.

“Ga.....ah.....!”

Having discovered the identity of the girl emerging from her chest, Kurumi let out a beast-like roar as she injected strength into the hand holding her short pistol.

“<Zafkiel>.....!”

Then next moment, in response to Kurumi’s voice, a shadow squirming underneath her feet was sucked into the muzzle.

Then, seeing Mio growing out of her chest, Kurumi pressed the trigger.

However, at that moment, Mio twisted her body in order to break free from Kurumi.

“Ga.....!”

Kurumi let out an anguished groan as her posture was broken.

Needless to say, the bullet Kurumi fired did not land on Mio——

“.....!?”

Instead, the trajectory of shot landed on one Kurumi’s clones.

“Wha.....m-me!?”

The Kurumi clone gasped as she clutched her chest.

“.....!”

Such misfortune to the point of being comical. To think, that this would be the final blow from the so-called Worst Spirit, Tokisaki Kurumi.

However, the clone quickly noticed that this bullet was not just a solidification of shadows.

There was no pain coming from her chest. Instead, from the entry point of the bullet, there was the sensation of her entire body being caught in a whirlpool.

“This is.....no way.....!”

The clone opened her eyes as she stared at Kurumi.

“.....”

Then, just for a moment, Kurumi smiled silently before collapsing into the abyss of death.

“Ah——”

In that instant, the clone noticed.

Kurumi did not fire a desperate last attack.

She tried to aim for Mio in order to camouflage her true intentions.

Yes, Kurumi, who realized that death was approaching, poured out her remaining power ——in order to entrust this bullet to her clone.

<Zafkiel>——<Yud Aleph>.

Kurumi’s secret weapon, paired with Twelfth Bullet <Yud Bet>, the bullet used to send the target to the past.

The taboo bullet to send a target to the future.

She understood Kurumi’s intentions as she fired that shot.

No words or instructions were necessary. Since the clone shared the same intentions and aspirations as Kurumi, she was nothing more than also *Tokisaki Kurumi*.

“.....*Me*——”

Having been entrusted with everything, the clone swallowed her words as she resisted the urge to yell back.

Kurumi had deliberately missed so that Mio’s attention would not be focused on the clone. She couldn’t waste that dedication in an ephemeral moment of passion.

The clone chanted softly in a volume inaudible to anyone else.

“—Yes, yes, you have entrusted it to *me*—the future.”

The clone whispered those words before disappearing completely from this world.



“That’s correct, Mio-san. I am a clone of Tokisaki Kurumi sent to the future from an hour ago. The last assassin sent to kill you.”

Kurumi spoke while holding the dual antique pistols in her hands.

Seeing that move, Mio sighed softly.

“.....Are you seriously saying that? A clone is a threat to me?”

“Yes, yes. The real me has been killed by you. And every clone other than me has disappeared, but—through the reiryoku entrusted to me through <Yud Aleph>, I can continue to exist until my time is exhausted. That is enough time—to kill you!”

Kurumi screamed as she kicked off the ground and fired from her two guns.

Despite both guns resembling single-shot antique muskets, a shadow was sucked in each time she fired a bullet, reloading the magazine in an instant. A shower of bullets approached Mio.

“.....”

Mio twitched her brow as she lightly pushed Shidou’s chest.

Then, with a momentum unimaginable for this casual gesture, Shidou’s body was blown to the rear.



“Ku.....!”

Despite falling to the ground, Shidou’s eyes remained fixed on both Mio and Kurumi.

Kurumi’s bullets rained down on Mio like a relentless squall.

Of course, Mio remained unharmed, but the stray bullets continue to bounce around, leaving numerous bullet marks on the ground. Perhaps, Mio’s prior action was out of a concern for Shidou’s—no, Shin’s—it was probably out of a dislike the probability of Shin’s body being scratched even a little.

Then, as if anticipating Mio’s actions, Kurumi landed right between Mio and Shidou.

“! Kurumi, what on earth are you doing—”

Shidou narrowed his eyes as he called out her name. In return, Kurumi quietly glanced at Shidou.

“—I’ve already said earlier that I came here to defeat Mio-san. —Ah, though there is one more thing.”

Kurumi strained the corners of his lips.

“—Perhaps, it’s because I couldn’t forget the feeling of Shidou-san’s lips.”

After saying that, Kurumi kicked the ground again to attack Mio.

“What.....”

While watching Kurumi’s back, Shidou frowned.

The reason was simple. It was because Kurumi’s actions were completely inconsistent with what was expected from Kurumi.

“—Kihihihhi—! Hey, what’s wrong? This isn’t just a defensive fight.”

“.....”

Kurumi continued to fire a barrage of bullets at Mio from her two antique pistols. However, these attacks continued to have no effect on Mio.

—Too much, there was an excessive power difference.

He didn't think that Kurumi did not understand this.

“What's.....going on?”

Just as the clone had said, the original Kurumi had been killed by Mio.
The clone should understand that she could never win against Mio.

Undoubtedly, Kurumi had sent her clone into the future for a purpose. For what goal though?’

—Even if she knew it was useless, did she still do it for the sake of revenge?

“.....”

No, Shidou immediately denied that possibility in his mind.

If it had been an ordinary person to do this, Shidou would have been convinced.

However, it was unimaginable for Tokisaki Kurumi to do this. That girl, no matter what limit she was pushed into, would never use her secret bullet without some purpose.

There must have been something. Surely, there was something hidden so Mio wouldn't discover.

That's right. Kurumi's resolve would not shake even at the face of death.

Shidou was confident of that due to having relived Kurumi's past through the Tenth Bullet <Yud>.

No matter what—it was impossible for her to give up.

In order to rewrite the world, Kurumi continued to fight even after sinking herself in savagery.

Repeatedly revising time in order to save Shidou's life—

(—Perhaps, it's because I couldn't forget the feeling of Shidou-san's lips.)

“——Ah——”

That moment.

A weak voice escaped Shidou's mouth as he inadvertently touched his lips with his fingers.

In his mind, there was the feeling of the last piece of the puzzle falling in place.

The sensation of an intertwined thread being unraveling in an instant.

No doubt, Kurumi surely—

“.....Ku, ha.....!”

Suddenly, Shidou opened his eyes after hearing a painful cry come out from the front.

“! Kurumi.....!?”

As he raised his face in a hurry, he saw Kurumi's figure as her body was pierced through by numerous bands of light emerging from the ground.

“So...rry..... really.....was no.....”

While vomiting blood, Kurumi look back to Shidou with an empty look.

But looking at Shidou's expression—she silently smiled.

Surely, it was properly transmitted.

The answer had reached Shidou.

“Ah—ha.....”

Kurumi smiled softly as she fell to the ground—just like that, she disappeared back into shadows.

“.....It's hard to understand. You should have known that you couldn't have defeated me.”

Mio looked down to the place where Kurumi had arrived with a strange look before slowly turning to Shidou's direction.

“Anyway—now everything has been settled. I praise everyone's resolve and applaud their willingness to fight. But in the end it was futile resistance. As for the result, nothing has changed.”

“—Futile?”

Hearing Mio’s words, Shidou felt a tremble in his throat.

“It was not.....futile. Everything—everything was necessary.”

“.....Shin?”

Perhaps finding Shidou’s response unexpected, Mio showed a baffled expression.

Shidou continued looking straight towards Mio.

“—Because everyone was here, because Tohka fought, Kurumi arriving on time.....allowed me to realize.....!”

Almost unconsciously, tears fell down his eyes.

Yes, everything was necessary.

If a single thing was missing, then Shidou’s memories would have been lost forever.

However, a series of miracles connected a thread that allowed him to maintain his life.

While watching Mio, Shidou let out a small sigh.

Mio was certainly powerful to the point where calling her ‘strong’ seemed like a vast understatement.

It was impossible to repel her, no matter what means he used.

<Metatron>’s light

<Zadkiel>’s cold air

<Camael>’s flames

<Michael>’s sealing

<Haniel>’s transformations

<Raphael>’s wind

<Gabriel>'s sound

<Sandalphon>'s blade, none of these attacks would even reach Mio.

Even if enough of Nia's Sephira Crystal remained to use <Rasiel> in combat, the result would presumably be the same,

However, within Shidou's body—there was the power of one more Angel.

“.....!”

Shidou called out the name of that Angel.

“<Zafkiel> —the Sixth Bullet <Vav>!”

At that moment, Shidou's shadow—creeped up from ground and gather in his hand to form a short pistol.

At the same time, mechanical ticking sounds were heard coming from his left eye.

That's right; a golden clock had engraved itself onto Shidou's left eye.

Kurumi had held the Angel of time, <Zafkiel>.

Upon her death, that power was absorbed back into Mio—but one-twelfth of that power, the Sixth Bullet <Vav>, had already been sealed in Shidou's body.

In the past, Kurumi had given Shidou a kiss as a prank. As a result, only that bullet had been sealed.

The power—to send one's consciousness back to a past body.

Whenever Shidou was killed, Kurumi had kissed him to regain that power in order to send her consciousness back to the past.

However, as far as this world was concerned, Shidou was still not dead.

Inevitably, the power of the Sixth Bullet <Vav> was still in Shidou's body.

Nevertheless, Shidou had never summoned <Zafkiel> until now.

It was impossible to reach this idea through his efforts alone.

Ah, that's right. Kurumi had squeezed out the last of her power to send a clone to the future in order to inform this last move to Shidou—!

“.....What—?”



Seeing that, for the first time on Mio's face, there was a sudden oscillation.

But—too late.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaa——!"

Shidou shouted, pointing the gun at his temple——

Then he pulled the trigger.



“——!”

His hazy consciousness gradually became clear again.

The starry sky was spread before Shidou’s eyes.

“.....This is.....”

Shidou looked down at himself before turning around to confirm his surroundings.

Glass-tiled ceiling. A white room with vending machines selling drinks by the wall, as well a few foliage plants for decoration. Sitting on a bench, he was holding a paper cup filled with milk tea.

—That’s right. This was the resting area onboard <Fraxinus>. Shidou quickly placed the paper cup on the bench as he hurriedly took out his smart phone to confirm the date on the screen.

“—February 19th—”

He whispered that date in his mouth as his grip on his smart phone tightened.

The day before <Ratatoskr> and DEM’s final battle. And also, the day before the Spirits was killed.

“.....Ah.”

Shidou bent down in an almost prayer-like position, struggling to contain the unbearable passion in his throat.

Relief from the success of the Sixth Bullet <Vav> and deep appreciation for everyone filled his heart.

“.....”

However, Shidou’s expression soon turned grim as he gulped.

Certainly, through his consciousness traveling back in time with the Sixth Bullet <Vav>, Shidou had escaped from the worst ending with the crisis of destruction and death of all of the Spirits.

But even so, that didn't mean the problems were solved.

The Spirit of Origin·Takamiya Mio.

The absolute Spirit bearing the name <Deus>.

Even going back in time, as long as there was no way to defeat her, the threat of the same ending repeating still remained.

It was meaningless unless the root of the issue was dealt with. Shidou began to desperately ponder.

—A difference between the former world and the present one. A possibility needed to break down the tragedy from happening.

The only thing that came to mind was the existence of Shidou who knew the events from the past. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the possibility of avoiding everyone's deaths in less than 30 hours depended on Shidou's actions.

However, on the basis of that thinking, the questions of what specifically needed to be done were raised. It was extremely difficult for Shidou to arrive at an answer.

While in his solitary monologue, Shidou began to mutter to himself.

—To not have Mio appear in the first place?

No, Mio was already inside Kurumi, and also existed as Reine as well. That was not possible anymore.

—Keep repeating history through the Sixth Bullet <Vav> until finding the correct answer?

No, if both Kurumi and Shidou died on the battlefield, they could no longer use <Vav> to change history. Additionally, the power from <Vav> was derived from Mio. There was the possibility of Mio's intuition catching on that he was repeating history.

—Seal Kurumi's power and travel back to 30 years ago using <Yud Bet>?

No, even if he attempted that, Mio would learn of those prospects from inside Kurumi. Eventually, that would lead to Kurumi's death.

“Ku.....”

Shidou shook his head. The appearance of Mio was at the endpoint of each choice.

Killing all living creatures and rewriting every law, the Spirit of Origin could extinguish all of existence.

“What exactly should be done——”

——At that moment, Shidou’s face was flushed with confusion.

“——Shidou?”

Behind him, such a voice echoed.

“.....!”

The moment he heard that voice, the illusions produced by the lingering thoughts in his mind were all washed away.

He turned around to see the owner of that voice.

“What’s wrong, in such a place?”

“Tohka——”

He opened his eyes in surprise as he slowly said that name.

That’s right. Tohka was standing there while wearing adorable pajamas.

It was reasonable when thinking it over. At that time, Shidou had encountered and talked to Tohka in the rest area.

However, Shidou couldn’t think about that.

Tohka, a girl who inspired Shidou to stand up and challenge Mio—an existence that was erased was now standing right here.

Shidou half-consciously opened his arms to hug Tohka.

“Tohka.....Tohka.....”

“What.....! S-shidou!?”

While initially startled by Shidou’s sudden hug, Tohka noticed he was calling out his name with tears in his eyes, so she gently caressed his head.

“Well, it’s me—what happened Shidou.”

“Tohka, I—”

In his excitement, Shidou was about to confide in Tohka what happened next and how Tohka’s existence had saved him.

However—he stopped just as he was about to say something.

The reason was simple. They were still inside <Fraxinus>.

Speakers and microphones with sound collection were installed in all of the main facilities inside the ship, with each conversation recorded and stored as data. Unless there was a guarantee that it would not be viewed by Reine, it wouldn’t be wise to talk about the future here.

Therefore, Shidou let out a sigh as he kept the information to himself.

“.....I had a dream.”

“A dream?”

“.....Yes, a very bad dream where everyone was killed in the battle with DEM. I.....I couldn’t do anything even though Tohka was trying so hard.”

“Shidou.....”

Tohka suddenly loosened his cheeks and gently patted him on the back.

“Everything will be fine. That certainly won’t happen.”

As Tohka said that, she continued while slightly wandering off in a joyful expression.

“Hmm.....but in that case, I was working hard in Shidou’s dream.”

Seeing that smug look, Shidou felt some his tension being relieved.

“.....Ah. Oh yeah, you really planned a huge active role.”

“Hehe, if so, it is wrong for Shidou to not be able to do anything, so I must have worked extra hard for Shidou.”

“Tohka.....”

“Shidou rescued me. You didn’t regard me, a Spirit, as an enemy and lend out your hand. So, I swear that I will protect Shidou no matter what happens.”

While saying that, Tohka tightly embraced Shidou.

“Moreover—it’s not a problem. Isn’t Shidou the man who can handle me and all the other Spirits? How can a person like that be killed by DEM?”

“Haha.....that’s.....maybe so.”

Shidou felt his cheeks relax while hearing Tohka’s words.

To be sure, just as Tohka said, all of the Spirits currently in <Ratatoskr> were once called humanoid disasters that wielded a tyrannical power.

“Of course, whether it was through a power that transcended human intelligence or the destruction brought by a spacequake, it was not something that Tohka and the others necessarily wanted. It was because of this that Shidou was able to seal the Spirits through dialogue—

“_____”

Suddenly, while thinking of this, Shidou widened his eyes.

“.....That’s right. Yes—this way.”

“Muu, what’s the matter, Shidou?”

Hearing what Shidou said to be confusing, Tohka slightly tilted her head in puzzlement. Shidou once again clung back to Tohka immediately after his arms were resolved with a newfound determination.

“—Thank you, Tohka. Thanks to you, I feel like that I saw what I needed to do.”

“Muu.....? Umu, is that so? That’s great then.”

Although Tohka didn’t understand everything, Shidou’s smile to her was a sign that everything was well again.

With this newfound affirmation, Shidou left the rest area.

Then, he walked heavily on <Fraxinus>’s long corridor.

“.....Ah.”

Shidou muttered to himself.

—Why did such a simple thing not come to mind.

Was it because of Mio’s sudden appearance?

Was it because of Mio’s overwhelming power?

Was it because Mio killed all of the Spirits?

Perhaps it was because of all of these reasons. Even after using the Sixth Bullet <Vav>, Shidou’s thoughts were still dominated by fear and trepidation.

If he didn’t defeat Mio, he couldn’t be able to move forward. Until a moment ago, Shidou really felt that way. He regarded Mio as an *enemy* and treated her as such.

But—that was wrong.

Shidou had forgotten until Tohka reminded him.

That’s right. As long as the opponent was a Spirit, then there was only one thing that Shidou should have done from the beginning.....!

“.....!”

While thinking this over, he stopped his feet as his eyebrows shook.

He found a woman at the end of the corridor.

Styled with untidy hair, there were heavy eye bags underneath her face.

—<Ratatoskr>’s analytic officer·Murasame Reine.

And also a provisional appearance for the Spirit·Mio.

Shidou clenched his fist with determination as he took another step forward.

“—Reine-san.”

“.....Hmm? Ah, what’s the matter, Shin?”

Reine replied back the same as usual. However, it was unlikely that he would ever be able to hear being called *Shin* the same way as before.

However, now was not the time to be soaked with in such sentiments. Shidou sighed softly while staring directly at Reine—then, he asked.

“Reine-san. Would you like to go on a date with me tomorrow?”

To Be Continued

Afterword

It's been 7 years since the beginning of the series. At last, she has decorated the cover.

Date A Live 18 Mio Game Over!

The Spirit of Origin descends now.....!

This is Tachibana Kōshi here entering in with a hot speech right for the get go. 18 volumes, how was it? I hope you have enjoyed it. But there is an uneasy atmosphere from this one's title.

So, Mio-san has finally come to the stage. Although the visual for her has been out since volume 17, this is the first time with her Astral Dress. As always, Tsunako-san's design is wonderful, but this time it is particularly dangerous. Really dangerous (lack of good vocabulary skills here)

Although there are no special rules, the design of the Spirit's Astral Dress is composed of two distinctive themes. One is an attribute that becomes a distinguished name for the Spirit and other is for the direction of the costume.

For a simple example, Origami's first theme is "Angel" and her second theme is "Wedding Dress". Kurumi's first theme "Nightmare" and her second theme is "Gothic Lolita". Although there are some commodities shared between the two themes like Natsumi's "Witch" and Nia's "Sister", it is usually determined by these two themes.

Having said that, I don't know much about clothing, so I can usually only set the first theme. I often have to talk to Tsunako-san in order to determine the second theme. For Mio this time, I wondered what kind of Astral Dress it should be and sent the theme as God and included the necessary elements for the setting.

And this design returned! The concept is "Maternity Dress". So that's the reason for this sort of operation.....! I feel on my knees without thinking. It's perfect in every aspect for the setting, it's impeccable. Such a capable panda cannot be found anywhere else.

Like with volume 17, I wrote a story that I've always wanted to write. The images released were an accumulation of feelings all at once. Especially, the last scene with Shidou. While writing, I asked the editor "Oh Oh Oh Oh!" please do insert an illustration here by all means. Since I gave my hopes to editor-san, I feel that the design of Shidou's clock eye was especially wonderful. For those who haven't seen it yet, go read the text first!

Also the spin-off series, Date A Bullet, will soon release its third volume written by Yuichiro-sensei! Who is that white girl.....?

The new anime series is also in preparation. We hope to publish more information sequentially, so stayed tuned!

Now then, this volume was successfully published due to the best work from Tsunako-san and editor-san. I would like express my sincere gratitude to all the people involved in designing, editing, sales distribution. And thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking this book in your hands.

So next will be Volume 19. What will happen from here?

Well, I hope to see you again next volume.

February 21, 2018

Tachibana Kōshi

TL Credits:

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Special thanks to all of the members of the Date A Live LN Translation Group. This translation wouldn't have happened without you guys!