

鎌池和馬

イラスト：藤原イリカ

とある魔術の
禁書目録 13



A red-tinted photograph of a city street at night, viewed from a low angle looking down the road. The street is lined with buildings and streetlights, creating a sense of depth and perspective. The overall mood is mysterious and urban.

とある魔術の
禁書目録
13

鎌池和馬

イラスト・灰村キヨタカ



「カウボーイっ!」皮調けやがて、
世れちやいそいだぜ!方通行(マッパル)!!」

「方通行(マッパル)!!」カウボーイやがて、
世れちやいそいだぜ!方通行(マッパル)!!」



「方通行(マッパル)!!」カウボーイやがて、
世れちやいそいだぜ!方通行(マッパル)!!」



「スクラップの時間だぜ! ケッソ野郎がっ!!」

学園都市最強の超能力者(ルルル) 方通行(マッパル)!!

「斯うは斯う、人はおれで殺される。
色めたいな修女は、さうやって殺えを広めたんだから!」

「……やらせぬかよ。人の友誼を何だと思ってるやがる!!」
平瀬の怒り、無言のうちに、しびれを覚わす。



「……」
平瀬の怒り、無言のうちに、しびれを覚わす。

「おやおや、大罪人同士、
キスの儀め合いでもなさる下はたまたかしら」
「……」平瀬は、その言葉に、何ともない顔で、静かに応じた。



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Chapter 6: Streets Beaten by the Cold Rain.

Battle Preparation.

Part 1

September 30, 6:33PM.

One person from [God's Right Seat], [Vento of the Front], physically broke through Academy City's Gate No. 3.

At the same time, an unidentified attack was launched, inflicting massive damage to both Anti-Skill and Judgment, the people in charge of public order.

With the defenses down, Vento herself kills three of the general board of directors.

Same day, 7:02PM.

Aleister, chairman of the general board of directors, decides to use the incomplete Imaginary Numbers School District - Five Layer System to stop Vento.

In the heavily-raining night streets [Hound Dog], commanded by Kihara Amata, commenced their operation.

Their mission is the collection of Serial Number 20001 [Last Order].

Kihara Amata himself successfully led the assault on Accelerator, who's judged to be an obstacle.

He rendered Academy City's strongest Level 5 nearly helpless.

But here the Hound Dogs committed one small error.

"Help..."

They had let slip one little girl.

And so,

"Help that person...!!" says Misaka as Misaka tries to beg earnestly!!"

Her pleas reaches the ears of a certain lad.

Part 2

"You there, what are you doing?"

The rain becomes stronger.

In the incessantly *za-za-* falling raindrops, sounding through the dark night streets, her voice drives into the ears of the groveling [Hound Dogs], Kihara Amata, and a wet Accelerator who's collapsed on the road.

In the dark of night, her white habit is standing out.

Index.

She's a delicate girl. Even when clad in a habit whose silhouette swells grandly, it cannot conceal her short build. With silver hair reaching her back and large twinkling emerald eyes, she gives out an impression of a delicate craft where each part is destructible from a mere touch. On top of that, she's carrying a tiny tortoise-shelled cat with both of her hands.

(Oh joy...)

Accelerator absent-mindedly thinks as he collapses.

This is too much for even something out-of-place. Far from an opportunity, the difficulties increase with this. She seems unable to even face the hoodlums squirming about in the back alleys, much less [Hound Dogs] armed with guns.

In fact, even Kihara frowns.

He's utterly not analyzing or thinking that she's some new war potential. His expression is like him realizing that a greenhorn has suddenly walked up the mound in the middle of a baseball match.

This white-cloak gives out an order, and that nun would be ground meat in seconds.

If a sub-machine gun capable of punching a car door full of holes is used, anyone can realize that that frail-looking person will be blown to dust. Skin, bone, meat and all.

(Which way should I take? Abandon her? Assist her? Or should I user her...?)

Accelerator turns his attention to the choker-type electrode attached to his own neck.

He should still be able to use his abilities.

But his entire injury-ridden body refuses to move.

"What now?"

One of the black-clad men fortifying the perimeters whispers to Kihara.

Kihara Amata, looking bored, exhales and,

"What now, you say?"

A single statement.

"Guess we'll have to erase her."

(Tch!!)

Accelerator clicks his tongue.

This Index is witnessing a [Hound Dog] operation. The organization itself must have been hiding its unofficial workload in the first place. What was given out was of course an order to keep mouths shut. The girl's already in a situation where she'll be relentlessly pursued from here until refuge. It's probable that she won't last three days.

(Either way, there's no changing that the silent me would be killed. Time to do something!!)

Accelerator regains his explosive power through sheer will at the intention of breaking Kihara's sorry face, rather than saving Index.

(This sister isn't worth the worry, but I won't settle into being beaten and left behind. Next time you'll be gnashing your teeth, Kiiharaa!!)

The switch on the choker-type electrode on his neck has been left on for some time now.

He can activate his ability just by ordering it now.

And for that purpose, he confirms every situation.

There are three black minivans within a 10m radius with Accelerator at the center. Nearly twenty black-clad [Hound Dogs]. Kihara Amata, the most problematic one, is standing right next to Accelerator, and it suffices to say that attacking him is almost impossible. Accelerator's defense [Redirection] is useless against Kihara's attack, and even if he raises a wind vector-controlled storm, a special sound will activate disrupting the vectors, rendering him totally powerless.

Also,

Index is standing about 15m outside from the encircling minivans.

(I'll be postponing their extermination until later.)

Accelerator, lying face down, touches with the tip of his toes the wet asphalt.

He confirms the sensation with his toe tips.

(Only one thing to do right here and now. Get away until I find a safe place. And take along that sister!!)

Those red pupils are pulsating.

His ability is in operation.

"Oooooooooaaa!!!"

As Accelerator screams, he jams the toes of one leg into the ground, kicking with all his strength as he lay down. And he controls the vectors at the same time. Gaining the explosive power rivaling that of rockets, his body flies from the asphalt, slamming into the rear sliding door of a black minivan at terrifying speed.

As if taking an iron cannonball, the metal door is torn from the hinges and is jammed into the van interior.

Accelerator's body ends up in the minivan's back seat.

"!!!?"

Before the black-clad man standing by at the driver's seat can react, Accelerator reaches out and tears a piece from the crushed and jammed in door. Gripping tightly a serrated-edged, 5cm wide, almost 20cm long cylindrical iron scrap, he vigorously stabs it in the middle of the back of the driver's seat.

Right through.

He got it by sensation rather than sound.

"I—aa!!!"

Accelerator speaks to the man, who's unable to even raise a scream and is skewered to the driver's seat.

"Drive."

Totally without mercy.

Calmly, and just the plain facts.

"You're dead in 30 minutes. Better get to the hospital fast before it's too late!"

Even the man might realize that from the level of pain, it's something an emergency kit can't handle. Also, in the first place, he should know better than anyone how **that** Kihara Amata deals with injury-ridden lackeys.

"Hiii!?"

The decision is swift.

Along with a high-pitched **screeech** engine sound, the black minivan with Accelerator in it hysterically departs.

The black-clads standing on the road jump out the way, scattering left and right.

Kihara, with a provoking face, shouts something.

During that time, Accelerator escapes from the siege net.

He knows that the men behind him will one by one aim their gun muzzles at him.

Glaring across the driver's seat ahead and towards in front of the windshield, Accelerator grasps Index's location.

"Veer left!!"

Accelerator shouts, throws away the hindering slide door from the gaping wide-open entrance, and then,

He leans out from there.

Ahead of where the vehicle is heading, the white sister is standing in the middle of the road.

"Shit!!"

He stretches his arm outside of the vehicle.

Index is holding the tortoise-shell cat with both of her hands. This left no choice but to grab her by the upper arms, but there's no assurance whether or not he can reach her even with his arm totally stretched out.

Even so he stretches out his arm.

Gunshots *bam!!* echo.

A bullet almost grazes across at his face, but Accelerator ignores it and grabs Index's arm. Controlling the vectors, he forcibly pulls her into the vehicle.

"Wa, waaa!!"

Index lets out an awkward scream.

Accelerator adjusts his own position to hide beneath the driver's seat. As he does so, he lightly touches with his fingertip the pointed metallic, dangerous weapon that is piercing into the back of the seat.

"I, gaaah!?"

tremble The driver greatly trembles.

Accelerator whispers in a tiny voice to prevent Index from hearing,

"...No racket! And keep on going. We both don't have time, right?"

"P, passenger, where to...?"

"I know a good doctor," Accelerator answers in a very disinterested tone. "Didn't think normal doctors would do. I want you to take us there, so do it well, driver."

Part 3

"Ah—ah—ah—ah—"

Kihara Amata lets out a flat voice as he watches the black minivan become smaller.

He holds out his right hand.

"Th-Th-Th-Th-! That one that one, bring me that one!!"

An all-too-confusing order is given out, but the subordinates obediently follow. With fast movements, a portable anti-tank missile is taken from inside the remaining minivan and delivered to Kihara.

Even as Kihara is screaming "Double time, boneheads!" and kicking subordinates off their feet, the artillery is assembled at once and its safety locks released, at speed and accuracy rivaling that of professional operators tapping on keyboards.

There is no hesitations at all in those movements.

Rather, it is the [Hound Dog] subordinates who had lost their presence of mind.

"T, the driver!?"

"To hell with him! Deserters get immediate death! Bye-bye pup, you'll be remembered for about two seconds!!"

Heave! Kihara shoulders the 1-meter-long 30-centimeter-wide launcher and looks over the side scope.

He sets on his sights.

And readies his finger onto the seeker missile's trigger.

Just as the minivan, already ahead by several meters, is about to turn at a road corner, Kihara laughs.

Just in time. Even though the van made a clean turn, the missile will follow said van diagonally, and when it slams into the walls of the building corners, the van should take a storm of concrete pieces and should turn over.

Accelerator might survive it, but he'll certainly lose a means of transport for now. With the other two injured behind him, it's better that they carefully deal with Accelerator.

(That's so naive, Accelerator! When you use a vehicle, you can't get around the fact that you still can't use your fine control of the wind!!)

"So long shitty bastard, that white body of yours will be burned black!!"

As Kihara Amata smiles broadly, he starts to press on the trigger.

But then,

"?"

The scope's sights are dyed yellow.

Something off the scale is blocking me, Kihara thinks as he looks off from the scope. There, a strange woman is standing at a position about 10 meters ahead.

Cold raindrops are falling on the road surface. There are no other persons or vehicles in the wide street. Pale light from the building windows and traffic signal lights reflect off the drenched road; within there, that woman stands alone, appearing isolated.

Totally unaware of everything up to this point.

She's a woman whose facial symmetry is ruined because of numerous piercings dotting on her face. A bunch of make up has been applied to emphasize around her eyes. It's a look completely without consideration on what others will think about it. She's wearing clothing that looks like a dress with yellow as the primary color, but it's so old its period is describable. She totally looks like a European of the Middle Ages.

But for Kihara, it's not worth the worry.

The more pressing matter is that thanks to him being preoccupied with this idiotic woman, the minivan had turned around a street corner and totally disappeared.

"..."

Immediately, Kihara's expression disappears from his face.

With his face looking absentminded, he casually pulls the trigger.

The anti-tank missile is launched.

Leaving a straight line of smoke, the missile strikes at the obstacle of a woman right in the middle of her chest.

Before one can realize whether or not her expression had changed, the missile explodes from within, unleashing a shock wave and blast of fire towards the surroundings.

An earth-shaking *BOOM* roaring sound explodes.

Rainwater that spread out like a membrane onto the road surface is blown off altogether, the signboards of the surrounding buildings are ripped and shaken. A large amount of leaves are torn from the roadside trees, dancing about in mid-air.

As the blast is in point-blank range, the black-clads that surround Kihara take a gusts of wind and are blown off.

Red blaze and black smoke obstruct Kihara's field of view like a cotton candy.

However,

It is only for about five seconds.

Byuo!! A violent wind blows everything off.

Even the flames and the smoke disappears without a trace due to a new whirlwind rolling at the epicenter.

The woman, with her appearance unchanged, stands among the burned, broken, and blown-off asphalt.

Everything about her, even her clothes, bear no signs of being burnt or hurt, not even a single hair strand.

"What a nice town, you know,"

The yellow-cloaked woman suddenly says.

Without looking at others like Kihara Amata.

"I thought the [Corrosion] would only make even faster progress, but that wasn't the case. Are most of the teachers and students not transgressors? If they were such, even my [Corrosion] rate would, of course, be delayed."

Although, the face-pierced woman looks at Kihara.

"...You people look like exceptionally pitch-black."

With that, Kihara finally opens his mouth.

"Who are you?"

"A competitor for a killing."

She turns to the corner where the minivan turned and disappeared,

"That was holding my target too, you know. Nothing's particularly wrong about someone else killing her, but I have a problem about someone uninvolved being able to take her.

Kihara sighs as he's not that into socialization, and,

"Kill her."



Immediately at the given order, one group of the surrounding black-clads simultaneously raises their guns.

But then,

"Stop it, you know."

The triggers are never pulled.

Just before they could, the men noisily collapse with a groan. Entirely without resistance. Easily an overkill attack that makes the other party experience something uncomfortable.

There are also people that collapse directly onto the ruins of the minivans destroyed by Accelerator, not to mention on the rain-soaked roads. Despite this, not even one stirs. They are totally helpless.

Just what kind of phenomenon is occurring?

Kihara steadily and lightly strikes the missile launcher barrel.

No one at that place can understand; at least that woman probably believes in that power. Her expression doesn't show any sign of changing, even though it's a situation where it will probably become a stirring hornet's nest at a single misstep.

The woman, with a bored-looking face,

"Even so, you did say 'Kill her' with no change in expression? **There was no hostility even with the intention to kill**. To begin with, you didn't even hold any guilty feelings because you didn't think of the enemy as an enemy. I wonder if it's not different from pulling out weeds? I said it when first I saw you and I say it now: you really are rotten to the core. At least the same as with me."

Kihara does not respond.

Turning to one of the surrounding black-clads, he waves his hand as seemingly annoyed,

"Split into two groups."

As he halfheartedly throws away the emptied anti-tank missile launcher someplace,

"Gather useless members from among the available members, line up 10 people a row and stay put. During that time, me and one group will head for the [Villa]Headquarters. Got it?"

It's too approximate for an order, but it's obvious that he's going to pump somebody full of bullets unless this order is followed. Moreover, unless Kihara is there, being unable to crush Accelerator is true once more.

The strange woman in front of them, Kihara Amata, Accelerator.

Judging who's the no. 1 [least terrible opponent], strangely it's still the strange woman whose, at best, degree of difficulty appears to be low.

Having just gave out his order, Kihara quickly boards into a minivan.

The woman calls out to that person who's facing his back to her.

"You, you have no hostility, right?"

"You want to face me, be a bit more capable." (!)

As Kihara says just that, he strikes the driver's back of the head, making the minivan depart.

Left behind is just the woman and the decoys.

"...Well, I just wanted to know who he is, but it seems he chickened out before I could ask. Sheesh, I'm not fit for intelligence gathering! Even too much killing is problematic."

As the woman cricks her own neck, she lets out her own tongue.

The chain *jingle* falls from within her mouth.

"Well, then. You're considerably treated with much contempt, but I wonder if you guys are useful."

Part 4

Kamijou Touma and Last Order are standing still.

Both of them don't have their umbrellas up, so both Kamijou, who's wearing a red shirt beneath a stiff collar, and Last Order, who's in a dress shirt on top of a blue dress, are completely soaked. Even the goggles that are on her forehead are drenched, but there might not be unexpected problems since it's intended for military use.

The tiny girl led him to a corner of the large avenue, not even far from the entrance of the underground shopping complex. With the trains and buses gone along with the final curfew time, there is absolutely no figure of a person in the complete darkness.

At least, the normal figures are those that stand and walk on two feet.

"_____"

Several people are lying down, collapsed on the ground.

Beneath the night sky with the rain strengthening, the uniformly all-black men had tumbled, their bodies sinking into the puddles. Reflecting the streetlights is armor made of composite materials, drenched in a thin watery film are the ominous sub-machine guns. Their appearances, with their faces disguised by helmets and highly elastic masks, on all accounts reek of out-of-the-ordinary people.

A *pachi-pachi* popping sound can be heard.

The sound of burning fire.

Just meters from where the men lie collapsed are squashed and crumpled minivans. Those are the firewood. The vehicle breaking through the guard rail and stopping at the middle of the walkway... is that the right way to put it? The more one thinks it's more accurate that they're blown off, the more the minivan will lose its shape. There are no other vehicles nearby. When it comes to this, did those belong to the downed men?

Last Order points at one downed person.

Her face ghostly pale, she says,

"He was attacked by these people," says Misaka as Misaka tries to state the real facts."

Is that real? she repeats. (!)

Kamijou again shifts his focus onto the downed people.

(Are those not Anti-Skills?)

He might be deceived by the black-clad battle gear, but on closer examination he feels that it's different from the standard gear of an ordinary Anti-skill. But then again, he's no military official, so he can't make an assertion since he has no detailed knowledge to the point that he can understand the model numbers that he might suddenly see.

(But, if these are not Anti-Skills, just who the hell are these guys? If we we're unlucky we would have been attacked by several of them, who seem better equipped than the Anti-skill....)

And yet, the attackers in question have badly collapsed.

He can't get a grip of the situation.

Kamijou looks at Last Order,

"Was your acquaintance attacked here?"

"That's right,' says Misaka as Misaka answers."

"About this, has that person killed would-be avengers?"

"That couldn't possibly be,' says Misaka as Misaka shakes her head. 'That person has a short fuse and is quick to quarrel, but even with that much damage, him suffering revenge is unimaginable in the slightest,' says Misaka as Misaka simply tries to guess."

Just what kind of guy is that guy, Kamijou sets his mind into deep thinking.

But then,

"...."

He's no invincible ESPer.

He doesn't know what kind of power Last Order's acquaintance uses, but unless it's an irregular like the Level 5 Railgun and it's attacked by a trained group with guns, it couldn't have turned the tables on them.

It's not an obligation applicable to the Level 0 Kamijou, but ability users are basically students. It's reasonable to think even that power is something that is "popular within school."

They cannot do anything if they're thrown out *pop* into this kind of battlefield. Unless they honed their wits... it's because they're useless unless they have the mental will just to [hone their wits] in the first place. No ordinary students are perhaps able to do stuff like preparing oneself in that manner and fight.

Normally they die.

(Anyhow, I have to report this...)

It isn't clear whether Last Order's acquaintance has been caught or is currently on the run, but in any case, the urgent situation remains unchanged. This really looks like he'd better seek the Anti-skills' help, Kamijou thinks as he brings out his mobile phone from his side pocket.

But then...

"...?"

But then, Kamijou raises his face from his phone just before pressing its buttons.

(...Why... I can't report this to anyone...?)

He looks at the sight before his eyes. A crumpled and crushed minivan. It looks like a few hours have passed since it burst into flames, but even then the powerful light is from the flames that are not weakening. With so many of these occurring, they didn't even reach one ear. Even they will understand a fire occurs even if they see it from afar. Kamijou doesn't even use his mobile phone; he thinks it's expected that someone has already reported it, and what's more, even rubbernecks haven't gathered.

"..."

Kamijou surveys the surroundings.

In the streets where the lights go out, it's a scenery where no ruckus occurs, and is totally wrapped in silence.

If...

If noise is made and yet it's not possible to make noise.

If there are many people collapsing within buildings just like the Anti-Skills.

(What the...)

Is it an unnatural attack, or is it an unintentional phenomenon?

It's a completely unassertive state of emergency where even that is not clear.

That silence isn't the scariest.

By the time Kamijou realizes the problem, the fact is Academy City's facilities were already driven to suspension, just like termites eating out a wooden bridge.

It's close to like when dozing off in the final exams, then he's awakened by the examiner's "Ten minutes remaining" voice.

And in front of a blank examination sheet, cold sweat pours out from the lad's entire body.

(What is happening now in this very town?)

And then, there's movement in an unmoving Kamijou's field of vision.

Last Order is leaning over the side of the fallen men, poking the equipment. That girl suddenly raises her face as if she notices something, and runs over to Kamijou's side in hot haste.

Then, she grabs his hand with her rain-drenched cold hand, and begins to pull hard on it. It totally looks like she's taking her parent towards a department store's toy section but,

"Hurry,' says Misaka as Misaka urges precaution."

Moreover, in a strangely urgent voice,

"They are coming,' says Misaka as Misaka reports while trying to hide herself in the back alley!"

Pulled along by Last Order, Kamijou secretly hides in a nearby parked van, while frowning and saying "They?".

With that spot clogged by fallen leaves and like, a large pond-like puddle is gathering around the vehicle. Stepping into it, even his socks are getting soaked with water.

But they had no luxury to complain.

A low *garororo* engine sound echoes.

Coming down was a strange black minivan with headlights turned off.

As it lets out a stealthy, low sound, the van stops at the place where the black-clad men lie collapsed. Its rear sliding door opens, and out goes in groups people with the very same equipment. A quick glance shows there are almost ten of them. Even with them temporarily unarmed, it's definitely not a winnable number.

And then,

"...Shit. From where did they get those kind of guns?"

He unintentionally groans.

The black-clad men, as if preparing for something, hang up their identical sub-machine guns by their shoulders. Perhaps they'll be defending themselves with other weapons like handguns and grenades.

They don't look like they're Anti-Skills, the guardians of Academy City's public order.

And they don't even look friendly.

And should they find Kamijou and Last Order doing their thing, they would rather rain the two immediately with bullets; such tension has been following Kamijou even up to now.

He cast his view onto his own right hand.

The Imagine Breaker in that hand can deal with the Level 5 Railgun. But on the other hand, it's entirely ineffective against a bullet which is not involved with any unusual power at all.

The black-clads shoulder their (probable) colleagues lying down on the road, and throw them ruthlessly into the minivan. There is a person with differing movements aside from this type of work. A man with a transparent tank, the tank being as tall as three family-size PET bottles fastened vertically, shouldered on his back. Fitted on the bottom is a nozzle, and the man grabs it and prepares a flame thrower-like stance.

"It's acid,' says Misaka as Misaka invokes a common name."

"And what's that?"

"Acid cleanupAcid spray... A specially weak acid is sprayed, destroying fingerprints, bloodstains, and DNA information,' says Misaka as Misaka takes out information from a manual on evidence destruction."

"..."

This is bad, thinks Kamijou.

That group must have felt it necessary to destroy evidence, even as it prepares for a large-scale operation. And it's anybody's guess on what action will that kind of company take if in a worst case scenario they find eyewitnesses.

In conclusion,

(—In that kind of situation, I really have no hope of getting away.)

His throat makes a *gulp* sound.

And the *drip* sound of water reaches his ears.

"_____"

Kamijou looks at his own feet.

He's in a pond-sized puddle due to drainage being blocked. And his feet getting soaked in there are shivering bit by bit. That shivering is creating tiny ripples on the water's surface. Going under their shield for a car, those ripples head for the other side.

However, they shouldn't be able to notice this.

The downpour has been beating onto the puddle. Even with their eyes attuned to this darkness they can't observe the state of the water puddles. *It should be all right*, Kamijou thoughtfully prays, but then,

turn. And,

The black-clads, in a spot a bit separated from where Kamijou is standing, are simultaneously looking at him.

Part 5

They've been on the run from there for about 10 minutes.

Speaking of ten minutes by vehicle, Accelerator thinks that's a [reasonable] distance. But conversely, it is the only the [reasonable] extent. It's highly improbable, but if those bastards didn't hesitate to use stuff like satellites in following their escape route, they would be overtaken in the blink of an eye.

While in the driver's seat, the man, skewered by Accelerator in the back, quivers as he says in a cracked, tiny voice,

"(...W, we're still running!? Haha, this ain't a joke. At this rate I'll really die—)"

"(...Shut it. We're not stopping until I'm stopping.)"

As he whispers back, Accelerator lightly moves the steel weapon that is piercing into the driver's seat. The man's body *snap* greatly trembles, his moan echoing inside the vehicle.

Index, having heard that, slightly raises her head.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Got it?"

On the pretext of settling down in front of the driver's seat, Accelerator is hiding that he's holding a deadly weapon.

The driver, sweating continuously, nods. Index frowns, but it seems she's clueless about the situation.

"But then..."

Accelerator unintentionally lets out his voice.

He thinks they might bump into the Anti-Skill for running through town in a suspicious, sorry-looking minivan which has a rear door missing and is really a hot vehicle, but somehow there are really no signs of that. Their time possibly saved to contact Yomikawa if possible — for a trampled Accelerator, it's somewhat of a let-down.

(No way, even this silence can't be one of that shitty bastard Kihara's laborious productions.)

For now, Accelerator has set the choker-type electrode back to normal mode.

This is simply for conservation. From the start, the battery won't last 15 minutes on ESPer mode. The fight with Kihara took off a considerable amount, and it was consumed little by little by normal activities even before that.

Considering the remaining battery charge, he can't even go full battle for seven more minutes.

As expected, he can't even use the minimum of [Redirection]. To fight Kihara and his men, saving up was important. But currently, Accelerator is a goner if for example a missile is suddenly launched onto this minivan before he could notice the attack.

Simply because there are such circumstances, Accelerator is out looking from the doorless entrance towards the flowing night town scape when,

"Ah, I've found the 'The Ugly Duckling'!"

Right beside him, the somewhat world-disconnected pure-white sister is rummaging and looking at the hot vehicle's back seat.

Perhaps this vehicle's real owner is a parent; Index brings out an infant-oriented picture book printed on solid cardboard. The tortoise-shell cat on her lap, its hunting instincts stimulated by the duck caricature drawn on the front cover, is for some reason slowly starting to eye the distance.

(Oh, a bookworm. The way her eyes twinkle isn't surprising...)

"You, carefree one. One thing, what the hell are you harassing me for?"

"Hm? I've come here to return what I've borrowed!"

As Index jams her hands into her habit sleeves and rummages through,

"Here's the cutting-edge daily necessity! You mustn't keep on leaving such important things! I was worried, but I'm sure you'll be fine with this!"

"Are you nuts!? It's a bother just to have you return such a disposable and ball-crumpled pocket tissue!!"

Eh, is that so? Index starts to spread with her tiny hands the pocket tissue crumpled inside the vinyl pack.

Looks like this ain't over until I get it. Accelerator, with an annoyed face, grabs the pocket tissue from Index's hands. He jams it halfheartedly into his pocket trousers.

"Speaking of which, are you all right with those injuries?"

"So?"

"But, look! A while ago you were down—"

"It's nothing! You bring that topic up again and I might go on a rampage."

Index is totally oblivious to the driver who's starting to *rattle* tremble.

Upon hearing Accelerator's impudent talk, and apparently relieved for now, Index focuses her eyes onto the picture book in her hand.

"Hmm hmm. So this is the translated version in Japanese, right?"

Index apparently knows the contents of the fairy tale; flipping through the pages at high speed, she reads aloud only the last page.

"The ugly duck, insulted as useless and hopeless, turned out to be an ero-kakkoii swan. The End. ...What is this 'ero-kakkoii'?^[1]" (!)

"Someone exactly opposite of your position."

"Hmmm."

Index closes the picture book with a snap,

"...In the end, it's a story where the swan's victory was determined from the time of birth, right?"

"The Ugly Duckling' isn't that kind of story!"

"Then what kind of story is it? Deciphering fairy-tales must be difficult with its many branches in interpretation methods."

"Hah? I see, what was it? Surely for that brat, the saying is [For the swan that wanted to get along with the ducks, is it really happy the swan itself was thrust with the fact that it definitely cannot join with their circle], if I recall."

Tch, Accelerator spits out.

The brat here is someone out of his league for sometimes saying such unchildlike opinions.

Because he heard a depressing groan from the driver's side again, he heartlessly shakes the steel weapon skewered into the back seat back and forth to shut him up.

As expected, Index is probably clueless of that.

Raising her head from the picture book, Index thus inquires,

"That brat you're talking about, was it a lost child you had been looking for?"

"Yeah. Although, truth be told even now the status is that I'm still looking for that child."

"Has the child gotten lost again?"

"...Yeah. That's right."

After leaving a bit of space, Accelerator affirms.

"From here on I'll have to search for that brat. At the worst, it looks like it can't go back to the house on its own feet. So we'll part ways here."

"Can I join, too, in the search?"

She doesn't even look away for one moment from Accelerator's scarlet eyes.

"But, I realize that you're worried. If Touma were here, I think he would have said the same thing."

"Hmm."

Accelerator uninterestedly turns his glance away, and calls out to the driver,

"Stop there."

The man, accepting the order from Accelerator who's literally holding his life, stops at the road shoulder.

Accelerator looks at Index.

"Help me out."

"Okay. What do you want?"

"There's a large hospital nearby. About 5 to 10 minutes by foot. Go there and find the doctor who's face really looks like a frog. If you meet with the doctor..."

Accelerator stops his words there, and taps the side of his own neck.

"Tell him to prepare a battery for the Misaka Network connecting electrode. Tell him that. The battery's important. I can't do any searching without that battery. So when you get that battery, run back here. Got it?"

"Understood. Battery for the Misaka Network connecting electrode, right?"

She flawlessly repeats it.

Of course she may not understand the meaning when she said it on her own, the 'Misaka Network connecting electrode', but damn she's unexpectedly smart; without giving Accelerator time to think of that, Index grabs the tortoise-shell cat and goes out unhesitatingly onto the road.

"You'll be waiting, right?"

"Hah?"

"Can't you wait until I come back?"

"...I'll be waiting. Just get on with it quick,"

Accelerator answers.

Index looks back at him twice, thrice; soon she's off running, stepping through *splash splash* the puddles. That tiny back then disappears into the heart of darkness.

"Shithead."

Instinctively spitting out, he leans onto the back of a seat.

There are no replacements in the hospital. The electrode itself is a prototype. Besides, the battery in question is a unique item, so it hasn't been mass produced. Otherwise, Accelerator would have jammed a large number of batteries onto his pocket on the onset.

It's an outright, simple lie.

With the exception of going to the place where the frog-faced doctor is.

There's no denying that there's danger everywhere one goes, but the worst case is that sister going solo. Better go to a place where there are many people to up one's survival rate, even just a bit. That frog-faced doctor's place is quite a worry, but it's probably better than nothing.

What begins from here on, to put it simply, is a battle with Kihara and his [Hound Dogs] for Last Order. While his fighting power is deficient, he won't last even under normal circumstances seven minutes of full battle, going against that enemy burdened with a baggage named Index is madness. That's why she parted ways there.

The burden has returned to the place where she won't be a burden.

No more than that.

That much is better.

"__"

Accelerator exhales lightly and changes his mind.

"Roll out."

"Y... you're still not letting me go—a gack!?"

"Live or die, your choice!"

As Accelerator lightly shakes the steel weapon skewered onto the back of the seat, the minivan quietly departs.

After Accelerator goes on for five more minutes, he makes the van stop in front of a small park.

They're in the vicinity of the Seventh School District.

Just ahead, a traffic signboard for the neighboring Fifth School District is standing.

He grabs a large bag that tumbled along at the rear seat floor, and places it beside on his own seat. This is probably spare equipment for the [Hound Dogs]. Looking similar to a body bag made of synthetic leather, the bag measures more than a meter long.

Zippering it open and looking inside, he finds killing weaponry scattered inside.

A small palm-sized handgun, a sub-machine gun that could be hidden into an encyclopedia case, and a mop-length indoor suppression shotgun. Besides these, clay-like explosives and fuses, wireless radios, and face-covering masks are stuffed inside.

First and foremost, what he is searching for is a,

(A substitute for a cane...)

His always-used T-shaped cane was knocked out from him during his rampage with Kihara. Supporting his body with a cane is important outside ESPer mode. Before he can even move, that's the firstmost important thing.

Accelerator roughly scans the bag's contents and,

"As I thought, this shotgun should do."

He randomly takes one from inside.

It is black-luster metal-made, semi-automatic shotgun. The parts from below the muzzle until 10cm before the trigger are probably the magazines on sideways. Looks like 30 rounds had been inserted. He thinks it uses the same loading mechanisms from some sub-machine gun.

The shotgun itself carries a body length of nearly a meter, also the rear stock has been constructed to allow expansion and contraction at one's preference. On top a scope had been installed, but peeking through there's no change in magnification; turning on a switch, he sees a luminous red dot in the middle. Probably a dot-sight. He thinks it's for more accurate aiming than that of normal.

(For this loud, shell-scattering shotgun, is there a significance for this kind of more accurate sights?)

An amazed Accelerator insults the dot-sight, but that is not the problem.

Grabbing onto the shotgun grip, and inserting the stock onto his side, it barely looks like a crutch.

(The gun barrel might be bent from my own weight, but at least this isn't meant for firing. It'll do as a walking support to the end.)

A voice starts from the driver's seat and reaches Accelerator's ears, who is thinking of various things.

"It's useless..."

It's a cracked voice.

The man's strength is ebbing away, very much as if he hasn't drank water for how many days.

"When you meet that person directly, you will understand. Kihara-san is [Absolute]. You, you who had had lost your touch from that peace-loving, you're no opponent who could go with him with your pretensions."

"—You, *you wanna play?*"

"Th, that might be fine, you know."

The man's voice is contrary to Accelerator's expectation.

"I don't wanna die. B, but then, even I know of Kihara-san's terror. Better that we'll never find out. I, I'll never see the next sunrise again. That person has no mercy. No mercy, no allowance. I will not be helped. If I'm unlucky, p, *perhaps he'll not have me killed*. Th, that Kihara-san, whether to break Guinness records or to add one more world-wide major incident, is one person who manages to do them without qualms..."

"The hell, you're yapping, noisy bastard,"

Accelerator interrupts in a disgusted voice.

Grabbing with his five fingers the steel weapon skewered into the driver's seat,

"Or perhaps I should say you're a too much of a bother. *Kill me*: you don't have to say it vaguely. Guess what, I'll churn and mess up your bowels! I'll make you vomit from your mouth your day's lunch along with clots of blood, you shitty bastard!!"

"Hi, Hiiiiiiii!!"

With the loud voice coming out near his ears, the man's bluff is easily defeated.

With just a shout close to his ears, the man's bluff was simply destroyed.

The gibberish of the man who does not actually feel [death], it's the only worth for this degree.

The driver screams as his eyeballs shake irregularly.

"Shit, you son of a bitch!! Cut it out! I don't wanna die here!! You bitches are both monsters alike! I don't wanna be involved with this again!! I'm going back home, take a shower, and scan recorded programs while drinking alcohol!"

What only remains are hideous hopes.

Without even discerning his own situation, it turns out that he's poking his own head into a dispute between two big game like this.

Accelerator, sitting behind the driver's seat, calmly raises his voice at the rattling and shaking [Hound Dog].

"You hate dying?"

"Y, yeah."

"You wanna live as is?"

"Yeah!! So what are you doing!! I wanna live also! Stuff like 'you'd better die' is not how one lives! I wanna live a proper, normal life with my dignity! Isn't it crazy!? Aren't I the most idiotic of all!? The hell you're talking about, that sort is probably not a problem!!"

This person is probably being driven to the wall until the last moment.

Unless this happens, the talk which had emerged thus far wouldn't have come out.

"You did not understand it well."

A mouth-rending smile floats on Accelerator's face.

The driver, having confirmed that on his rear-view mirror, *hii* gulps in air.

"You think there's a remaining way out for you now? Living in this kind of world, you trampling people with impunity, and to top it off, piss off both me and that bastard Kihara, you still wanna live happily? Don't spout off such bullshit, you idiot."

"Uh, uwaahhh..."

"Shitty bastard. How many you've killed until now?"

"...F, fourteen."

In a voice that sounds like it's being squeezed out.

But Accelerator, upon hearing that, seems to instinctively lose his momentum.

What's with that count?

If that's the case, will that make one less of a man of peace than even himself.

Is the me, who's thinking about that and [man of peace], not quite the monster?

"Choose! You die here from too much blood loss, or get turned into an laughably inevitable corpse by Kihara Amata's hand." (!)

"N, no! I don't wanna die! I definitely don't wanna die!"

"Sigh. So it's the hospital then."

The Level 5 continues while smiling.

"You're not going to die. You're not going to die that easy. I'm not allowing that to happen. You think I would easily let go of shitty bastards who are not happy even if they kill 100 times? I'm so gonna prolong your suffering. You're going to continue to live forever on the road with no relief just to relieve myself of my own stress."

"Shiit..."

Even though it was said that he's going to be treated, the man gnashes his teeth and grumbles.

"I'm so dead. Kihara-san will follow me to the ends of the earth. No one can save me now..."

"The shitty doctor I know isn't probably the kind of person to at least abandon his own patients even against that. Isn't that a tear-inducing story? Well, think you can live even for a day?"

"Y, you have nothing assured."

"Is-that-so? Then for the meantime I'll probably be gouging out Kihara's heart."

The man goes silent for a bit. He's thinking that if Kihaha is really killed by Accelerator, then perhaps he might be saved.

And then he says,

"In any case, we're no match for Kihara-san."

"Could be, somehow for me and impossible for you."

Is there other useful stuff aside from the shotgun? Accelerator, rummaging and looking inside the synthetic leather bag that looks like a body bag, finds a certain equipment.

Its shape looks like a silenced handgun, but at the muzzle a sponge-shaped sensor that looks like a mic was installed. And a small 3-inch LCD monitor is mounted on where the hammer of the handgun is.

"...That, that's a scent sensor,"

The [Hound Dog] answers, confirming through the rear mirror.

"That thing used by perfume and deodorant industries was diverted to military use..."

"In short, mechanization of police dogs?"

It's probably smarter than dogs. To be able to create data from sensory information means to be able pick out only the important stuff from among the several odors and register it to memory.

Though scent is classified into several categories, each genre possess a molecular structure similar with the others. It's more likely that they should be approaching from there.

"We would always use that to follow our target's footprints. It's fast and yet reliable. We would always find the person who's on Kihara's eye and was on the run..."

"_____"

Accelerator turns his face into a seemingly bored-looking one.

He has no objections in smashing up the [Hound Dogs], but he always did not like the [surprise attack from the opponent] pattern. He has better come up with a [surprise attack to the opponent] pattern.

"It's useless even to use vehicles. They'll follow the scent of tires and find this minivan, and it's over should they follow your scent. We continue following our target until we stab it on the back. Even you will be found shortly!"

Accelerator tinkers with the scent sensor while listening to the man's voice.

"How do you use this? This might come in handy in searching for that brat."

"...It's impossible."

The man merely laughs. A pale, dried laugh.

"[Hound Dog] has a cleaning agent to negate the scent sensor. It interferes against the molecular structure of scent. Nothing can be captured when we use it at an attack site..."

According to the man, it appears there are two kinds of cleaning agents: one is affixed onto the members' uniforms, the other is scattered behind onto the actual scene.

"And you guys carry those cleaning agents?"

"If we have, it would already been used. Following footprints and erasing footprints are our specializations..."

Tch, Accelerator tut-tuts.

But then, the catch here is the realization that there are materials that can throw a scent sensor off.

Throwing the scent sensor to some spot, Accelerator says,

"...I have nothing more to hear from you. You, don't move."

"Hii!?"

The driver lets out a stiff voice on sensing a *crawl* wriggly feeling at the back seat.

I knew it, I'll be killed!

The man thinks so, but contrary to his expectation, Accelerator moves towards the doorless entrance. It appears he's heading outside.

"W, where are you going?"

"Hmm? To crush Kihara and save that brat!"

The man is dumbstruck at his seemingly troublesome reply.

"Why, why aren't you giving up!? No matter where you go, Kihara-san will come to crush you with a smile! There no spare time for stuff like battle preparations. The initiative is totally taken by the opposing side. You're willing to do it even with that situation!?"

"Of course."

"...What's your grounds when you can answer promptly! You're immersing yourself in someone else's world; did you realize how much you're at a disadvantage yourself?"

"The hell if I know."

Accelerator spits out.

He set his hands onto the doorless rear-seat entrance, so he can contact the frog-faced doctor,

"I could have gone dull with this peace-loving madness."

Part 6

The decision is swift.

Kamijou, thinking it's useless to even hide, lifts up Last Order's tiny body and carries her with his arms, and rushes out crouching from the vehicle's other side.

The vehicle is parked illegally onto the footpath edge.

The entrance to the nearest alley is only about 5 meters.

But then,

Pop!

The destructive sound similar to the sound of light silk being pierced by iron pipes echoes.

Several sub-machine guns are simultaneously being fired.

It's on high-speed rapid fire where he can't figure out how many rounds fire in a second. So far, the vehicle's glass shatters, its hood bending like being trampled on, its steel door getting tattered due to numerous holes being punched open. The car interior is shredded, cotton flying about inside the car.

Destruction occurs in an instant, with all those sounds coming together into one explosive sound.

Nevertheless Kamijou heads for the alley entrance.

Bullet trails pursue after Kamijou's escape route.

Just in front of his very eyes, a bullet flies into a concrete wall at face level. Attacked at his direction, even though Kamijou flinches and stops, he intends to handle it like how he handles beehives. Instinctively his head lowers, his body barely moves. Tiny broken concrete pieces graze by Kamijou's hair.

Almost tumbling, Kamijou jumps into the back alley, looking as if falling flat onto the wet ground.

"Are you all right, Last Order!?"

As he asks, the tiny girl in Kamijou's arms silently nods many times.

They can hear a metal-twisting *clatter* *clatter*. The sound of the black-clads' equipment. Kamijou tut-tuts, then carries Last Order's body again, and starts running into the heart of the back alleys.

He wants a place to hide.

The affinity of the Imagine Breaker in his right hand is really too bad. It gives him a means of escape for tricky irregular opponents like sorcery and ESP, but it really has no chance for those guys' guns. Even if he fights dirty, him turning into a torn and scrapped rag would be the outcome.

"Last Order, you controlled the Sisters, can you also control electrical power?"

"Yeah, but I can only use it equal to that of Level 3," says Misaka as Misaka answers."

"Then you can open electronic locks. We're entering some building through the back door. Perhaps this alley isn't that long, you know. There's even the possibility of an ambush at the exit."

Understood, she replies.

Kamijou stops in front of a nearby door in the back alley, and lowers Last Order beside it.

"Okay."

Last Order brings out a mobile phone from the chest pocket of her dress shirt, and turns it off. Somehow it appears to be a hindrance to concentration when using electricity-type abilities. She then points her tiny palm horizontally onto the installed card slot and closes her eyes.

Clatter *clatter* They can hear black-clads' metallic sound.

Whether they're near or far, they can't sense the distance. Since the alleyways are not straight but weave back and forth, they wouldn't be suddenly mowed down from the exits and entrances; even so, with a situation where he can't find out whether he's overtaken or not, continuing to fixedly wait for something is giving him more pressure beyond imagination.

(Not yet...?)

Kamijou waits, his ears bent towards the darkness, only towards the overlapping sounds of footsteps.

(Dammit, aren't you through?)

No way, the strange effects aren't coming out due to the Imagine Breaker! Just as Kamijou is getting worried,

"Got it!" says Misaka as Misaka opens her eyes!"

A high-pitched *beep* electronic sound rings.

Kamijou has his hand onto the knob of the iron door, and turns it.

The lock has been released. Just like that he carries Last Order and breaks into inside of the building.

There are no indoor lights.

It appears to be the kitchen for a family restaurant. Emergency exits are prepared as it is a place where fire is handled. They think that it's still business hours, but the light fading out is a bit

ominous. The green lamp indicating the emergency exit only lets the silhouettes of cookware float dimly.

"What are we going to do from here?" says Misaka as Misaka tries to ask.

"I wonder..."

Kamijou lowers Last Order to the floor, then turns his eyes towards the door before him. At any rate, they want to go where there is light, and people.

"Those guys have a vehicle. It's likely that we'll be overtaken if we run for it. There are no trains or buses at this time, and I don't think we can get away even if we manage to catch a novice taxi driver."

Last Order looks up at him with worried-looking eyes.

I want to throw away everything, but I can't show this kind of disgraceful behavior, Kamijou thinks.

"Anyhow, let's head for a place where there are people. Those black-clads wouldn't want to cause chaos there. So they only follow us. They should have their priorities backwards if they start a massacre there."

"Is it possible to really help that person with this?" says Misaka as Misaka laments at her own lack of power.

"I dunno. But we absolutely cannot give help until we survive. First, we mustn't get killed if we are to save that person. I don't think that person wouldn't be pleased by our deaths."

"...Okay," says Misaka as Misaka nods.

"Good, then we will live."

That's a very outrageous line for me, thinks Kamijou as he opens the door in front of him while smiling wryly.

That place is probably the main floor where guests consume the cooking. Flooded with lights of white fluorescent lamps, the cable broadcast is playing an out-of-place cheerful music. On the wall-covering big-screen TV, a CM is being projected. The fatty smell peculiar to the retort packs sticks to their noses.

But then,

"...*Even here!?!*"

Kamijou Touma instinctively groans.

There are many guests inside the store. Like men and women who look like couples and men who look like faculty with their work over. There are waitresses with pretty uniforms at the thin passageway between tables. On the counter is a male shop assistant who's a bit older.

All of them are down.

As in let down, completely exhausted, and without any injury.

There are no signs of panic inside the store. There are some spoons and forks that fell onto the floor, but perhaps they must have ended there at the same time the guests fell prostrate onto the table. Everyone inside collapsed, not even one of them understanding it... That is the impression at the spectacle.

Just like the downed Anti-Skills near the entrance of the underground shopping complex, there are also people collapsing, as if asleep, here, too. On the other hand, there are people lying on the floor, stiff as stone statues. Looking at its entirety, they are divided into several groups.

The kitchen's state is also strange; however, a problem could have arisen on the other side.

In any case, this does not fulfill Kamijou's [place where there are people].

With everyone losing consciousness, it's quite the same as if nobody is witnessing it.

(How did this happen?)

Kamijou is instinctively about to be amazed.

(They collapsed, maybe just like some of those black-clads. In other words, this isn't the black-clads' doing! The fact is that this is not the only problem!)

"Last Order, let's just get out—!"

Kamijou, stopping mid-sentence, pulls in Last Order and rolls down to the floor.

BAM!!

The windows facing the main street are smashed into very small pieces. They hold on for several seconds, aware that someone is firing from the main road into the store interior. The fired rounds even hit the cable TV tuner, rendering the speakers silent all at once. The TV is smashed up, and sparks are scattered about.

On seeing the small glass shards raining incessantly onto the guests lying down onto the tables and floor, Kamijou's rage flares up. Luckily the bullets don't hit them, but that is not the problem.

(Shit, they don't care even with the ordinary people around them!!)

Someone slowly enters into the main floor, stepping onto the broken glass shards.

Kamijou picks up a nearby fork that had fallen onto the floor.

It's so weak it's laughable.

On top of that, this time the floor's lights are abruptly fading. The door where Kamijou and Last Order entered opens, making a soft *creak* sound. From there about three more black-clads join in, moving noiselessly like cockroaches.

The only thing guarding Kamijou and Last Order is a large square pillar in the middle of the floor.

There's hardly any blind spots for them against the black-clads in slow search of their target from both directions.

Kamijou, dimly shining fork in hand, leans it back towards the pillar.

Suddenly he looks up.

An air hole directly above him was opened; the bullets hitting through the window must have hit it.

(Piercing? This pillar can't be a shield...!!)

The muscles of a surprised Kamijou stiffens more than that is needed.

Unhurried, the footsteps that seem to suppress as much vibration as possible, narrow down little by little the siege nets.

Part 7

Accelerator considers using his mobile phone, but instead he goes walking for a bit and calls from a pay phone. By some chance Kihara and his group might be using wire-tapping equipment to pry his number from the phone lines.

Entering what it feels to be a somewhat corrupted and completely unused-for-years pay phone box, first he calls for an ambulance by pressing the red emergency button. Even if these parts are probably not designated under its jurisdiction, it should be going for the frog-faced doctor's place.

After dropping in the few remaining coins, he picks up the receiver again. He one-by-one pushes the digits of the pay phone while deliberately checking the mobile phone number.

The mobile phone number is Last Order's.

"..."

But there are no signs of the other party answering. The announcement replying back to Accelerator, who's silently holding the receiver, means that either the mobile phone isn't switched on, or the phone is probably out of the coverage area.

He puts back the receiver.

*(...Well, **it's just as I expected.**)*

If she escaped into a narrow place, it's plain that the signal won't reach her, and what's more it's possible that she could be wary of ring-tones or vibrations sounding nearby.

The worst possibilities flash through his head, but Accelerator goes to execute what he himself should do next.

Again dropping in coins, this time he dials a different set of numbers.

The ringing sound continues for a while.

An elderly female nurse answers after it. Accelerator instructs her to get the frog-faced doctor.

The doctor takes over at once.

["What kind of business do you have at this time?"]

"Trouble came up. A big one."

["Did you listen for the general situation from the Misaka Sisters for once? Information exchange is probably done through the girls' electrical network, you know."]

I know, they have that aside from telephones, Accelerator agrees.

But for him who's only borrowing a substitute operation, it means he's unable to utilize the network.

"So the story is out. Give me the info they knew so far. What happened to that brat?"

["It appears that up to now she's being followed by a [Hound Dog] squad, you know. She's on the run together with an ordinary person who's totally there by chance. It appears that she's still not captured...but to tell you frankly, it looks like it's only a matter of time."]

Looks like Last Order appealed for help at the neighborhood after being separated from Kihara. The problem is that the appealed has none of the expected ability.

Accelerator tut-tuts.

"Location?"

["She herself appears to be uncaught. However, it appears that she is in some family restaurant, right?"]

He thinks for a bit; as expected, identifying a specific place with just that is impossible.

Even the Sisters should be out in search for Last Order, the frog-faced doctor adds. Of course the problem is that the ten of them present in Academy City are currently undergoing bodily adjustments; it will be a while before they would be allowed to walk in the rain.

It's annoying, but now it's up to him to complete the work itself.

"Has the brat with the white habit arrived there?"

["She's now in the waiting area. How did she know those substitute operation matters?"]

"None of your business."

["...Perhaps you're in a state that you really need a new battery?"]

"That ain't it."

Accelerator continues to spit out,

"Later, watch over the brat that's been screaming about that battery. It's possible that for the next twenty-four hours her life could be on someone's cross-sights. Don't take your eyes off her."

["*Yare yare*. Is it a problem that you can't leave to the Anti-skills?"]

"What can those pacifist teachers do? The enemies' levels are different! If they don't want the body count to go up, they'll just simply have to change their mind-sets."

["...Ah, that. Don't tell me, it has come to a difficult situation where one protects the lives of others who are non-patients, right?"]

"If so, include the patients too. In a short while, a man stabbed in the back will arrive. If you treat him adequately, get ready for an attack. How's your battle strength there?"

["Battle strength...not that very dangerous topic, right?"]

The frog-faced doctor is, as one would expect, taken aback, but Accelerator never messes around.

For time is of the essence.

"You've managed to grasp the situation at hand through those clones' network, right? In that case, I should know that you'll not be saying sweet words. Now spit it out fast. You hesitate and the death rate will spike up depending on how much you hesitate!"

["Good grief, you're just like that lad too, having a penchant for injuries and hospitalization, no?"]

A sigh is heard from the other end of the phone receiver.

After some silence, the frog-faced doctor answers,

["There are about 10 of the Sisters undergoing adjustments. Do you think that the weapons used in the [Experiment], the Metal Eater MX anti-tank rifles and F2000R [Toy Soldier], will be suitable for them afterward?"]

Accelerator thinks for a bit,

And then shakes his head.

"With that extent they'll be eaten up completely. In the first place, the clones in their present state have no battle strength. It's flawless but probably futile. Can you evacuate all the staff and patients in your hospital?"

["Me leave my post, you say? Do you know just how many beds are in this hospital?"]

"About three hundred."

["Seven hundred,"] the frog-faced doctor answers promptly. ["Newborns, the critically ill, and the physically restrained number fifty-two, you know? It may be safe to say that there are no patients undergoing surgery, but even I can realize how unreasonable is this large-scale movement."]

"...."

["What will you do when I'm out and an emergency case pops up? That problem exists too, you know."]

At the frog-faced doctor's words, Accelerator can not think of a poor excuse and appreciation.

He has no time for that.

"Can you do it?"

["Probably,"]

A quick reply comes back to his question.

Frog-face's tone changes from his habitual aloof one towards a completely different one.

["Using a warning flare, this would be viewed that a fire has broken out. If this is linked to some terrorist act, this would probably be a good justification for forcibly evacuating everyone, you know. There are patients that have to be restrained for safety's sake, but guarding them is my duty. I'm willing to do it by all means."]

"So you probably really can't do what I've demanded myself?"

["I've told you 'I'll do it'. You yourself haven't thought of talk that skillfully changes like this? There are several plans even in emergency case matters. Various plans like distributing them in other hospitals, right? Otherwise I wouldn't have nodded."]

"...Sorry."

["Well, you people using me in conflicts is honestly annoying, but I treat all patients equally. I pull out all the stops when I say I'll protect the patients being transported."]

An ambulance's siren passes through.

Perhaps that [Hound Dog] person was already loaded into the ambulance and is being brought to the hospital.

As Accelerator listens to the siren, the frog-faced doctor suddenly says,

["And up to what lengths do you intend to do about it?"]

"Kill Kihara. Crush [Hound Dog]. And then recover that brat uninjured."

["That's impossible!"]

An immediate reply, too.

Accelerator frowns at the all-too-frank cool-headed voice which is unsuited for the frog-faced doctor.

["Given your constrained condition, you have too many objectives in your arms. And so you absolutely cannot achieve them all. How many have you managed considering you have goals to aim at while taking side trips here and there?"]

"...When did the doctor start spewing out nonsense as lip service? You from that world, don't talk as if you know of the darkness!"

["Are you saying there is a misunderstanding?"]

The frog-faced doctor is unperturbed.

He continues with the plain truth for Accelerator,

["**I have seen hells far worse than yours.** Do not take lightly a doctor's business. I believe perhaps I've seen more blood and tears than you have. It's unavoidable for tragedies, you know. I was called the [Heaven Canceler]. That's about the gist of it, in a few words. Our differences are simple. You who had stayed there, you can go back respectably. That's the only difference,"]

The doctor opens up for a bit.

And then he continues,

["I'll tell you some advice as a senpai^[2] who knows the darkness as well as you do. Whittle down your objectives to just one. Kill Kihara? Crush [Hound Dog]? You can deal with those boring pursuits later. You should have one that should be done right here and now. Can you realize that now?"]

"As expected from a doctor that prefers human life. But then, saving that brat uninjured and smashing down Kihara and his gang is one and the same. Omitting either of them—"

["That's not true."]

"Hah?"

["Rescue Last Order uninjured? Are you saying such a thing that you cannot do as of yet?"]

[——]

Accelerator's blood freezes.

Just who is this person on the other side of the phone?

["I've said this a while ago. I've heard the direct story from the Sisters who were exchanging information via the Misaka Network. I intend to some degree to understand your circumstances. With that in mind, what do you say?"]

The frog-faced doctor says this with a slow, yet powerful voice.

As if he's sermonizing someone.

["Take a hard look at reality. Would you realize that you cannot do that by the time you're groveling clumsily? Listen, you're losing even at the best of circumstances. Towards an opponent where even victory is difficult, what will it amount to even when it is matched furthermore by a hope with such a dream? Compromise, Accelerator. Last Order is already beyond rescuing uninjured. No matter how lofty you've prepared, she'll definitely get injured."]

The mood turns into something like a blow that was driven in from a psychological blind spot.

While unconsciously, that much indicates it had relied on this doctor.

"...Shithead. Can't you see me saying that since I don't wanna admit that, I'll kill Kihara even if I have to crawl on mud?"

["I don't know. Were everything had turned out well as expected, I wouldn't be a doctor in the first place. I'd have shut myself up in a mountain and meditate for 365 days. But because that way I couldn't save a person physically I became a doctor. I'll say it plainly. Your assertion is nothing but egoism of a child who has ignored the possibilities."]

"Then what should I do? Thanks to that shitty bastard Kihara, I saw that brat in tatters; is it a happy-end if I say 'Good, good' with a sweet smiling face?"

["That's right. There are doctors for that reason."]

Even when excited, Frog-face remains unperturbed.

Smoothly, he fluently continues with his words,

["Broken arms, flayed skin, damaged internal organs: if you bring her before me alive I'll certainly cure her. I'll save your important person in perfect shape, mental care included and without leaving lifelong scars. Doctors are there to answer those expectations. So Accelerator, you must place absolute importance only to saving Last Order's [life], without the unnecessary and futile aiming for the stars. That's the most important one. That's the only thing that a novice's skill like mine cannot recover, right? If it were different, I would have tried to say right here, right now something more important than that child's life."]

No, he cannot think of anything.

At this situation, due to the adults' circumstances, a child is going to be deprived of its life.

And now,

He totally understood his own situation. He knows for sure that panicking or shouting will get him nowhere. He'll be fighting earnestly as a [doctor].

["Kihara? [Hound Dog]? Quickly finish such a trifling skirmish. And please quickly send Last Order to me and let me start the decisive battle."]

Later, Accelerator is taught where to hide himself should the doctor be temporarily out of the hospital. This is for the case when Last Order is recovered.

He puts back the receiver,

And leans back onto the glass door of the pay phone.

(...Beyond rescuing uninjured. No matter how lofty you've prepared, that brat's going to certainly get injured.)

Accelerator once breathes in, and out.

[Hound Dog] is using a scent sensor. He himself would have of course used it in looking for Last Order. Even at the best of circumstances when she's in a dilemma, the devil's hand is more and more stretching out at an increasing rate.

There's no room for error.

So he's preparing himself.

"Bring it on..."

A smile remains after everything has been accepted.

An incredibly dreadful smile that tears at the corners.

"—I'll help out that brat, even if it means beating to death both good and bad guys."

[Hound Dog] is possessing a scent sensor.

Kihara Amata and [Hound Dog] will immediately find out this position, and come in with an attack.

First off, he'll counter-attack that one.

He wants a battlefield for that purpose. There's no spare time to loiter around at a location like this.

Between the lines 6

Tsuchimikado Motoharu runs for the gate connecting Academy City to the outside world.

The down-pouring shower not showing any sign of weakening at all, the moonlight being obstructed, and the sound of rainfall, are exerting an adverse effect onto the sound gathering work, and even the surrounding scent has been erased. The completely damp scenery, that much, is especially racking up the night battle's body count.

(Most of the town's facilities have been damn paralyzed. It's fortunate that neither rebellion nor robbery have arisen,)

Tsuchimikado seems to mutter in his mind while surveying his surroundings, not losing his running strength.

It's fine to say that the guardians of public order, Anti-skill and Judgment, are almost annihilated. It appears that some of the members can still move, but it's impossible for them to entirely cover Academy City with that many people. Should anyone realize the paralyzed status this town is in, the cash registers and the goods shelves will be raided and plundered.

The reason that it hasn't occurred at present is that since Academy City has basically set the last trains and buses to the final coming home time, majority of the populace doesn't notice the [outside disaster], and then before they could notice the [outside disaster], many of the students were also struck by an unidentified attack, and were caught into having their consciousness taken away.

Attack.

More accurately, an attack from the magic side.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu gnashes his teeth at those words.

Although, at the battle below, since their thoughts were made uniform as far as possible, a wave of very easy-to-understand feelings don't materialize.

([God's Right Seat]. I've heard stories about them, but I never expected them to go this far.)

Tsuchimikado had felt admiration instead while running through the streets that had become still as death.

It's an excellent magician.

Despite of this, they were swept away with so many large-scale magic attacks, and yet they themselves couldn't analyze what variety of art they've taken blows from. It's totally like being completely wrapped up in smoke.

(But I can't rest easy only with what Aleister said. I'm sure there are other groups here. With the situation where the town facilities are paralyzed, this town's finished were it to be trampled on by even these lot.)

The [God's Right Seat] not coming to break in at the same time with a battle unit is, in a word, strange. But that's probably only a problem with numbers. For example, if there are about 10,000 on standby outside, even if they break into Academy City, they'll end up fighting against all of the 2,300,000 inside. But if [God's Right Seat] manages to chip off Academy City's battle strength at the start, an invading force's loss ratio should be drastically reduced.

The enemy's battle numbers are unknown.

How they're stationed outside of Academy City's outer walls is probably unknown.

(...But, normally they would all break in at once, right?)

Academy City has 2,300,000 people, all hands. If for example the Roman Catholic Church throws 10,000,000 people at them, expressly standing by outside the walls is unnecessary. And even Vento as the vanguard would be unnecessary. It's sure to think of gaining total control by strength (Of course, there are sections where it's not possible to count the number of Academy City's ESPers and armed groups, but it's unlikely that the Roman Catholic Church has rightly recognized that).

At the present time, probably, there are surprisingly few people on alert.

With Vento striking first, their numbers are only sufficient for [cleanup] in the silenced streets.

(Even so, it doesn't look like I can meet them head on.)

Tsuchimikado Motoharu is not wishing for the enemy's annihilation.

Until Academy City's town facilities recover, the invading force standing by outside must absolutely not be let into the inner premises. That's his winning condition. This winning condition is what he, not Aleister, decided for himself. He can only leave Vento to other people.

But then, to continue keeping out the enemy which he doesn't know how long they will stay there, with no way of knowing when then town facilities will be restored, is almost tantamount to suicide.

(Mere Anti-skills are of no use. And other people just like me have their hands full with other things.)

He has no allies to help him out.

And he has no special weapons or magic to rely on to defuse the situation.

Even so,

(Maika is in this town.)

He thinks of his younger stepsister, no way connected to the world of magic, and is aiming to be a simple maid.

With that alone he's decided to prepare to battle.

(I don't care if I betray everything else, but I definitely won't betray her.)

Passing through the totally defenseless Gate No. 3, Tsuchimikado Motoharu goes outside.

As a master Onmyoudou magician.

As a useless Level 0.

To defend the world where his cherished one lives.

References

1. 'Ero-kakkoi' is slang meaning 'Sexy & Cool.'
2. A senpai/sempai is a senior of something.

Chapter 7: Changing Raindrops into the Color of Blood. *Revival of Destruction.*

Part 1

Yomikawa Aiho grabs onto the car's steering wheel.

It looks like a cheap-looking domestic sports car, but the engine sound is unusually low. Meant for chasing fugitives on the run, the hidden parts are being tuned to the max. With almost seven-speed gears, it's up to one's imagination how much unreasonableness is being done.

On the search for Last Order, gone from her apartment house since this afternoon, she brought the car running up to speed but,

(...? Nothing can be done, with the streets empty....)

By nature, Academy City is a town for students.

Since only the faculty, staff, merchants, and university students use cars, traffic volume doesn't reach to the level of an ordinary metropolis.

But even so there are no cars today.

On the spreading road opposite of the windshield with its wiper moving at regular intervals, she sees only a mere runway.

"Does anyone know what's going on...?"

Yomikawa grumbles.

That time, a lamp for the wireless radio jammed inside her car lit up instead of the car audio. She switches on her blinker, drops her speed and slows her car to a stop at a road bank.

Looking at the radio, along with a low *ga—* sound, a postcard-sized scrap paper is spat out.

It works on the same principle as small-sized printers used for digital cameras, used for sending from Anti-Skill HQ to every computer terminal with stuff like mugshots of wanted people.

The photograph is rough. And it was taken from a telephoto distance. The camera was probably shaky, so the outlines are blurry. Even so, in the middle of a great number of downed Anti-Skills, she can spot a woman dressed in yellow standing up.

"?"

Yomikawa is perplexed.

Normally, text information like the scene of the crime information should be printed out along with the mugshot, but there is none. In the first place it's unknown what that woman in the picture had probably done. Whether she is a suspect for some incident, or a rescue objective, it's not possible to judge.

She's worried about the lost Last Order, but this is as expected a [case] that takes priority over a [lost child].

Yomikawa switches on the radio and says from there,

"Yomikawa to HQ. Requesting details for call 334."

Must be a communication error, she thinks as she tries to get confirmation, but there is no reply.

Only a low *saaaa—* noise reaches her ears.

Even after that, she tries talking several times to the radio, but there's no reply that comes back.

"..."

Yomikawa switches off the radio.

Inside the car that stopped at the road bank, Yomikawa again holds the postcard-sized scrap of paper. There a yellow-clad woman is being photographed standing up in the middle of the rain, in the middle of downed Anti-Skills.

(This woman....)

She snaps at the woman in the picture with one of her fingers.

(Just what is this? Based on my impression of what I saw, this is no mug-face for a rescue objective. It quite looks like what happened after my colleagues were struck down....)

An ominous sensation runs through Yomikawa's spine.

And at the same time, she feels anger for her own colleagues lying down on the ground,

(Well, if I catch sight of this face I'll give her a proper conversation—)

It is a random thought, but Yomikawa never drives her sport car again.

Zon!!

For a sudden attack runs through Yomikawa Aiho's brain.

"Ah...!?"

Even she can't raise a scream.

With her strength continuing to go out from her entire body, her upper torso leans onto the steering wheel. Her chest being pressed is painful, but she can't do anything about it. From bone to fingertips, all her strength is being taken away.

Her field of vision is rapidly narrowing.

(W, what is...)

Unable to understand why, Yomikawa's consciousness slips away.

The car radio switch is mere centimeters from her loosely hanging hand. But her hand cannot move. So she cannot appeal for help. Even her breathing is getting beyond her control.

(...This, picture...)

Watch out, it must have been signed from a colleague. Perhaps it's possible a downed Anti-Skill like her mustered the last of their strength to send it out.

But that wasn't taken advantage of.

(...Dammit...)

The photograph between her thumb and index fingers lightly falls down.

At the same time, Yomikawa Aiho totally loses consciousness.

A carless road.

An awfully silent street.

A car radio that won't respond.

Perhaps, the situation is probably progressing by some absurd plan.

Part 2

"Third Resource Recycling Processing Facility."

A black-clad man is looking at a group of buildings soaring over the corner of the Fifth School District and his lips moved.

They're in a facility, a very close neighbor to the Seventh School District. The minivan used by Accelerator and the [Hound Dog] deserter was abandoned very near the side of the Seventh School District park.

"They've taken refuge in a troublesome place, Nancy."

The said person herself reflexively snickers at her colleague's words.

What is Nancy, even the person herself grumbles, but it can't be helped if they use this codename to call each other.

Nancy is, indeed, an ordinary Japanese of the yellow race. With black eyes and hair, those complexities are not embraced at all. If she were to make the codes, she wants them to be in kanji. Surely Kihara Amata is a person who creates gaudy handle names from the network.

Her entire body is covered with jet-black armor and mask, but even so the lines of a properly matured woman cannot be hidden. [Hound Dog] is at any rate, regardless of gender, an organization that is comprised of merely garbage, so there are some other female Nancies. Also, just because it's for congeniality doesn't mean a strange sense of solidarity is produced. It's because this human organization, with its former Anti-Skills who fell for the pleasure of hunting down case suspects and analyst-technicians who bring in [scarless torture] into investigations; basically all of its members are scummy, shitty bastards.

The woman is slowly swinging a tool in her hands.

An equipment similar to a toy gun — a scent sensor.

Furthermore, on top of the grip where the hammer of a pistol should be, a tiny three-inch LCD monitor is mounted. On it are numerous bar graphs continuously going up and down. Just like musical bars installed in component stereo screens.

"The target's [scent] continues to there. I can say I'm almost certain of it,"

Nancy says towards her backup colleague at the rear.

The scent.

Police dogs cannot pursue the scent with a rain like today, but for them that problem can be considerably resolved. The scent drifting away doesn't mean [the scent disappearing], it's more like [the scent is being blended in]. The sensor in this case can deal even with scents that are blended into.

The man casts his eyes towards the direction of the [scent].

"Quite a facility there,"

The black-clad man standing beside Nancy says.

An idle chat, but it is as he says.

Spreading before the woman's eyes is a gigantic facility that spans about 2km in every direction. It's meant for recycling the recyclables. By nature at the resource-deficient Academy City, from the basic paper resources, to stuff like metals such as iron and aluminum, petroleum products like rubber and plastic, and many more goods besides them, are being recycled. This is the facility that collects and processes items into something useful from the [resources] generated from the four school districts that surround the heart of the Fifth School District.

Those vast grounds suggest some coastal petrochemical kombinat. Cylindrical fuel tanks over 100m in diameter line up single-file, and there are factory areas with numerous smokestacks standing up.

Even so, it's a recycling facility.

An all-too suitable place where the shittiest of people fight.

"Nancy, what do you think that guy's aim is?"

Rod inquires about that matter.

"I can't get the strategic standpoint and importance of this facility. But if it were only for going undercover, deliberately dodging security and coming to a place like this is a pain."

"Hmm. Unexpected, easy as that was possibly."

Rod's faced turns to dissatisfaction at Nancy's casual reply. Before his eyes, Nancy lightly waves her scent sensor.

"To get away from us, looks like he's serious about destroying his scent by passing through the garbage processing plant."

"...That means he, too, knows our equipment."

"It's because that fool Orson ran away with the target, you know. There was some spare equipment inside that van."

It's hard to throw the scent sensor off track by putting on the stench of garbage, but it's a different story when either the scent's molecular structure is changed or a certain kind of detergent is used. The concealment group of [Hound Dog] has been developing its own for exclusive use, but it's likely that this kind of resource processing facility has the same kinds of chemicals.

Time for last-ditch methods, Nancy giggles, then inquires at her colleague,

"Rod, how's the rough layout of this facility?"

"Already acquired one from the Bank."

"Transmit to all members. How about the worker count and patrol routes?"

"Good thing we don't have to worry about patrol routes," the man called Rod reports. "It's almost automated inside. There are fourteen workers, and all of them are in the control center as operators tapping on the keyboards. I've heard that machine maintenance is sent in via a dispatch from an external organization."

"Good. That would save us time for cleanup,"

Nancy says halfheartedly, then hands over the scent sensor to her colleague. She then proceeds to check her shoulder-slung sub-machine gun.

Rod lightly waves at a small-sized computer where a rough layout is displayed,

"There are 24 entrance and exit locations. It's impossible to cover them all and then manually search one-by-one every nook and cranny inside the facility."

The current battle strength of [Hound Dog] is being dispersed into a diversionary unit against an unidentified enemy, a detached force in pursuit of Last Order, and a bodyguard unit for Kihara Amata. Because of this, there are about ten of them gathered now in the facility.

"Better that we guide the target's movement. The enemy should be convinced that we are numerous. We attack from map waypoint A, and after deliberate guiding we ambush from emergency exit C. The more bombs we throw in, the better we shake him. Got it?"

"What we gonna do if he uses his powers to bust through? We must be able to guide him, you know."

"It's alright."

Nancy looks again at the facility on hearing Rod's voice.

With metallic pipes entwining the massive concrete many times, it's a complex associated with heavy industrial facilities.

"If Kihara's word is true, the target is not that omnipotent."

Part 3

"This is it...."

Accelerator chuckles inside the control room of the Third Resource Recycling Processing Facility.

In every windowless wall of the small room, a horde of monitors had been installed. From factory operations to security mode, everything is being controlled from here.

The fourteen workers, impotent against a shotgun-wielding intruder, are reduced to trembling masses here and there; Accelerator doesn't bother with them. He's glaring at a single monitor. There is a list of detergents being prepared at this facility.

Accelerator's looking for a detergent that chemically reacts with the scent's molecules into [fundamental elements].

(I've found it. And lots of them. With these I can shake free from those bastards' [sense of smell]!)

He's resolutely determined on complete resistance to Kihara Amata's [Hound Dog], but he doesn't prefer to be on the [always under attack] side. He doesn't have even seven minutes to fully use his powers in fighting. No problems were it Kihara Amata himself, but he wants to avoid wasting the time away when it comes to the [Hound Dog] lackeys. With that in mind, he's decided that him taking the initiative of this battle is better.

Of course, the most important objective is not taking on Kihara and his group, but rescuing Last Order safely; even so,

(Even if I look for Last Order, right now the [Hound Dog] pursuit must be stopped. If that brat is recovered before that, the risks from stray bullets will rise!)

The difficulties will jump up after the rescue effort. Accelerator's ability is meant for defending only that person; the battery won't last with him using his abilities every time [Hound Dog] pops up.

Even for this type of meaning [when to fight and when to avoid], he must grasp at it at all costs.

(I must quickly use the detergents to wipe off my scent, then leave from this place. There's no time until Kihara himself reaches that brat. I mustn't sluggishly drop in the way in this place, and I definitely have to return ASAP. Now where are the detergents in this facility stored...?)

At that moment, the monitors *zaza* shake.

Dozens of monitors in the control room show their images being erased into gray noise one after the other. Just before their annihilation, at the security videos of this facility's Second North Entrance, fleeting images of a black-clad man are shown.

If they have the skill to flawlessly defeat the Third Resource Recycling Processing Facility's warning equipment, they should know even where the cameras are placed. As far as it goes, those black-clads are deliberately showing off their own whereabouts to try to tempt him.

(Shitheads! They're faster than I expected!!)

This facility is already surrounded.

Accelerator cannot move without his cane. In other words, he cannot speed up. Even if he shakes off the scent sensor with the detergents, just this troop entering this facility means he'll probably have to take them on.

He cannot escape from that lot. And now,

(I have no intention of escaping. I'll smash up those stalkers right here.)

Accelerator scans the surroundings as he leans his body onto the shotgun that serves as a substitute cane.

He warns the real workers who were mixed up into this.

"From here on a gun battle will happen. Even if the fight is over, succeeding groups will probably move in. You guys wait for about twenty minutes after the gunshots are heard no more. Then change into civilian clothes from work clothes and leave this facility."

Only incomprehensible (can't find out if they nodded or shook their heads) replies come back.

(Interesting. What do we have here...)

He confirms his status.

It seems he can't use his ability. Inside the factory, massive concrete prevent him from doing so, and precise electronic communications with outside fails. On top of it, because it's for resource recycling, many conveyor belts, press machines, and have quite massive motors installed, scattering powerful electromagnetic waves. The Misaka Network that creates electronic data

from changing the Sisters' brain waves into electromagnetic waves, is rendered perfectly useless in itself.

At any rate the jamming is horrendous.

The difference between music and noise is intense. Normal conversations would end with [a bit of chaos], but if it happens while he shows off and uses his ability, it will only lead into an accidental discharge incident.

(At least it won't reach to Kihara that I've been using my abilities here.)

He has no experiences up to this point fighting naked.

Until he uses his abilities, he's only a person whose movements are limited to using a cane for walking.

He only has a single shotgun that he uses as a cane for a weapon.

Packed into its magazine are around 30 shells.

"What to do...?"

He's looking for a way, with only his current equipment, to intercept [Hound Dog] who's known for systematic fighting.

As he continues to worry about the black-clad man shown on-screen,

(What to do?)

Accelerator tears his eyes from the monitor, digs out the papers containing rough sketches, and spreads them out widely.

Take the bait? Leave the bait? Offensive and defensive battles have already started from there.

Part 4

Misaka Mikoto is in a convenience store.

She's standing up in a corner for rain gear.

"Hmmm...it's small,"

She grumbles while gazing at the cheap plastic umbrella. This kind of umbrella being not unwieldy is popular, but it seems she'll eventually get wet with its size being reduced so much.

Looking from the wide window, the outside looks completely dark. Relatively large raindrops are striking the glass.

Misaka Mikoto earned the privilege to force a penalty game onto Kamijou Touma from a Daihaseisai contest. But then, that penalty game was totally blown to pieces at some point, so she's looking once more for Kamijou now, but then...

"Why is it raining!?"

Her eyes drop onto the paper bag of a mobile phone company she's holding onto along with her school bag.

(I don't wanna get Geko-ta and Pyon-koThe straps wet!)

Mikoto is humming with those feelings when her mobile phone suddenly rings out. With an annoyed feeling, she brings out the phone.

Displayed is the number of her kouhai^[3], Shirai Kuroko.

["Onneesama—"]

"What is it, Kuroko?"

["I'm on Judgment business, so I can't go home to the dorm, so I want you to send word in advance to that fussy dorm head. Now look, isn't it way past curfew time?"]

"Weeell, right now I'm in a convenience store."

["Gyaaa!?"]

Shirai sends back a very unladylike response.

A distinct voice, situated a bit back from where Shirai is, goes through the speaker.

["Ehh-? Shirai-san, you did contact Misaka-san, didn't you?"]

It must be Shirai's colleague, Uiharu Kazari.

["It's annoying. Annoying in the way that Onee-sama cannot get in touch with the dorm head from outside. But, I give up, you know. Presenting official documents is necessary for curfew extension procedures, and that dorm head won't respond to phone calls. No use arguing about it though; looks like the two of us will have to take a demerit for this."]

["Ehhh—. By the way, why is Misaka-san breaking the curfew time today?"]

["!?!"]

A *hah* intake of breath is heard, followed by a thick *mishi-!!* sound. It's probably an increasingly violent grip onto the mobile phone.

Shirai Kuroko inquires,

["It, it can't be... at this rate Onee-sama will be on a night date with that rotten ape!? Damn that bastard, making a very tasteful choice like enjoying a night view of the rain!!"]

"That's not it, you shitty idiot!!"

Mikoto instinctively shouts back.

But Shirai, as if she hadn't heard it,

["Damn, it cannot be done this way. Defending Onee-sama's chastity is my, Shirai Kuroko, responsibility!!"]

"Don't say 'chastity' loudly!!"

["Then I'll say it more assuredly!!"]

"Don't say it!!"

Mikoto, with her face becoming red, shouts, but Shirai is probably completely oblivious to what she is saying. Rapid machine-gun-like speech comes flying out from the speaker.

["Anyway, I'll go there, I'll definitely go there, so Onee-sama, please send an authenticated code mail so the GPS service can be used to find out where you are now—"]

["You can't do that!!"]

With a single phrase, Uiharu starts to block the Shirai machine-gun.

And then Uiharu continues talking,

["Look, the office paperwork, bills, and orders documents are piling up into mountains and won't stop. Shirai-san, if tonight's an all-nighter then it's an all-nighter. You cannot step outside to buy a bento^[4] for dinner, and even bathing is forbidden."]

["UGAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA——!!"]

["Hi, higya!? Shirai-san, Shirai-san!!"]

A noisy clattering sound can be heard at the other side of the phone.

Placing the mobile phone a bit of distance from her ears, an amazed Mikoto calls,

"Weell, then shall I hang up?"

In lieu of a getting a deranged Shirai, Uiharu replies,

["Uh, yes. I've got Shirai pinned down, so, good luck and do your best!!"]

"I TOLD YOU IT'S NOT A DATE!!"

Mikoto shouts with all her might, but it probably doesn't reach the other side. She thinks that the slapstick of a violent commotion continues, then the phone *beep* goes dead.

Part 5

Kamijou Touma and Last Order are secretly hidden in a pillar.

A dreadful silence has filled inside the lights-out family restaurant.

It is a hopeless 30 seconds.

He thinks his brain structure will collapse from too much stress.

But Kamijou, secretly hiding in a pillar and holding his breath, notices an abnormality.

No matter how much time passes by, the men aren't coming closer.

That black-clad lot who broke into the family restaurant should have found out by now where Kamijou and Last Order are. And they should have known that the two aren't carrying any suitable weapons. There's no way that an armed armored group expressly on the lookout for an unarmed high school lad and a young girl would remain motionless.

(What kind of situation is this?)

His mind on 'moving simply is dangerous' and,

His mind on 'move fast or we might lose our chance' are mixing together.

"...."

Last Order, sticking very closely to him, apprehensively grabs his shirt very tightly.

The girl's little hands becomes the helping hand that barely defends Kamijou's presence of mind.

So as it is, 30 seconds have elapsed.

No conspicuous sounds.

Strangely, only the sound of the falling rain comes from the broken windows and into Kamijou's ear.

He holds his breath.

And closes his eyes.

And waits for a time.

Then, there is movement.

"Haaiii♪! I wonder if you are utterly scared. Can you stop being afraid and come out-?"

A high-pitched woman's voice is heard.

Kamijou cannot confirm the face due to the pillar.

And he can't find out where could she possibly be.

Nevertheless,

(What the? She acts obviously different from those guys so far.)

The black-clads, who were cornering Kamijou and Last Order some time ago, are seemingly noiselessly and soundlessly trying to kill them at the fastest rate, avoiding their self-assertion as much as possible. To put it bluntly, as much maximum efficiency as possible, choosing only the minimum of movements.

On the other hand, the woman's voice is the exact opposite.

In the first place, when she let out her voice and made her appearance, it went [contrary] to the black-clads' movement patterns. Far from gender classification, it's unknown if she's even human; it feels like the most distant command is from the shadowy existence.

(When it comes to it, is she not with the black-clads?)

On the other hand, he feels that it's dangerous to just get out and go. In the first place, whose voice is that?

"Hahaha. You feel afraid, eh? Well, it can't be helped if you're in a pinch like that. However-, I have my own reasons-, so if you haven't heard much of what I've said-"

The female voice continues while laughing.

Then with a tone that is unconcerned about disturbances and precaution, with a totally blank voice,

"**I'll turn you to pulp, shitties!!**"

"!!!"

Kamijou embraces Last Order, and promptly dives for the floor, flying out from beside the pillar in doing so.

A *BOOM* thunderous roar reverberates.

The invisible blow mows down the pillar horizontally that, until a moment ago, served as a shield. The attack probably struck dead center of the pillar, as the pillar, broken into two sections, flies into the wall. At such speed and like a cannonball, it strikes the wall and is broken into pieces that scatter.

The entire building shakes.

The framework collapses, making a sharp *Gasshaa!!* sound, breaking all the glass inside the store where they took refuge from the black-clads.

Kamijou, covering up Last Order, scans with his eyes.

In the middle of the main floor, with the lights out, a woman stands alone.

Streetlight from outside slightly shines on that silhouette.

She is a strange woman.

Her garments are seen as a dress similar to what European women in the Middle Ages would wear. The hair on her head is entirely covered with cloth, nary one strand of hair can be seen. Her face, mouth, nose, and even eyelids were installed with body piercings, destroying her looks. Intense make-up that emphasizes her eyes was applied, which makes her unnecessarily more intimidating.

And there's the woman's hand.

There, it holds a enormous hammer over a meter long. Attached from the grip up to its end are pointed barbed wires wrapped around it. It could be a defense method to make it impossible to handle, or it could be a pretty ornament.

(....)

Surely if hit by this, the pain will be inexcusable; on the other hand, it's unlikely that she could win with only that against a hardened group armed with sub-machine guns. Nevertheless, whatever the heck happened, the black-clad men ended up tumbled down in this woman's surroundings.

It appears none of them are conscious.

(This is...)

The armed, armored, and probably trained black-clads—they were somehow rendered useless without raising a single sound.

(It's similar to...)

The lack of information emphasizes the ominous more.

(To the Anti-Skills that fell down with a clatter just outside the underground shopping complex...)

Only one thing is certain: she is no ally of Kamijou.

(And to the downed black-clads beside the wrecked vehicles...!!)

"You're..."

As Kamijou inquires with a low voice, he gets up from Last Order and stands up.

In answer, the woman quietly informs him, while lightly swinging her unidentifiable hammer,

"A person from [God's Right Seat], Vento of the Front."

The woman called Vento mischievously puts out her tongue.

"Target detected. Well in that case, I'll quickly kill you, Kamijou Touma."

The thin chain attached to her tongue jingles and falls down.

—And attached at its end is a small crucifix moist with saliva.

Part 6

At the Third Resource Recycling Processing Facility where Accelerator is hiding, the [Hound Dog] are silently infiltrating.

Upon entering the concrete factory, the machinery sounds are far more troubling than imagined.

Even we are getting edgy, Nancy thinks for a bit, *but unnecessarily adding more tasks is a waste of time*. Perhaps Accelerator right now is in a condition where he can't use his ability well enough, but him recovering his mental composure is something they must avoid at all costs.

Surrounding Nancy are about five colleagues.

Her group is in charge of guiding, so they have to ostensibly display a [crowd of people] as much as possible. Nancy's group will recklessly fire bullets and a detached force will ambush the target after it has taken refuge in the inner passages—that is their tactic.

The rough path where the target has passed through can be followed with the scent sensor which she left to her colleague some time ago. When hunting for the enemy inside and that in mind, well, hopefully nothing can go wrong.

(What to worry about later on are the guns.)

With the scent sensor, and going along the target's scent from the minivan parked by the road, it led to this facility. No one was in the van, and the bag jammed with spare equipment was there. With its zipper opened, perhaps the target was carrying some small arms.

(Well, Accelerator has no marksmanship ability to that extent. With that guy reliant on living dependent on his ability, there's no way he's trained. It's appropriate to think that we have the advantage here by far,)

Nancy thinks that so.

(Even so...)

With the production operations mostly automated, there isn't even air-conditioning inside the concrete building, making it humid. Cold rain should be raining outside, but inside it's brimming with heat from the constantly moving gigantic motors.

While their nerves are slowly and little by little getting warm, they slowly walk through the steel passageway. The heat is felt even from the light of the white fluorescent lamp.

They are getting tense.

And so they are getting deluded, Nancy judges.

With a quick peek at her colleague's face, even with the movements of the colleague hidden by a black mask, are few but constrained; in other words, stiffening.

In this facility, electromagnetic jamming is occurring due to various reasons.

Accelerator's ability is probably getting electronic support; according to Kihara Amata's opinion, "because of the dangers from spontaneous discharge, Accelerator almost certainly cannot use his ability."

When Nancy started out as a member of [Hound Dog], she thinks that was appropriate. With so many restrictions, the ability cannot be used recklessly. The risk of spontaneous discharge jumps up with the power as strong as that.

However, on the other hand, the worry that "he might be prepared to use spontaneous discharge when cornered" cannot be discounted.

Only Kihara Amata can truly bring down Accelerator.

Guns and bombs, which Nancy handles, won't make a dent against Accelerator.

(So the cardinal rule is "kill before the opponent feels he's cornered.")

Hence the incitement tactics.

The target is alerted to their presence, but it will slacken up when it takes refuge inside. There the detached force which is waiting for that moment will shoot to kill. To make that a success, it is important to go out ahead and bear some risks to get Accelerator's attention. Though the opponent can't use his powerful ability, the probability of him bearing guns are high. And there's the danger of one's head getting shot out from getting preoccupied at poorly executing the diversion.

(That's well, from under stress. The people here, including myself, were trained only [to kill fast]. Because it doesn't take training to put a situation like this to one's mind.)

There are several kinds of soldiers.

It's not a problem even when hostage negotiations skills are not necessary for jungle work, or when an urban sniper doesn't know how to survive on an uninhabited island. There are many special units with sharpened abilities that can be made simply because of eliminating the useless, and especially put the remaining time into adopting training methods that specialize into separate fields.

In short, for Nancy and her group's position where they are placed as soldiers specialized for desert warfare, it would be the same if they were made to walk in the piles of snow in the Arctic Circle.

(We can do this...)

Nancy, beneath her black mask, gulps down saliva.

(...or we're dead meat)

Kakin

At that time, a soft metallic sound interrupts Nancy's thoughts.

"!?"

Nancy and her group simultaneously turn their guns at the source of the sound.

But there is no one there. Not even a hiding spot. Nancy, maintaining her stance, uses her eyes and fingers to contact the colleague nearest to her.

"(...Looks like a lone sound produced from machine parts.)"

"(...I agree with you, too. But even if a person's there, there's no place to hide in. It's unlikely that it's the most advantageous point.)"

"(...Is it possible that something that makes sound was thrown?)"

"(...If that's the case, the target is hiding somewhere very close.)"

Tension is running through all the members.

"(...Rod, how's the scent sensor?)"

"(...Hold on. Analysis is being completed now.)"

Their heartbeats are getting faster, their index fingers on the triggers are shaking bit by bit. Both skin and glove are slightly wet with sweat.

Right after,

Gachin

This time all the lights go out at once.

A darkness quite like it was timed.

It is a battle tactic using light and sound to incite mental stress to torment them psychologically.

Oh no, Nancy just now realizes it.

If they pull the triggers aimlessly here, they'll hurt their comrades that are in close formation. They'll aim up their muzzles, but the surroundings, as well as the walls and ceiling, are all metal. The unleashed bullets will ricochet back and might bare its fangs at them.

They didn't even consider their guns' safeties.

Their thinking has been restrained as far as them awkwardly moving their frozen fingers being taken as that's as far as they can pull their triggers. It appears that Accelerator is aware that they are not carrying any night vision equipment.

"(...Wait!!)"

She immediately tries to make eye contact, but she can't reach to her companions due to the darkness.

Here vocal relay is the best, but that would only end up telling the [enemy] where they are.

Her heartbeat is **thump! thump! thump! thump! thump!** ominously reverberating.

Her trigger finger is shaking.

Trigger... gunshots... accidental discharge... those images are going round and round in Nancy's head.

There, a **BAM!** ear-shattering sound explodes.

She thinks her heart stopped.

(G...gasp...!! T, that was the sound of steam exhaust! A normal sound!!)

She somehow resists moving her index fingers, and even though she concentrated her nerves onto her five senses again to look for the target that is causing this,

"Gack!?"

Suddenly a low voice echoes directly at her side.

A shock **goton** that's similar a person collapsing is being relayed from her feet that are firmly planted on the floor.

She feels an acrid and stinking smell of iron.

(Oh—no!)

Were they calm, they might realize that it is only a spanner thrown from within the darkness. If they see through a trick as another trick, on the other hand, that much might regain them their mental composure.

However,

Gradually taking away that [composure] is that target's objective.

(That bastard... not only does he uses his ability, he even uses the person's fear—!?)

It's already too late by the time Nancy realizes that.

In the darkness, she starts to muster her nerves towards her entire self. Right at that moment,

A single tool comes flying and just weakly *klunk* hits her own shoulder.

Unconsciously, her body, already robbed of composure more than she thought, reacts on its own.

****Her finger on the trigger goes past its fixed position.****

Several gunshots sound, and the place is again filled with the smell of more iron.

Part 7

The inside of the totally dark family restaurant is wrapped up by a bizarre tension.

Kamijou Touma is confronting the woman who called herself Vento.

(Dammit. One after the other....)

If this woman is a magic-wielding person, then unlike before it will be the Imagine Breaker's turn. But he isn't be able to rest easy yet. If Vento's power is real, then she has the skill to instantly and silently annihilate the four sub-machine gun-armed persons. When it goes against the Imagine Breaker and the like, there's even the danger of being killed instantly.

Besides...

He didn't have to look closely at the condition of the downed black-clads, but the absence of injury and bleeding is all too similar to [unconscious people] that was a severe sight up to now. If

these two situations are same, then surely this Vento before him is the one that brought all of Academy City's facilities to its knees.

A woman all alone is aiming to crush the top rank of the scientific side.

Viewed in this light, the danger level of the person in front of him is way over that of the black-clads.

"It's okay to not even be tense."

Vento informed while the jingling her chain.

"For there's even no luxury of feeling the pain."

Vento casually swung the barbed wire-laden hammer in her right hand.

A side sweep attack.

The distance to Kamijou should be easily over five meters but,

"!!!"

Kamijou, having felt a sudden chill, throws back Last Order whom he was protecting until now and immediately bent down; just above him, something pierced through. It was a mass of wind along with minute splinters within. Taking in air, eating away at the walls, swallowing in small wreckage, changing from transparent to opaque, the blunt weapon of air mass went from right to left, cutting through a wide swath.

The entire building *gagon!!* lurched diagonally.

(A magic attack that fires out projectiles from swinging the hammer...?)

Kamijou, having gone pale from the attack, can hear the sound of fragments falling down in large chunks.

It was an act that totally gave no heed to the collapsed people surrounding them.

"Hide yourself, Last Order!!"

Kamijou shouts to Last Order, who had just got up from being thrown back. As he checks on her moving behind a square pillar,

(What the hell, I've had enough of the black-clads, and I've had enough for this woman...!!)

Kamijou gnashed his teeth; of course that wouldn't stop Vento.

Vento, while stepping back, again and again halfheartedly swings her hammer, horizontally and vertically, twice and then thrice. The chain fastened to her tongue *clink clink* swings and waves about. The hammer's path is a precarious trajectory that grazes over chain in the tongue every time. A few millimeters more and the piercing connecting the chain to the tongue would be torn off, but there was even composure in Vento's face.

Vento's hammer tears through the air.

And a *BOOM!!* explosive sound struck the ears.

A destructive tempest is rising.

The hammer was like a bat sending a heavy iron ball flying. Tables are blown off, floors are torn up, the black-clads' limbs sent flying, and these plop on top of the limp customers. Kamijou's head flared up, so he dealt with all his might the blunt wind weapon that came flying for him.

The moment Kamijou's right hand touched it, the blunt weapon of air *don!!* was repelled and dissipated.

It's the Imagine Breaker.

Without this power that would negate all supernatural abilities, his body would have been broken already.

Nevertheless the air mass didn't fly only at a straight path. If there is curve-tracing attack that comes from the right or left and goes towards Kamijou's direction, there is also an attack for Kamijou, his feet firmly on ground, that goes from above his head and pushes him down.

"Hahaha, as expected of that rumored right hand of yours. You've done well in holding on and keeping up, you know!!"

Vento, while laughing, swung down her hammer from top to bottom with all her might. A destructive wind is created along with it.

(It's vertical!!)

Kamijou, in hot haste, raised his right hand overhead, but then,

The mass of wind, broke right through at once **horizontally from right to left**.

".....!!"

Cold sweat gushes out from Kamijou's entire body. At once he bends back, only lowering his upper body back. A *boom!!* unpleasant sound shoots through in front of his face, and the skin on the tip of his nose was slightly grazed.

The wall right beside him was smashed up, creating a *begoom!!* sound.

The ceiling, obliquely shifted in position even under normal circumstances, gave out even more ominous tremors.

(What the!? The hammer and the attack trajectory are out of alignment...!?)

The question pops up in Kamijou's head; of course Vento cannot answer them one by one.

"Gyahahahahahahaa!! This is so--- fun!!"

The long chain, attached to Vento's tongue and matching in tune to her movements, is swinging left and right.

And the crucifix, attached at the end of the chain, is giving off a dazzling unnatural light.

Flicker, the ever-repeated blinking continues.

And then Vento, with a face that revealed her aiming was off, frowned.

"I see, I see."

Vento nodded with seeming interest as she continued to hit him with rough wind attacks one after the other, creating a *gonganbangin!!* thunderous sound. As if she completely dealt with it. She can't close the 5-meter distance.

"The Imagine Breaker, they say? That right hand's effect is extraordinary, just as it is written in my reports, you know. **My favorite, where I interweave here and there, is totally ineffective-**"

Favorite? Kamijou thinks about his opponent's word as he waves about his right hand.

He's worried because there are reports on the Imagine Breaker. Kamijou Touma's importance must have changed in the Roman Catholic Church.

"But then, I don't understand well such a thing...well, might as well try and find out."

"??"

"HOW ABOUT THIS!!"

Vento shouts heartily, then swung the hammer in her hand horizontally.

She creates a blunt weapon of air mass along with a *BOOM!!* thunderous roar.

She greatly deviates her aim from Kamijou, and went for the unconscious customers who were lying prostate onto the table.

"YOU BITCH!!"

He at once thrusts out his right hand as if to jump in. The air weapon came into contact with his right hand just before at the head of one of the guests, and was blown off in all directions. The amount of power included in that attack was frightening.

Anger, passing through even the core of his mind, strikes Kamijou.

Upon seeing it, Vento narrowed her eyes in seeming deep interest.

"...I see, so that's it. The ease of use seems to be unexpectedly bad?"

Is she examining its battle strength? Kamijou thought.

Vento was probably investigating the Imagine Breaker's definite effective range.

"Sorry--"

For now, the attack kept on being blocked; there is no irritation in Vento's face.

"It seems unreasonable not to feel some pain. I have to personally kill him, you know. If there is some consciousness left, then he should be dead from the excessive pain, or should I say, by the shock, right? So, if it wants to be happy it will awake even as a masochist, right?"



A *jingle* sound of the chain being scraped is heard.

The chain attached to Vento's tongue goes along with her movement, and drew an arc in a right-to-left direction. Vento then swings her hammer down with all her might, sweeping over that chain.

Orange-colored sparks *bachi!* scattered about.

(!!? That one from a while back...)

As if blowing them off, the blunt air weapon is coming to strike in a right-to-left curving trajectory.

(The hammer's movement and attack movement are damned out of---)

It's following the trajectory of the chain attached to her tongue.

(This pattern!?)

The attack was being guided by that chain.

"No way, ...it's that chain with the crucifix!!"

Kamijou shouts as he crushes the wind weapon with his right hand.

Vento laughed in reply.

"Oh-my-, I've been found out-!?"

Again the long chain with the crucifix accessory attached to it traces out its trajectory freely. Every time Vento swings her hammer sweeping over the chain, the blunt air weapon comes flying and follows the route similar to what is being traced by the chain line.

(Damn it! Even if I get it, defending against it is tough!!)

He's reacting unintentionally against the trajectory of the large shockwave-producing hammer. However, the movements of the chain and hammer are practically different with each other. If he considers the swinging down from above the chain is tracing a curved line, and if he considers the hammer swinging horizontally, the chain is heading up from below.

The [attack motion] and [actual direction of incoming attack] are both out of sync. If this deceives his vision even for a bit, his reaction would be too late and his body would be cut down.

"Shit!!!"

"Oh my, it has come to be somewhat of a bother for you, dear."

An even stronger blunt air weapon *BOOM!* came for him.

Furthermore, the blunt weapon didn't aim directly for Kamijou, and merely fell for the floor just before him. The flooring is torn off and turned into large amounts of wood chips; then these turned into sharpened splinters and strike Kamijou's body.

"G, gaaaaaaah!!?"

Rather than struck at one place, his entire body was struck by them.

Kamijou was thrown backwards. Just like that he falls and tumbles over.

He painfully shook off his light-headedness and desperately tries to recover his senses.

And before he's aware of it, he was pushed back to the immediate rear of Last Order.

Taken aback, Kamijou rises up from the floor.

Last Order, who should be secretly hiding in the pillar, must have stood up and rushed over to him.

"RUN FOR IT!!"

"Fufu-"

Vento very heartily laughed at Kamijou's exclamation.

With her attack, she'll have no problems smashing up Last Order.

But Last Order did not move. Kamijou didn't know whether she couldn't move or she's deliberately not moving.

At this rate, her tiny body would be turned to a bloody pulp.

"SHIT!!"

Kamijou got up and starts running, and pushed a standing Last Order down onto the floor. She went down at the same time Vento's attack was unleashed. The produced blunt air weapon mercilessly smashes the pillar. From there it was negated by Kamijou's right hand. Even so, large quantities of fragments were scattered about.

This is getting way past dangerous.

Unless he can evacuate Last Order from this place as soon as possible...

"Go!! Hurry!!"

Kamijou shouted, but Last Order shook her head, even though she's overcome with surprise.

She doesn't want to abandon him.

"Hurry!! Call for help!!"

So Kamijou gave her a false objective that should be impossible to achieve.

Told to that extent, she finally staggered up to her feet. Unfortunately, her pocket contents were scattered when she fell down. When she sees it on the floor, a generously glossy and cute kiddie mobile phone that looks like a toy, Last Order looks like she's leaning over again.

"Forget it!!"

Her shoulders shook with a start from Kamijou's scream, and ran with her tiny feet. She went out from the smashed windows onto the road. Her back is succumbing to the uneasiness, she seems almost losing herself.

Vento aimed her huge barbed-wire-wrapped hammer at the tiny girl.

But Kamijou went around and cut in, putting himself directly between the hammer and Last Order's path. All the while, the building is slowly shaking.

As a result of pillars being smashed here and there, the ceiling is at once starting to crumble obliquely. The side where Vento is facing and Last Order exited was closed and blocked by the fallen ceiling.

Even with a single target escaping, there was no irritation in Vento's face.

She talks to Kamijou while smiling rather pleasantly,

"You're cruel, you know. For that tiny child, I think it's a reasonable burden to continue running aimlessly through the dark. She might become stiff with fear and start to break down, you know."

She swings her huge hammer and,

"Isn't it more fortunate that we kill you both together rather than suffer this?"

Kamijou instinctively spat out at that voice.

This woman is the worst.

"...I won't shoulder that burden."

He tells her that, and again tightly clenches his right hand into a fist.

He then faces the pleasantly smiling Vento.

"There are no problems in facing you. Therefore I won't die."

"Ah that's fun♪ But hey, I wonder if you can say the same line even if I'll shake your organs and bowels and turn you into human juice---hm?"

Swinging her hammer, a thick sound reverberates. The chain in her tongue jingles and swings around.

"Well, you're my target, and I'm frustrated that I won't be bothered by those heathen monkeys. I tell you, you're greatly helping me make my aim easier for obediently not running away!!"

Again several blunt weapons of air sweep over, and mercilessly destroy the interior of the family restaurant.

Part 8

Within the darkened factory, Accelerator is holding his breath.

For this operation, even as he prepares for his first move, he's on his own from here on.

Accelerator grabbed a few items from inside the minivan. One is a shotgun that he uses as a cane substitute, the other is a small wireless radio.

These, too, were used in this operation.

Currently the enemy group is in the dark, fearful of friendly fire, and scrambling to contact each other by radio while each of them is loosely scattered about. Accelerator is playing the confused, noise-ridden voice of an [ally], moreover perform nonsensical information exchange, and break the enemy coordination. It appears that the opposing side is instantly aware that Accelerator is disturbing them, but there is no method that can distinguish comrade from dummy in incoming voices. As a result, the lot are going to intensify their misgivings on [all voices].

Unless they use radio, they can't figure out their comrades' current position.

Even if they find a shadow of a person, because of [fearful of friendly fire (or fearful of being killed by friendly fire)], their target-aiming speed is weakened, and cooperation among allies is

being interrupted. In response, Accelerator only has nothing but to act as if [all shadows are enemies]. As far as he is concerned this is a huge advantage for him.

The threats from [Hound Dogs] are [small arms] and [groups].

It's not a cause of concern since with his current move the opponent has almost lost both of them.

For Accelerator, unable to use his ability, today was his first time using this kind of fear-inducing tactic, but the opponents were amusingly caught in it. As he thought, fear is the common denominator for mankind. At the back-alleys, he ruled as the very symbol of fear even though he did nothing. Just by concentrating and using a bit of seriousness in that exchange, there are a lot of great results.

They are no longer enemies.

They are just mere moving targets.

(Well then...)

By means of radio and fear, they have been torn loose to pieces, with each of them helpless. Even if he runs amok here, there is a margin of a few minutes until reinforcements rush in. Worrying about the surroundings is in a word, unimportant.

A smile was stuck on Accelerator's mouth while he lurks in the dark.

In his sights is a big game, separated from its peers and nervously searching alone for an enemy.

(You've crammed yourself full, you plump, fat brute.)

The target's range is about 15 meters.

A shotgun's effective power increases at short ranges. That said, this distance isn't yet the best; even so Accelerator leans back on a wall, raises his staff from the floor, aims appropriately and fired.

A shoulder-breaking shock came along with an ear-splitting roar. As expected, the shots scatter about before it hits the target. But in the surroundings are hard concrete and metal plates. Several shots ricochet from them like pinballs and crash into the black-clad from different angles.

A scream reverberates.

In the darkness, liquid is being scattered, and the human silhouette whirled down just like in action movies. Accelerator, after confirming it, approaches towards the black-clad with his shotgun as a cane.

It seems it hit their arm.

Their right arm was hit by the shotgun shells, and because it fell down onto the floor as it whirled, their other arm was probably already twisted.

The sub-machine gun they held was sliding a distance away. It seems they're trying to pull out their spare handgun, but because both of their arms were crushed, they couldn't take up weapons as much as they want to.

It was an unsightly, hairless caterpillar.

Accelerator braces his one hand against a nearby wall and presses the shotgun's muzzle at the side of the black-clad's cheek.

"Y, you're joking, right...?"

Unexpectedly, the voice was high-pitched. Observing very closely, he realizes that it's a feminine line even though it's a black-clad.

"Joke? Yeah."

Whatever, Accelerator appropriately omitted,

"A new one." He pulled the trigger.

Accelerator's body uncontrollably tumbled back at the *dobam!* dull recoil shock. *Not a gun to be fired one-handed*, he thought. Getting up as he shook his head, the black-clad woman in front of him was writhing.

"Oo, oohu, buuaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

She's grabbing onto her mouth with both her broken hands, but both of them were strangely getting into the inside her face. For everything below her jaw was blown off sideways by the shotgun. Were those hands out of the way, one would find out that only her upper jaw was lining up in a row.

Accelerator noticed something warm sticking onto his own cheek.

Moving it with his tongue and holding it in his mouth, he chews it along with his saliva. It has the taste of flesh.

"Aha..."

An unintentional smile escapes from his lips.



There's no point in sparing infinite time with a battle-incapacitated woman. Accelerator has to leave his place immediately. Other [Hound Dogs] would turn up should they hear the gunshots. He doesn't prefer to be found by them and be shot at directly. The best way is to lurk to the very end in the darkness, crushing the big game one person at a time. Better that I leave, Accelerator thought; as soon as possible.

****But then,****

Using the shotgun as a cane, he staggered up to his feet.

He has become somewhat happy.

Even though he thought of it as useless, he cannot suppress **the feeling of freedom** as if it had burst open.

As he messily and sloppily chews with his mouth, he stands in front of the woman whose jaw was blown off.

"...Oh hoh hoh, so your face turned to something good for a fuckin' pacifier."

Snap!, the woman whose lower half face disappeared looked at him.

Now what kind of face do I have, Accelerator cannot even imagine that.

"And how dare you still live!! You've got to be kidding me, bitch!!"

In any case, he started to kick on the groveling woman's stomach.

A thick **dongongaki!!** sound occurs in succession. As he gives five, ten, fifteen, then twenty kicks, the woman's body suddenly disappeared into the dark.

Looking closely, it looks like a machine press for metalworking use.

Acting like a cliff, metallic objects fall in and is brought from here via conveyor belt, probably to be pressed and tempered; it occupies about 3 meters in depth, and ten meters spread in every direction. Considering that empty cans and steel rods are already turning into mountains, it might be actually deeper.

The woman was struggling three meters below.

She was an unsightly human, with both arms injured and the lower half of her face blown off.

Even as he looks at her, Accelerator felt no compassion.

He throws a fleeting glance towards the corner of the pressing machine inlet. Almost all of the equipment should be controlled in the control room, but there must be a device for tentative manual operation. There was indeed a probable one, a large button on the side wall.

Even the woman must have understood what Accelerator is looking at.

She's pleading for something while looking up overhead at the inlet.

"Afee, afuhee, farahahe..."

"Too bad."

Accelerator quickly apologized to interrupt her.

"You know who you're messing with, bitch."

BAM!

As if slamming his palm onto the wall, he pressed the giant switch.

There was absolutely no mercy in that action.

A *koum* dull sound of a motor operating resounded inside the facility.

"Well then..."

Already ignoring that spectacle, Accelerator resumes his loitering as he lets out a fervent sigh.

"My next game, where did it lose its way...."

There was only a gaping, face-tearing smile on his mouth.

Part 9

With Vento's attack, the interior of the family restaurant is being destroyed thick and fast.

There's still a little time before Kamijou is finally cornered. Bloodied, he leans back against a demolished wall. No matter how much his Imagine Breaker can defend against her direct attacks, he cannot defend himself against broken floor tiles and table splinters.

In the end, there are only few options left for Kamijou.

The instant he was cornered, he can only continue defending himself with his right hand. Vento's attack frequency is not that much, but the trajectories of each blast is complicated. Because he must read her moves and act accordingly, his moves appear slow and passive.

For sheer destructive power it's probably inferior to Misaka Mikoto's Railgun. And there's the terrain problem when he came to deal with Mikoto. When he goes against her, Kamijou absolutely doesn't want to choose a narrow place for a battleground. Without a spacious place where there is freedom of moving around and freedom of running from place to place, he's definitely not facing her.

If this is not the case, he will be cornered just like that.

However, in this demolished family restaurant are,

(...In addition, the collapsed people are...)

On the receiving end of an unidentified attack, both guests and waiters are here and there tumbled down, their consciousness stolen. Even the building is taking too much damage for certainly bearing the brunt of Vento's attacks, there's the danger of the ceiling collapsing and killing them all.

Kamijou was watching his surroundings more than necessary.

And it's all too clear even in Vento's eyes.

Vento levels her huge hammer as she chuckles.

"You don't have to worry about yourself. Look♪"

She *biyuu!!* swings her weapon carelessly.

The chain attached to Vento's mouth has drawn a trajectory deviating sideways from Kamijou's face.

The blunt air weapon slightly bent its alignment sideways from Kamijou. Vento is deliberately adjusting it towards where its barely out of reach from Kamijou's outstretched hand.

"!!!"

Kamijou leaped at full strength; just before the weapon strikes into a guest his right hand repels it.

This time Vento unleashed her blunt air weapon at the opposite direction.

Just like a practice in volleyball receiving, Kamijou's body is being racked. Vento launches one shot after the other towards the surrounding guests and yet sometimes a shot aimed at Kamijou

himself would come through feints. Demanding for unreasonable movements, his breathing accelerates. The remaining stamina in his body is being taken away in a flash.

"You bitch!!"

"Hm-hmm-hmm? Now that you're mad, what are you gonna do? You should know what happened with Academy City. If I were a person with consideration for other people, I wouldn't have done this in the first place!"

"Shit!!"

He thought for sure that she didn't intend to say that she caused so much of these flashy efforts all just to kill him, Kamijou Touma.

No matter how he puts it he doesn't think that would be the case.

For just killing a mere single high school student, this is way beyond large-scale.

"You should realize your own worth, you know--"

Vento again mows down through the air with her gigantic hammer while she lightheartedly says the next words.

"**My target is you, Kamijou Touma. Everything and everyone else are all extras.** Even that Index is unimportant compared to you!"

She readily said those words.

"Make no mistake about it, you are now the enemy of the Roman Catholic Church. And we will do whatever it takes to kill our enemies. I'll say something extreme to you. We will kill you even we have to exterminate this entire nation called Japan! ...Although you might say, when I consider about that right hand, my usual pattern doesn't seem to work. Anyhow, it looks like that I'll have to kill you directly myself."

Vento fluttered up a document, that looked like it was brought out by sleight-of-hand, as she continued with her words.

It's probably some sort of decree, but it's unreadable in the darkness. In the first place, it's doubtful whether it's written in Japanese.

"As you can see, it has the Holy Father's personal signature. You've been targeted by two billion people!"

The hell is that, Kamijou was astonished at his opponent's words.

In contrast with the fact that she let out the words "Roman Catholic Church" here, it's a talk too different in scale to say that they're going to wipe out a nation from the map just because of himself.

Currently, Kamijou Touma has much experience in [himself getting dragged into the middle some kind of incident]. The incidents occurring with him in the middle, it was since that time with that Aztec magician on August 31.

At a Kamijou who's getting filled with horror, Vento again hides the document with a sleight-of-hand and,

"You think it's a joke? Then, I'll open your eyes by doing something serious."

Hyun, Readyng her hammer again, Vento smiles.

The chain in her tongue moves, and its crucifix slightly vibrated from left to right.

"What the..."

Now I'll kill every person inside this store

Kamijou choked.

Vento continues while sweetly smiling.

"For that you will probably be suffering. I'm willing to annihilate everyone just for that boring reason. Even you would seriously understand your situation once I go that far."

"STOP IT!!"

Kamijou, ignoring his situation, instinctively starts running towards Vento. She bends back while laughing and while hanging there her neck shook greatly. Along with the sound of *jingle* metal rubbing, the chain attached to her tongue drew a helix surrounding Vento.

If she swings her hammer at this state, a destructive whirlwind with Vento in the center will rise.

"BLOW OFF, SHITTY!!"

Along with that roar, Vento's right hand moved.

A *BOOM!!* thunderous roar reverberates.

An iron-like smell has filled inside the unlit and ruined family restaurant.

Part 10

In the dark, sweltering factory, the sound of short breaths echoed.

Vera, a [Hound Dog] hiding under cover, was a woman who might be told from anyone that [they can't imagine why she would go down into such a place].

She's cheerful and sociable, and yet she doesn't fail in gauging her distance with other people. She can handle both physical and mental work together well. She is that kind of person.

Even she has some girl issues, but she has the knack of skillfully talking her way out from those who are interested in those kind of matters.

In any case at the dubious-looking group [Hound Dog], Vera who had some good sense, requested for cooperation with others. Such acts don't belong in that group where one despises the other, but at least Vera wanted to put up even a little trust with her [comrades].

Even so,

(...What a noisy radio)

She's been continuously hearing screams and appeals for help from it, but Vera's reaction was that of seeming annoyance. She doesn't even know which among them is real or a trap. Since then, she can't contact Caines who said he's rescuing comrades and took independent action. There's the danger of carelessly replying.

Already she cannot trust anyone.

What she thought to be slowly built was all crumbling away now at this place.

Instinctively Vera let out her sobbing.

At any rate she had better leave this facility and start over. Even Rod said by exit there's a trap at the exit, but on the other hand that kind of alert report is suspicious. Is that really Rod? She ought to leave, even if she has to take some risks. Even leave behind her [comrades]. All to avoid being annihilated.

(This is the worst... This is the worst day...!)

With staggering and uncertain steps, Vera started to look for the exit. She had already lost her will to fight. The excessive mental stress is all the more wearing down her concentration and thinking.

And then, she noticed something.

(A radio...)

Before she's aware of it, from the only source of noise that is the radio was sending back nothing but a fixed *zaa--* static noise. Because she thought she can cause unnecessary chaos to the place she maintained radio silence up to now, but upon coming here she suddenly felt insecure. Vera presses the switch and draws it to her lips.

"This is Vera, Vera. Request for status. Over."

There was no response to her request.

Cold sweat burst out from her. The worst thoughts flashed through her mind like should she kick away that sham for her radio or, on the contrary, surely all of them have become Accelerator's prey.

(Well that, or else.)

Vera, thinking for a way out, is struck with a different idea.

(Others like me, all of the survivors must have on one occasion took refuge outside. Because of the facility's massive walls, there's a big chance that no signal passes from outside to inside. If everyone were out, my signal should have reached to them.)

In that case, Vera would be abandoned by her [comrades], and also they would consider that she abandoned them. Comparing these to the fact that her [comrades] were annihilated in this garbage processing plant,

(That's right. There's no way the [Hound Dogs] would be deceived that easily. The darkness tactics Accelerator took has no effect unless it's totally dark. With the moonlight, we can distinguish friend and foe even without radio. In that case, it's more efficient to deal with going out from the facility.)

With that understanding, better that she leave for the safety outside.

As Vera drew up her own conclusions, she looks for the exit with a some more reassuring steps.

She still has hopes of her own.

If everyone were gathered once more, even Accelerator wouldn't be that scary. Simply because she thought it so.

Until the moment she saw her own comrade being crushed by the pressing machine.

Vera's thoughts turn around, collapsing at once into that of a panic situation.

Strictly speaking, Vera cannot directly see her [comrade being crushed]. What is plain to her eyes is only equipment that presses scrap metal into lumps. It has a section about three meters deep dug into the floor. The total length must be about 10 meters.

The massive iron pressing plate went down.

Nevertheless, ****a groan can be heard from the opposite side of the plate****.

(...Nancy-!!)

Because of her reckless thoughts for her comrades, Vera can see who that is with only a weak voice. Meanwhile, a creaking sound is produced as the massive plate slowly continues to go down.

"U, uaaah. uaaa, aaaa, aaaahh!!"

In a state of near panic, Vera slammed her palm onto the button at the wall. Along with a ***gagun*** sound the pressing machine's movement finally stopped.

The groaning still continued.

There's no way that the human flesh can endure the pressure from this iron plate. Nancy is alive, perhaps because of the metal scrap for pressing scattered inside. Nancy's body is sinking into a cushion-like mountain of metal scrap.

Even so, there's little doubt that she's nearly dead.

This may be as harsh as dying a horrible death.

By pushing another button on the wall, the iron plate returns up.

And perhaps Nancy can be rescued.

But then.

On the surface of that button, something thick was sticking onto it. A blackish mucus, just like those seen in garbage bins beside vending machines. It is necessary for Vera to make contact with the mucus to push the button.

****Even if the true form of the dirt is human meat and bone.****

****Even if it is bits of human skin and meat along with crushed bone sticking to the button.****

"-----a, huh?"

Her fine line with her consciousness was cut off.

She thought she heard a soft dripping sound.

"GAAH!? GYAAA!! GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!"

Vera lets out a shout with throat-tearing vigor, and fell backwards at full power. She could not endure this any further. She surely got the feeling that what she built for herself up to now is crumbling down. She thought that she would die from shock even if a single drop of water hits her skin.

In such a situation her foot caught on something and Vera fell on her backside along with a slimy feeling.

Looking at her feet, a soft and flabby handful of human meat is clinging onto it.

It was pulpy, but that was a human lower jaw any way she looks at it.

"UAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!"

She tried to shake it off and run for it.

But as she tried to move her sights at random, she met her other comrade. Well, one never knows if 'met' is the right expression. In front of a person who's been boiled up after been hoisted up by fat wires and is made to bathe in high temperature steam from severed steam pipes above it, whether that word is appropriate for this is a mystery.

Both vomit and shit have spouted from her.

Because her face-covering mask serves as a block, nothing else was leaked outside. Mucus and gushing water are leaking from both her mouth and nose, but Vera is in no condition to notice it. Not that much.

"HII, UAA, AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA..."

A soft drawn-out voice is leaking out forever from her own mouth.

Vera looks at the silent radio.

So that was it.

The meaning of the silence being shown is simple. There is no strategy. And there is no change in plans for rallying. Perhaps not even one of her colleagues ever got outside of the facility. Each and every one, all of the [Hound Dogs], were just like the wind annihilated and dragged into a ghastly attraction of the Third Resource Recycling Processing Facility. Perhaps just like her now,

they were driven into psychological instability, even their common sense was taken away, and then were handled to be toyed around just as they were about to stand still in total shock.

Vera lost her grip.

Her radio and sub-machine gun falls with a clank onto the floor. Even Vera herself fell down onto her knees.

Just who was she fighting against?

So far Accelerator has especially not used any weapons. Nor does he consider the terrain. With only just his ability he mows down every obstacle in his way to move forward. Consequently, with his ability restricted now, he can only think of bringing down opponents as much as he likes depending on the strategy.

But it was already different now.

He uses weapons. He even utilizes the building. He reads the opponent's minds, weaves the most efficient method to derange them and executes it. By not entrusting to mere anger and beating opponents to death, but by giving them the maximum psychological damage, even he starts to adopt non-killing options.

His mental growth rate is formidable. This is not for children who rely solely on their abilities. This is for those who use everything they have to kill a person. Even at present, Accelerator, with plenty of threats on his own, is perhaps speeding up further. Up to the point that it goes out of someone's control and smashes up the world.

Under extreme shock, Vera's nerves were paralyzed.

Even the capability to feel fear was taken away.

He's a monster.

Unwisely, the [Hound Dogs] gave a hand in breaking off its shell.

clank, clank

Soft footsteps echo right behind Vera.

She didn't turn around, and was laughing softly as she lay crestfallen.

Part 11

A dripping *gopo-* sound resounded inside the dark interior of the family restaurant.

Blood is dripping onto the floor.

Kamijou Touma stopped instinctively before the sight in front of him with an attacking stance.

No doubt about it it's fresh blood.

He confoundedly looks on at the point where red is spouting out.

At the mouth of Vento, who up to now was elated with success.

"gack"

She bends down her body, bringing both her hands onto her mouth, coughing violently in short bursts. Every time she does that, a heavy and slimy fluid seeps through the gaps in her fingers.

"Ga, ack. Aah"

With unsteady movements, she backs out with a step, then two. There was no composure with that behavior so far. It doesn't appear to be acting. And it's likely that she really is in agony.

(What the)

At her sudden hemorrhaging, Kamijou's thoughts were cut off as if cold water was poured on him.

(A side effect of her magic? This is bad for her, but this could be my chance.)

His awareness returned.

He's somewhat reluctant to throw a fist at someone suffering, but plainly speaking there's no room for niceties. If he doesn't take her down when he can take her down, she'll create more victims at her pleasure.

Kamijou holds his temper, prepares himself, and clenches his right fist.

"Gr, raaaaaaaaa!!!"

But before he could do it Vento turns about face, and swung her barbed wire-wrapped hammer towards the wrong direction.

It takes a path sweeping over the chain, and sparks jump from both hammer and chain.

There is none of the expected rash mood. It was a disorganized and violent movement, like a drunkard striking.

Along with a heavy *GOBOOM!!* shock wave, she opens a large hole in a wall.

Vent runs through there.

She went and flew out of the building while unleashing two, three diversion attacks at Kamijou who's about to pursue her.

"... .."

Frankly, he doesn't really know if he should pursue her or be relieved because he let her get away.

(What was that now?)

Since Vent went out of the building, neither Kamijou nor the store were crushed. It's unlikely as her character to take into consideration the other guests. Perhaps dealing with the abnormality in her body involves her totally shutting her mind from other matters.

Kamijou sorts through little by little the new problems that befell to him.

The [God's Right Seat].

Vent of the Front.

And then, the Roman Catholic Church.

Part 12

Shirai Kuroko and Uiharu Kazari were at the Judgment Branch No. 177.

It's an exaggerated name, the point is that it's only one room in a building at Uiharu's middle school.

Several desks were lined up, but those weren't made of plywood and pipes like in classrooms; it's more like those in offices. This means workstations in each desk, but bags of potato chips were plopped about in blatant disregard for those types of delicate equipment.

As Uiharu Kazari was plunging both her hands into a vinyl bag and rummaging it,

"Shirai-saan. Which one for dinner, Chinese rice bowl or fish bento?"

"Either one will do!!"

"Sure? Then it's Chinese bowl for me."

"I'm eating that Chinese bowl! Grrr, right now at this very moment Onee-sama and that rotten ape are together walking through the streets at night... UGAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!"

Shirai Kuroko, the girl with the pigtails, is banging on the desk with her both hands.

There is only the two of them in the room. A large radio transceiver was also in the room, but that was silent. Basically Judgment's work completely stops along with the final coming-home time. This is because their main task is to suppress any school violence. By all rights, it's strange for students to remain at the station at this time.

And so an overworked Uiharu Kazari brings out her own mobile,

"Oh, the variety show I always watch is about to start!"

"Get to work, Uiharu!!"

"You have no right to tell me what to do, Shirai-san. And by the way, I'm the type who can work while watching TV-"

Mobile phones have TV functions probably included, but Uiharu greatly likes that variety program. So she deliberately switches on the large office TV.

"Hmph!!"

But then, an irritated Shirai steals the remote control and randomly changed the channel. A totally uninteresting news program is projected. With Uiharu shouting "Daa--! What are you doing, Shirai-san!!", the pair started their battle for the remote.

On-screen, the announcer and a lady performer is reading aloud from a manuscript.

"Next up, let's see...it's Academy City news."

Hm? Shirai and Uiharu stop their grappling and look at the TV.

This station is located outside of Academy City and is on a nationwide broadcast. Thus, Academy City news being broadcast outside by those [outside] stations is rare. The announcer is probably perplexed because there are news reports from there.

"There are reports of intruder riots in Academy City now. With it are widespread damage to the city. We've got a shot on-location. Ishigo-san?"

The image changed completely.

It was a coarse telephoto image. The camera was probably located outside Academy City. And it's looking vaguely at a yellow-cloaked woman walking through the rain-beaten road.

She's was walking unsteadily through the rainy streets, pushing away nearby collapsed people with her feet. She lets out her tongue, swinging from left to right the long chain that was connected there.

And, before the reporter could move, the camera swayed and toppled down. As soon as they thought a *gachan* sound echoed, the image is covered with snow-like noise; there was no response no matter how many times the name was called. Whether the reporter was there or not was not evident.

The image immediately switched back to the studio.

It was due to superb timing that a broadcast trouble was barely averted.

"Was that an intruder just now?"

The commentator sitting beside the announcer answered in a composed voice.

"Taking into account Academy City's security situation, because it is different with other schools, the possibility of a disaster-level crime aimed simply at the children might be almost nil."

"I see."

"A terrorist attack against science worship or a hijacking for high technology, those are the possibilities."

"When it comes to that, here's the one thing the entire audience is most concerned about: does it have an effect on the security of the students?"

"Naturally."

The commentator already pompously shook his head sideways.

"It's because the children are being dragged into adult situations. Or rather, it's more nasty than mere random attackers. Good grief, who's that woman in the image. We sometimes tend to disregard the lives of children, but letting those good-for-nothing non-conformists loose is----"

It led to a *goton* sound.

The commentator suddenly falls prostrate onto the table, hitting onto the image.

"?"

Shirai frowned.

She thought it's another performance, but the prostrate commentator jolts its body around and falls under the table. *Kyaa!*, the announcer's shriek can be heard. The camera loosely jolts, and lads lightly equipped with what looks like AV rushed into the studio.

A deep voice gave out instructions off-camera, then the image was immediately changed completely to a CM. It's plain that trouble has occurred.

Averting their eyes from the image of a face-popular young female star being passionate about the magnificence of the face-washing foam, Uiharu faced towards Shirai.

"Wasn't that image been reported and sent to us? We've been doing nothing but paperwork the whole time today so we totally didn't notice it. But if it's true that only one person overwhelmed the Anti-skills, that intruder's danger level is really something. Why such an ominous person would come invade us..."

"Judgment being summoned an off-campus...and night time work is rare, isn't it? If things go really bad, an assistance request from the Anti-skills would come in. Until then we handle the documents as much as possible--"

"...."

Kazari didn't respond to Shirai's words.

Shirai thought she saw Kazari's body swing aimlessly backwards, and rolled down without any resistance onto the floor. She can then hear a nice loud *batam!* sound, after which Uiharu no longer gave any signs of movement.

Shirai then rushed over to Uiharu, overcame with shock.

"Uiharu!!"

She tries to call a downed Uiharu's name close to her ears and even slaps her cheeks, but there was totally no response.

The TV's voice reaches into Shirai, who's unable to understand what happened.

The news program is not resumed even with the CM over. Just a [please wait for a moment] is scrolling across the telop.

Part 13

Almost all of the [Hound Dogs] have been disposed of.

Since he doesn't have an accurate head count, he has to be on guard for ambushes, but Accelerator's gut instinct told him that the battle is almost over.

It would be admirable if he assumes the [Hound Dog] survivors are the ones [producing] this mood, but there was absolutely no time for that. Accelerator's attack is a program where, in the interval from the timing the gimmick flies out until the silence, everything is made to cave into a calculated cerebrophysiological, exhaustive, and sure-fire panic situation.

It is not fear that can be done somehow by will-power, it's pounding emotions from a brain synapse-like aspect. Nobody is likely to fight fair and square. As long as there are people in the world ---- as long as they greatly lack common sense, there's no way to escape from this attack. Screaming and thrashing around their limbs, that's as much as they can do.

Accelerator opens the lid of the bottle of detergent he found inside the facility. He pours the transparent liquid onto his head, and as he threw away the emptied container somewhere,

(At this point Kihara will definitely move. It'll be a lucky strike for me, but in the meantime no monkeying around, shitty bastard. It'll take some time before the reports will reach him. In the meantime I'll do what I have to do.)

Accelerator's objective is the rescue of Last Order.

But he can't get a lock on the current location of the girl currently in flight (whether that's true or not he's not certain). It might change if they talk by mobile phone, but he's not certain he can rely on it. In that case, to save Last Order he'd better pour his efforts onto interfering Kihara and his ilk.

He has to divert all their attention onto himself.

He has to make them believe [before we kidnap Last Order, at any rate we have to do something about that Accelerator in front of us] or he'll never win.

The more that expectation is fulfilled, the more Accelerator is driven into a dilemma, but...

(Either way I'm ready for it.)

He heads for the exit, his shotgun serving as a cane.

Torturing [Hound Dogs] and pulling up information is also one way, but Accelerator has avoided those. With him, relying on his cane, unable to use his ability in this facility, he can't carry adults

outside. Even his victories so far are all the more the result of his plans. Even he cannot ignore an injured opponent. The current him will die from a single bullet. If he makes a bad move and has the tables turned on him, the person who would save Last Order would be totally gone.

Accelerator considers on his next move and objective.

(I'll check again the [Hound Dog] minivan. I don't think that their safe house would be found that easily, but even with crushing detached forces, at least I have to get the information on their rough location...), there he ended his train of thought.

There are traces of blood on the floor.

On seeing the red stains here and there, Accelerator slightly frowned. The enemy has all moved in as he calculated, stirring up their fears, then smashing them up one by one; he doesn't recall cornering them using this route.

There are still survivors.

"...."

As far as the trail of blood goes, the enemy's pace was dazed; they're concentration going here and there. Because of the extreme fear, they're scared towards anything. His psychological operation is probably effective.

(Or perhaps, they're only posing and are actually enticing me.)

As he held on to his cane, Accelerator carefully follows the blood trail.

Ahead is a small emergency exit. A green pilot lamp is installed above the iron door. A box protected by reinforced glass is installed beside the door. The glass itself is broken, the lever within was shifted.

Someone unlocked it and went outside.

Accelerator leans himself on the wall beside the door, touching the knob by stretching out ahead his hand. The cane's presence was irritating. Should he use both his hands, one hand is sure to touch the switch for the choker-type electrode. There's the danger of an explosion, but he can do nothing but use his ability when the situation demands for it.

Slowly he turns the knob.

And silently pushes the door.

"-----"

There was nothing out of the ordinary.

At least, there was no bomb set for him. Accelerator confirms this, then threw open the door at once.

Before he knows it, the raindrops from the heavy downpour are beating on his entire body.

For Accelerator, hidden inside the humid facility, that was a comfortable stimulus.

But then,

"There you are..."

There was no smile on his face.

Accelerator is standing on the second floor. Descending down the emergency stairs from there, it continues to an area roughly about 20 meters of asphalt, ahead which is an area-delimiting wire mesh fence.

There he found a figure of a person clambering over that fence.

The back of a black-clad, it's an unmistakable [Hound Dog].

And, very near the fence is a parked car. It's easy to imagine the destination of the black-clad.

He thought it's a fresh [Hound Dog] reinforcement, but that isn't so.

That car is being used for a regular Anti-skill patrol.

The hell is this, Accelerator thought.

There must be a mistake for those guys to pop out and come here.

This is a battle between demons, mere people shouldn't be coming out, right?

"....."

A very very light breath escaped from Accelerator's lips.

He's even at a loss of words.

The black-clad's scream reaches the silent him.

In this downpour, there is a 20-meter distance between them; even so, it's a loud voice clear enough to be heard.

"Hey!! Anyone inside!? H, Help, HELP ME!! You're the guys guarding people on streets, the Anti-skills!! So save me!! That bastard, that bastard all did it! Hahaha, serves you right! I'm saved. Your demonic hand ain't reaching me now!!"

A jarring noise can be heard.

I HAVE BEEN IN THE UNDERWORLD FOR SO LONG, BUT EVEN SO YOU CAN HURL INSULTS AS THOSE HARSH UNHEARD-OF WORDS ONE AFTER THE OTHER.

"Listen up, bastard, no matter how much you struggle it's already over! The Anti-skill have arrived here. Go ahead and try if you can kill me!! But then you'll drag in the Anti-skill and you'll really be wanted!! With this your days with that goddamned kid whom you wanted to protect so badly is already over! You'll be dragged back into the cold research labs, where you'll be a fucking guinea pig for the rest of your life!! GYAHAAAAHAHAHA!!"

An intense power is gathering up in the hand where the shotgun being held.

****His mind explodes.****

The battery electrode, the fact that he's trying to conserve it because it only has seven minutes remaining, and the fact that if he used them all up here he cannot fight against Kihara Amata, all those were completely blown away.

Accelerator has his hand on the back of his neck.

The electrode switch is there.

He was in control.

He'll make a victim only for that goddamned bastard with this method.

Only that alone was within his mind.

Part 14

Anti-skills Saigou Ryouta and Sugiyama Edao were lucky.

While a large majority of the town's public order preservation systems had stopped functioning, because they had inadvertently slept in late, they hadn't caught the coma attack unlike the others. Even when no one responded to their radio inside the car, they figured it's only some machine trouble. Better or worse, they are out of the loop.

And so now, they were probably lucky.

At least, because they're helping out a fence-climbing bloodied man, Saigou and Sugiyama alighted down from the driver's and passenger's seats respectively and went that way.

In that instant, the first thing they heard is a roar.

A person screaming, just like a monster.

Before both Saigou and Sugiyama search for the source of that bellow, a second one came.

It was a massive iron door.

The iron door, rotating vertically and flying at a terrible speed, barely grazes over Saigou and Sugiyama, and smacked right into their parked Anti-skill patrol car very much like a gigantic buzz saw.

DOGAA!!

Scattering sparks, the automobile bends back and forth into a L-shape.

It's like suddenly throwing a shell from the side onto an ordinary car. The car's rear half stayed straight, on the other hand the front half was squashed into a wreck and is being bent directly horizontally. The car did not skid with the remaining power, and on the part where it's hit with the shell, the torn metal spread out like a flower. The iron door, having destroyed the car, remained unstoppable and smashed up the asphalt into small pieces before it finally stopped. The gasoline line, torn up at once, gets into contact with the electrical cable which was too disconnected. Tiny sparks fly out.

That alone was enough.

The car, smashed up from the side, explodes with a single blow, and flames and smoke were scattered onto the surroundings.

"W, what the!?"

Saigou, with his field of vision reduced to zero due to the smoke, can only shout.

Because the iron door was flying at an excessive speed, Saigou didn't find out what made the car explode. Also, the zero-visibility situation is unnecessarily fomenting his impatience.

Even he can't see the face of his partner who should be right beside him.

With that situation,

"Gaaa? S, STOP IT!!"

An unfamiliar man's voice echoed in Saigou's ears.

It's that of the black-clad whom we're trying to help! Before Saigou realizes it,

"Wait, wait, Accelerator! No, no, NO!! ANTI-SKILL! W, WHERE ARE YOU!! HELP, HE...III, GACK, GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!?"

SQUICK!! A sound where a sticky wiener is being munched and torn up can be heard. Saigo, having sensed imminent danger, instinctively drew out his pistol, but he cannot move from there. He can't get a clear view with the severe smoke. Firing recklessly would only risk his partner Sugiyama or their rescue target being hit. He cannot know what is occurring on the other side of the smoke in the first place, and he cannot determine whether the [instigator] is a person or a wild animal. He cannot imagine how the situation will go if he just aims at somewhere and fires randomly.

"S, Stop! Freeze! Back off from that person!!"

He cannot see anything, but even so Saigou aims his gun by guesswork and shouts.

From a short distance, he felt a laughter coming back.

Clearly it's not the hearty kind, he feels it's a smile that is unintentionally shown even though the mouth was shut.

Afterwards, a thick sound occurred consecutively.

In about ten seconds, the screams were interrupted.

Eventually, Saigou was unable to move about.

In this world, there are things which should not be seen.

He realized by instinct that by some good fortune those were obstructed by the smoke.

The heavy rain is extinguishing the flames of the exploded cars. Along with it, the vision-obstructing smoke is finally abated.

Nearby, his partner Sugiyama had landed on his backside.

His mouth moved, flapping open and closed, but no voice totally came out.

However, with his face pale, he pointed at the ground with his unsteady index finger.

Saigou focused his sights there.

There, the man they're trying to rescue was gone. No matter where he looks he was gone.

At the spot where Sugiyama is pointing at,

At that spot, there is only a spatter of blood and two halluces torn off from a person's feet.

Between the lines 7

Academy City Outer Zone, even if said in a single word there are various facets in the place.

The town boasts an area 1/3 of the Tokyo Metropolitan. Because it faces Eastern Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama, and Yamanishi areas, both scenery and features change completely.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu is running at a place halfway between the urban and wooded areas. There, huge abandoned factories line up, buried among the deep conifer forests. Vigorously reproductive weeds and ivy-type plants entwine the concrete walls, incorporating them into nature without mercy.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu suddenly *screeeeek!!* starts to stop inside one such building.

It's originally a transport company's bus maintenance bay.

The concrete space is slightly smaller than even that of a school gym. With the high-valued machinery removed, what remains are only useless and rusted metal clumps. Because of this, the place gave out a deserted impression, but parts of the 2nd and 3rd floor still have remaining steel scaffolding that look like pathways. On the floor of the upper pathways are wire meshes, here and there are rust and opened holes.

The roof is almost collapsing, and the heavy rain is mercilessly pouring down. One entire side of the wall is made into a metal shutter, but that, too, was even getting rusty and degraded.

(...This is it.)

In front of him is a long wooden stake protruding from the floor.

And it's huge. Fifteen centimeters in diameter and more than three meters long. Its tip, roughly sharpened like a pencil, is facing directly upwards. It is catching numerous raindrops, and the water is flowing on the surface of the stake akin to flowing blood.

It is a magical item.

And the main component is crested ibis (*Nipponia nippon*).

"A surreal spectacle, eh."

Just as Tsuchimikado twisted his lips and smiled, completely identical three-meter stakes *ZUDOO!!* vigorously thrust out from the flanks of the original stake in all directions. Those are no wooden stakes, but are the stake's wood jutting out. As Tsuchimikado back-steps and avoids their pointed ends, more stakes thrust out one after the other from the surrounding floors, parts of the second floor pathway, and even from the mountain of rusted machine parts. All are thrusting out, aiming for Tsuchimikado's body.

As if they felt they had to catch up with him, who's back-stepping like a moving target in orbit, some of the stakes explode from within. Along with a *BOOM!* roar, hundreds of shrapnel goes toward Tsuchimikado.

Whether he's crouching or hiding himself behind machinery, Tsuchimikado lets all the spikes pass by.

In just seconds, the surroundings were turned into execution grounds littered with thousands of stakes.

The gigantic pencils are growing closely packed on the entire area.

(I see. They intend to attack Academy City this way. They're going to skewer the immovable people there one at a time.)

They're fucking making fun of us. As he spat that out, Tsuchimikado moves his head as he shifts minutely here and there.

Perhaps the [stakes] were growing up in places besides the maintenance bay.

(Here, deliberately just to entice me here and get caught in its trap— can't be. It's way too big for this. It's appropriate to consider that it is plunged right in the middle of the likely spot.)

The crested ibis is originally a wood that symbolizes [Blessing]. By using its special characteristic, it's possible to provide the property to slip through defenses like [Suppression] and [Repulsion]. Had Tsuchimikado carelessly used some defensive magic, those would be recognized by the [Blessing] and the easily armor-piercing stakes might go right through his body.

For them to really prepare thousands of those stakes is amazing but,

"Heh. Don't be deceptive with numbers."

As Tsuchimikado said it, the appearances of the explosive stakes suddenly stopped.

SHIFT

A pale figure of a person appeared from the darkness where nothing should of been.

The mood was like looking at the tunnel exit. Within the darkness, only that male practitioner stands out like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. It could be because the man himself is shining, for beneath his feet 12 silhouettes were arranged in a circle and in equal intervals. It seems like an analog clock.

Whether the shadows themselves could be a key in invoking the magic, each of them is continually expanding and contracting in accordance to some kind of instructions.

"_____"

Tsuchimikado took a step forward, but the distance remains unchanged.

The opponent has no indication that it moved, but the distances hold before he's aware.

It's quite like it told him that there's no way he can close the distance.

(This is bad...)

To make matters worse, this is not the only sign.

There are more inside and outside of this building. The total count may reach in the dozens, and if that's the case it's possible that those are its colleagues with the same development at other points outside Academy City's Outer Zone.

Tsuchimikado softly tells his silent opponent.

"Three is the skies, four is the earth, and you represent the world with twelve. It's not important to prepare all the stakes. By putting significance to special [numbers], you'll be in a position to be able to obtain [enormous] credit."

In short, he finds out that seven stakes serve as the nucleus, and destroying even one of them will nullify his enemy's magic.

From within this few stakes.

From the thousands right now, and from the mountain of stakes that will again add to the numbers after this.

Tsuchimikado smiled broadly and said,

"A good magic...but this is not Christianity. This is from the theories of the pre-Christian Greek Pythagoreans. Since when did you bastards affirm the world before the [Son of God] was born?"

The opponent was probably enraged at his words.

The unknown figure roars.

A *BOOM!!* thunderous roar exploded. The wooded stakes explode, and the entire service bay shook. The second and third floor pathways, the rust falling from the almost-collapsed roof, they add to the [Power], with new stakes popping out from the surface of each rusted splinter, trying to impale Tsuchimikado from all angles.

The wooden stakes that popped out from various directions block off all available space, stake and stake are impaling each other, breaking *crack!!* apart as if in mutual destruction.

But, Tsuchimikado was already gone from there.

He's standing at the maintenance bay's upper part, at the third floor pathway where steel is linked together.

He catches an inhuman gaze from far below.

The countless stakes burying the concrete floor explode from the inside one after the other, turning those splinters into anti-aircraft fire. Tsuchimikado moves about, jumping here and there over the rusted open holes in the pathway. Right behind where he passed through, the pathway is broken up, bent in, and getting destroyed in rapid succession.

Thick blood is slowly flowing from the tip of Tsuchimikado's lips.

It's not because he sustained damage from the magic attack, it's because of his jumping through the third floor pathway with the use of magic.

He's an ESPer, and also a magician.

And when an ESPer uses magic, they're in a difficult situation where a strong reaction occurs and their body is injured.

(Shit. I can't win in a drawn-out battle.)

He considers this as he wipes the blood from his mouth.

That figure doesn't have a sense of distance. It's like running after the afterimage that reflects in pupils. The more he advances the more the figure falls back, and the more he moves back the more the image approaches. An existence with that kind of slippery traits. Therefore, directly striking it is impossible...even without saying it, it took him quite a while.

If he's bound to that, it's better that he stop the functions of the mountain of stakes ahead.

After he takes away the opponent's weapons, he will deliberately deal with him.

"Too bad, eh."

As the rusted pathways are *BOOM!!CRASH!!* breaking up, Tsuchimikado jumps over an opened passageway hole, and pushes on towards one point.

"When you look at a delicate work of art, you'll feel regret in destroying it!!"

Ahead and buried in countless stakes, is a lone wooden stake.

A one among the seven, and it is the weak point that is common to all the stakes.

References

3. A kouhai is a junior of something.
4. A boxed meal.

Chapter 8: God's Right Seat and the Imaginary Number School District. *Fuse=KAZAKIRI.*

Part 1

"Aiho!!"

In the down-pouring rain, Yoshikawa Kikyou finally found her old friend.

The surroundings of the night streets are quieting back down into eeriness.

Yomikawa was limply leaning onto the steering wheel inside the domestic sports car that was parked on the road bank. With her chest pressed, it's obviously a painful pose. Even so, she did not move once. And she is unconscious.

As Yoshikawa lays her hand on the driver's door, it turns out that it was unlocked.

The moment Yoshikawa opened the iron door, Yomikawa's upper half swayed down. And then slips sideways, flying out from the car.

"!!!"

Yoshikawa somehow caught her and pushed her back inside the driver's seat.

(...Just what is happening!?)

She checks for breathing by placing her hand in front of Yomikawa's mouth, and she checks for a pulse by placing her hand on Yomikawa's nape of the neck. For now, it appears that Yomikawa's alive, but even with that there are no signs of awakening at all. It seems to be different from mere sleep.

"..."

Yoshikawa ignores the rain, and sweeps her gaze from the car towards the surroundings.

The car was parked in a large avenue, but not far off from it is a connected alley where juvenile delinquents gather.

She was attacked by them, Yoshikawa thought, but then Yomikawa bore no injuries. Yomikawa Aiho is a beauty even on the point of view from other women. Not to mention an Anti-skill. If

attacked, the harsh situation that would happen would be unimaginable. Even the car might be chopped up and its parts sold for the delinquents' pocket money.

(When it comes down to it, another...?)

Yoshikawa narrowed her brows at that thought.

If it's not the delinquents, then someone somewhere inflicted injury to Yomikawa.

(Anyway, for the hospital... There's a clinic over there, and it's faster than calling an ambulance!)

Yoshikawa, having trouble thinking clearly, heard a *ga--* low sound.

Looking closely, it looks like a small printer running, installed with the radio. It spits out a postcard-sized piece of paper.

"Hm..."

Reaching over Yomikawa, who's been stretched out in the driver's seat, Yoshikawa picked up the piece of paper.

And then she stiffened...

At what was on the piece of paper.

"Anti-skill Branch no. 84, report from Saigou Ryouta of Suzuyama High School. Inside the Fifth School District, comparing evidence at the scene of the crime with the [Bank]. This person, Accelerator, is wanted as a suspect for attempted murder."

A familiar person's portrait was spat out on another scrap of paper.

There was no way for a mistaken identity.

Part 2

Accelerator was in the dark side of a slightly dirty alley.

He was once again back at the Seventh School District, but it was impossible to feel relieved.

A heavy *gan* metallic sound reverberates in the dark, where only the sound of rainfalls persists.

It's the sound of a [Hound Dog] member, which has turned into old rag pieces, is thrown into a huge dumpster and its lid being slammed shut. From the dumpster lid and its cracks, a thick red fluid is oozing out. It seems like the drool of some greedy hog.

Accelerator places both of his hands onto the back-high dumpster, then his body leans onto it, and with his legs losing strength, his back slithers down onto the ground. He thought the oil-stained puddles are soaking into his clothes and skin.

"Haha..."

Laughter.

He crushed flesh after such a long time.

It felt like he guzzled nothing but coffee, which hasn't been drunk for quite some time. There should be good feelings for it, but it's despondency instead. Even though his mood should have been uplifted, somewhere he can't get over the feelings of resignation. Even though he continued drinking that refreshing and sweet drink, he was in a strange mental condition where, before he knows it, he would tilt his head and say "was that it?"

For some reason or another, he was made to realize it.

The current Accelerator wouldn't try to stop at killing someone with this method. Or rather, what the one who was aware of it said on August 31 was probably right. At any rate, meeting Last Order was a big turning point.

Accelerator doesn't want to kill someone like Last Order. Thus, it's possible to show the same sentiments even to other persons who are living in the same world as hers, like Yomikawa and Yoshikawa. There's something wrong with sweet people walking in the light, being victimized by those who lurk in the dark like Accelerator. So, to hold them back, Accelerator is willing to fight alone.

At first glance, it looks like it appears to be a sensible person's way of thinking.

However, there are holes in this reasoning.

Like for example, if a rotten shitty bastard totally different from Last Order appeared in front of him. Or if an irredeemable person takes away a redeemable. At that point, Accelerator's [I will not kill] restraints would be totally disconnected. Accelerator's anger is on [people of the light being made into food by the people of the dark]. Since Accelerator hates himself for his affinity with the world of darkness, there's no way for him to be able to accept people from his world.

Consequently, only when specific conditions are present can Accelerator tear up human flesh without reserve.

What is contained inside their stomachs will completely spill out and fly till it becomes white.

Just like now.

"_____"

Beaten by the downpour of a rain, Accelerator bowed his head.

In the end, those bounds were useless. That turning point on August 31 didn't wipe out his deeply ingrained darkness attribute. That one is insufficient. And because of that, something is lacking. To return to the human world, several more parts are necessary.

He smiled at what he's thinking so far.

A forced smile like something was given up.

Solitude rules him.

He returned to where he was before he met Last Order.

"Haha..."

Accelerator, leaning back at the dumpster, looked up at the night sky.

Raindrops are beating on his body.

The clouds are heavy. Looking at it, it's as pitch-black as his darkening heart.

(ESPer mode is less than four minutes, eh...)

He confirms his current situation as if he's fed up with it.

(I've even been spotted by the Anti-skill. My mug shot would already be scattered throughout town around this time. With this, I already cannot return to that world even if I crush Kihara and help out that brat.)

His relationship with Last Order is already cut off. Even if he saved her unharmed, she cannot walk on the same path as him. In that case, what's important now is not exerting effort in moving forward on the same path with Last Order. It's the strength to accept the immediate truth. Even that doesn't matter, just the strength to move in order to help her.

Tch, he tut-tuts.

It was for a short while, and in a case where he parts with it, a feeling of loss blows open in his heart.

But then, this much doesn't make his crimson eyes waver.

*(**I admit it. So what.**)*

With one hand, he grabs on the shotgun that was sinking in the puddle.

(I'll bring back from the dark even if it's only that brat. That alone should be my objective, so any excess baggage other than that will be cut off. I'm doing this right here. Right now, what's important is just that shitty brat's safety.)

Holding onto that weapon as a cane, he staggers onto his feet.

Kihara Amata, [Hound Dog], Anti-skill, and what lies ahead—he already cares less about them.

Better to have one purpose.

When he thinks of this, he feels at ease. He felt something heavy that was burdening him taken away entirely. He can now believe on his own that no matter the objective, he can always achieve it.

The last of the chains have been cut off.

Accelerator, having regained his [best] in exchange for what is important, leans on his cane and walks on the rainy streets.

To crush his next target.

To solve his problem, even if he stains everything in blood.

For in the meat of his game, he has an idea.

Part 3

"The entire facility's clear. No one's in here."

Dennis, a [Hound Dog] member, reported the collected intelligence via radio to the standby team.

Acknowledged, the short reply from his colleague came back.

They were in a hospital. Dennis and his group were in the large reception area on the first floor. With glass fitted onto the walls, it's an architecture that takes in much light, but it's evening, so everything above the illumination is omitted.

The pitch-dark hospital was in a word, ominous.

The orders given to fourteen of them were the disposal of former [Hound Dog] Orson, who had deserted under enemy fire and the silencing of the white sister who had turned into an eyewitness. It even said that in the worst case scenario, explosives may be set to the hospital and each blown off.

Dennis once again continues reporting.

"Found a used flare in the third floor corridor. Looks like it's been there for not too long."

"For now, reports indicate danger from terrorist activity and there's the possibility of suspicious persons hiding inside the facility; they're temporarily evacuating all patients and staff from the building, it said."

His colleague Mike answers, having received the report as he accesses a portable computer.

Dennis draws away from the radio,

"...We've been noticed."

"You said it."

Mike replied, looking bored.

"Personally, I feel better with that."

"But, how about the patients which need the large-scale hospital equipment?"

"They'll be using the hospital bus," Mike halfheartedly said. "A special ambulance just under 30 meters in entire length, and the approximate size of a sight-seeing bus. I heard it can rush onto the scene and perform simple operations then and there."

"I haven't heard of that."

"I thought so. In practice, that vehicle's size is the problem; it flopped for its inability to make tight turns and its inability to reach onto the scene. It might have succeeded if it were not in Japan. Or like in navies, coordinate with smaller-sized ambulances."

"Does this hospital have that?"

"It might be in the basement parking. It wouldn't be strange for this hospital. I wouldn't be surprised if you say there are ten of them lined up. That means confined patients would be relocated there, and those who can walk would then be each evacuated."

As Mike said it halfheartedly, he switched off the portable computer's power.

"It's been a while since we lost contact with the group assigned to suppress Accelerator."

"They were killed, weren't they?"

"It's necessary to appropriate people to the pursuit. And so we have no time for resting. Pull yourself up. If the hospital staff were to escape, at any rate they should have gotten rid of all indicators of their destination."

"Kihara won't accept this."

"He won't accept even if we say we can't get any hints, regardless if we spend time for it. There's a change in the priority. First kill Accelerator, after which we can return to the elimination of the hospital staff. If one mistake can be covered by one achievement, we can relieve that person's anger. All of us might not be disposed of either."

Summon them, Mike tonelessly said.

Just as Dennis switches on the radio in answer to that request, a change occurred.

A *purururu* telephone ring sounded.

"..."

"_____"

Dennis and Mike turn at the same time.

The source was at the other side of the reception counter. The accuracy was like that after someone reckoned their location, it looks up at a specific telephone and calls them.

"Trap probability?"

"Can't confirm any wires or infra-red rays."

Accepting Dennis' words, Mike jumped over the counter, keeping vigilant with the surroundings. After seeing the red call lamp blink on and off, he picks up the receiver.

["You're late."]

It was an aloof voice.

Mike frowned. He might have taken it with a sour-looking face if he wasn't wearing a black mask. The other side's speech belonged to a doctor he was accustomed to hearing from. His life was saved by this very doctor before.

"[Heaven Canceled]..."

["Talking with a discharged patient is one of a doctor's pleasures, but I haven't got much time left, so I'll be brief. Is it fine with you?"]

It appears even the doctor has seen through his background.

He must be one of those people who doesn't forget the faces or voices of the patients he himself took care of.

(...Where is he calling me from?)

Mike was sure all the security systems of this facility were smashed down before they rushed in. However, upon seeing that frog-face made pinpoint contact with him, it's better to see that another security system was in operation.

"I wish I had time. In an ambush, keeping silent without taking up this kind of provocative action is the theory. Do you want to be traced back?"

["Am I a child that would make mistakes at such fundamental matters? Besides, there are things that should be done even if I bear a few risks."]

"Things that should be done?"

["I am a friend to patients. You may be those people who drag incapacitated patients into your battles, but I cannot help you if you're trying to take away lives. Isn't a doctor's words essential? It's a request, so I want you to hear it out."]

The doctor smoothly said. necessary

But there are of course some biting words in those what he said.

["Get away from under Kihara, and run for it. Otherwise your life is in danger."]

"Are you seriously saying that?"

["You'll be crushed by Accelerator."]

"By that coward?"

["It seems you misunderstand,"] the doctor was unperturbed. ["Accelerator is not good at all. Not a good person. It seems he gets a tiny light and obtains some goodness, but he's basically a dark and evil one. Until now... that's right, he's closer to eternal darkness than grayness, if I might say. Either way, he's an unstable dangerous existence, isn't he?"]

"..."

["Did you realize? You're the ones who had stained him, he who had just barely obtained a bit of goodness, pitch black again. Therefore, he will not give no quarter at all. I did not say mercy, but no quarter. He will continue his acts even if he stains everything in blood, all to protect that tiny light from being buried by the darkness. You mustn't face Accelerator. I only say that as a doctor talking to a patient. I repeat, you mustn't face Accelerator. The current him is not what you assessed."]

"You speak nonsense."

["I see. It's too bad my intentions weren't going as planned."]

The doctor ended his words there.

And then, he said,

["By the way, have you considered who told us of the danger?"]

"What?"

Mike frowns, and then an ominous feeling struck on his chest.

(Oh shit...that guy...?)

Thinking that far, he was taken aback. If that guy is the one who told the doctor of the crisis, he should be able to guess as expected that the [Hound Dogs] would come raiding here.

Trying to take precautions, Mike tried to hand-signal his nearby colleague Dennis, but before he can do it the doctor whispered,

["Don't die. I'm willing to help as long as you're not dead."]

GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!

A scream that would shake the entire building exploded from the ceiling.

Here and there inside the premises, gunshots echo in rapid succession. But those were one by one certainly silenced, as if they were plucked off.

Something is approaching.

Mike throws away the receiver, and along with Dennis readies his sub-machine gun. They hide under cover, concentrating their sights on the other side of the darkness, trying to acquire ahead even a little of the numerous field intelligence.

And then,

The [Terror] appeared in front of their eyes.

The [Hound Dog] group, where Dennis and Mike are included, were annihilated in about ten minutes.

Part 4

Vento was in a rainy street.

(Shit...)

Her movements were slow. Thick blood seeped through from the gaps of her fingers that were on her mouth. Sometimes, she felt her back would jerk and move greatly, and then she would vomit out a red mass onto the ground.

(...What is this? Who did this attack...? Curses. A little more, and I could have killed my target.)

Artificial light shone onto that woman.

That light was shifting.

An enormous large-screen display was installed onto the side of a department store. The voice of a frantic announcer is beating on Vento's ears.

It seems it's from a state broadcast.

["Errr, currently, reports of people unexpectedly losing consciousness are coming in from various parts nationwide. Police are in a rush to determine the specific cause, but—"]

"G-gaa..."

She cannot turn her attention towards the pain and shivers from within her body.

Nevertheless, she moves her bloodstained lips.

"...It spread out even there, it said, eh. For it is difficult for my attack to decide its targets. But it's fine as long as Academy City...can be suppressed."

["Besides Japan, it seems we are looking at damage reports even from parts abroad. Furthermore, its influence is beginning to take effect in transportation schedules of airports, railways, and shipping—"]

"Haa..."

After taking a deep breath, Vento said,

"**Good thing the Vatican did not suffer any damage.**"

In a voice that seemed very much unworried.

It seems even chaos continues in the news, but there is probably length in a program. Switching to a different reporter, they read out loud the next report.

["Next on business. At the Parallel Sweets Park, where the world's pastries are gathered within the Tokyo Metropolitan, an autumn fair was held. Held at the same time, with the start of business—"]

"..."

Vento turned her glance at the large-screen display.

["It was reported that the number of scheduled visitors exceeded two hundred thousand after one week of the garden's opening. With the cooperation of the small and medium-sized enterprises expected in the manufacture of promotional items, the regional economy, as well as the attraction industry in general—"]

BOOM!! Along with a thunderous roar, sparks fly out as the large-screen display was blown away.

Vento carries her hammer on her shoulder.

And again started to walk on the rainy street.

Part 5

Kamijou dragged out—under the rain—the unconscious guests and store staff from the family restaurant building, that seems it would collapse any moment. This is to prevent them from getting pinned under. Next he moves on to the treatment of the wounded. Only the black-clads had their hands and feet flung about. The wounded parts were forcibly bound with rope to stop bleeding. Should their senses catch up, them not panicking—even if they see the wounds—was contrarily scary.

Then he called out an ambulance, but when he considered the town's current state, them arriving at the hospital is somehow equally likely with them not arriving here.

(That's right. Last Order...)

Looking around the surroundings, it's improbable that she is here. Kamijou ran through the rain, and entered the nearest Anti-skill station. If she were to appeal for help, he thought this place is the most probable one. However, inside, only deathly silence came back, with only a collapsed male Anti-skill lying prostrate onto the table present.

It's an identical situation like the restaurant. Kamijou again visited more distant stations twice, then thrice, but it's all the same impression. There's even no security inside them. If that's the case, just where might of Last Order ran to?

Only time elapses while searching about here and there.

And so, Kamijou realized that something is in his own pocket.

It was a cute mobile phone designed for children's use. It was dropped when Last Order escaped from the family restaurant. With this, she is unreachable by anyone.

(Those black-clads and that Roman Catholic calling herself Vento... when I think about being stalked by either of them, I cannot be slower than them.)

Vento is probably aiming for Kamijou, but on the other hand when she encountered Last Order, she did not become friendly with a sweet smile. Just because it's not a favorite, somehow it was not seen by people who were watchful of others.

"..."

Kamijou looked again at Last Order's mobile phone.

Though it's seen as bad manners, he turned it on and displayed the addresses.

Kamijou doesn't know whether Last Order escaped on her own or sought the help of her acquaintances. But, if she were to seek the help of her acquaintances, by tracing these addresses he might meet Last Order. Even if this is not the case, better notify her friends of the dangers. Much better if they tell him the place Last Order might go to.

There are very few registered numbers.

He has no need to scroll through them, for there are only four entries in them. Only mere phone numbers were registered, and there aren't even any names written. Only short [Number 1], [Number 2] default indicators stand out. Perhaps, it was possessed by her guardian, and may have not at all used it herself.

He tries to call each number.

However, only the ringing sounds continue, and there are no indications of the other party responding at all. Vento's unidentified attack might have reached more widely than anticipated.

Three entries yielded silence.

If the last number is the same, then he's out of options.

With wishful feelings he presses the button.

And places the mobile phone onto his ear.

Within the downpour of a rain, a monotonous calling sound started to ring.

Part 6

Accelerator, standing in the dark hospital, lightly scanned his surroundings.

The enemies, turned to pulp and then spat out, were rolling around somewhere. Since the guns used were not the same kind as his shotgun—that's being used as a cane—reloading ammunition was not possible. There was actually the option of picking up other guns, but he avoided it. He did not want his enemies to know that he's very dependent on firearms.

(Well then, this makes two squads destroyed.)

Accelerator mutters as he gazes at the window being struck by large raindrops.

(With this, even that shitty bastard Kihara would be forced to more-or-less change his plans. The priority to crush me would jump up. Just from that extent, the danger level of that shitty brat would be reduced.)

At first glance, all of these look like an advantage for him, but in fact, Accelerator's inferiority does not change. Even if he smashed ordinary [Hound Dogs] every time, Kihara doesn't feel fear — even as he frets. This is because Kihara possesses a special martial art to completely destroy Accelerator bare-handed.

Furthermore, there aren't even any hints on where in town Kihara Amata and Last Order are, respectively. The present Accelerator cannot start decisive actions. He can only wait for his opponent to show their weakness.

If Last Order is not yet captured, the tactics done by Accelerator thus far would be effective. Kihara would change his plans, surrounding him with even more assassins. That should reduce the number of people who're after Last Order.

However, if Last Order is already captured by Kihara, Accelerator's efforts will end in vain. On top of being unable to find out Kihara's position, he can't even go immediately to help, and what's more, the chances of Kihara showing his weakness will be reduced completely to zero.

Their target is Last Order, not Accelerator. It's not important for them to continue to imprudently create more violence.

(This or that. Nothing in between. Great, a situation not to be laughed at.)

Accelerator tut-tuts, then looks at his own feet. There is a radio used by the [Hound Dogs]. Getting irritated, he trampled on it. Kihara must have known that Accelerator had obtained a radio. Important conversations were lost some time ago. And so he can't use the radio any longer.

(Even so, why did they choose this timing to target that brat?)

Leaning back, he ponders.

(As I thought, they'll be heading for the Sisters if they wish to study the research-connected Last Order. Even so, Kihara said that the battle strength of the Sister is not significant. Kihara was a fool who exploited me. If they were dead serious in using ESPers in combat, either using my DNA map or creating a DNA map better than mine should be two options that are suitable.)

During the time he was smashed up by Kihara near the entrance of the underground shopping complex, he said something cryptic. Something along the lines like military applicants aren't the objective of the Radio Noise project, if they were really creating an ESPer for combat, they should have used not the DNA map of the Railgun, but that of Accelerator's.

(Radio Noise project, and then the Level 6 Shift experiments that follow it...)

Absent-minded, he moves his eyes about,

(...Me and that brat, just what the hell are we hooked into now?)

He felt that he has a hold on something, but Accelerator's thinking didn't last long.

For suddenly, his mobile phone has vibrated a bit.

[———]

Accelerator holds his breath. And takes out from his pocket a small communicator.

Displayed on the screen was Last Order's phone number.

He ponders.

(Either it's that brat herself or that shitty bastard Kihara. Surely two extreme outcomes, eh.)

He presses the call button.

And places the mobile phone onto his ear.

["Thank goodness, I was finally able to get in touch with someone!"]

The voice wasn't that of Last Order's. On the other hand, it wasn't that of Kihara Amata's either.

Is a lackey of Kihara using it?, he thought, but,

(...this voice?)

He had a hunch that he heard it somewhere, but it's not clear. The phone signal's not good, and what's more, the sound of heavy rain is interfering from the speakers.

["I've just tried all the registered numbers in Last Order's mobile phone. You're the only one who answered. You may not be aware of the situation, but I need your help. I tell you, that girl's in danger!"]

The chances of a trap is very high.

But Accelerator has no way out in order not to get on that trap.

"What's the situation?"

Accelerator asks as he focuses his concentration in order to gather a great deal of information as much as possible.

The voice on the telephone talked non-stop.

About past the final curfew time, he met with Last Order. He was pleaded to help her [acquaintance] who was assaulted by an unidentified group. Arriving on the scene, there are downed black-clads but the [acquaintance] wasn't there. Later, when they were pursued by people who might be comrades with the black-clads, he let Last Order escape ahead. He can't find out if Last Order is now safe, and he can't get in touch with her. Since he can't decide whether or not the crisis aiming for her has gone away, it would be better to safeguard her quickly. Those are what he said.



With the black-clads' activities and Last Order's location, the [Hound Dogs] would be easier to catch.

The possibilities of traps is increasing more and more.

But at the same time,

(...Yup, indeed that's the way for that brat.)

["Hey. Perhaps you're that [Acquaintance] that child's been talking about?"]

"Most likely."

["Thank goodness you're safe. So too, is Last Order, and should you two meet up please go hide yourselves."]

Accelerator returns on track as it looked like the talk was getting off topic.

"Where did you two get separated?"

["The prefectural road in the Seventh School District... that's all I know. That's the name used among us here. And I wonder if it has a formal name?"]

Silence continued for a while. Perhaps he's looking for a signboard.

["Got it. It's written as No. 39 Konoha Avenue. It's a Spanish cuisine family restaurant named Olla Podrida."]

He has an idea on the location.

Those parts are basically bustling with activity, but there are places not far from the large avenue where there are alleyways that wouldn't be noticed by unaware eyes. With contact points with the visible and the many invisible, there are many people who were dragged in.

"What's her escape route direction?"

["I dunno. She ran away with all her might from the building to get outside. Perhaps, I think she might be along the avenue. It's been quite a while since we've separated. Honestly, I can't predict where she is now."]

I can, thought Accelerator.

With final curfew past, there is nothing to board on in a bus-less and train-less Academy City. Even if she found a taxi, probably none of them would conscientiously stop at such an obviously penniless and completely wet brat if she were to raise her hand.

Last Order can only walk.

What's more, whatever she's doing on her own, her strength has now been weakened since she struck water from a high altitude when she escaped from Kihara's reach. If that was not the reason, then it would be because of the downpour. Quite some time has passed; perhaps Last Order has almost stopped moving and should be recovering as much of her strength as possible in some building.

For the voice on the phone, he could possibly managed it now, somehow.

Even with a trap, there's a possibility of progress after that.

"Got it. I'll deal with the recovery later. Throw away the phone and get back to the public at once."

["The hell're you talking about! I want to help too!!"]

Truth is it's easier to move alone; put it another way, the situation wouldn't be thrown into chaos by an awkward amateur. Even so, he is unexpectedly joining in. *Trap or not, he's a mad bastard*, thought Accelerator as he said with a bored tone,

"I see. Then head for the large railway bridge in the Seventh School District. That's our regrouping point at this time. Even she is heading in that direction."

[Got 'ya,] the reply came back, filled with some willpower for some reason.

Of course everything is a lie.

["Watch yourself. Somehow, Academy City is a bit strange today. Some strange woman has come invading in from outside town, and what's more, the Anti-skill and the entire town populace has went down like flies."]

"What?"

Accelerator frowned.

An invader heading for Academy City and a great number of people dropping like flies is something he heard for the first time.

["Apart from the invader, is the town's strange behavior more intriguing? Anti-skill, and well, even the black-clads look like they've sustained damage. Even the restaurant guests have collapsed. As if made to physically and immediately faint from a hit to the guts from someone. It's an atmosphere where people walking around would suddenly flop down. Can't confirm this every time, but I thought the surroundings are eerily quiet."]

"..."

What is the meaning of this, Accelerator ponders for a bit.

Kihara Amata would probably go and do this to that extent. Accelerator is bothered by his lackey [Hound Dogs] even collapsing; however, if it's Kihara, he probably won't hesitate killing subordinates.

He is smelling trouble, but he'll put it off for now.

For now, recovering Last Order is his highest priority.

["It looks like quite an indiscriminate attack, you too, should be careful!"]

"What a bother..."

The two each exchange arguments, and went silent for a while.

Finally the other party on the phone told him,

["My bad. Truth is, that child shouldn't be left alone."]

"...Same for me. It's because I completely left that kid alone."

The phone went dead.

After looking for a bit at the mobile phone in his palm, he jammed it into his trouser pocket.

Gripping on the shotgun that serves as his cane instead, he faces the hospital exit.

Right now is the critical moment.

Part 7

Kihara Amata was in a darkened room.

Presently, it was an unused office. With majority of the office equipment gone, lots of unused office desks and chairs only remain. Kihara was leaning back on one of the chairs, and both of his feet were placed on top of a dusty desk.

Armored men surrounding him were waiting.

Their numbers were fewer compared to the start. At most, there's about five or six of them.

Even so, Kihara's face still has its composure.

The [Hound Dogs] have been going around from the top at will. That means the shitty people have been rolling about anywhere. A person might see Kihara as a model for some bad people should they see him. However, once he boldly hurls an attack, even he is no better than garbage who doesn't care about a person's pain.

It won't disappear even if one tries to put it out.

Therefore, he is not worried.

"We've lost contact with several groups. Probably."

A nervous lackey's voice is heard.

Kihara threw back heartless words in a calm tone,

"They run or they die. Either way, ****I'll have to collect their hearts later****."

Death is not permitted for failure. Plucking body parts from corpses to make them take responsibility for their mistakes was Kihara's way.

"But they could have taken either way."

"I don't care either way. And I don't give a damn about Accelerator. He's so poor my heart hurts when I thrash him. ...the problem is that woman, you know."

Kihara, too, has caught on to information that Academy City's town facilities were paralyzed.

And then, his own lackeys, too, took the very same attack from before.

As far as he's concerned, [that woman] is taking the assault to town and yet,

(...an interesting phenomenon, that one.)

He felt that the [invisible physical phenomenon] is different to stuff like nanotechnology and electromagnetic waves. Normally, when using those kinds of weapons, the user puts on a personal mask and suit, but that woman has nothing of that sort at all.

Kihara talks to another lackey, the nearest to him,

"Just as we're about to shoot that minivan Accelerator was on with a missile, that woman butts in. Have we recovered our guys we used as decoys at that time?"

"Yes, sir."

With only that, the black-clads can probably understand what Kihara is trying to look into.

"Currently, we're about to examine the casualties with portable equipment."

"Are the status the same for all?"

"No, sir. We have just confirmed three variations. From unconsciousness persons that just appear to be asleep, to stone-like stiff persons."

"Is the location the criterion for variation separation?"

"Even among the collapsed persons in the same place, the groupings are scattered. At this point, we're still at a loss."

That's for the most numerous group, the black-clad remarks,

"Since they weren't turned to the research institutions, the accurate readings are uncertain, but somehow the collapsed decoys look like they have extremely reduced oxygen levels within their bodies. Visible necrosis in their bodies did not occur; perhaps the minimum necessary amount was maintained for brain and organ functions."

"...an artificially induced asphyxiation."

Most animals, humans included, have defense mechanisms that slow down bodily functions in response to insufficiency of what is needed for living activities. One can easily understand if they call to mind the hibernation of animals during winter.

The lackey continued to speak,

"But still, because even with regulated supply from oxygen tanks, there's no change in their state; it's better to think that some kind of [power] is in motion. ...That woman, who the hell is she? Dammit, thanks to that, that bitch is starting to affect our mission success rates, even Olaf and Lulu —"

His voice cut off, the black-clad collapsed just like that. A heavy *goton* sound is awfully fresh in their ears.

"_____"

Kihara Amata, seated on his chair and both his feet onto the table, threw glances around him.

Nothing changes apart from that.

They briefly held their breath, but there were no signs of a second one coming in.

Kihara thought it's sniping with some ability used; should the opponent have such an ability, even he might end up bullet-riddled. First off, he was worried regarding him being not targeted and the timing when the lackey collapsed.

(Bastards... how do they fucking set their targets...)

There's a window on one side of this empty office, but merely aiming from there means Kihara should have been prioritized in targeting as expected. Are there special targeting methods aside from eyesight? The targeting mustn't miss Kihara, yet still hit the subordinate next to him.

Kihara went over his thoughts on the special phenomenon assaulting the [Hound Dogs] now. Only ESP can execute those series of attacks.

(What a tough one...)

It might be possible if one's aiming for a person or two. However, as much as he can remember from the report a while ago, the collapsed lackeys are way more numerous. Notwithstanding the trouble of keeping the oxygen level of each individual person at a constant level, when it comes to perfect and controlled placement of multiple bodies at different locations, it yields to a technical impossibility.

Besides, according to the lackey, there are probably different symptoms among the collapsed people.

(Just for the body count, gathering attack ESPers is not impossible... but the cost would be always too high. And it's not worth it to have a soldier be tied to one small fry.)

Because this is what the expert on ESPer development and directly involved with Accelerator's development had decided, this is about as reliable as it can be. When it comes to it, just what kind of law was causing the bizarre phenomenon in front of him?

When it comes to powers outside of ESP, several technologies are included, like nanotechnology and electromagnetic waves. However, even those can't give reasons why Kihara was unharmed. In the first place, with this kind of technique, rather than stunning a person, it was possible to control the oxygen level within their blood.

This is no ability created in Academy City, and neither is this advanced technology.

However, if that were the case, the talk will be continued to the occult realm for sure.

Indeed, the woman who stood before Kihara is really a person who wields [power] outside of ESP.

(Quasi-science.)

Kihara's eyes narrows; he does not deny that word.

On the other hand, that word makes the borders distinct simply because the leading edge of science needs it. Only by performing countless experiments can only the theoretical and incalculable mysterious value come out only for an instant. Kihara, after he developed Accelerator, was captured by something vague. It's the feeling of invisible emptiness somewhere in the theories of a perfect world he himself believes in.

He tut-tuts, then lowers both his feet down the desk.

"Well, enough of this. We can only do our own part. That bastard Aleister is fussy, so the faster we move the faster we finish this."

Kihara didn't get any explanation on what Aleister's ultimate objectives for capturing Last Order is. However, the protocols on what should be done were followed. So he should be carrying them out.

"Is the Testament prepared?"

"Right here."

Another lackey placed a silver attache case on top of the table. Originally the Testament, an electro-brainwashing machine, was supposed to be huge equipment; by extracting the minimum necessities, this could be achieved thus far.

Of course, this means the more [extraneous parts] eliminated, the more the subject is placed in danger.

(Accelerator...)

As he gazed at the lackey unfastening the attache case locks and hastily setting up the machine, Kihara suddenly softly muttered,

"Manipulating all vectors, eh. So what's with that sort of irregularity, I wonder."

"Ha?"

Nothing, Kihara said.

Part 8

Accelerator arrived at the Seventh School District Line 39, Konoha Avenue.

He immediately spotted the family restaurant stated by the [man on phone]. Just like a building wracked by a civil war, it was destroyed to the point that the rebars are showing through. Even Kihara's [Hound Dogs] were collapsed, having received rough treatment. And they were not even given minimum concealment.

"..."

Perhaps the [man on phone] was possibly not a trap.

If that's the case, then the man saying that only Last Order escaped in spite of getting dragged into this kind of terrible spectacle is real.

(Tch, gotta find that brat fast. Now just where the heck did she go?)

She would have left something that would serve as a sign, but she might have no room to write down such a sensible one. Even if she left a temporary one, chances are high that it would be washed away by this rain.

(That brat should have been on the run with the help of the Sisters' network and in accordance with the evidence suppression manuals used during the [Experiment]. It's the same pattern with Amai Ao on August 31.)

He feels disgusted just by thinking back on the [Experiment], but it can't be helped for in there lies the means of escape.

(...A way where she's invisible to satellites, and yet out of the way from the patrol routes of police robots.)

The [man on phone] seems to be looking for an Anti-skill station in the main avenue; perhaps he's at the far end. Following the sources from the evidence suppression manuals, it's the side streets that are suspicious.

Accelerator leans on his shotgun that serves as his cane, and enters the alley. Beaten by the downpour he can only walk, dragging his hard-to-move body. He checked every building back door he found on the way. Searching for traces of lightning abilities being used, or locks being pried open.

He got nothing..

There are many paths, and she's possibly hidden in a building somewhere.

And there are too few hints.

With this there's no way he can look for her, but it can't be helped as it serves as an escape from her enemies.

"Shitheads..."

Last Order should be nearby here. He was certain about that.

Alternatively, if Accelerator sends out a sign, Last Order might come out. But what's the signal? Last Order is without her mobile phone. Unable to contact her that way, another possible method is to release the electrode switch and go on a rampage spree.

And with this thinking thus far, Accelerator thought of other methods.

Because those were too nonsensical, those were the methods not thought up until now.

He should be shouting her name out loud.

Should she recognize Accelerator's voice, Last Order should be coming out.

But then, he'll be totally like a parent in search for his lost child, walking around and shouting the name of his missing child. Judging from Accelerator's values, it feels like the most unlikely action.

He laughed, but that's the only thing he can do.

After tut-tutting as if really annoyed, he breathes in deeply.

But no voice came out.

For he found [that] just before he says it.

Something floated above a dirty puddle, felled to the ground by the heavy downpour.

It was a torn piece of cloth. About the size of a handkerchief. On closer examination, it looks like a sleeve from a man's dress shirt. Accelerator has an idea from the design on the cuff. It was put on top of Last Order's sky-blue camisole.

Accelerator's mind went blank. And then, his complexion turns pale little by little.

This is—

It can't be—

No way—

As if was timed, his mobile phone vibrated. Accelerator slowly takes out his mobile phone. Displayed on screen was an unknown series of numbers.

This is different, he thought.

*There's no reason for **that guy** to bother sending word. That guy won't use such a transparent method. So it'll be all right. This is not that case*, Accelerator persuaded himself.

He presses the phone button.

Without even placing the phone on his ear, a very loud voice struck his ears.

["Whaat's up, Accelerator. GYAHAAAAAAAAHA!!"]

The phone on his hand made a grating sound.

As expected way too much, the vessels on his head bursts immediately.

Accelerator's pupils pulsate wildly. The storm of noisy emotions scatter away from him towards the surroundings.

"The hell you want, Kihara-kuun?"

["The sense of fun (humor)! Whether it's chess or shogi, victory or defeat is probably declared by a drop of the curtain. It's what people from the past do. They fully savor the moment where the shitty bastard who kept on annoying them lie broken before them in defeat. This is the epitome of victory, see?"]

"Declaration? Are you seriously saying that?"

["If you don't wanna believe, then fine. Rather, has that brat's shirt scrap fallen there? Better look for it if it hasn't yet, **for it's been expressly left there, you know.**"]

"____"

["What [Testament] said is impressive. A virus driven into a person's head is no ordinary matter. HAHA! The brat's body is fucking trembling and shaking!! Hey you bitch, tell me your address, I'll fucking send you a clip of it!!"]

He turned pale.

(That bastard, is it that reason why he took that brat away...!?)

Kihara is attempting almost the same that Amai Ao had attempted on August 31. Using brainwashing equipment and directly rewriting Last Order's memory. He doesn't know what's added to the contents of the orders, but this is really an insensitive action. Even more blasphemous than rubbing one's entire semen load on the inside of her brain.

["Even so, you did get it, you bitch. The methods where you don't kill enemies are surely effective. There's a saying like the world's a living hell. **Those who guess wrongly that death is the worst fear in the world,** are punks that can't withstand that kind of pressure. Take my lackeys for example. Even so..."]

Kihara exhaled dryly.

As if he's a disappointed teacher towards an incompetent student.

["**That won't work with me who knows them!** I can easily see through that cheap play of yours, idiot. Listen up, it's review time for shitty brats like you. For cadavers (objet d'art), it's how much you kill. When ending a life, it's like adding the finishing touches to the face of a sculpture. Your objet d'arts aren't fit for an art gallery. I'm thinking that they're only appropriate for stone-grinding and thrown away someplace!! Isn't what you did so discourteously to those lumps of meat?"]

Accelerator did not answer.

He analyzes the situation he was put into now.

["And with that case, I'm willing to show you bitch an example for once. I'll teach you how to make a pretty piece of meat. You be ready though, so the brat isn't automatically blown away when she looks at your disaster of a work!!"]

The speaker-breaking laughter continued.

Accelerator listened to it for a bit.

Finally, he turned the mobile phone and said,

"So, just any reaction would do?"

["Hah?"]

"I wonder if rolling around laughing would be the right action eh, you masochistic fat brute?"

["Oi, oi. You brat, has your judgment faculties totally busted or what?"]

"You for sure are serious in doing it. If those lines just now are to make me feel regret, it means you did not recover that brat. How 'bout quickly turning it into a corpse and have it sent to me.

Testament, you say? You're insane. A tough-to-understand method when it suddenly pops up and is seen are no use for your plays."

Accelerator laughed as he continued to talk.

"Those young hoodlums wandering aimlessly somewhere, they guessed wrongly that they would gain their freedom if they immersed themselves in the world's darkness when in fact it's really the opposite. The more they immerse themselves the more the restraints of the pecking order get stronger. Eh, isn't that right, Kihara-kun the slave lapdog?"

["I see, your obsession is that brat's cry, eh."]

"I'd rather not hear it, eh. This development is boring and I'm getting tired of it. I want a survival confirmation right here. I won't mind if you're so inclined to lop off even the nose and have it sent to me."

["That would be fine as an item for you to order. Although, I'm willing to send the ears as a set right now."]

"Don't lose your nerve, greenhorn. Even you might be employed for somebody. There seems to be no significance for that brat to be used for your private research. At best you're a bastard who uses others like you as you wish. I wonder if the top brass are spitting out tear-jerking lines like [recover her unharmed]? If both brain and heart are safe, you might have said something afterward, like 'no problem.' Even so, what's with you unable to feel your quivering finger?"

["Yeah, yeah."]

"You're miserable, Kihara-kun. Who's your delivery service? Was that impatience of yours because you got scolded when 30 minutes were up, but it still hasn't been delivered?"

["**I'll kill you, bitch.**"]

The phone call was suddenly *bam* cut off.

He felt the sound of heavy rain rapidly coming back.

Accelerator whirls round and round the phone on his hand, analyzing the conversation just now.

(Because of that bastard's personality, before this conversation, for this much he would have definitely plucked out an eyeball from that brat. Oh dear, that wasn't the case. This bastard's basically a gofer for someone else.)

It was a risky exchange, but he can't argue with Kihara without bearing these kinds of risks.

"—That was the case."

Conversely, someone in the back must exist that could dissuade Kihara from that. Examining the well-prepared equipment, the most likely would be...

*(No way... **is it Academy City?**)*

Most likely, it's the general board of directors, who have a direct hand on Academy City. The time of that [Experiment] and the time the Sisters were used haven't change at all. No, by some chance, all might be connecting events.

(I can't find out Kihara's whereabouts. But it's a different story for those general board of directors. Talking to them, he might even grab the above-mentioned [plan] Kihara is holding. Hm? ...Oi oi, this is way too good. Just like that, the situation will progress. Is it okay to turn out this well?)

Accelerator *bam!bam!* strikes the wall as he laughs.

As he snaps the phone into two and places it back into his pocket,

"THINK YOU CAN MONKEY ME AROUND!? THE NERVE OF YOU, MESSING WITH MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!"

He screamed.

And flicks on with his fingers the choker-type electrode on his neck.

An enormous controlling ability rushes back.

Accelerator is standing in a narrow alleyway, with nothing but concrete walls in every direction.

Even so, he didn't care.

He can certainly obtain the target's location info from the absolute coordinates. He widens his eyes. Accelerator knows; because his body is surely soaked in the darkness. Of the direction where it is erected,

(The enemy's Academy City! Controlling them is the general board chairman!!)

****The windowless building—****

****—Is the shelter for Academy City's board chairman.****

"GAAA
A!!"

Accelerator thrust his hand into the nearest concrete wall. Due to vector control, it totally looks like his arm is buried in tofu. As Accelerator screams to the point of blood coming out from his throat, he disorderly swung his arm about that's buried in the wall.

He brings together and controls all the vectors.

A *BOOM* thunderous roar echoed throughout.

In that instant, the earth's rotation on September 30 slows down by about 5 minutes.

His arm, having took away the enormous energy of the planet's rotation, converts it via vector control into a single demonic attack.

The forcibly gouged-out concrete wall was blown away at a horrifying velocity. Accelerator is standing on an alley corner that surrounds a building, but the several buildings that serve as an obstructing space between him and the [target] were being destroyed as if they're waste paper.

Such thoughts (allowance) like concern for the surroundings and the involvement of civilians were all gone in an instant.

By the time he noticed, it was already unleashed.

The distance towards the [target] was almost over two kilometers.

The windowless building.

The world's most hardened shelter said to be the castle of Aleister, the general board chairman of Academy City.

Towards a gargantuan structure said to be unyielding even against a shockwave of a nuclear weapon.

The attack directly hit it at a horrifying velocity.

An enormous swirl of noise exploded. Nevermind if the distance is over two kilometers. Blowing away two or three buildings one after the other ahead, like an uninhabited bank and government buildings, shooting through the avenue separating building and building, tearing off an electronic scoreboard from the side of a multi-story building, and then going into the target at once. The fact that no human casualties had occurred on the way is only a miracle. He really did not take this into consideration.

Ashen dust scatters, temporarily blinding him.

The listlessly hanging dust continued on for a while.

Before long, his vision slowly recovered.

Spreading out in front of Accelerator—

"..."

—was nothing changed in the world.

The windowless building remained unmoved even when it bore the brunt of that attack that even took the energy from the very earth's rotation, and wielded at full strength by Academy City's strongest ESPer.

The results were obvious.

The walls were too massive.

"G-GRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!"

Crumbling down, Accelerator pounded his fist into the dirty water puddle. No matter how much he did, he cannot reach Aleister. By some unknown technique, the attack was being dispersed, and there's even no guarantee that it was there in the first place. Everything could be a dummy. It didn't matter. It really already didn't matter.

For they've taken away Last Order.

As far as he can consider, that's the worst situation.

What he wanted to protect was being torn to shreds, leaving nothing.

(I'll kill him.)

Click, switching back the electrode to its original setting, he silently thinks.

Thoughts like getting in touch some way or another to Yomikawa or Yoshikawa completely vanished.

(I'll kill Kihara Amata. I'll definitely kill him. Against that shitty bastard who I can't be satisfied killing him even a hundred times, I'll turn those hundred into one strike and kill him with it. I'll have to do this or anything and everything is not worth considering.)

Unsteadily he stands up, using the shotgun as his cane.

He turns his awareness into the mobile phone in his pocket.

There Kihara's number is recorded. Even for a dummy number, it's worth investigating. If it cannot be investigated with normal methods, better to take up abnormal measures. If there's no future for Accelerator, and even Last Order's future is being taken away in the process, there's no point in restraining himself. If the standard databases of Anti-skill and Judgment offices aren't worth considering, then breaking one by one into the general board of directors' hideouts would give him complete access to the Bank, and to hell to those twelve big shots. He can crush their heads and hearts if it's necessary.

He's willing to kill by setting the entire town on fire, burning it down without leaving a single cell alive.

Muttering as if declaring it, he began to walk slowly back into the back alleys.

His back is once again vanishing into the deep, deep darkness.

Part 9

Aleister was in the windowless building.

The inside of the building remains unchanged even when it took that kind of attack. He was in the center of a spacious room, floating upside-down inside a cylinder filled with a red fluid, but even that fluid didn't even shake a bit.

(There appears to be a ruckus or something at the front.)

His consciousness is not focused on that source.

If that's the case, even he's not shifting his focus on that.

Aleister's eyes were focused in the blank space.

Some kind of technology is being used, for in the empty space where there should be nothing, countless rectangular images (windows) were floating. They follow along with Aleister's eye movements, changing their displays in sequence, and commands were being input on them in tune to his fingers.

(Heheh. I have to move my body sometime.)

Aleister, with the majority of his body functions relying on a life-support system, strictly speaking is in good condition even without him blinking. Because he's in the constantly regulated fluid, moistening his eyeballs isn't important. Even moving his fingertips is being recognized as an [event]. Finding out the worth at that minute of movements, and analyzing the signals sent by nerves to the brain, this means only that much action will lead to divine inspiration.

For him, there's no concept like forging one's body.

Even electro-constriction actions of his muscles, internal organ control — these are only miscellaneous trifles all left to machines to do on their own. If one hears him say one thing or another about not walking for several years, the former might think he's in poor health, but Aleister has maintained what everyone in the world thinks is the ideal health condition.

It's also the same for intellectual pursuits.

As far as Aleister is concerned, the brain is only one of the parts. Body and soul are separate entities, and so substitution is possible as much as one likes. His inspiration is drawn outside by means of a cable, brewed inside a computer enshrined nearby, and is sent back to Aleister's brain as a personal opinion. The life support system is his skin, his organs, and his brain. Perhaps, this group of machines are now, even at this very moment, probably alive. In establishing transplanted organs to a patient's body, the metal clusters that're too close to a person are to the point that one's at a loss over whether he should call them a machine or a person.

Surrounded by the solid mass which seems even its pulse is heard when touched, Aleister calmly smiles.

There are several sets of data on the images he's gazing at.

First set is the distribution map of the Sisters throughout the world, and the graphs of their brainwave patterns.

Second set is the in vivo data of that [thing] in the process of being born in this city.

Third set is the image, captured via ultra-telephoto zoom, of Vento leaning on a handrail, coughing violently.

(Even Kihara has probably succeeded in recovering Last Order. With the preparatory phases after the target code is injected, changes are already arising at Academy City's [Place].)

Allowances were being created in Aleister's thoughts. In an emergency, the forecast power output is greatly lower than expected; even so, with this little it's still sufficient.

(The development of the Imaginary School District—the Five Layer System—which utilizes the AIM diffusion fields, is now complete. Every magician who uses magic within Academy City will go berserk and self destruct. And your body is no exception to that, Vento of the Front.)

Inspirations bring forth thoughts, thoughts bring forth inspiration. After this, a huge intellectual torrent which repeatedly changes history is building up.

(The current output is not enough to cover the entire world. Even at technical pressures, it's at a barely endurable level... It's still far from complete. And it won't basically start up with the usual codes yet. The situation will plainly change along with Fuse Kazakiri's turn.)

A new window is displayed mid-air.

Displayed there is Kazakiri Hyouka, confused at the changes in this town and seemingly walking uneasily in the rain.

Part 10

Vento was on the railway bridge.

It's a bridge crossing over a large river. And the iron-and-asphalt-built structure is nothing but bleak. With the effects of the downpouring rain, the dark river below her is increasing in water level, the murky waters creating a thick sound.

"*Gack*, *cough*, *cough*..."

A watery, violent coughing sound occurs in succession.

From the gaps of her hand that covers her mouth, thick blood is seeping through. Vento gazed at her own blood-stained hand. Then she violently shook that hand.

(This is... what the hell...?)

It's understandable, even she herself can't comprehend its causes. What has occurred in her own body, what is the extent of the damage, is her own body safe, or in danger?

*(...My...body, **my specially made body**, it can't... It wasn't this case up till now. This is, this is his fault...)*

Cough *cough*, the foul sound continues.

A fresh red color is falling onto the wet road.

Beaten by the heavy rain, the make-up around her eyes is getting blotted. The cloth covering her hair is disheveled, the frayed hair from her forehead hanging down.

*(When it comes to it, it's a new...magical, attack...? No, even that's...wrong. I'm in Academy City. Magical attacks...are impossible. No evidence...of magic ceremonies set. First of all, **I'll do a complete counter-attack on such a thing**...)*

"—!!"

Gack! Shivers run through her.

Pain goes out all at once from Vento's body.

This was no physical recovery.

It's the reverse. More urgent phenomena than that had occurred.

There's the oppressive feeling. It's not a question where in the body. It was that feeling where, from the skin surface up to the internal organs, everything up to the last blood vessel was being squeezed.

That true nature was the [presence].

An all-too-enormous presence, and it was shaking Academy City itself. This presence has no animosity. For people like Vento, it's invisible. Figuratively speaking, it's like a predatory beast, like a panther or a lion yawning while right at their nose. Even when the opponent has no hostility, weak people can only shiver and sweat coldly.

She can't figure out the presence's direction.

The scale is way too different. It's quite like it consumed the entire town. For those people swallowed into the beast's belly, once inside there's no point in searching for the signs of the enemy. Even if they're too strong, their outlines cannot be ascertained. Going against it is the worst way.

On top of that...

(This unidentified presence, it's still continuing to expand...!!)

The biggest shock should be that one. Whoever that gigantic being is whom can shake the world, bend several piled layers, and blow away even magical laws over an airspace, it's increasing its pressure as if it's saying this is still the beginning. Not even the Christianity's [Saints] would have gone this far. There's only one explanation.

(This is, Academy City's last line, against us (the occult)!)

This the real nature of Aleister's composure.

Surely this can't be it. Vento has paralyzed close to ninety percent of Academy City's town facilities, but it's the hidden aces that could overturn that situation. But on the other hand, there were times when she thought it was too easy up till now. In that case, this might be the one great power on par with the magic side.

"...This matters...not. Whatever happens, I have a mission to accomplish!"

Vento let out a short word.

The name of her younger brother.

From that much, Vento's torturous trembling somewhat ebbed. The horror of blood-vomiting with its reasons unknown was mitigated. She has calmed down her thoughts. Her shocked heart regained its fortitude.

(It's true that I took away ninety percent of the town facilities. There's no change in my dominance. Aleister's driven to the corner to the point of showing his hidden ace.)

And so she wins, Vento concluded as she wipes the blood off her mouth.

*(The **hidden helps** are already useless. I don't know what position Kamijou Touma is to Academy City, but even Aleister cannot stop his death...)*

Those who defend the town called the Anti-skill and Judgment were exterminated. For those very people, they were the first suspects to her attack. If left out, numerous fresh troops might show up; even so, it's certain that Vento is steadily advancing in her efforts.

Only to kill.

A certain target named Kamijou Touma.

(I hate science.)

Vento thought as she holds on the railing with both her hands,

(I abhor science.)

She hates the science that did her like this. She hates the science that failed to save her younger brother's life.

Wiping her mouth with her arm, Vento slowly breathed.

And breathes life into her own damage-ridden body.

I'll quickly kill that target Kamijou Touma. Just as Vento had got off from the railway bridge,

An intense sound suddenly rang out.

Some kind of long-distance attack has probably been unleashed. The nearby building from the firing point has been destroyed, and from there runs through obliquely upward at a distance close to ten kilometers, appearing to assault a building somewhere.

(What...was that now...?)

It's a move unrelated to both the Roman Catholic Church and [God's Right Seat]. She thought the invasion forces were still outside town.

It means Academy City has other problems apart even from herself.

Vento frowned, but she has no time to pursue that thoroughly.

"..."

Bringing out from emptiness her barbed wire-wrapped hammer, she catches it.

Since Vento's piercings were related to [the flesh pierced by metal], it bears attributes of the [Nail] that crucified the [Son of God] to the cross. As for the hammer, it even merits no explanation, for the [Son of God] was struck by a hammer used for executions.

A single sound incites her to prepare her battle stance.

The sound of footsteps.

Part 11

Kamijou, following the advice of the [phone voice], ran for the darkened railway bridge.

But Last Order wasn't there.

It was the [God's Right Seat].

Vento of the Front.

"Wh... you bitch!!"

At Kamijou's roar, Vento swung her huge hammer as she turned around.

The blunt weaponized wind tore through the rain, but Kamijou blows it off with his right hand.

An invisible tension is dominating between the two of them.

"The hell you're doing here! What have you done to Last Order?"

Vento slightly frowned at Kamijou's outcry.

And then she replies,

"Did it come here just to be killed?"

"I'm asking what happened to that child!!"

"Last Order? The hell if I know that one!!"

Screams were clashing with each other.

But, the two didn't clash with each other.

****BOOM!!****

For a terrible flash assailed both their eyes.

Their sights have been blotted out. Kamijou was on the lookout thinking this, too, is one of Vento's plans, but he heard teeth gnashing from Vento.

Toward Kamijou, who hadn't grasped the situation, a lightning-like shock followed a bit later by a boom strikes him down.

Every joint throughout his body screamed.

"Gaaaah!!"

Kamijou tumbled just like that on the road. The massive bridge that should have been made of iron swings like a suspension bridge. Unable to endure that movement, several bolts pop out, their sounds reaching his ears.

(...tch. What the...)

Kneeling down, Kamijou shook his head.

From the separation of the light and sound, what happened now is an event happening from afar.

(Where's Vento...!?)

The flash wasn't long enough to blind his eyes. Kamijou gets up in hot haste, surveying his surroundings.

(...What?)

And, she's not looking at Kamijou.

Grabbing at the railings with both her hands, her hammer dropped by her side, Vento glared at a far-off object, trying to take it in.

"That bastard...ALEISTER!!"

Her scream, full of anger, reverberated.

It was a distinct wrath, several tens of times stronger than even what was thrown at Kamijou.

Vento looked back at him.

"Your shitty small game is off the hook for now. ...I'm so gonna kill him. Now I see. That's the Imaginary School District - Five Layer System! Damn you Aleister for making fun of us. AND YOU WANT TO LOOK DOWN ON US!!"

Grabbing her hammer, she struck the ground at her feet with all her might.

Asphalt fragments scatter about along with a thunderous *BOOM!!*.

"!!!"

By the time Kamijou covered his face with both of his hands, Vento was already nowhere to be seen.

(...She disappeared? As if!!)

In hot haste he runs over to the railing. However, even as he looks on ahead, there's only the dark river far below, flowing on noisily. It's quite swollen due to the rain. Did she really fall down there? Or did she use some kind of magic?

(What the heck...what is she looking at?)

Vento was supposed to especially attack Academy City to kill Kamijou Touma.

Nevertheless, she totally abandoned him, the primary target.

Kamijou shifts his gaze from the handrail toward the front,

In order to ascertain what Vento was looking at.

"...No way."

Part 12

—Imaginary School District - Five Layer System, commencing partial expansion.

—Applicable coordinate, approximate center of Seventh School District, Academy City.

- Overwriting additional modules to base theoretical model [Kazakiri Hyouka].
- Internal, external transformation of theoretical model confirmed.
- Controller and superior of the Sisters [Last Order] confirms the additional imperatives (code).
- Results of enforced operation of the Misaka Network — Successful artificial directional guidance of all AIM diffusion fields of Academy City.
- First stage complete.
- Changes to physical laws confirmed.
- [Fuse=KAZAKIRI] manifesting at Academy City.
- To all concerned, please prepare for unexpected shocks.

Part 13

Academy City at night is enveloped by rain.

Unlike other cities at night, there is little light on the extremely low-traffic roads; it was the same for buildings. A sense of lost uniformity appeared, just like when all town inhabitants were coming out; either there were no lights or they were left on and were forgotten, in some respects leaving behind a night view.

In a corner of that town, an enormous flash is flooding it.



****BOOM!!**** From the center of the light, countless wing-like objects swept destruction. Dozens of these wings were quite as sharp as swords. Each one of these wings is from 10 meters up to even 100 meters, and can extend very very high as if defying the heavens.

There are buildings surrounding it, but it has no indication that it is paying attention to them.

It destroyed buildings one after the other, as if it's tearing up wet paper. Its wings calmly flap as it eats away the insubstantial structures built by humans. It's as if it's implicitly saying humans are not the masters of the world.

It quite looks like huge crystallized peacock wings.

"It can't be..."

Kamijou Touma, dumbfounded, gazes at that from over the bridge.

He knows.

He knows the real nature of the extremely unscientific being, seen far off ahead.

It really has that same horrible presence as that time a being named Misha Kreuzhev manifested itself.

A being who manipulates magic styles to bring humanity to ruin without moving even one finger, and bring Saints to near-death during its spare time.

It is named,

"—an angel!?"

Although his own mouth said it in advance, his excessively weak head did not catch up with it.

(E-Enough already!! And I hoped that even in the best of times that problems won't pop up here and there!! Just what is happening in this town since while back!?)

The fact that Vento's expression changed means that it's not prepared by the Roman Catholic Church.

Then, how can it be explained if it's not them?

Why did such a word like angel come out of his mouth in Academy City?

Is a magic organization even more dangerous than the Roman Catholic Church and [God's Right Seat] hiding within Academy City?

Or...

The supposedly scientific-side Academy City made an angel descend.

Leaving Kamijou who's unable to comprehend the situation, the far-off angel's wings slowly moves on.

At the noticeably large space between the wings, the unknown discharge-like light instantly blinks.

Immediately after,

****BOOM!!****

A destructive attack was unleashed.

The generated spectacular lightning springs in a snake-like movement for outside Academy City. Kamijou follows the afterimage. At the point where the strong light struck, the earth, every tree in the forest and even people were flung up into the sky; it's quite like explosives were set beneath the earth. Though Academy City's exit should be about in the horizon, even in Kamijou's view he's sure he saw [something similar to a wave] go up and down. With that extent, enormous quantities of materials were blown sky-high.

Several seconds later, an explosive sound struck his entire body.

It was already a shock wave. Kamijou almost falls down from the excessive force. The entire iron bridge, like the time the angel appeared, again made an ominous creaking sound. He feels the danger of staying here.

"...!!!"

Whether it's Last Order, Vento, or the black-clads, it's exceptional that these various problems are occurring in this very day. If that being is to move around as it pleases, that alone would completely destroy Academy City.

And the damage wouldn't be restricted to end only in Academy City.

(But, what about Last Order!?)

It's plain that she has to be under protection. The [telephone voice] said that this railway bridge is the meeting place, but Last Order was nowhere to be found. Did she really appear? Or did she run away because she saw Vento?

(Dammit!!)

Kamijou brings out Last Order's personal kiddie-use mobile phone, and dialed a registration number.

The telephone was immediately connected.

"Hey! I went to the railway bridge, but Last Order is nowhere to be found! Have you found—"

["Are you nuts? I can't believe you fell for it!!"]

The other side shouted before he could finish talking.

The phone again continues in an irritated tone toward the confused Kamijou,

["I've already ascertained that brat's whereabouts. At the least, she's been aimlessly running around the streets, so I haven't found her yet. I'll handle the rest. And get away from there at once!!"]

"...."

Shit, Kamijou grumbled within his mind.

The fact that he cannot help Kamijou with this is stabbing his heart.

"Sorry. Did you see that a moment ago? I think there's something at the street corner, where tens of wings are springing out along with incredible lights."

["...That thing turned toward outside of Academy City, and it attacked something there."]

"I'll have to go and stop that [angel]. Therefore, me helping you out would be difficult."

Doesn't matter to me, the voice easily replied back.

Sorry, after Kamijou apologizes,

"Good luck."

["The same to you, too."]

Switching off the phone, and putting it away in his pocket, Kamijou then faces his head forward.

The [Angel] that had cut down so many buildings, clearly showed its majestic appearance.

Between the lines 8

He thought his eardrums were blown off.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu is bloodied, and lying on top of soggy mud. He should be in the abandoned bus maintenance bay in the middle of the forest, but now there's not even a shadow of it. Everything is torn off, blown away into smithereens, and it's once again heavily raining onto the ground. Quite like after a massive landslide had occurred, many trees were buried within the muddled and collapsed earth.

There aren't even any figures of his enemy. They're either buried in the mud or blown off into pieces.

For Tsuchimikado, the rain today was his salvation.

The magic style where he is most skilled is the [dark style], meaning water.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu's proud of his strongest ability as an Onmyou expert, where defensive magic, even for a moment, had been put up when his own body and soul had been in danger. With that, he barely survived.

"*cough*, *cough*!?"

But even so, blood has been pouring out from his mouth.

His body is from the start unable to use magic, but that was not the only reaction. It's clear that his body is torn up, having taken the attack that came from the outside and eating through his defensive magic.

But there's not even one single wooden spike.

Far from destroying the odds-on favorite magic style, the surrounding region and terrain was summarily destroyed.

(What, in the world, happened...?)

It seems they've took a single blow from quite a distance, but he can't really imagine definitely what kind of magic style that is. On top of that, the attack came in from Academy City's direction. It's too unnatural of a situation for him to easily label the magic attack = Roman Catholic Church.

Tsuchimikado, unable to get up, turns his head toward that direction and,

(No...way...)

Far off, he saw the countless wings expanding within Academy City.

From here he can only see tiny shadows. It was hidden by the outer wall and behind tall buildings, so its origin is not totally clear to him, but his breath stopped just by catching sight of those wings.

An angel.

Its appearance is similar to those of Misha Kruzhev's, but the interior is totally different. In contrast to an archangel's [divine strength] where the atmosphere is similar to a piercing cold, what's expanding now is a strong discomfort similar to smelling the scent of a humid room full of adhesive.

It appears that was an artificially created angel.

An attack unleashed precisely towards the magicians antagonistic towards Academy City.

(A...leis...ter...)

Tsuchimikado Motoharu reflexively moved his lips.

The Imaginary School District-Five Layer System. An artificial [world], created by controlling the scattered AIM diffusion fields through the Sisters scattered throughout the world, and focusing them around the heart of Academy City.

"And he used that — damn that bastard..."

With the appearance of the angel, even inner Academy City itself would turn to large-scale turmoil.

However, Tsuchimikado's expectations, along with the completion of the [world], are the destruction of all of the occult, with the magicians dying out, and the magical facilities expected to be destroyed. With Tsuchimikado still alive, there's not even a sense of discomfort at the composition of the magic style.

Perhaps that Imaginary School District is incomplete.

If that weren't the case, at this time even Tsuchimikado would be dragged into the [removal of all magic].

That Aleister dragged out such an imperfection means,

([God's Right Seat]... Academy City is really in a pinch...)

Or possibly, this is just one of that person's [plans]?

He's thinking, but now is not an occasion to do so.

Another strike is coming unless he can get up and get away from here as soon as possible. More than bringing out that being, Aleister's real motive is seriously exterminating his enemies. With an unchallenged counterattack. All for smashing up the assassin from the Roman Catholic Church. At this rate, even Tsuchimikado would be dragged into it.

"Guh..."

Tsuchimikado tries to apply strength to both his feet, but he's flat-out unable to move.

Due to the shock wave sometime ago, the damage has been accumulated even up to the bones of his body.

"*wheeze*, *cough*"

He tries to stand up somehow with sluggish movements.

Still, his body cannot move.

The angel that appeared in Academy City once again started to cast a disturbing light.

A second one is coming.

He knows this, yet his feet won't move as he wants.

He clenches his teeth.

It's impossible for him to die here. And so, he's not giving up; even with that angel.

Chapter 9: The differences of obstacles that stand in one's way. *Two Kinds of Enemies.*

Part 1

Huge vehicles were parked in the multi-storey car park of the Seventh School District.

Their white bodies were about the size of sightseeing buses, but they have no windows. These are not buses but the world's largest ambulances. Aside from being fully equipped with beds furnished with life-support systems for 10 people these so-called hospital *buses* also have equipment in-place to perform simple surgical operations.

About ten of these hospital buses were parked in the parking area. Fully utilized about a hundred patients can be accommodated.

Several little figures were there, hidden secretly in those hospital buses.

The Sisters.

These young girls were armed with assault rifles and anti-tank rifles; a total mismatch for their blazers that serve as the Tokiwadai Middle School's uniform. There are about ten of them, and they're on the lookout for the hostile force called the [Hound Dogs] that a person named Kihara Amata unleashed on them.

And in the middle of that group a young girl's voice is reverberating,

"Let go of me! If there's no battery for the Misaka Network connection, there's no point in me staying here! The town's situation is strange; I have to go and see it for myself!!"

The white habit-clad girl was being pinned down by the nurses. Even the tortoise-shell cat has its fur ruffled up; held by a nurse with both hands it's unlikely to break out though that doesn't stop it from thrashing its paws about.

The racket even reaches Misaka-imouto's ears but she has no time to turn her head toward it.

Her body isn't moving.

["(—Signal from superior individual No. 20001 confirmed.)"]

["(—Danger level 5 presumed, Misaka No. 20001 is rejected.)"]

["(—Rejection inadmissible. Signal accepted through routes R, V, Y.)"]

["(—Misa— Extra heaaaaavy burden on thinking functions.)"]

["(—Rejection inadmissible.)"]

****Zaa!!**** A certain signal is spreading out like a huge wave inside the Misaka Network. In the blink of an eye, it covered up the entire world.

It was an emergency code from Last Order.

Whatever its contents, the lower-ranking Sisters cannot oppose it.

The girls, with the majority of their brain's functional areas taken away, stiffened on their respective places as mere beings that can only breathe.

What to do, all of them thought.

They're certain that Last Order fell into someone's hands...and also that they can't oppose the incoming directive no matter how malicious it is. On the other hand, to witness a scenario where their limbs are paralyzed is out of the question.

(An action...without going against...the order...)

No. 10032, Misaka-imouto, sends the information over the Misaka Network.

(...If that...leads to the breakdown...of this critical situation...)

All of them answered to it.

Abandon any useless opposition against the Virus (what the Sisters redefined for the emergency code from Last Order). By doing this, they'll re-secure the operation domain that was spared for resistance until now. What was obtained, though was just a little of the thinking faculties and Misaka-imouto still could not even move a single finger.

Still, if ten thousand of them were to gather, they'd become a single power.

The Sisters didn't do something like saving up that power on their own.

The girls know a person who can use it more effectively, though.

Part 2

Smooth sailing.

Those were the words to indicate Thomas Platinabank's life.

Born to an affluent family, living a life of luxury, highly educated, and victorious in daring businesses, which as a result he obtained wealth and power. Excluding the general board chairman (Aleister), being selected at an exceptionally young late thirties into the only twelve general board of directors of Academy City, is the trophy that such symbolizes his travels.

He has never failed up to now, and from then on never walks on the road other than success.

Not even a speck of cloud, that's what he believed.

He didn't speak of this to anyone, but he's thinking that at any rate it's not difficult to seize all of Academy City as the general board chairman. That is not ambition at all, apart from the natural transition if he does his best with what he has now, he can only guess that rest will occur on its own without fail.

Surely.

That person wouldn't imagine it even in his dreams. Something like the instant he opened the entrance door, a shotgun muzzle was pressed onto his chest, and there the trigger was pulled, blowing him back five meters.

"..."

Accelerator looked with cold eyes at the young upstart flying unbounded through air along with a thunderous *BOOM!!* roar. It seems that the upstart is aware of the possibility that he's normally on someone's cross-hairs, so he put on a bulletproof jacket under his clothes. Thanks to that, his upper and lower halves of his body were not separated right in half, but on all accounts, all of his ribs were shattered. The upstart's body is both trembling and twitching, his consciousness should be completely bombed out.

Something was settled for Accelerator.

It was probably around when he unleashed the attack towards the windowless building. It was not forbidden to antagonize someone. It was already this late by the time he understood the meaning of what that damned doctor said. Narrow down to a single aim. It was really just like that. **Even if he makes Last Order his enemy, he should save Last Order.** If he makes even that brat his enemy, why should he hesitate when it comes to other people?

Why was such a method not thought of at the start?

Accelerator laughs in self-derision from the fact that he unconsciously created a mental blind spot.

"Such stupidity."

Unmindful of his totally soaked appearance, Accelerator walks through the premises, rubbing a blackish stain against the luxurious carpet. In comparison to the attention given to each of the items, the mansion's scale is awfully small. It was probably because of that that this mansion was seen as a cottage, rather than a western-style house.

Even one piece of furniture would enable one to buy a miniature garden for their home.

Peeking at the room here and there, he saw several men and women—probably the servants—lying on the beds, sofas and floor. This may be the reason why the young upstart answered to the call himself.

Accelerator finds the office and heads for the large ebony desk there. It looks like...an antique furniture, but when he flicks a switch, a section of the polished board lifts up, and an LCD monitor and keyboard is revealed.

There are several locks, but Accelerator took little time to release them all. The system doesn't use fingerprints or retinas for biometric authentication. Perhaps, it's probably because the young upstart judged that he'd be in danger of having his wrist gouged off or lose his head if he did use biometrics. Actually, Accelerator was even intending to do the very thing.

Displayed on the large thirty-inch monitor, is only data, untouchable by mere ordinary people.

Many documents that define Academy City's policy are coming out. The biases towards a category present in these documents may be connected to the specialty of the master of this mansion. The mountain of data looks like nonsense, but if he skims through it, he might overlook some important data. On the other hand, scrutinizing each datum might take several days. And so, Accelerator, who's getting impatient, finally arrived at the intended data. "...this is it."

It's information concerning [Hound Dog].

It is written that "currently, an unidentified threat is harming Academy City. To remove the threat, they'll quickly recover Last Order." A laughable matter, but it seems they're playing make-believe as heroes protecting the town.

(Damn, they're messing around...)

He reflexively spat it out.

If there's such thing as a splendid idea, they'd better make themselves a shield. For harshly tormenting such a tiny kid, a "please speak well of us"-like manner is way too good.

"This is—"

As he further examined the data, Accelerator held his breath.

It appears that those general board of directors were likely using the [virus-infected Last Order] to try go against the threat. As far as they're concerned, they're worried about Last Order dying on them, at least until the [threat] is gone.

Perhaps it is not over yet.

Perhaps he might be able to take her back.

Accelerator, with hands slightly shaking with anticipation, taps on the keys.

However, regarding Last Order, it is not written specifically how to [eliminate the threat]. As expected, the details of the threat and the virus are not even touched on. It's plain that the information is insufficient. Just the meeting's strategy application form (in name, it's actually a directive), and there is no essential [what to apply for] information at all. From here, the succeeding data probably only exists inside the general board chairman's (Aleister's) head.

However, the name written on the strategy application form is,

(*"ANGEL"?*)

Angel. At that word, Accelerator is somehow reminded of the enormous wings that appeared in a corner of Academy City.

And, that lad said he's going to stop it.

Is he himself not the only one fighting in the darkness?

(...)

In any case, he currently has no spare time to pay attention to that. His highest priority is Last Order.

Before, on August 31, Accelerator exterminated the virus written on Last Order's brain.

However, not only they had acquired the virus information beforehand, Accelerator's power was at full strength and so for this very reason they were able to do it. With this current situation he's in, it's unlikely he can do it.

Worst of all, his battery is insufficient.

ESPer mode already has less than two minutes remaining, and getting medical treatment here is impossible.

(Well, by using my strength, it's not necessary to get medical treatment. For Kihara to torment that brat's head, he should have used the Testament. And he'd better use it. Even for the virus information, the bastard must have his hands on the original script.)

There's the possibility that Kihara will destroy Testament after writing the virus...but Accelerator surmised that its probability is low. In that situation, he cannot backtrack if, in a worst case scenario, everything went wrong. Kihara should have prepared in advance some kind of insurance for that situation.

(When it comes to it, my drive didn't change after all.)

He continuously taps on the keys.

(Ha! A hit!!)

He immediately found the [Hound Dog] standby point.

(Now I can kill Kihara and take that brat back. Haha, I've found my drive and now it's coming out!!)

There are several hunting rifles inside the office.

He searches for bullets which fit his shotgun from among the various types of bullets. Accelerator loads up with these bullets and goes outside.

Part 3

Index rushed out from the multi-storey car park into the downpour outside.

She had been shaken in the large hospital-like bus until now, but she has lost the time to hide stealthily.

A voice requesting for restraints followed her from the back, but she did not turn back.

(Really, what's with that [Battery for Misaka Network connection] after all?! Perhaps I've been deceived? And even though a lost child is serious, but even then that sort of thing came out in Academy City!)

Only the wings are excessively huge, and the vital real form was hidden behind buildings, so it was not seen. She knows that those dozens of wing clusters move fast. As fast as people walking.

Angel.

Index didn't really understand why that thing manifested itself in Academy City. What's more, information on that angel did not exist among her 103,000 books. Such was the situation as Aureolus' [Ars Magna]. In other words, the phenomenon before her is an equally serious matter.

(I have to stop it...)

Index looks at a distance, keeping her eye on the 100-meter wings, the largest of their class.

(If I don't stop it, there will be serious consequences.)

Even the fierce destructive power was hidden in its previous attack; if that's the same existence from what Index knows of [angels], that's not its true power. It should hold enough power to exterminate all life on earth with only a single finger and exert a deep influence even on the celestial bodies of the universe.

Index.

And Necessarius.

They've done everything in preparation for such a situation, but they have never felt this uneasy. Even professional magicians would feel this much fear. Index believes that it's impossible to present that to unrelated persons.

Index runs through the streets that had returned to eerie silence. Possibly from the downpouring rain, there is not even one passer-by.

Then, the far-off [angel] started to give out a night sky-rendering howl. Quite like the sound of a beast being dragged by a choker made of barbed wire.

Several of the huge wings quiver as if they're being electrified. They seem to wriggle ominously, and they seem to stir as they bear the pain.

As it does those, that [angel] is making a sound.

Index brought her attention there, hoping to obtain as much information in a short time,

"...eh?"

She suddenly voiced out her doubts.

A mere air-shaking sound, as if she can't comprehend towards a person at all.

Even so, as Index hears that voice, ****for some reason she felt a sense of nostalgia****.

"——"

In front of her eyes are the gigantic wings of an [angel].

The wings of light that essentially shouldn't be in this world, and will freeze one's spine even though they're divine. For those wings, occasionally the outlines floating in the wind would turn invisible, and then turn back to their original forms, like sea waves, like how fog shifts with the wind.

Though that movement appears to be chaotic, in fact it is a fixed pattern.

And because Index possesses a perfect photographic memory, she analyzes the information.

She had witnessed the same movements before.

It was on September 1.

It's from the time when she went with Kamijou Touma to the hospital where the frog-faced doctor is stationed, after they had repelled Sherry Cromwell at the underground shopping center.

That is...

The one who has this introverted behavior, and is afraid of almost anything is,

"...Hyouka?"

Part 4

"What's going on here?"

Misaka Mikoto muttered in amazement.

With an umbrella bought at a convenience store in hand, she's standing still in the middle of the rain-beaten street. It could be that it's way past curfew time, because of the weather, or that they have other reasons, but there is no one else on the wide street.

She has been looking for Kamijou Touma, but it's already late, and with the passing rain getting more and more serious, she was about to think of going home. Then suddenly, a group of buildings on a street corner crumble to dust, and scores of sharp and pointed wing-like objects flew out.

Even for an ESPer, the scale is way too big.

Or rather, just what kind of ability was used to make that possible?

What's more, immediately after that, the wings cause an electrical discharge-like phenomenon, laying waste upon the outer parts of Academy City.

It's an [electrical discharge-like phenomenon], not an [electrical discharge]. Mikoto is Academy City's best electricity-type ESPer (Electromaster). Even from her observation, that power didn't use electricity.

Then what is that?

The more that power resembles electricity, the more she can't grasp its true form; for Mikoto, she realizes that the scientific rules she herself believed do not apply so far.

She tries to use her mobile phone to get in touch with Shirai Kuroko, but there were no signs of a reply.

She even tries to dash into the Judgment station or call the Anti-Skill, but the result was the same.

She felt she'd been left alone in an unexpected place. And she did not know why, but Academy City's public order maintenance facilities were completely halted. And to top it off, that monster appeared. Driven too unexpectedly into a situation with a weak sense of reality, Mikoto stood still, umbrella raised up.

And then...

The sound of *splash* *splash* puddles being stepped on echoes, and someone passed by Mikoto. The person is going through the route heading for that far-off monster. Mikoto recognized the back of that girl running through totally wet and rain gear-less. It was the sister clad in pure white nun habit and was always with Kamijou.

"H, Hey! What are you trying to do at such a place!? You don't even realize it's dangerous, you know!"

Mikoto impulsively chases after the girl and grabs her arm.

"Let me go!!"

Index shouted without looking back.

"I have to go, Hyouka is over there. I don't know why, but I have to stop her. That's my friend over there!!"

She did not give any explanation to why she's under so much pressure. The moment Mikoto started to think she's probably too confused from the situation, a new figure appeared in her vision.

"Touma!!"

Kamijou Touma, it seems.

From a corner about 100 meters ahead, he went out onto the main street. The lad probably didn't notice them. As expected, his focus was only on the group of gigantic wings, the same as Index.

Finding her quarry, Mikoto instinctively opened her mouth, but no words came out.

For Index's resistance got tremendously stronger, even though she should have found her acquaintance.

Index shakes off Mikoto's arm, and shouts into the down pouring rain,

"No, Touma! Don't kill Hyouka!!"

Part 5

Kamijou Touma was being chased.

As soon as he lost sight of Vento at the railway bridge, he started to return to the urban areas with stopping the [angel] his highest priority. And he bumped into a group of black-clads, the very same black-clads who were after Last Order.

He immediately takes refuge in an alleyway too narrow for a vehicle to go through, and tries to throw off the pursuers through complicated ways. However, even with a more or less advantageous position, it's impossible to lead trained persons by the nose. It's incredible that his body hasn't been shot up yet.

"No, Touma! Don't kill Hyouka!!"

And so, the moment he heard that loud voice, Kamijou thought his heart stopped.

Because he simply misunderstood the [loud voice] as gunshots rather than the details of the voice, he was deluded into thinking that he was shot.

"!!"

Stiffening on the spot, he takes about two seconds to slowly turn around, and upon finally seeing Index and Mikoto running towards him, Kamijou relaxes for a bit. At once he changes his mind that this is no time to relax, and grabbing both their arms, they dive into another alleyway.

Several *rattle* footsteps were ringing in the main street.

It was the black-clads.

Their eyes were scanning over many places, and soon they might notice the place where Kamijou and the girls were hiding. Apart from Mikoto, Index didn't even notice those black-clads for a bit. For some reason, she was looking up at him with frightened eyes.

What happened so far, and why he was being pursued now, those she did not ask. Index informs him of something more important than those,

"Please, Touma, don't go over there. Even I don't know the reason, but I'm sure the [angel] over there is Hyouka! That is a phenomenon that must be stopped at all costs, but only Touma must stay away! If Touma should touch her, Hyouka who's unrelated with good or evil, will completely disappear!!"

Grabbing onto Kamijou's totally rain-soaked shirt, Index sincerely appeals to him.

Because she's quite excited, her speech was almost halting.

However, Kamijou has an idea of the name [Hyouka].

Kazakiri Hyouka.

An aggregate of AIM diffusion fields. A being who has a human mind, yet does not have a physical body.

(No way...)

From what Kamijou knows of her, she's a person totally unrelated to those sort of destructive actions. However, if there's someone who can interfere from outside the composition of the AIM diffusion fields, it's possible that kind of [transformation] would occur. By completely manipulating the AIM diffusion fields, it's possible to control everything from shape to speech and conduct.

Because it's a phenomenon, it is an incomplete nature.

If that's the case, who made her turn into that?

(If Vento managed to bring down this town's students...no, it can't be...?)

Index urgently says something at a desperately-thinking Kamijou,

"Touma, I'll do something about Hyouka. So please don't get involved with Hyouka!"

For Index, Kazakiri Hyouka was the first person she befriended with.

And Index probably doesn't want to make Hyouka her enemy, even though her position between them is shaken.

Kamijou starts thinking.

Kazakiri Hyouka is a good person. However, with the situation where she's berserk, nothing can be guaranteed. It is the same for dead drunks, their normal personalities cannot be applicable to them.

And so he says,

"I can't do that."

"Touma!!"

"I'm going to stop her. And besides, **the problem is not only her**. I can't just leave it only to you."

"But, if you use your right hand Hyouka will die!!"

"I WON'T LET HER DIE!!"

Kamijou unintentionally shouted, forgetting that they're hiding themselves from the black-clads. Grabbing a complaining Index by the scruff, he forcibly pulls her towards him. Towards a surprised-stiff Index, Kamijou says,

"I'm not here to kill! Rather, I'm taking action to save Kazakiri! Can you see the normal Kazakiri in that one!? No, you cant. Something must have occurred, so she totally turned into that being! And so I must rescue her!! Me staying out of this? Stop kidding me. I don't need your permission every time I rescue her!!"

Index flaps open and shuts her mouth, speechless.

Kamijou, unmindful to it, says,

"I have no idea how and what the detailed magical arrangements of that [angel] are, and so your knowledge is important. But since the phenomenon occurring with Kazakiri now also involves the AIM diffusion fields, there might be something even you don't know. If that's the case, I'll help with that part. Together we can save Kazakiri Hyouka!"

The heavy rain sounded far off.

Only the lad's words were in control of the surroundings.

"Various things have occurred in this town today. Honestly, I just can't get a grip of the whole story yet, and even I can't find out the clue to the solution. However, I know what we have to do! We're going to rescue Kazakiri! Am I right!?"

He poses this question to obtain her confirmation.

And to make Index, who had spouted out nonsense like kill or do not kill when it comes to friends, come to her senses,

"Let's go, Index. Lend me your strength, for we're saving Kazakiri Hyouka!!"

Index, upon hearing that voice, nodded deeply.

Kamijou then lets go of her.

And then, he turns his sights onto the alleyway exit. At first the black-clads on the main street must be scattered, one way or the other. For someone who's unrelated to magic and ESP, mere bullets are really the most incompatible opponent for Kamijou. His right hand can only be used against unusual powers.

And,

"*siiigh*..."

Mikoto, also taken by Kamijou into the alleyway, let out a big sigh and tosses away her umbrella. With a somewhat tired look, she looks at Kamijou and Index.

"I don't understand it, but you were once again somehow dragged into a big problem, right?"

"W, well you could say that, but..."

"Then, 'your acquaintance is in the middle of it,' you're about to say?"

"Not 'acquaintance'. 'Friend'."

Index corrected.

Mikoto gazes towards the alleyway with an increasingly bored face,

"I have only one thing to confirm: that thing is not a bad person, right?"

"Absolutely right."

Kamijou immediately answered, unhesitatingly.

"Index might also say it. Over there is our friend."

"Friend..."

Mikoto looks at the [angel] who, even now is moving in the distance, is unleashing an electrical discharge-like phenomenon at the space between its wings. And then, she looked once again at Kamijou and Index's faces.

"That... Well, you're going to meet that friend of yours, right?"

Index and Kamijou almost answered at the same time to her question.

"That's right, we have decided, you know."

"You've confirmed something this obvious."

Hahaha, Mikoto laughed.

"So, this means the black-clads a while ago are the bad guys, right?"

"I haven't quite grasped what they're aiming for. At least, they shouldn't be the good guys."

At that same time, several footsteps have entered into the alleyway.

It was the black-clads, who had waited near the entrance for information, coming in for an assault.

Not a raid, but an assault. One with no time delays.

Even so, Mikoto laughed.

"Can't be helped then. I don't know about it somehow, but I guess that's your cherished friend then. I don't want to hear that from you guys again. Just go and save her! I'll do my part somehow here."

"You, you're mad...!!"

Kamijou instinctively tries to grab on Mikoto's shoulders but then,

"Sorry, my bad. My stopper's about to start!"

Mikoto had already faced the alley exit and fired her arcade coin.

The Railgun.

The launched attack, at three times the speed of sound, tore out the left and right alley walls, unleashes a terrible roar and flash of light, and went straight through the main street. She probably chose a trajectory that will not hit the black-clads, but some people are being knocked over by just the unleashed shock wave.

Ashen dust floats about.

And before the dust was cleared off by the raindrops, Mikoto rushes out into the naturally unshielded main street, treading onto the black-clads' guts to rob them of their consciousness.

"Misaka!!"

Kamijou shouts, but since the return fire from the black-clads waiting in the main street comes close to the alley entrance, he cannot advance further from there. Meanwhile, Mikoto, proud of her immense power when it comes surely to [average battle-strength], calls out to Kamijou from the battlefield where bullets fly rampant.

"It's about the penalty game!!"

"You said what!?"

"It's that when you listen to what someone says! Since it's still valid as of today you know, you'll [certainly save your friend and come back]!! Got it!?"

Kamijou seemed to try to shout back, but it was interrupted by the *crackle* electrical discharge and the sounds of gunfire. *Dammit*, he softly spat out.

"I'll surely follow it! So don't you die on me as well!!"

Pulling Index's hand, Kamijou, trying to shake off something, starts to run for the inner of the inner alleys. They have one destination. If Index's words were right on the mark, they're heading for the place where Kazakiri Hyouka is waiting.

On hearing the *splash* *splash* wet footsteps, Mikoto let out a sigh at the battlefield.

This is really a lousy role.

(Penalty game, eh. In the end, I wonder if I'll be using it for these.)

But oh well, it cannot be helped, she also thought.

It's said that one risks his own life to help his friend. She cannot pour cold water on it. However, if these black-clads (*well, isn't this fitting?*) did not make trouble in the first place, a better penalty game might have been continued for a short while.

As she thinks on those, clicks came, although these are few.

"Now, I'm so pissed."

Several gun muzzles are turned towards an unarmed Mikoto.

But just before the triggers were pulled, she gathers in rapid succession manhole covers, water pipes, even signboards and created a shield. A shield created by magnetism. The unleashed bullets were all repelled by the steel shield.

"If you're not running away, then bring it on even if it kills you!"

For the counter-strike, lightning bolts were wildly unleashed.

For she did not feel like losing.

Part 6

Kamijou and Index are running through the heavily rained streets.

He's worried about Mikoto behind him, but perhaps for Kamijou she's only a burden.

Moving on, Kamijou looks on where he's going.

And Index, running beside him, so asked him,

"Hey, Touma. The streets have been quiet for a while, what with this? Aside from Hyouka, I feel a somewhat different magical flow!"

"Indeed. That silence is probably because everyone has fainted. This is all thanks to that magician who came to this town. I also would like to know the construction of that magician's attack. Even that person has a way to reverse this!!"

He then summarily explains what's happening in Academy City.

Index, on hearing those, went silent and bent down her head in deep thought.

She then raises her face, while kicking the rain-beaten ground.

"Perhaps...that's the [Divine Punishment]!"

"What?"

"It's where you make a specific emotion the key. And it strikes down the person who embraces that emotion, regardless of distance or location! Thus, this is God's [Divine Punishment]. The reasoning is that wherever and whomever they are, people who spit on God are not forgiven!"

Index continues to talk,

"Touma, didn't that magician show some sort of practice-swinging? More importantly, they're trying to incite from you that specific emotion!!"

Specific emotion.

Now that it's mentioned, Kamijou remembered something about Vento of the Front.

—Her deliberately provocative speech and actions.

—Her deliberately revolting make-up and piercings.

—Her deliberately repeated unprovoked attacks aimed upon civilians.

Vento's reasons for her own actions may probably even have magically important facts. Or perhaps it's possible that she carries the role to [direct towards a certain emotion]. If that's the case, that emotion is...

"Unpleasant feelings... no, *hostility and ill will*? You don't mean...those are the activation keys for the damnation magic style!?"

With that kind of attack surely existing, Vento is almost invincible.

No one can stand in her way.

For the moment they think of standing in her way, the magic would be invoked.

The keepers of public order, the Anti-skill, must have tried to stop Vento, whom tried to pass through the gate without permission. Other Anti-skills then received reports through radio of them knocked down. And moreover, everyone in town knew the report through the news.

"Perhaps that damnation magic has stages in response to the hostility! Depriving the consciousness, body-binding, even preventing interference from the outside. But no matter the state, if you take it you're finished. Until the magician judges that [damnation is no longer needed], I think it's absolutely incurable!!"

And that's why everyone has collapsed.

And it's not only inside Academy City. In a worst case scenario, the damage might continue to expand outside town—Japan and many places around the world—through the news. In addition, other collaborating organizations and agencies of Academy City will automatically attempt contact; it is possible that this scenario would product more victims.

However,

"Is that possible? Is that magic so convenient?"

"Normally it can't be done! There is no description for that in my 103,000 books. However, only this can explain that phenomenon! ...Even I can realize it's strange. The [Divine Punishment] is the literal punishment handed down from the heavens. It can't be done by just the power of mere mortals!!"

However, Vento is implementing that.

That is the power of [God's Right Seat].

"That bastard, with that magic, Academy City is—"

"Hold it, Touma! If what you said now is true, don't speak to me of that magician's identity! My current [Walking Church] has lost its papal-level defensive functions. Unlike you, even I'm in danger of experiencing the damnation magic!!"

Is that so, Kamijou held his mouth in hot haste.

Vento's damnation magic is unblockable even by Index. Unless it's something like Kamijou's Imagine Breaker, it only takes to meet the the condition for anyone to be struck down. And Index is someone out to fight with the magician who is harming other people.

Anyhow, if it's incurable, it's inevitable that they have to stick to it.

Now for Kazakiri.

If Index disclosed even Vento's damnation magic, perhaps she might understand that too.

"Do you know what's with Kazakiri's...[Angel's] structure? She should be all right, shouldn't she? She still could be saved, right?"

"That is..."

"Damn, why must that thing come out at this time!? Does it have something to do with the [Divine Punishment] that occurred in the town!? Why not merely a phenomenon gone berserk, but an [angel] clearly manifesting itself!?"

"I DON'T KNOW!!"

Index, who has memorized by heart 103,000 magic books, unusually shouted.

Even though the [angel] spreading out in the distance should certainly be something from the magic side.

"For exterior and structure, it's very similar to the magic books inside my head. However, the used parts were totally incoherent, to the point that it's unfamiliar!! It's similar to looking at a wall painting where unknown characters were drawn. You can generally understand what they're trying to do from the picture, but you can't step into their cultural and spiritual [heart]!!"

"____"

The most frustrated of them is probably Index herself.

Because she has the [Index Librorum Prohibitorum] to certainly solve such a problem.

"At least we know that for the [angel] over there, the [core] that is controlling it would be in some separate place..."

"Even Index can't solve it..."

Kazakiri Hyouka is a being created from the AIM diffusion fields. On that basis, ESP research and state-of-the-art science and technology are included. When it comes to that, because Index could not perform to deal with that, this means she cannot bring up a counter-plan to the [angel] phenomenon.

Kamijou and Index continue their conversation while running.

Driven by restlessness to the point of not caring about the downpouring rain.

"How about Touma? Does Touma know something about the [structure] of Hyouka now?"

"That's hard to say."

Saying the phrase "it uses the AIM diffusion fields" is easy. However he cannot explain when it comes to the structure. Anyone can understand that [cars run on gasoline], but when told to [well, then draw up its plans], only very few can execute it.

(...There's one who's more knowledgeable than me. A university professor-level guy who can hum as he draws up the [plans]...)

However, Kamijou is not connected to that kind of adult or researcher.

Dammit, just as he thought to spit it out, one character floated up to his head.

"Komoe-sensei!!"

Surely, just like the time at the start of September when they were attacked by Sherry at the underground shopping center, she can see through Kazakiri's true form just by listening to him. Komoe-sensei should know the full details when it comes to AIM diffusion fields.

Her number is the number registered during that time.

As Kamijou runs through the rainy streets, he immediately connects to Komoe-sensei's mobile phone.

However,

"What's the matter, Touma?"

"Shiiiiit!!"

No answer.

Whether she was struck down by Vento's attack, or the mobile phone was rendered unusable due to some reason, he can't connect to Komoe-sensei no matter how much time passes.

(We're in a stalemate...!!)

Gnashing his back teeth, Kamijou went up and down through his list of registered numbers. However, the rest of the numbers were all registered only to students. A person whom has more knowledge than the teacher—

"!!"

Kamijou immediately contacts the lowest phone number in the list.

It was the most recently registered phone number.

And it belonged to,

"Misaka!!"

["Gah!! W—what! I'm damned busy; you can't pile up more of other people's work onto me!!"]

Mixed in with noise and muffled by the *bam!bam!bam!* consecutive gunshots, Mikoto's voice came back. What made the communication extremely poor is herself unleashing her lightning.

But he has no time for it.

Without hearing her complaints, he went straight to the question.

"If I remember right, word is that the quality of lesson contents at Tokiwadai Middle School is different from a normal middle school! Being educated to be at the forefronts upon graduation, **you even took on university-level lectures**, right!?"

["Ha!? What are you talki— watch it!? What are you talking about!!"]

"Information to stop that [angel] is needed! I need detailed advice in connection to the AIM diffusion fields!! You're the only one I can rely on! Can I leave it to you!?"

A strange *bu!?* voice can be heard from the mobile phone.

Kamijou at once puts the phone away from his ears, and then shouts in confusion.

"H—Hey Misaka! Are you hit!? HEY!!"

["I'M NOT!!"]

A *boom!boom!bzzt!* thundering sound can be heard in rapid succession.

Mikoto's voice continued afterward.

["A—And I'll have to do it!! I definitely won't forgive you for making me fight while using my head on other matters!!"]

"Good, well then Index, I'll be leaving my phone to you. If you have trouble understanding something, then listen entirely to what she says!"

Eh? Towards a disappointed-looking Index, Kamijou tries to hand over his phone.

Meanwhile, Mikoto herself,

["Ehhh!?"]

"??? What, what's the matter Misaka?"

"No, well, that, that's OK then. But, eh—!?"

"I'll leave it to you then!!"

He seems he had said something unintelligible, but he has no time to trouble himself with her.

Kamijou jammed his mobile phone onto the white sister.

"I have my right hand, and perhaps it's unlikely that you'll be helpful when it's magic-related. Sorry Index, you'll have to manage it alone somehow."

"What will you do, Touma?"

"We talked a while ago about the [core] controlling that [angel] being in a separate location. So, you're heading for the [core], and going solve the problem there. In the meantime, I have to do one task at the [angel]."

Kamijou continued to talk,

"And I've said it before: there's the magician who's been using the damnation magic. The magician named Vento from the organization [God's Right Seat] is out for Kazakiri, who's been turned into that [angel]. Before we even release Kazakiri, first I'll have to hold her back. Therefore, I'll leave it up to you to cause problems at the [core]. While you're doing it, I'll defend Kazakiri from Vento's attacks!!"

On hearing it, Index shifted her eyebrows, seemingly slightly concerned.

She's probably thinking about the various magic stuff that came out from Kamijou.

However, she did not voice them out, and let out different words for Kamijou,

"I understand. Touma, take care of Hyouka!!"

"We're on the same boat! You can count on me, Index!!"

The pair parted ways and went on their own ways.

Both have the same purpose of helping Kazakiri Hyouka.

Part 7

"HAHA, HEY, THAT'S AWESOME! JUST WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT!?"

In the currently unused office, Kihara Amata was cheering.

Several hundred meters ahead, large numbers of [wings] flew out as they level down buildings here and there. He can only see [wings] from his window, but as Kihara glimpses at them, the word [angel] floated up in his mind without knowing why.

The moment he injected a virus into Last Order's head (who's been lying on top of an office desk) and restarted her, that [angel] manifested. The name of the virus passed from the top brass is very straightforward: [ANGEL]. Any way he slices it, it's unlikely that it's unrelated. It's an existence alien to science, but it manifested due to science. From the start, Kihara did not deny that unscientific situation. On the contrary, he was amazed that at last science has tread its feet upon even this domain.

Academy City's general board chairman, Aleister.

Even he thought himself mostly as a mad scientist, but that bastard's more than that.

"Shit, this is frustrating! And damn it's flying, Aleister!! Even I can't understand the logic behind the theory—!? You're a scientist and yet you reject science, what scientist are you, OI!!"

The five lackeys surrounding Kihara, unlike him, seem to be bewildered. Whether it's okay or not to treat the spectacle before their eyes as something that exists in reality, it seems that with that stage they are already at a loss.

"Using **that** to beat down Academy City's enemies is the objective!! Surely, as long as that thing is prepared, most bastards can do only shit about it. We don't know who the fuck is stuck in the outer part, but too bad for them! Look, you bitches! We've fucking brought out an angel, this is no racket against the three nonnuclear principles!! Hey, since when did the Bible become a pop-up picture book!?"

Their brains unable to process information, the [Hound Dog] lackeys sluggishly follow Kihara's words and look outside from the dust-ridden window.

However, not one of them caught sight of the far-off looking [angel].

Because they soon saw a sky-flying Accelerator just before he kicked down the window.

The ***CRASH!!*** sound of glass screaming exploded.

ESPer mode is already released.

The black-clad nearest to the window took the full blow of Accelerator's dropkick and was blown off to the opposite wall. The [Hound Dog] crashed mercilessly into the soft inner wall, and tumbled down onto the floor as his armor shattered to pieces.

Accelerator didn't care if he's dead or alive.

His bloodshot eyes are rapidly swaying, but nevertheless he accurately acquired his target.

"KIIHARAA-KUUUUUUUN!!"

As he screamed, he aimed the shotgun's muzzle, and unhesitatingly set his finger on the trigger.

He's aiming all from the chest to the gut.

His mind is on a total and certain kill.

And, Kihara pushed his nearest lackey towards the front. As the man let out a goofy [Uwaa] voice, he jumps out just as Kihara's shield.

Then, countless shells go right through, splattering the blood of the [Hound Dog] as he rolled away. Kihara didn't even flinch. He's bursting out in laughter, his face seemingly being destroyed.

"AIM AND FIRE PROPERLY!! IT'S TROUBLE FOR EVERYONE IF YOU DON'T!!"

Accelerator ignores his blatant provocation.

His gaze zipped towards the flustered black-clads whom were readying their weapons in hot haste,

(Damned pesky shields...)

And *snap* gnashes his teeth with all his might,

(Bring it on! Don't say you're trying to spit out lines like [we were only following orders, please spare us], right?!!)

Manipulating his walking ability vectors, he changes his aim from Kihara to the [Hound Dogs], and thrust something into one of them. It was his five extended fingers that did not use the shot gun. On the man's armor, knives and handguns were attached. Four hand grenades were prepared near his shoulder.

He's aiming for the grenades.

Using four fingers from the index to the pinky, he pull the pins of all four of them.

He immediately kicks the abdomen, sending the man to the other [Hound Dogs], mowing them down like in bowling. As the topmost man in hot haste reaches for the attached hand grenades, the human bomb exploded.

The fragmentation grenades scattered about blood and meat.

With this, the remaining [Hound Dogs], except Kihara, is reduced to one.

"Hii!?"

The final target, being glared at by Accelerator, immediately grabs up something lying on top of an office desk. It's Last Order, limp and unconscious due to inclusion of unreasonable processes from Testament.

In Accelerator's hand is a shotgun, ineffective for minute aiming.

He's probably thinking that with the human shield, Accelerator can't fire at him.

However,

"__"

Accelerator's eye color had changed. An explosion *BOOM!* has been produced. His walking ability vectors manipulated, he directly closed the distance in an instant.

It's certain that Accelerator won't attack with the shotgun.

Instead, he full-swings the metallic gun barrel that's over a meter long, smashing the face in of the [Hound Dog]. From the sheer impact, the shotgun was smashed into pieces. Small springs and cylindrical shells that were inserted into the magazine whirl about in the air. After making a dull sound, the man's body whirls about on all fours like a taketonbo, and crashes onto the floor where it moved no more.

Supporting the separated and airborne Last Order with one hand, Accelerator gently places her body on top of the table.

And then throws a look at the ringleader, Kihara Amata.

So far he exterminated the escort unit defending him.

However, Kihara is guffawing since that only made him all the more carefree.

"COOOOL!! YOU'VE SHOWN YOUR TRUE SELF, AND I'M LOVIN' IT, ACCELERATOR!!"

The two villains' screams shake the room.

Opening once, then clenching both his slender hands, Kihara then rushes for Accelerator while licking his own lips.

Accelerator knows that [Reflection] doesn't work on Kihara, but he is already unfazed.

He opens up his ten fingers and starts running.

Remaining time for his ESPer mode is sixty seconds.

Part 8

Kamijou Touma was in the center of an explosion.

It was at a corner in what used to be the Seventh School District. The tall buildings are nothing but buildings of famous companies or rather high-class student-oriented department stores, and the restaurants included in the departments stores are frequently referred to in magazines. He could not visit it every day since it's off from the school zone, but even Kamijou would take Index there for dine-outs (of course there are no moods at all).

At the Seventh School District where the high-class [campus] atmosphere and the popular atmosphere like those of Kamijou's dormitories coexist together, when pressed to talk about that corner, it tightly fits into a high-class area. Practically during the day, many girls garbed in Tokiwadai Middle School or Kirigaoka Girls' College uniform should be walking there.

It was a space built not only for children, but a single peculiar class of well-groomed adults.

There,

Just like a castle being built in the sand pit being destroyed, it completely changed into wrecked ruins.

"..."

Everything from ground zero up to a 100m radius all around was mowed down and destroyed without leaving a single building standing. It doesn't mean that it was a thorough crater where it left not even a single fragment. It was a mess of a disaster, quite like each building had been plucked off by some giant's arm. But on the other hand, the obliquely-inclining buildings and department stores with only the foundations remaining are strangely shaking Kamijou's freshly-scarred mind.

Vento of the Front.

Many people rendered immovable because they took her special attack should be in there.

And during that time, on top of it, this large-scale destruction occurred. Just how many people are buried in that mountain of rubble? for Kamijou, it's hard to imagine. Rescue is late in coming, but should they come, he's hoping many people might be rescued.

His nerves have gone numb.

Kamijou, with staggered movements, looked towards the center of ground zero.

There is a solitary angel.

Its real form is as tall as a normal human being.

On the other hand, the scale of the wings is too big; it quite looks like this person is being swallowed by the wings.

Her wings give off a dazzling light, seemingly blowing away everything, even the ashen dust and the heavy rain. Their total lengths vary from 10 meters to 100 meters. Lots and lots of these non-uniform (like those weeds disorderly stretching out) and sharp-pointed gigantic wings are connected to the back of the diminutive girl.

The [angel] located close to 100 meters from Kamijou slowly moved horizontally relative to him. She should only be walking on two slender feet, but every time the girl advances step-by-step, a low *rumble!* shock is transmits back.

The girl.

Kazakiri Hyouka.

She was a long-haired girl. Pretty-haired with a mix of small quantities of light brown hair among the jet-black. Most of her hair reaches onto her back, but a bunch of it is tied by the side of the head and left hanging down. Along with glasses that seem to hide her timid looks, she has a school-designated blazer that did not even mess with the skirt length. And accenting them is a red necktie.

She's the girl Kamijou is sure he's acquainted with.

A girl who should be a crybaby, and even hesitant to hit rascals.

However,

What Kamijou is looking at now is obviously different from such an image of Kazakiri Hyouka. Her head is loosely hanging, her tongue is partially sticking out from her half-open lips. Her opened eyeballs were rapidly and irregularly shaking as if they're following the small letters of a machine lens. The face-wetting rain water and her drool are mixing together, stickily soaking her uniform by her breasts. However, Kazakiri didn't twitch, even as she received that sticky shine and texture.



Several gigantic wings. The unworldly atmosphere. The walled-off presence.

Those resemble Misha Kreuzhev's.

However, the giant angel before his eyes is more unnatural, more warped than even she herself was.

There is no emotion on her face.

There is no flowing teardrop from her ominous, staggering eyes.

Even tear-shedding was prevented.

By some kind of constraint.

Above her head floats a halo about 50 centimeters in diameter.

The halo changes its rotational velocity to match Kazakiri's limb activity, and its diameter repeatedly expands and shrinks. On the exterior of the halo are pencil-like rods appearing infinitely, appearing and disappearing at a *gasha!gasha!gasha!!* rapid pace.

Kamijou Touma remembers this.

In Kazakiri Hyouka's head, a triangular prism-like part is set in. Her limbs were moving in accordance to that triangular prism.

He thought he saw something in there.

Lots of electrodes were stabbed into her cranium and are controlling her, it was a chilling scene.

(Kaza...kiri...)

At the extreme sight, Kamijou immediately averted his eyes from Kazakiri's face. It might be better to see it as a corpse.

I have to end this, Kamijou thought from the bottom of his heart. Reasons be damned.

"KAZAKIRIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!!"

Kamijou instinctively shouted.

The feet of the randomly-walking and looking Kazakiri suddenly stopped.

Her head slowly tries to turn toward Kamijou's direction.

However.

The angel halo above Kazakiri's head rotated at high speed, along with a metal-grating *gagagari!!* sound. The pencil-like rods packing closely outside of the halo simultaneously *shaga!!* stab into it.

A screaming sound can be heard.

Kazakiri's head movement forcibly halts, and it *gigigi!!* shakes. Like the gear-like eyes being blocked, her neck turns back to its original orientation. Her head unnaturally twisted, Kazakiri again slowly sets off.

An electric spark-like sound echoes.

Looking up high overhead, each time the gigantic wings close the distance between them, a pale light blinks. It quite appeared like it's confirming the state before firing.

The strange light *blink!* flashes on and off at Kazakiri's surroundings. It looks like it's timed in tune with the angel's halo. And then, Kazakiri's body is forcibly being moved, guided on by that light.

Even though in truth she doesn't want to do anything about it, she is really really worried sick about it; she looks like she's intimidated into moving towards there at all costs.

Like as if worrying about the main gas stop.

Like thinking the dirt won't come off, even as one washes his hands many times.

(...looks like a severe case of OC neurosis.)

He feels it vaguely. Even though there's no reason to decide on the rules, she can't help but having to check on it no matter what. It's the same with that light. With the [important points] hurling one after the other, it mentally guides Kazakiri's movements.

However,

If that kind of situation continues on forever, the nerves wearing down is unavoidable. For this is like leading a person to the maze exit, and said person is blinded and has a heated iron plate pressed onto their back.

That was an act that completely ignored the mind of Kazakiri as a person.

It was only like pouring scorn on a person's back who is clumsily tumbling down.

(Shit...stop messing with her!!)

Kamijou instinctively tried to rush over to her, but his feet froze.

How to get near to her?

He cannot touch Kazakiri's body.

For his Imagine Breaker would destroy even the illusion called Kazakiri Hyouka, no questions asked.

"Dammit...!!"

Kamijou gnashes his teeth, and punches his useless right hand into a collapsed wall.

He cannot save the people buried here, and he cannot even save Kazakiri who has been struck down by an unusual phenomenon like this. He was too small, and helplessly miserable.

That person hears a new set of footsteps.

The bad luck in front of him is again beckoning in a different kind of bad luck.

"Oh my God. I wonder if you're about to lick each others' wounds, fellow mortal sinner."

Kamijou turns around.

Standing there is a woman with her face full of piercings, and her body clad in a dress of a very antique pattern. A member of the organization [God's Right Seat], she came to knock out Academy City's town facilities and calmly walk during that time to kill Kamijou.

Vento of the Front.

She's holding in her hand a gigantic hammer wrapped in barbed wire.

It must be an illness, or some other reason aside from it, but red blood is dripping from Vento's mouth, staining her rain-soaked clothes here and there. Even so, Vento's expression is unchanged.

Vento, whose facial balance is beginning to collapse due to her numerous piercings, smirked at the weapon in her one hand. It's a smile full of contempt and ridicule unlikely to be aimed at a person.

"Though I considered with great trouble about putting it off, you've come to be the first one to be killed. Perhaps you want to be crushed first, since you don't want to see this wretched being any further?"

"I won't let you kill Hyouka."

"Oh really? You have feelings even for such a being. You're one kind of a philanthropist. Even for a blasphemous symbol even more unclean and corrupted than the [Great Harlot] that will come on the Apocalypse. I believe that pervert, as expected, won't accept that."

"You bitch!! Back off!!"

"For what? Perhaps you intend to say that it's out of the ordinary? Nonsense, today's the first time I've seen it, but I don't believe that the head of Academy City would create a harmless and useless being by manipulating the entire town. This has enormous worth and war potential. Instead, I think what you saw up to now is an incomplete and imperfect irregularity.

The head of Academy City.

For the science side, he's the person who's in complete control of half the world.

If Kazakiri Hyouka is an existence created to make use of the AIM diffusion fields of the entire Academy City, surely that person is top on the list of persons (probably) controlling her. She was not created just by accident; if there is some reason in creating her, surely credibility arises even in the words [incomplete] and [imperfect].

"As a member of [God's Right Seat], I won't let that monster pass. Well, we're not even a decent group, but even we can't approve of that monster. That's a blasphemous lump to be crucified and be sneered at by all — a being that should be exterminated!"

A thunderous *spark!* roar struck Kamijou's ears.

(...!? Not again!!)

He turns around just as a light that looks like lightning flashes from the gigantic wings connecting to Kazakiri's back. Sparks bridge across the gap between wing and wing, and the sound scale is changing rapidly to a high-pitch. It looks like it'll overflow and fly out for the outside anytime soon.

Kamijou was a bit silent, considering everything so far.

And then he says,

"Just this once, I'll repeat myself."

"What?"

Back off, shitty bitch.

Heh, Vento happily laughs.

"How unexpectedly noble of you. Fine then, I'll consider your feelings. Either way, I have plans to kill both of you one after the other, so I'll happily kill you both together.

That's probably the best compromise for her.

But from Kamijou's view, it's a condition so bad he wants to spit on it.

"Perhaps, you're appealing for help from that monster? Forget it! You can't win against me, even if you join forces."

Vento informed him with a cheerful tone.

"Did you know? From the start, [Angels] have no free will of their own. They're God's perfect tools!"

Vento informed him in scorn.

"When it malfunctions and messes up other command systems, it turns into what we call a fallen angel. One famous example is the rebellion of [Light-Bringer (Lucifer)]. When this machine was dragged into [malfunction], it caused chaos to one-third of all the angels deployed in heaven, and this resulted to war."

"Well then," she says while she grinds and scrapes her hammer on the asphalt.

On making eye contact with Kamijou, she says,

"Is that monster sacred? Or is it corrupted?"

"..."

"There's no need to say it! That's a mere bastard of a fallen angel!! That's not even a running amok angel created by God, it's a man-made doll attached with misshapen wings that's confused, a pitch-black bastard of a sinner with crimes piling up!!"

Vento lifts up the hammer from the ground with one hand, and points it at Kamijou.

"I don't know what kind of plans there are in Academy City! Did they fail in trying to create the perfect angel, or were they trying to create the depravity in the first place!? Either way, we won't approve what you bastards are doing!!"

With those words, only its emotions are enough to beat up a person.

It was a voice that totally denies the existence of Kazakiri Hyouka.

"I didn't think that monster would now pass as my [favorite]. In the first place, I don't know if it holds a soul just like a human being. Even so, I will kill it! For that defective [fallen angel], even with my insufficient powers, I'll make it destroy itself by introducing interfering magic at its internal combustion control systems, similar to a mid-air explosion!! I'll blow that monster away with monstrous powers!!!"

Kamijou took in those words.

Gritting his teeth, he looks at her straight in the eye, and his mouth moves,

"...I won't let you."

The battle conditions were bordering on the impossible.

In other words, Kamijou takes on Vento even though he doesn't know how to win against her in the first place, all while protecting Kazakiri. And to top it off, even that Kazakiri is not necessarily harmless. And with those horrific sparks being unleashed from the wings, it only takes one striking his back.

Even so Kamijou Touma strongly clenches his right fist.

He then says,

"...on top of being made to experience this because of Academy City's big wigs, they stained her forcibly guided hands and feet with blood, even preventing her from crying or seeking help. On top of this, she's now being treated as a monster and about to be killed by the likes of you, coming in from the outside on their own?"

It doesn't matter whether or not those are sent to [that girl] now. Kamijou has since decided on defending Kazakiri Hyouka. And to accomplish that, he'll stand in Vento's way, and keep taking on conditions that are disadvantageous to himself as he gets beaten by the downpouring rain, and the giant wings right at his back.

"Enough with this shit! And enough with that shit you're trying to pull on a person's friend!!!"

Chapter 10: Their respective battlefields. *The Way of Light and Darkness.*

Part 1

The time limit is sixty seconds.

At any rate, he can only kill Kihara. There's no problem, even if the remaining time after the end of the fight is ten seconds. The quantities of energy consumption between ESPer mode and normal mode is incomparable. Even with several seconds of battle mode left, after switching to normal mode, several minutes of activity is still possible.

In a corner of the abandoned office, a portable-modeled [Testament] is lying there.

It's the minimum in any case, but he can say that the conditions for Last Order's mind recovery are prepared.

If the virus has really been driven into her mind, perhaps Kihara still has the original script. In that case, preparing the vaccine program shouldn't be that difficult.

(And so I will kill. In any case I will kill!! Everything will end if I kill him! And to hell with the rest. Either way, I cannot return to the way of the light. If so, then think only of going down to hell together with Kihara!!)

In a room of the vast abandoned office, Accelerator thinks only that as he thrusts his hand as fast as a bullet at Kihara's gut. A right hand with all fingers extended. A demonic hand that uses vector reflecting powers and only mere skin contact would make the blood in the entire target's body regurgitate, and as a result, destroy to bits both blood vessel and internal organs. If he were to consider that Last Order is on the same floor, he wouldn't use such a flashy technique. Still, this is enough to kill a person.

He violently thrusts his hand, aiming for his face from below.

In response, Kihara merely swings his face and easily avoids it. There is none of the "I'm dead if it touches me even for a moment" fear and nervousness. It's a face that appears to say "no problems, it definitely won't hit me."

Kihara jumps in for a cross-counter at Accelerator, who had just tried to hit him in vain.

Immediately after he unleashes several precise boxing jabs, he draws back his fist.

And then it mercilessly crashes into Accelerator's septum after it quickly made it through his [Reflection] barrier.

"Gh...!!"

A thick *bash!* pulverizing sound echoes.

Like a hammer, this is not by any means a flashy, heavy blow. Still, one's field of vision will shake when they take it on the nose, but on the other hand, this is not the kind that would knock one out.

However,

More fast consecutive attacks strike at Accelerator, who momentarily froze due to the pain. Face, chest, shoulder, gut, and then again face, face, face. Kihara steps away from Accelerator's swing, and follows it up with a distance-closing attack.

"GYAHAHA!! YOU SHITTY BASTARD! YOU DARE STAND IN FRONT OF ME?"

Along with Kihara's scream, a *wham!!* impact shakes Accelerator's head.

As expected, [Reflection] did not work.

The absolute wall where not a single hair on his head behind it would shake, even if the wall itself directly took a nuclear blast.

Accelerator in the meantime tries to step back.

And Kihara again greatly leaps to the front of him, continuing with yet another unleashed fist onto his face.

"!!"

Accelerator's [Reflection] is not a massive bombproof board generated in front of his body.

It just thoroughly [changes the direction of a vector toward its opposite]. With all the vectors coming in from all around him changing to their opposite directions, he defends his body from all types of attacks.

In other words,

*(**If a vector heading backward hits my [Reflection], just like that it will turn for me!!**)*

Beaten, with blood dripping from the tip of his mouth, Accelerator obtains his conviction.

Kihara pulls back the fist that he throws just before it hits Accelerator, just as it approaches near the line that indicates the thin covering film of [Reflection]. With that fact, he's in a fix where [the fist that's heading backwards is naturally changing its direction towards him].

In that case, he only has to alter the vector control powers defending his body; however, he has to minutely readjust the turning direction of Kihara's fist as if he has read it ahead of time. The mind that directly developed the ****power called Accelerator**** is probably really something.

"What's the matter kiddo!? Did you come here to save that brat?"

His timing was taken away, rhythm seized, and he's being led around by the nose. The damage from the light and agile Kihara slowly accumulates in his body like alcohol. Every time Accelerator's body movement wavers, Kihara changes to a more daring action, speeding up his [drunkenness] rate.

"Gu...aaa...!!"

Time more and more mercilessly passes by.

Even though this amounts to this gap even as he uses Academy City's strongest powers to its fullest, without the electrode's divine protection, even standing on his own is difficult. And for that, a sudden chance definitely won't come.

Impatience cuts down time, and time is leading further to more impatience.

(...Shithead!! Even with me too busy to stop the likes of Kihara, I'm losing the time needed to use the [Testament] to cure that brat—!!)

"Slacking off eh, scrapped murderer bastard!! Already thinking on what to do after you've won!?"

WHAM!!, a thunderous roar echoes.

The consciousness of Accelerator, who is in deep thought, certainly shakes this time.

Kihara Amata's movements are considerably greater. He must have judged that the damage-saddled Accelerator is already unable to deal with his speed.

The blows become longer in interval; in exchange, the fists are slowly increasing in force.

"Hey bitch, perhaps you think of yourself in awfully good shape eh?"

At a face-crushing blow, Accelerator's two legs stagger. If he were not careful they would have been twisted around.

"You think your own life will be written off of all debts by going alone against a huge evil organization and making efforts to save a pathetic captured brat!?"

Even when he's paying attention of his enemy, Kihara's fists again come flying in. Even with his vitals guarded by both his arms, the impact always slips through the cracks of his defense. The damage is extreme, and thickened clots of blood gush out from the cracks of his lip that caught it.

"GYAHAHAHAHAH! DON'T GIVE ME THAT SHIT! A BRAT LIKE YOU HAS BEEN IN THE MUD HIS ENTIRE LIFE! GROVEL AND CREEP UP ALL YOU WANT, YOU'RE STILL STUCK IN MUD!! NOW GO AND SINK IN THERE! EVERYTHING'S TOTALLY DIRTIED WHEN BRATS LIKE YOU WALK AROUND!!"

And along with an especially massive *BAM!!* impact, Accelerator's body finally collapses onto the floor. Both of his knees buckle, and his forehead looks like it's going to hit the top of the dust and hair-ridden carpet.

(...Sh...Shit. This shithead...)

Even so, Accelerator places his hand onto the steel office desk, preventing himself from totally going down. His body's stamina was taken away due the damage from Kihara. Just like after finishing a marathon, his entire body is screaming for relief.

(...I know that. I know that I've been in the mud in my whole life. You have reminded me of that, and so I already have no regrets being there. What I'm seeking for isn't there....)

Gritting his teeth and forcibly putting up with the pain, Accelerator applies force onto the supporting office desk. Applying strength to his arms, he unsteadily gets onto his feet.

(...Enough with this shit! Enough with all of you ganging up and aiming for that brat. Only you and me are going to hell. Don't you dare drag that brat to hell, you shitty bastard...)

However, this kind of resolution ends in vain.

Beep beep, goes a small electronic sound.

A tiny, tiny, ultimatum comes from the choker-type electrode on his neck.

A mechanical signal that 1 minute—or 60 seconds—have passed.

It means that the battery is out.

Sound of someone collapsing.

An Accelerator, who had lost all of his strength, crumbles down in front of Kihara Amata onto the dust-ridden floor.

Part 2

A *boom!!* thunderous roar reverberates.

Anytime now, the overwhelming sparks will bridge across the [Angel's] gaps between the wings.

"HAHAHA!!"

Vento of the Front, gigantic hammer in one hand, rushes for Kamijou's position from the front.

And Kamijou is trying to throw his clenched fist, which aims at the incoming Vento, at full strength.

A *zoom!!* whooshing sound resounds.

That isn't the sound of Vento swinging her hammer.

It's the sound of Vento's body flying just three meters above him.

She's evading not through below, left, or right, but above.

Probably a variation of magic that uses the air.

Her merciless counter of a flying kick struck towards the face of Kamijou, who had missed his strike. And along with a *crack!!* thick sound, his body tumbles onto the wet asphalt.

(G-Gah!? This bitch...!!)

Kamijou gets up in hot haste as he applies pressure to his nose.

And Vento is right in front of him.

Her raised hammer vigorously swings down towards Kamijou, who's on the road.

The *jariri!!* sound of the chain grating can be heard.

Looking closely, the bloodied, red-dyed chain on her tongue aims at Kamijou's face, tracing out a helical lance.

A deadly weapon of wind comes out, following that chain.

"Gaaah!!"

Kamijou pushes out his right hand as he screams. Vento's attack is repelled, the whirlwind scattering into the surroundings. This greatly disturbs the direction of the raindrops for only several seconds.

Neither of them noticed it.

Vento breathes in, and again recklessly swings her hammer. The chain in her tongue wriggles like a living animal. Kamijou gives up on blocking it with his right hand, and rolls backwards to evade. He thinks he can't ever turn around his disadvantageous position if he keeps relying on his Imagine Breaker. As he uses the rolling momentum to fall back, he immediately stands up from the ground.

The blunt-air weapon that missed him plunges into the asphalt, and those asphalt fragments are revolving about in mid-air.

Vento's ear-piercing voice flies at Kamijou, who is using both his arms to protect his face from the stony storm.

"*Cough* ...Shit, as I thought, her strength output is weakening..."

Coughing out blood from his mouth, Kamijou glares at the angel behind his back.

While swinging her blood-strewn chain, Vento raises her voice,

"HAHA, IT'S BEEN A BOTHER SINCE A WHILE BACK EH!! SWINGING THAT DISGUSTING ARM OF YOURS AND PROTECTING THAT SICKENING [ANGEL], HOW FAR WILL YOU MAKE ME LAUGH 'TIL I'M HAPPY!?"

"DON'T MESS WITH ME, YOU BITCH!! YOU THINK THERE'S ONLY YOUR PERSPECTIVE IN THIS WORLD!? WHY WON'T YOU TRY TO ACCEPT PEOPLE APART FROM YOURSELF!!?"

Going through the storm of stones, Vento again comes rushing for Kamijou's gut.

Strangely, the asphalt doesn't hit her body. He sees the illusion that they're quite avoiding her. Kamijou surmises that this is some kind of magic that uses air.

Swinging her hammer, she shouts,

While thick blood escapes from her mouth,

"BECAUSE I ABHOR SCIENCE! I HATE SCIENCE!!!"

Just as Kamijou is about to knock away her hammer with his right hand, it suddenly disappears into thin air. As Kamijou's fist cuts through thin air, the hammer once again appears at its own discretion in Vento's hand.

Vento *wham* forces the hammer's end into Kamijou's defenseless gut.

And the chain in her tongue wraps round and round at its handle.

"I HATE THE SCIENCE THAT MADE ME INTO THIS!!"

Immediately, the blunt-air weapon blows out from the hammer's tip.

Kamijou immediately twists his body; nevertheless, the blunt weapon grazes his flank. With only that much, his body *gurun!* whirls like a taketonbo. With any form of landing impossible, he just crashes into a crumbled wall.

"I HATE THE SCIENCE THAT LET MY YOUNGER BROTHER DIE!!"

Hurling an indecipherable one-sided verbal assault, Vento again sweeps down her hammer. With that much, the entwined chain unravels before one is aware. A blunt weapon of air is generated, and unleashes right for Kamijou. The stuck-to-the-wall Kamijou vigorously jumps to the side and avoids it.

The building wall smashes down like a toy.

Kamijou shivers at that power, but his movement suddenly stops.

Opposite of the destroyed wall is a collapsed man, about the age of a college student.

"Wai—!!"

Kamijou tries to stop, but then,

A *BOOM!!* thunderous roar overwhelms Kamijou's words.

It's the sparks from the wings of the [Angel].

It's way past a thunderous roar, it's already close to a shockwave.

"!!!"

At the sheer shock, Kamijou instinctively covers his ears with both hands and reveals a pained expression. As he averts his eyes from Vento and looks back, the spark that draws the bridge at the gap between Kazakiri's wings has finally been unleashed beyond the tolerable level.

BOOM!! Something that exceeds the sound barrier pierces through.

It draws out a snake-like line, and in an instant it beaks through as far as the area outside of Academy City. In spite of the distance close to possibly being hidden by the horizon, it certainly appears that a wave is raised due to the blasted-up soil.

Perhaps the angel's attack was again unleashed to attack an [enemy].

(Dammit...)

His head hurts intensely.

Even as he understands that he has to stop Vento or they will drag collapsed people into their battle, he cannot move his body well.

Meanwhile, Vento, with a pain-ignoring expression,

"THAT THING'S PART OF SCIENCE!! YOU ALSO ARE A PERSON OF SCIENCE!! DOES THAT MEAN YOU DON'T THINK OF THAT THING AS DISGUSTING!?"

Vento, with her mouth continuing to spew blood, waving her hammer as much as her strength allows, determines the alignment of her tongue piercing, and the extra-large blunt weapon of air smashes the concrete down into very small pieces.

All to deliberately drag that ordinary person into their battle.

Part 3

He can't get a hold on his general balance, and he can't even [calculate] where to direct his power in order to get up. He can't even count how many fingers he has in his outstretched hand even while following it with his eyes.

Because the battery is out, Accelerator's neck electrode has lost its effect.

Now he can't use his ability, understand language, or even calculate the answer by bending his fingers. Far from able to clench his fist and snap it at Kihara, because in the first place he cannot even control his own body weight and center of gravity, standing up is flat out difficult.

With his cheeks on the dust-stained office floor and dust-entwined carpet hair, Accelerator is feeling this so-called [discomfort] status but,

(...What...can I do...to eliminate...this [discomfort]?)

Even as he can passively receive information, he can't actively show a response. It's because that the necessary intervening [calculation] has been sealed.

A voice pours over from above the head of Accelerator in such state.

Kihara Amata's.

"**Is sleep finally coming onto you fine and the least of your many problems!？**"

He cannot understand at all what is being said.

What did he want to do here in the first place? Even as he asks it himself, he cannot answer. Surely Last Order should be here. He's sure he should be taking her out from here. That he understands. If it's only outputting the previously input information to his consciousness, then Accelerator can do it without any [calculation].

But then,

How to do it concretely?

(.....)

Accelerator's movements stopped there.

It's plausible that even with his perfectly working thinking ability status in the first place, deriving this answer is probably impossible. Even as he fully uses Academy City's strongest power, Kihara Amata would see through it first, and in a puff of smoke, would contrarily strike back with a severe counter after he had restrained Accelerator's power. In contrast to Kihara, who would dance around his world-destroying blow as if it was nothing, the current Accelerator lost the benefit of the choker-type electrode and only has the locomotive ability to rely on a stick to barely stand up. With this, deriving the prospects of winning is too harsh. The output solution would come out at, in one word, 0 percent—even if [Tree Diagram] is used.

However,

"——?"

At that moment, the mouth of Kihara that spews out harsh contemptuous words stops.

In his expression full of insults, some bewilderment is added in.

It's probably understandable. It's all the more when one sees the machinery on the back of Accelerator's neck, and almost accurately deduces its functions and weaknesses.

Creak.

Accelerator again tries to stand up, clinging onto the office desk and jarring it.

It is simply not a fighting condition.

He cannot even support his own body weight. Right now, both his hands are holding onto the desk, but if he lets go, it's expected that he'll immediately collapse onto the floor. The focus of his eyeballs won't come together, and his irregular, loosely shaking black eyes projecting onto something is a level he himself can only understand.

Far from standing before a mighty opponent, he's an Accelerator that's being defeated by the Earth's gravity.

But even so, he's confronting Kihara Amata.

Looking at Accelerator's unsightly state, Kihara laughs like an idiot,

What are you giving that's the same as repelling a bombardment company?

He's definitely hurling unreachable insults.

'What are you even going to do with the battery out,' is the words' meaning, but it's impossible for them to reach Accelerator now. And so, even if they did reach him, his actions would definitely not change.

The current Accelerator cannot do any and all calculations.

Even as he understands this hopeless situation, the chances of successfully overcoming it will not go up.

However,

Conversely, the current Accelerator cannot reckon his total defeat.

Therefore, he is definitely fearless.

Even if driven into this situation, even as he realizes that the next blow would kill him.

Until the final of the final moments.

He is dead set to continue fighting, even if he's unable to do calculations.

Part 4

Both of Kamijou's eyes open.

His right hand that hides the Imagine Breaker did not reach in time.

In the middle of the downpouring rain, Vento's unleashed attack smashes the concrete wall like a bomb. Including the unconscious person there, everything is wiped out into ashen dust.

It's on the same level as attacking a battlefield hospital, shoving the gun muzzle one by one onto the heads of severely wounded awaiting treatment and then pulling the trigger.

No matter what one thinks, there's no way that the person dragged into that attack would live.

Only scattered, shredded human flesh should remain after the ashen dust is cleared away.

Meanwhile, Kazakiri is continuously unleashing *BAM!!* *BOOM!!* the lightning-like attack.

Unnecessarily crushing down Kamijou's heart.

"YOOOOOOOOOOOUUUUUUUUUUU!!!"

The scream unleashes quite later from Kamijou's mouth.

The scene before his eyes is that of gruesomeness, enough that his mental processes slow down.

A *whoosh!!* storm blows by, suddenly taking away the dust.

And then,

Within it is the unconscious, yet uninjured civilian.

"Wh...?"

"Ah...?"

Kamijou and Vento look at the collapsed college student.

Surely the attack should have scored a direct hit.

(What the hell is this...? Shit. To thwart the ordinary person in front of me, it should have taken a bit of shaking up from its emotions.)

Vento ponders this, but then,

Gently,

Like a cotton that gave off a soft light, it slowly descends from the night sky.

Turning their heads, both Kamijou and Vento confirm it.

Some glittering scales are lightly floating about, surrounding the uninjured college student. It's proof of an unusual power so weak one cannot spot it without straining his eyes for it. However, they are hovering and covering the area around the student, as if to thwart the attack. It appears that much is the real form protecting the civilian from Vento's attack.

Where did it come from...? Kamijou scans the surroundings.

The glittering scales lightly drift about in the surroundings, unmindful of the downpouring rain.

Kamijou and Vento are preoccupied with totally different matters when it comes to the survivor's situation.

It's scales of light.

Kamijou knows of this radiance.

And he turns back around.

There, is Kazakiri Hyouka, scattering the scales from the countless wings.

"Haha..."

He laughs.

Kamijou instinctively laughs at the scene before him.

The surrounding rubble makes sounds. Appearing from within the rattling wreckage are normal people buried with the university student. Men and women, children and adults—it's a crowd.

The scales wrapped in a hundred, then a thousand of them. All are set on continuing to protect them.

And there aren't any injuries.

Not even one of them.

Zaa!! The surrounding place is being illuminated by the glittering scales.

Her emotions are wiping away away the darkness!!

"Hahaha..."

He doesn't know who the person who made Kazakiri into this is, but it's unlikely that the person has concern for the survivors' safety. If that's the case, apart from the destructive acts, these glittering scales that helped out the survivors should be in contrary of the orders of someone lurking in the shadows.

As far as it's concerned, this is a phenomenon caused by this girl's intentions.

Even when made into this form and totally robbed of her freedom, as a result of her desperately resisting, she spares no effort defending the final line to the end.

The pencil-shaped rods installed in the angel halo above Kazakiri's head move *click!crack!click!* at high speeds. And the light meant to guide her body *flash!* consecutively blinks on and off.

Perhaps these were commands to stop Kazakiri's independent action.

Snap! A strange sound is heard from Kazakiri's right arm.

At the excessive restraining force, her right arm conspicuously destroys the outline.

Even so, the scales drifting about in the surroundings are never lost.

She'd definitely never give up.

Along with a *dogaa!!* thunderous roar, the lightning-like attack is fired in succession from Kazakiri's wings towards the outskirts of Academy City. However, the countless scales take the attack, obstructing their path. The scales are lightly blown away at the sheer destructive power, but Kazakiri does not stop resisting. No matter how much bodily injury is inflicted on her.

Destruction and protection, those two reciprocal actions.

Right now, Kazakiri Hyouka is showing both of them.

Even if she cannot run away from someone's control or cannot stop the attack toward others, Kazakiri does not give up.

She's resisting to the point of jarring her own body,

To diminish even a little a person's sorrow,

She exerts all her strength with a very serious resolve,

****To fight alongside.****

"DAMN—THIS—HYPOCRITE!! What the hell is it doing!?"

Vento shouts as her face turns bright red, but her screams do not reach Kamijou's ears.

"Haha..."

Thank goodness, he thinks.

For Kamijou Touma, he was right in taking action to defend Kazakiri Hyouka,

But only that fact is clear to him.

"Hahahahaha!! This is madness! Unbelievable!! Normally I'd be saying "such bad luck", but **this is perfect for a blessing**, right!?"

"W—What... What the hell are you saying!!?"

Vento, who up to this point was still continuing to seize the initiative, instinctively steps back at Kamijou's aberrant laughter. The blood-stained chain in her tongue leaves a trail in her wake. In contrast, Kamijou totally doesn't care to answer her question. For he is already satisfied. He doesn't need ask for answers beyond this, and so he has no need to answer to Vento's words. Since an answer was given, Kamijou's heart will never give in, no matter what Vento says and does to him.

"Just hold on, Kazakiri."

This time, convinced that "it will reach her", Kamijou Touma talks to her.

Toward the girl who's unleashing the destructive attacks, and the one who keeps on resisting from it with defensive scales.

"Index is now on the move to save you. You don't have to worry about leaving this troublesome matter to her. It's because she's your friend, no matter what you say. She'll fulfill your hopes."

And so, Kamijou told her as he applies power into his right hand.

Forming a strong and hardening fast fist that is way beyond with what he did before.

"Rest easy. Until that happens, I will absolutely hold everything back right here."

Part 5

"ENOUGH MONKEYING AROUND, YOU CRIPPLED FUCK!!"

Kihara Amata shouts, then with all his might knocks Accelerator, who's been staggering and leaning onto the office desk off his feet. Accelerator already cannot use his powers. And so there's no problem hitting him with all of Kihara's strength without resorting to the special [fist reversal] strike.

As a result, Accelerator's body is about to dance about like wastepaper.

However, just before it happened, he grabbed Kihara's wrist. Due to the simple and stronger-than-expected dog- or cat-like instinct of [grabbing anything that flies], Accelerator's body suddenly stopped.

"Tch!"

Kihara tries to shake off Accelerator's hand, which had grabbed itself to his fist, but it does not go as he expected. Meanwhile, Accelerator is already clenching his other loose hand and smashes it into Kihara's face.

Only a soft *pashin* sound came out, almost painless.

Until Accelerator **grabs the hair just above Kihara's ears, on the side temples, and rips them out with all his strength**.

"GAAAH!?"

Blood sprays out along with Kihara's scream.

Because it was pulled out like weeds, scalp is ripped apart along with the hair. And just like earth entwined with grass roots, lightly sticking along with what Accelerator is holding as [hair] is flesh-colored skin and pink-colored flesh.

Totally without sympathy.

Totally without mercy.

Accelerator smiled a mouth-splitting smile right in front of Kihara, who's expression is breaking down.

He, close to fighting purely by instinct, reveals a facial expression of an extremely primitive [exhilarating] feeling.

"WHY—YOOU—LITTLE—SHIIT...!!"

Kihara pulls back further while holding the side of his head with one hand.

However, Accelerator clings on Kihara quite like a zombie, and just like that he pushes him down onto the floor. "YOU BITCH!!" Kihara shouts, but this completely does not reach Accelerator, who has no language faculty at this point.

(He's taking me down...!!)

Kihara tries to shout, but at that moment, Accelerator went to grab for Kihara's ear to rip it apart.

"Ooooh!?"

In hot haste Kihara swings his head and avoids Accelerator's fingers; he then punches Accelerator's face and gets away from being pinned down. He moves on the floor, rolling his body along.

(Fuck you for messing me up, I'll fucking kill you right here and now!!)

Kihara, downed, spots a handgun rolling on the floor. A weapon from one of the [Hound Dogs] crushed by Accelerator.

I'll use that to punch holes in his body, thinks Kihara, but then,

"_____"

Accelerator grabs that hand of his.

And Accelerator jams his other hand into the solar plexus of Kihara, who's going to bring his own hand closer to the gun. As Accelerator does it twice, then thrice, Kihara gives up the gun for a moment, drives his shoulder into the face of Accelerator who's leaning on him, and tries to gain distance from him.

It might have been instinctive movements, but even so, Accelerator collapses, separating Kihara from the gun.

(Goddamned shit for a brat... with the faculty he lost, he's fuckin' startin' to go berserk with his actions!?)

Kihara breathes roughly while glaring at Accelerator, who's wriggling and squirming about on the floor.

Suppose Accelerator still has his normal thinking abilities, he might have noticed this physical malaise.

And it's strange that a monster that can easily deal with Academy City's strongest Level 5 would be this nervous up to this extent.

There's a twist in here.

After all, Kihara overwhelmed Accelerator only because he [personally developed Accelerator]. Therefore Kihara, having gathered all sorts of data on Accelerator, like personality, ability, and kinetics, has acquired only sure-kill tactics [effective for Accelerator only].

Of course, to make it succeed requires a sense for excellent body kinetics more superior from those of normal people and a genius brain able to incorporate extensive research data into battle tactics. But even as he realizes these, they are not enough to take down the only seven Level 5s of Academy City.

In the first place, Kihara wouldn't have employed [Hound Dogs] as lackeys if he really could crush Level 5s without any trickery. And he should have personally and quickly dealt with that woman full of piercings when she appeared.

However, that mask was torn off right here.

With the fact that Accelerator has turned from a Level 5 into a Level 0 that's unable to use any powers.

Because all of his tactics up to his point were discarded, Kihara's [countermeasures] have lost their significance.

(He's fucking making a fool of me. I'll fucking kill him, I'll so fucking kill him. Shiit, why did this have to happen. I should have overwhelmed this brat through and through. There's really no reason that would come up for him to crawl on the floor...)

Kihara, grumbling in abusive language, suddenly felt an unusual phenomenon outside the windows.

There something strange with the [Angel].

Just where exactly the [unusual phenomenon] is occurring, Kihara has no idea. For the moment, he feels something's out of place. Had he done it in a vague style of speaking, the stabbing ill-omen would have disappeared.

(Strange...event...?)

Kihara thinks, dumbstruck.

(Certainly, a problem even Aleister himself didn't think through...)

Wiping off sweat from his forehead and trying to stand up, Kihara looks at the face of the nearby Accelerator.

His mouth is moving, forming words.

However, those words do not reach Kihara's ears. Even if they did reach him, the current Accelerator is not in a condition to be able to speak human language. It should be impossible for Kihara to decipher what Accelerator wants to convey. Even so, Kihara feels the blood vessels on his forehead pulsate ominously.

He was made into a fool only because he was made to realize them thoroughly, only from expressions and mood.

(Making fun of me...)

Kihara Amata's eyes become bloodshot at once.

(Killing him isn't enough. Even if I stop his heart, this brat has the luxury to die. I must take it away. I must take away from him the significance of his death. I'll do anything for that!)

His thoughts swirl around in a flash. What's the weakest point, the vital spot, something to be destroyed that's most painful to Accelerator. Then the production, screenplay, special effects — all will come together to compose the worst scenario.

Aha! Kihara grins.

He quickly thrusts his own hand into his white gown. What he brought out is a single chip. Inside it is the original script of the virus jammed into Last Order's brain.

This data is absolutely important when using the Testament to treat her head.

Without this, Last Order is definitely out of help's reach.



And that chip,

Kihara wraps it in his hand and crushes it in front of Accelerator.

"GYAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH!!"

A roar of laughter full of insults jolted the abandoned office.

Plastic fragments fall down and scatter onto the floor. Accelerator does not move. For him, who cannot do any calculations, he cannot show the answer on what will bring about with that chip's destruction. Nevertheless, Kihara is satisfied. He is extremely pleased to destroy everything before Accelerator's eyes.

"See what happens! SEE WHAAT HAPPENS!! NO MORE WIN CONDITIONS! Now regret it, you little shit!! I HAVE DESTROYED WHAT YOU BITCH HOLD MOST PRECIOUS! You brat can't take everything back now!! AHAHAHAHAHAHAGYAHHAHAHAHAHAHA!!"

This is the world where Accelerator and Kihara Amata live in.

A world without compromise, mercy, sympathy, or relief.

It is where even good and evil die. Where the weak are merely turned to prey in turn. For getting lost in this world, people like Last Order definitely won't survive. It's a fundamental underworld rule all too obvious and inexpressible with words. For getting involved with that, yet another life is lost.

Nothing more and nothing less.

However, that should only be the case.

Kihara kicks Accelerator's flank as he shakes himself with laughter. He's not letting Accelerator get away with only taking away the latter's hopes: he's beating Accelerator to death on top of it. Deeply engraved on Kihara's face is the face of a pillager's joy.

"Heeeeeeey now—it's your turn next. Whether or not there's a heaven, time to consider that useless question!!"

Hope is already lost.

However, help does not abandon Accelerator and Last Order.

"There!! That child!!"

It's incoming footsteps into the abandoned office.

A girl's voice that feels surprisingly nostalgic, even though he only just heard her voice a few hours ago.

The head of Accelerator, who's being kicked around the floor, turns to the source of the voice.

And there,

Stands Index, dragging her soaked white nun's habit.

Part 6

With the gigantic angel that unleashes a lightning-like discharge at his back, Kamijou Touma rushes for Vento.

And at an arrow-like speed. It seems that his movements a while ago were all ruses. Well, it might be the opposite. The survival of people buried alive had been ascertained, and so is Kazakiri's mind. And he simply knows that she did not quickly and simply treat other persons as [hostiles]. And then the fact that Vento's chaotic attack would no longer expand towards the surroundings. With this Kamijou, freed from all worries and fears, is unshackled, and is able to fight at full force.

He only has to defend.

He only has nothing but to defend his own cherished friends.

That simple.

And because of that, Kamijou Touma is liberated from just about everything.

"Shiit!!"

Vento swings her hammer as she cursed, but by that time Kamijou is already onto her. His right hand pushes out forward on and on, and with a single *BAM!!* blow the blunt-air weapon is blown away, and what's more it's going to grab Vento's hammer at the place where it is not wrapped with barbed wire.

"!!"

Just before his hand touches it, the hammer vanishes from Vento's right hand. With the hammer immediately moving to her left hand, Kamijou's hand cuts through thin air.

Aiming for his exposed body, Vento's hammer goes for Kamijou in a sideways attack.

Kamijou bends down and dodges the attack. The *BOOM!!* thunderous roar passes way over his head, and he hammers his elbow, bent at a sharp angle, right into Vento's gut.

A sick *crack!* sound explodes.

"Ghhh!?"

Vento's body bends forwards; moreover, her foothold slips and she tumbles on the ground. Kamijou then was about to sink his heels like a stake into her gut, but before that could happen, Vento, lying down, swings her hammer with all her strength.

The blunt-air weapon shoots out, going for Kamijou's face.

"!!!"

A dangerous weaponized wind *WHOOM!!* pierces through, right beside the spot where Kamijou had jumped back to in hot haste. Eating through the downpour of rain, it leaves a particle-like afterimage.

Kamijou starts over, but there's a smile in his face.

This is going well.

(Vento is preventing her hammer from being caught by my right hand.)

Kamijou opens and then closes again the five fingers in his right hand,

(In other words, this means I can negate it with my right hand. What's more, it's unlikely that a destroyed hammer can return to its original state. Once I wreck it, the hammer's sealed.)

"Of course I have to get near her, or it's unlikely that I'll win...."

Heave, she wraps her hand onto her long hammer, and shoulders it.

Thick blood, escaping from her lips, drip along the thin chain, getting the crucifix at the tip wet.

Kamijou readies his fist again, smiles fiercely, and says,

"I don't have to worry about those around me; now I can go free-for-all against you."

"Hah! As if it looks like you have the monster behind you helping you."

"It's not 'looks like'. She is really helping me out!!"

"THE HELL ARE YOU SAYING?!"

Vento at once swings her hammer downward from its rest position at her shoulders, and Kamijou vigorously rushes for her.

The succeeding second shot of the blunt-air weapon that was fired and is coming in head-on is blown away with Kamijou's right hand, and it falls on his feet. Asphalt is blown away into small bits, and large quantities of fragments assail Kamijou.

He presses on forward while bending his body to reduce the number of fragments that would hit him as much as possible, and on top of it, crossing both his arms to cover his face from those fragments that go there.

As he does that, he screams,

"THIS IS AS FAR AS YOU GO, BITCH!! THE POINT WHERE YOU CAN'T USE HUMAN SHIELDS!!"

"DON'T YOU DARE MOCK US, THE [GOD'S RIGHT SEAT]!!"

Vento shouts, and then again swings her hammer to try create a blunt-air weapon.

That attack was already seen through.

Using that hammer creates that [weapon], and is shot in accordance with the trajectory of the cross in her tongue. That was the repetitive pattern. That can be dealt with Kamijou's right hand.

(No, maybe the real Vento shouldn't be doing that.)

She has the magic of [everyone who's hostile toward her will all be crushed] in her. With that and her air manipulation attacks, almost everyone is no match for her. **It's because the [hostility] of the opponent springs out just from her being aimed at with a deadly weapon, even though the opponent could not hit her.**

However, Kamijou's Imagine Breaker keeps off Vento's big favorite, the [Divine Punishment Magic].

At present she can only use the [blunt weapon] for diversions.

(I'll win this!! I'll end this right here!!)

Kamijou's right hand tightly clenches into one hard mass, and goes for Vento's gut.

Before his hand reaches her, Vento swings her hammer horizontally.

A blunt-air weapon is created.

But before she unleashes it, Vento rolls her wrist and again raises her hammer from below upwards. And along with a *BOOM!!* thunderous roar, a second blunt weapon of air is created.

The two weapons don't fly in different directions.

When they clash into each other creating a single mass, they explode quite in a fan shower-like shape. Several hundreds of sharpened air-drills attack, aimed and launched at Kamijou at once.

This is too much for just his right hand to defend against.

"Aaaaaaaaah!!"

Forcibly bending his forward foot, Kamijou rolls sideways with all his strength. Along with a thick *BOOM!!* sound, the asphalt several meters behind him is turned inside out in lumps. His uniform is ripped away at the arms, and his skin has been ripped along with it.

Vento then again raises her hammer towards Kamijou, who had just bent over immediately after tumbling. Swinging consecutively in every direction, this time three blunt weapons are vigorously created.

Kamijou stiffens.

(Oh shiit!?)

Kamijou, currently unable to get up properly, cannot move fast. If the shower blast that headed for him a while ago was tough to avoid, this time there's no guarantee he can do dodge it.

"Dammit, I'll be blown away...!!!"

Kamijou immediately sets up his right hand, but then...

Cough!!

He thinks he sees Vento suddenly bend her body, and blood clots explode out from her mouth.

The three blunt weapons, with their control lost, explode on her spot. Along with a *BOOM!!* roar, Vento's body is flung backwards.

"Vento!!"

Kamijou instinctively shouts at his enemy.

He's sure Vento must have coughed up blood some time ago.

"...What's with you, speaking in a stupid-sounding voice."

As she spits out blood that gathered in her mouth, Vento unsteadily sets up her hammer.

Due to the explosion just now, her yellow outfit is in tatters, and blood has started to stain it.

"You and those who side with science, you set this up, right? You have forcibly inflicted a magic-like pressure to the entire [area] along with the appearance of that [angel]. In other words, you're causing an imperfect circulation of magical power. Damn that Aleister, for him to consider this disgusting move..."

As Vento's tone is faint, one cannot fully understand what she's saying.

However, Vento now seems to be in a fix where she vomits blood every time she uses magic.

Even her way of continuing to create numerous blunt-air weapons may have added unnecessary burdens onto her.

Even so.

She again continues to brandish her hammer while coughing up blood.

Kamijou's expression has changed.

"You idiot!! You have a reason to fight even at your state now!?"

"To strike you shitty bastard dead! I don't have to say those very obvious words!!"

The hammer dances from vertical to horizontal in rapid succession, creating three blunt weapons; those swirl together, changing into a single long pointed stake which then launches itself for Kamijou.

And along with a *BOOM!!* thunderous roar, the stake goes through to the immediate side of one of his ears.

Kamijou did not dodge it immediately.

She couldn't react. Her missing him is because Vento's aim was shaking against her will.

She can't sustain her physical strength any longer.

(Striking hard on air at multiple spots, multiplying those vectors, beating on the air from really different directions and power...)

"That attack just now...wasn't it an application of fluid mechanics!?"

"You annoying brat. Sorting out on your own human magic as if you know them...! The very fact that you use scientific terms disgust me!!"

She shouts, but her strength doesn't catch up with her intentions.

Her overarching hammer, along with her arms, fall to the ground with a crash. Both her hands are loosely hanging down, but the flashing hostility does not disappear from Vento's eyes.

"GROOAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!"

She clenches her bloodstained teeth, and swings her hammer upwards.

It's an unsteady swing, as if she feels the limits of her physical strength.

The unleashed blunt-air weapon doesn't even hit Kamijou, and directly strikes the road right beside him.

Upon seeing this, Kamijou says,

"Um, do you need to be rescued?"

"Don't...bullshit...me..."

"Excuse me, but even you've had your hands full. I'm bringing you to the hospital quickly!!"

"SHUT IT!! I'm never again entrusting my own body to science!!" Vento howls.

Kamijou suddenly raises his eyebrows at her lines now.

"'Never again'?"

She instinctively grumbles, then an even deeper anger engraves onto Vento's face.

As she spits out the blood clots gathering in her mouth to the side and wiping her lips with the back of her hand, she says,

"...My younger brother was killed by science."

"What?"

Gritting her blood-stained teeth and raising her hammer with all her strength, she continues.

Gritting her blood-stained teeth, she raises her hammer overhead, before continuing.

"And it's thanks to a malfunction that occurred during a theme park attraction test run (monitor). A young me, with my younger brother, us two ended up in a wrecked mess. 'Scientifically speaking, there should be no problems,' we were told! Loaded with safety devices, the latest in lightweight reinforced materials, fully automatic speed control programs! Just those trustworthy words were lined up!! Virtually nothing would go wrong!!"

"You..."

"And so I won't believe science will save man. The same goes for that angel there! That will protect people? As if it won't resort to destruction behind its back!!"

Kamijou is at a loss for words.

Vento sticks out her tongue at him, and says,

"Surprised? And for that reason I'm fighting as a member of the world-controlling [God's Right Seat]. But you know, I so hate science I'm willing to use even the [God's Right Seat] to destroy it!!"

The attack did not immediately come, even though she is so enraged.

Vento herself must be feeling with her body that it's at the limit of its physical strength.

She's probably timing her instant kill, as she slowly shifts her feet horizontally.

Lolling out her blood-stained tongue, she says,

"Type B Rh negative. The blood I spat out now, the doctor said it's a pathologically rare blood type. It simply can't be found in a blood bank. So what do you think happened after we were brought to the hospital?"

"...."

"**They couldn't prepare a blood transfusion for both of us.** They contacted many people but they gathered enough for only one person. We, on the brink of death as we continued to wait that far, heard despairing voices from the doctors. They can only save one, they said. And so only I survived! And they left my brother to die as he said 'please save my sister!'"

Blood seeps through her teeth, but even so Vento does not attack.

She's taking her time to kill him absolutely, she's implicitly declaring.

"Science took our lives away, and on top of it made a mockery of even the Bible that teaches the means of salvation! After all, this is the true nature of science. Nothing but a pest for man!!"

Breathing deeply to regain her strength, she then voices a shout that makes even the air shake,

"AND THIS IS WHY I HATE SCIENCE—I ABHOR SCIENCE! IF SCIENCE IS THAT COLD, THEN I WILL DESTROY IT AND FILL THE WORLD WITH AN EVEN WARMER RULE. THAT OBLIGATION IS MINE, WHEN SCIENCE HAD TOTALLY TAKEN AWAY MY YOUNGER BROTHER'S FUTURE!!"

"—."

It might very well be as she says, considers Kamijou.

In the end, Vento is so full of remorse with the fact that her younger brother died because of herself. Perhaps for her, she's her own worst enemy, not science. And with that hand, and it should be Vento's own, she made someone she tried to protect die so she could live up to this point.

Divine Punishment.

A magic where anyone who shows hostility toward the caster is struck down, no questions asked.

When he first heard of it, he felt that it was a convenient power. However, conversely speaking, that magic is really useless **without an environment where she's being constantly being bombarded with hostility from numerous people**.

Vento chose a life where everyone in the world has a grudge against her.

There's no result or even value without the animosity she receives from other people. To make that work, she can only bring herself into the world's darkness. Quite like a way of life where even the possibility of receiving good will from others is suppressed.

The woman walks that path of destruction precisely because of her dead younger brother and because she believes in "that".

Kamijou thinks it's something he could not simply imitate.

Regarding it, he says,

"Enough with the bullshit!"

What? Vento furrows her eyebrows.

Kamijou continues,

"What kind of science that killed your younger brother? That doctor has since decided from the beginning that he didn't want to cause any deaths. He's dead set on saving you two!! It's also the

same for the attraction where the accident occurred! It was not run to injure people! It was run to create smiles in people!!"

"Shut up..."

"Your younger brother who was about to die, said with all his feelings 'please save my sister'!! He knew everything of what he's into, and yet he still wished to save you!! That person didn't wish for revenge against science! That person wished for your happiness more than anyone else!!"

"I SAID SHUT THE HELL UP!!"

Full of rage, Vento swings her hammer in a blind effort.

It's as if she didn't do any calculations. The chaotic blunt-air weapon is easily blown away by Kamijou's right hand.

"There's an injured blood relative in front of a child less than 10-years-old who's dying and losing consciousness! If a child in such a condition states his decision, anyone would have shook their head!! At a small child's words! As if there's any worth in it!! If there was not enough blood, everything should have been given to my younger brother! If it suited them, they should have even used my blood!!"

Kamijou's expression did not change for a bit.

Amidst the heavy rain, he focuses squarely onto Vento's face and says,

"There's worth in his words."

Spitting out, he continues,

"Even if it was a child's view, if that were his decision, then you would be alive until now! That means his views have value!! Aren't you the one who has to understand that value in the first place!?"

"Madness!! Are you consoling me with such words!? I'm here to destroy other people's future!!"

"A person with quite the same circumstances as you have wouldn't shout out what you've shouted now!"

"!!"

Vento chokes.

Kamijou presses on forward with his questioning words,

"I myself can't do that! And that's why I'm against you!! Your way can't be right! I don't know what kind of a person your younger brother was. But then, he did what I could not! That time he did what the world considers the best!! And you're smearing it in mud!? You're making his efforts come to naught with such words even as you die, hating science through and through!!"

"—You make me laugh."

Vento of the Front says, her lips almost shaking.

"You try to change my path with those words? I've decided on this path. And there's no way I'm simply changing it just because I've heard your shitty talk right here!!"

Backing a step, mustering what's left of her physical strength, she raises her heavy hammer, setting up. The blood from her mouth flows through the thin chain in her tongue, staining the tip of the crucifix.

In response, Kamijou hardens his fist, focusing on Vento.

They're separated apart only by five meters.

For Kamijou, it takes two steps to get his hand in range. And for a weakened Vento, a single successful blow might be enough to knock her out.

However, Vento will unleash her attack during that time. It would be her killer attack as a result of several blunt-air weapons going together, their form and their vectors being changed quite in accordance with fluid mechanics.

It's a one shot, no frills fight.

And it starts in a flash along with the sound of crumbling rubble around them.

""!!""

Kamijou's body rushes forward.

Vento vigorously waves her hammer continuously; as she spits out blood, seven blunt-air weapons are created all at once. Those join together, their vectors changing, their swirls winding clashing, and those swirls change into a single gigantic spear.

Kamijou didn't react even at the spear that came from three bundled up blunt weapons.

Were it to be over twice the number, it would be unimaginable how much power is generated.

But even at that Kamijou does not hesitate.

He's not shifting to evasive action. He's attacking head-on with his fist, putting more power into it. When there's just centimeters of gap between fist and head, Kamijou's head surely should have exploded. He knows that fact, and still Kamijou's eyes do not even shake.

(The critical situation Academy City and Kazakiri Hyouka are in,)

Or possibly, he might be calculating his strike using Vento's eye movements and breathing timing. Utilizing the raindrops of the downpour, it's also possible to read the wind attack.

(The hatred against science where Vento is imprisoned at,)

However, Kamijou throws all such calculations away.

The end of this battle is not decided by such trickery.

His entire heart throbbing, and looking at the woman who's about to launch her strongest attack, he determines,

(I'll definitely crush those illusions right here!!)

"OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!"

Both Kamijou and Vento scream.

Both fist and spear are launched at almost the same time.

And along with a thunderous *BOOM* roar, the spear pierces through the space between Vento and Kamijou; the raindrops are smashed up, blown away into fine particles. The raindrops, blown into tiny mists, block their fields of vision for an instant. They're scattering into the surroundings quite like steam.

The sound vanishes.

Immediately after,

A primitive *CRACK!!* sound explodes, as Kamijou's fist catches the air spear's tip, conclusively smashing that attack.

"...!!!"

Vento tries to raise her hammer again, but it seems she has no physical strength left.

And so, Kamijou rushes to her.

"You may not be a big deal compared to younger brother..."

Kamijou's fist clenches and hardens to its limit.

And glaring at Vento's face,

"But at least I'm going to save you! Now come here and start over again, you big idiot!!!"

BAM!!, Kamijou's fist slams into Vento's nose.

And her body flies back several meters, then tumbles onto the rain-soaked asphalt.

Part 7

Index found a tattered and collapsed Accelerator as he was being kicked around by a white-cloaked man. Strangely, he resembles someone she spotted at that time near the entrance of the underground shopping complex.

(The person from that time...!! Do these people also have a connection with that!?)

Although, she has no time to face them.

As far as she is concerned, her primary objective is the kid who's in control of the [Archangel].

However,

(!!?)

Index's eyes open. The white-cloaked man stands in front of a downed Accelerator, and kicks his head with all his might. Accelerator's body tumbles unopposed on the floor.

Index instinctively starts to rush for him, but then,

"GRRRRRAAAAAAHHH!!!"

Letting out a hard-to-identify screaming sound from his voice, Accelerator *BAM!* slams his hand onto the desk and gets up. He places himself precisely as Index's shield.

Index is a bit apprehensive, but she has a lot of things to do.

She grabs a disconnected telephone that was on the top of the desk, and throws it towards the white-cloaked man. And as she looks back at Accelerator launching himself at the same time, along with the thrown phone, and Index shifts her focus onto a 10-year-old girl lying on the desk.

This is the person Accelerator was looking for, and was shown to her only once by a mobile phone image.

This girl is the key to everything.

(This place won't do. And even if I can do the [work], I must take her to a more secure place...!)

Index tries to carry her limp body and get out of the abandoned office, but looking at her weak state she decides that carelessly moving her is perilous. Index thus slowly lowers her from the top of the desk onto a hidden spot to avoid getting dragged into the battle.

"YOU BRAT!! I'M NOT LETTING THAT IDIOT DO ANYTHING!!"

The white-cloaked man screams, but Accelerator is forcibly holding onto him.

Index again surveys the girl's body from head to foot.

From a magical point of view.

(As I thought, this child is the [Core] to everything. The basis is in the angel's architecture. Like a balloon figure, it's a creation of a silhouette where the formless [Telesma] is forced into a [Pouch] in the image of a person. The kind of magic even the magical group [Golden Dawn] where Crowley belonged to would perform.)

Zaaaa!!, In the blink of an eye, the 103,000 books of knowledge unravel the magical enigma.

However,

(...I don't know what to do from here...)

Grrr, a grinding sound comes out from Index's molars.

(Even when I can see the entire picture, I can't comprehend what parts were used to create it!!)

Metaphorically speaking, it's like asking a violin craftsman who specializes on wood to make an electric guitar out of electronic parts. Because the instruments' handling are different, even though they're both musical instruments, the craftsman can only grasp the situation [somehow].

And [somehow] is out of the question when it comes to precise work.

Alone, Index is at her limit here.

And for this reason, she unhesitatingly seeks help.

"Hey short-hair, I have a question!!"

Index's words are directed toward a mobile phone in her hand.

Connecting on the other end is a single girl.

["Call me Mikoto-sama!! Well, a 'question'—*bzzzzzzzzt!* *crackle!crackle!* what is it?"]

Explosive sounds *BAM!BAM!BOOM!!* can be heard frequently from the other party on the phone. However, Mikoto doesn't feel those. It's as though it's a bother to deal with it.

Index decides to depend on that goodwill.

"What's this 'electronic network that uses brain waves'!?"

Mikoto fully answers with the knowledge she acquired at Tokiwadai Middle.

On hearing that answer, yet another question comes out from Index,

"What do you mean by the 'AIM diffusion field that is spreading in Academy City'!?"

The two girls, one from science and the other from magic, lack the knowledge of the other.

And so, they totally cannot understand the answers that tries to guide them about each other.

"What's the safety devices for the electrical network that uses brain waves for its basis?"

Even so, the two girls press on without concern.

For them to solve the problem. Even if they can't understand the solution along the way, it doesn't matter as long as the right answer is given. In a way, by casting aside pride and being aware even of matters outside the box, they continue with their actions, hoping just for the situation to recover.

(In other words, by restraining the mind of this girl who's in control of the special power that the town is full of, this special power is distorted, creating the [angel]! That's it!!)

"I only have to unravel the [knot] inside this girl's head!!"

For the girl from the science side, that is probably called a [virus].

(But then, what to do to make this idea a concrete measure...)

For Index, she isn't using magic.

Using magic is not important in saving Last Order.

Index will use a [word] to unravel that [knot]. Tampering with human minds surely might have a special reputation, but so is study through reading books. Man uses it from the start for the very

reason of opening [windows]. By choosing the word that corresponds to the [knot], just hearing that is enough to [unravel].

Hence, the concrete method is,

"...A song"

Index considers that.

"It can be easily handed down even with simple languages. Even for a man unmoved by an hour of preaching, it only takes a tenth of this time for a song to bring him to tears. Using rhythm and musical interval, a multitude of emotions can go back and forth. And so,"

However, Mikoto, on hearing that, objects with a somewhat confused tone,

["Hey, hey, is that an OK conclusion!? For overriding the human mind, repetitive study is the basic, and what's more, the brain's memory and adaptation may not be very good at that!! On top of that, to interfere with an electrical network, digital input from a [Testament]-class personal equipment is required? Aren't voice and songs primitively analog forms!?"]

Unable to comprehend the meaning of the scientific terms Mikoto is spitting out, even Index has no positive proof. She knows of mind intervention attacks, like [Spell Intercept (Compulsion Aria)] and [Sheol Fear (Voice of Magical Destruction)], but this kind of method is the first time for her.

"We can do this..."

Even so, Index answers with that line.

"Our prayers will go through. Men can be saved with those. For I, as a nun, will spread those teachings!"

Unhesitating, she just looks on ahead.

"With our prayers we will save everyone. This child, Hyouka, and Academy City!!"



Part 8

Thrashed, beaten, and crushed by Kihara Amata, Accelerator rolls on the floor.

Right now he's in no condition to fight.

It was due to brain damage in the first place that he can't even stand up on his two legs. Even Kihara is wary of his fighting style, where he would grab onto the former's body with a move that would make him almost collapse, and is avoiding it by keeping his distance when fighting.

"AHAHAHAHAGYAHHAHAHAH!!"

Kihara's throat-tearing laughter continues.

It's totally unlikely for a man whose skin on his head was torn off at full strength.

Accelerator is grabbed by the collar, dragged up from the floor, and back-slammed onto the office desk; there Kihara's fist again hits him. A sickening *CREAK!* sound can be heard from his cranium, and his facial skin is tearing apart. He's aware of his brains being shaken, his strength leaving him from his fingertips.

However, only his consciousness does not go out.

That's the only thing that definitely won't be shaken.

"____,"

A girl's smooth melody reaches Accelerator's ears.

For Accelerator who had lost his language functions, he doesn't know [what language] just from [hearing a voice]. However, the girl's aria has emotion. Accelerator surely feels its sympathetic feeling for Last Order going across the language barrier.

He doesn't know what the voice signifies.

Perhaps it's taking Last Order's hand and is relieving her of her pain.

However, that is an admirable helping act.

For Last Order didn't receive those until now.

"GRRRRRRRRRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!!"

A conspicuously heavy fist is launched along with Kihara's scream, and Accelerator rolled about on the floor, kicking about office desks. Pain shoots out from everywhere in his body. To the point that getting up is annoying.

Even so, Accelerator faintly smiles.

The young girl's smooth singing continues.

It is an aria that has a warm light within it. Perhaps it itself is a voice that only a person who lives in Last Order's world can create. Accelerator nevertheless hears it. A voice he himself will definitely never create. Create with his mind totally without any operation faculties.

The brat who looks like Last Order shouldn't be coming here to do that towards the likes of shitty bastards like Kihara Amata and Accelerator. It's fully proper that the warm people of the world of light should be helping out their own kind.

However,

Why this?

Why, why should Accelerator show weakness at that. Why, when the dark ones like him must be concluding that they keep their hands off something that radiant.

Should only upright people do what is right? Should only good people do good deeds? Indeed, that sure is right on the mark, that for sure is the logical path.

However,

In the first place, what is the reason for having to go through the logical path.

Accelerator wants to save Last Order.

He wants to save her, who's been continually oppressed with unreasonable violence.

What is wrong with thinking that?

Light and darkness, it doesn't matter for both where to stand. Accelerator doesn't want to protect her because she came from the world of light. Accelerator does want to protect her with his own hands no matter what world she lives in.

And the world's differentiation has no say in that.

As if there's wrong with villains reaching out towards good people.

As if there's complaints against villains wanting to defend the world of light.

The strongest villain in Academy City today, who had behaved impudently up to now, had now come to this stage, and where it is important that he has to faithfully guard it.

"..."

BAM!!, A steady Accelerator reaches out for the office desk.

And he slowly stands up, making a grinding sound.

He has his conclusion.

He'll throw out his chest with pride, evil as he may be. He'll push on for the world of darkness, and yet he'll save those who dwell in the light. He's no longer ashamed that his path ahead is different from those around him. He'll be the bad guy, to the extent that he's proud of the darkness within him.

All rules are out of the window.

He'll redefine what is possible and impossible.

He'll change the list of conditions in front of him, and demolish those barriers.

"KI—HA—RA!"

A voice is let out from the mouth that shouldn't have any language faculties.

His feet are slowly supporting *creak!creak!creak!* his body.

"KIIIIIIIIHAAAAAAAAAAAAARAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!"

At that instant, Accelerator uses his feet—which should be immovable—and rushes out.

Right for his natural enemy, Kihara Amata.

Even if he fights all reality, get wounded, or lose so much,

He'll fight on to protect to the end that single illusion.

Part 9

A great and growing ferocity is being engraved in Kihara Amata's face.

That Accelerator has stood up.

Even if injured to that extent, even if severely knocked off his feet, he still rushes for him, shouting his own name all along.

It's as if he's trying to defend the space behind him.

As if he's trying to help the two girls secretly hidden at the office desk.

"...Interesting..."

Kihara says it about his un-killable enemy.

His face is full of ferocious delight.

"THAT'S BETTER!! IT'S BORING WHEN YOU GO DOWN THAT EASY! YOU SURVIVE THROUGH YOUR SPIRIT FULL OF VIGOR, ACCELERATOR! RIGHT NOW I'M GETTING PISSED THANKS TO YOU, BITCH! I AIN'T USING GUNS!! I'LL SEND YOU TO THE BOTTOM WITH MY FISTS BEFORE I'LL KILL YOU!!"

It flies out from within Kihara.

A monstrous roar. Both Accelerator and the strange girl's singing are unshaken. With their utmost concentration, they're already seeing nothing from around them — that girl has probably entered a meditative state. Just about everything is shining (full of enemies). This is the best for a scene.

(It's fine and dandy if there's a corpse after — but why the fuck are you still alive, you bitch!!)

Kihara attacks back the oncoming Accelerator.

Gripping both his hands, the finger joints crick.

And hardening it into steel, he mercilessly drives them smack in the middle of Accelerator's face.

A *BAM!!* enormous sound echoes.

A small groaning sense is sent through Kihara's arm.

Even so,

Accelerator's movements do not stop at all.

"GRRRRRRRRRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!!"

Unmindful of his face being crushed, Accelerator counters with a hand that catches Kihara's face. Kihara's nose is broken, inducing more pain. It was quite a blow. And it merits no explanation to be understood.

(...*Gh-ghack!!*)

Creeaak!, As if he's pushing back the hand, Kihara forces his head back upright.

He again hardens his clenched fingers.

"OHOHO, YOU CALL THAT NOISE, KID!!!"

He smashes into Accelerator's thin face, sending the latter rolling down to the floor. For some reason Accelerator is restlessly squirming about, but Kihara stamps his foot down with all his weight.

Like a fat stake being struck using an iron hammer.

A *BOOM!!* roar explodes. As Kihara repeats with his indecipherable screams, he rapidly tramples Accelerator here and there. Something being broken is heard, and red liquid flies about.

"All right, I'm in the mood!! Finally I'm warmed up like an engine, but how 'bout you, bitch!? Too bad, perhaps you were really thinking that bitch can save you, eh?"

Accelerator did not reply at all to his cheerful words.

Lying broken on the floor, only the glint in his eye definitely did not fade away.

So he can help, and protect the lives of those girls.

He's never disheartened.

"HAH—!! HAH—!!"

The trampling Kihara is obsessive to the point of running out of breath.

HAHAHA, he laughs as he looks around.

Lying here and there on the floor are the incompetent [Hound Dog] lackeys, all downed by Accelerator. And all of them carry the same set of small arms. Kihara, getting pissed at various stuff, gets near one of them and bends down.

"...Just to make stuff more interesting, show me more of your guts!"

He chuckles as he picks up one object from within. With an expression of a runner who had finished a marathon.

Kihara Amata lightly flings something in his hand at a currently down Accelerator.

An anti-personnel grenade, minus its pin.

With at best part of brain functions lost and beaten by Kihara, the collapsed Accelerator has no time to evade and flick back that grenade.

Along with a small *tock!*, the grenade strikes Accelerator's forehead, bouncing up slightly.

The small lump doesn't even have time to lightly float.

Along with a *BOGAAM!!* blast, the hand grenade explodes. Shrapnel are scattered along with the shock wave, and gray smoke blows violently. Due to the short-range explosion, even Kihara's cheek is grazed by one of the Shrapnel. Even from that much, his skin is deeply cut like a chisel. However, Kihara laughs. Only with feelings of exhilaration.

Silence comes.

Only the sister who's getting into meditation is continuing with her soft and lengthy aria.

"Hii..."

He's victorious.

"GYAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!"

Kihara bellows out loudly from his gut.

He's dead. That thing's dead. At any rate it exploded a few centimeters from his head. There's no way human flesh can withstand that. Right now it is covered smoky dust, but after it clears away the unrecognizable and destroyed corpse should appear in front of Kihara.

The ashen dust blown up by the grenade is spreading out onto the surroundings as it taints them. Like a billow, it flows right through Kihara onto his back, clouding his vision.

When this smoke clears away, Accelerator's corpse should appear.

And on seeing that unsightly end, Kihara's battle is complete.

(Aleister told me not to waste that mass-produced brat, but other than that anything goes. Well then, I'll jam this gift of a corpse immediately at that sister who's continuing with her weird songs and crush her ego!)

"Haha!"

Just as he thinks of that, Kihara's face is,

****GRAB!!****

Grabbed from the front by someone's hand.

"...!!"

Someone is standing in front of Kihara Amata's very eyes.

He can't clearly see that someone with all the dust in the way.

(Gh-gah—!?)

Normally thinking, chances are good that someone is Accelerator. However, Kihara doesn't get it. As long as Accelerator did not use his abilities, he's even weaker than a normal highschool student. Without any trickery, there's no way he could even endure a grenade blast.

Kihara finds it improbable that Accelerator's [Reflection] reactivated on its own for some reason. Dust is sticking on the arm used to grab him. If [Reflection] is working, even tiny dust should have been blown back.

"Why this..."

However, surely it's Accelerator standing there.

White-haired, red-eyed, well-ordered looks, prominent skin, thin framed, has a neck choker, grey-dyed clothing, somewhat skinny hands and feet, shiny black shoes,

****Kihara is screaming as he ignores all these.****

"What is happening here, he has pitch-black wings growing from his back!?"

It's more close to jet-stream than so-called wings.

Unidentifiable plumes of jet-stream that's so dark, even light is being swallowed by it.

Kihara's witnessing an [Angel]. Even he can understand he had a hand in its appearance. Nevertheless, he can't for sure recognize the phenomenon occurring before his very eyes.

(D, damn you, bastard...)

Accelerator's power is [putting all vectors under his control, regardless of type]. And so he's probably using some sort of power that exists within his space for his language and locomotion functions and supply of [new powers].

Scientifically, since Accelerator right now cannot operate on the physical laws, controlling those powers is impossible.

However, that's if other laws don't apply.

To begin with, even if he can grasp the unscientific theories, is there a relation with the existing operating faculties?

It's the occult.

****It's just like an irregular law**** which one can only look in the face among the piled-up tens of thousands of experiments, and is, on the contrary, hard to understand if one is not on the level of Kihara.

(An acquisition for an expansion [clearance] of a new control area!? Damn this brat, just what numerical values did he input into his [personal reality]!... How the hell did he establish communications with someone or somewhere!?)

Even he says the paragraph he remembers.

Even the representative of the powers in Academy City says it.

*(**Hey... it's AIM. Don't tell me that's the true nature of that power and that angel form of yours!?!**)*

However, Kihara's opponent is having none of it.

Accelerator furthermore ***mekii!!*** applies power to his arm, applying pressure to Kihara's skull,

"____,"

Kihara is smiling. He is quietly smiling.

Even as Kihara Amata's arms and feet are loosely hanging down, he still instinctively smiles back.

He asks on,

"B, behind you... you haven't noticed it, you monster."

ihbfKILLwq

The black-colored wings *BOOM!* explosively spray out.

An invisible, unexplainable power shoots out from Accelerator's palm strikes Kihara Amata.

Kihara's body is separated from Accelerator's hand, goes across the abandoned office at a terrible velocity, is thrown outside through the broken window, and cuts through the night sky at many tens of times the speed of sound. In the wake of the excessive speed, an afterimage of orange-colored plasma remains.

There's no need to express confirmation that Kihara is dead.

Part 10

In the middle of the downpour, Kamijou is sitting down on the road. His entire body was wet from the start, so he doesn't mind the water-soaked road surface. Finally being able to rest, he exhales.

The angel's wings are silent.

The enormous sparks that were continuously being severely unleashed until a while ago are completely dormant.

(...Index must have...)

The other side is probably doing all right. Kazakiri's wings and her angel halo hasn't totally disappeared yet, but their outlines are gradually shaking.

(It's still really dangerous, but at least not that much. Last Order... that fellow on the phone, it's good that they're saved as well.)

The phone, he remembers.

Kamijou takes out Last Order's mobile phone from his pocket. Academy City is still in the middle of a situation, but it's better if he tries to call an ambulance. He feels shy about using other people's mobile phones, but now is not the time to be shy.

Sure enough, the person who answered the phone said it's probably unlikely that it be dealt with as expected. Even so, it's far better rather than doing nothing at all.

Placing the mobile phone back into his pocket, Kamijou scans his surroundings. The area for as far as he can see is reduced to rubble along with Kazakiri's appearance... but along with it, due to

her powers, the residents are probably safe. Even now in the darkness here and there, he can see the shining scales drifting about.

In contrast to his consideration whether he better help out, those scales might be rendered ineffective thanks to Kamijou's Imagine Breaker. For now it looks like it's better if he leaves them be.

"Even so..."

Kamijou looks at the downed Vento.

On all accounts she's unconscious.

He's trying to ask her for a way to wake up the collapsed people that are stricken by the [Divine Punishment] magic in Academy City, but no matter how many times he slaps her face, there is no indication of her waking up.

What will happen to Vento after this?, Kamijou starts considering. It's unlikely that Academy City would leave an existence alone that drove its city functions into an almost complete suspension. And there might be no talks on a power balance between the science and magic sides. In the first place, the magic side went ahead and destroyed that balance.

Lines might probably be crossed.

For Academy City, not only they will kill Vento — they will try to erase the dangerous arts from the world. On the other hand, the [God's Right Seat] and the Roman Catholic Church will not simply or quickly let go of such a high-powered magic. So far it seems unlikely that they've managed something like several times of [science and magic conferences]. At worst, the danger of this battle might serve as the trigger to Armageddon is also something to consider.

(Dammit...)

For sure what Vento had done is probably serious when looked at from a historic view. However, for Kamijou, having known her circumstances, can not approve of her simply being executed or be turned into a living weapon. Those methods are the worst, even with compensation.

(With both science and magic sides antagonizing over everything, she can't continue running for eternity in this small world. But something has to be done. At the very least until the situation is resolved, she has to go underground temporarily. Perhaps Tsuchimikado is the right person to talk to about it. Even so, how to do this right...)

Simply placing her in the care of the Church of England is also not an option. Vento's existence is too much when doing that. At most, it's unlikely that a mere high school student can do something like [resolving] a world-class problem. Even so, something has to be done. As it is, leaving Vento alone would leave a bad aftertaste in his mouth.

"For the time being I'll wait until she wakes up. She's been beaten real badly..."

Now Kazakiri... Kamijou shifts his focus from Vento to her, but there's no reaction from her as usual. There's no change in her state. Like somewhat vacant eyes and lots of gigantic wings growing out of her back. The outlines of the wings are becoming more transparent little by little as time passes by. The comparatively smaller wings are almost losing their shapes. Perhaps, Index is performing some kind of interference.

However, it looks it will still take some time until the wings have completely disappeared.

Kamijou looks at his right hand. If he uses the power residing there, he can negate ten or twenty of those wings just by touching them... perhaps. However, they'll lose everything due to Kazakiri herself being dragged along with that. He's a bit bitter about the uselessness of his own power for that time.

(All the same...)

More than Vento's hatred for Kazakiri, he thinks that is probably a phenomenon Academy City created. Those on the top, just what are their objectives? It's unlikely that Kazakiri was created just for nothing more than a defense and counter-attack weapon against the likes of Vento if they suddenly came in. There must be other objectives in mind.

The questions keep piling up, Kamijou mutters to himself.

At that time,

BOOM!!

Suddenly, the concrete in front of him breaks, clouding Kamijou's vision with ashen dust.

"!?"

Kamijou covers his eyes with his hands and instinctively jumps back.

The dust in the air is slowly washed away by the downpour.

Standing in the middle of the explosion is a propeller from a wind-powered generator. Torn off casually then thrown, it stands in the middle of the crater where the rubble was blown away, half of it buried. It's a giant of a pole like that for power lines.

What the hell has the strength to do such a thing? Kamijou is terrified, but then,

(!!...Where's Vento!?)

In hot haste, he searches his surroundings.

The downed Vento, who was nearby until a moment ago, is missing.

However, Kamijou discovers another person instead.

A lone man stands on a spot not too far away from him.

"Who are you!?"

Kamijou suddenly shouts offensively at the man, as he is carrying a limp Vento with one arm.

He's wearing a white short-sleeved shirt on top of a blue long-sleeved shirt. His trousers are slacks made of light and breathable material. He has a sporty, but vigorless look. Which makes him a man in his prime who prefers the fairways. Together with a chic umbrella, he's full of quite and unshakable demeanor not even a highschool student like Kamijou can show.

However, the fact that he did not show even a bit of nervousness when he sees this level of destruction is, on the other hand, eerie. Everything, even his white skin and blond hair, is seen as a sharp knife.

"Pardon me."

The man says, in fluent Japanese.

"I too have business with this woman. I was hoping to have you turn a blind eye to avoid violent behavior, but it seems I've offended you."

"I said who are you!?"

"Acqua of the Rear. A member of [God's Right Seat], just like Vento."

Kamijou takes on more precaution than expected upon hearing him easily say out the name. He totally doesn't know the pecking order within the [God's Right Seat], but this is quite bad if he assumes Acqua simply holds the same powers as Vento. If an exhausted Academy City takes on a second wave, this town would not recover anymore.

Acqua chuckles at Kamijou stiffening. An expression quite unlikely for a brawny-looking man.

"Worry not. I'm doing this to avoid a soldier's pointless death. As of today we're turning back. Surely going against you with the [Fallen Angel] as your backup is reckless. At least until preparations are in order."

Conversely speaking, Acqua is saying that he'll take both of them on as long as he's prepared.

Kamijou's eyes become sterner, but as he takes that Acqua can't suppress his emotions.

"It seems so far the effects of crushing magic and making Vento suffer have long since gone, but the source is here."

As he takes a breath, he casts a look towards a lingering Kazakiri Hyouka who's located nearby.

Speaking of angels, they're the only existence even able to take on Kanzaki Kaori on equal terms. Even for an irrational group like [God's Right Seat], they're probably strategic material.

In any case, keeping silent and turning back doesn't matter at all.

Provided that,

"Step back from Vento."

Kamijou thrust those words before Acqua.

"...You want to hear the way to save the casualties in Academy City, don't you?"

"Well, that too."

Kamijou answers. He meant, "apart from that."

"The woman's hostility towards science is a mere misunderstanding. Even she herself knows that is true. If the [God's Right Seat] had been here, she wouldn't have surpassed her emotions no matter how much time passed!"

"Vento's darkness is easily negated."

Acqua uninterestedly replies.

"We, the [God's Right Seat], don't sympathetically hold out our hands towards a mere unhappy girl. We exist to change the world. And now Vento has decided to use even that power for her own reasons. Do you know how much in kind she has paid up to now? As if you can imagine how much in kind for that power."

Now that he mentions it, Vento's reasons for her actions didn't include the results as an organization. Conversely thinking, to be in that organization means she has to continue making those advantages on her own.

Kamijou considers about those just for a bit.

Even as he thinks about it, there's no way he can simply understand her feelings.

"...So, what now?"

"What is it?"

"Since I couldn't make you listen to my words, I have nothing more to say to you; we're going around in circles here."

Kamijou looks Acqua straight in the eyes.

However, unlike Kamijou, Acqua is extremely composed.

Sigh, Acqua exhales.

"If I separate from Vento and if she was ever captured by the science side, she'll be executed, no doubt about it."

"!!"

Kamijou's body hardens at Acqua's words.

Acqua widens his smile at Kamijou's state. Quite like an adult who's reading their wishes written down on a Tanabata tanzaku.

"I'll let you have this."

Tick!, With Acqua moving only his fingers, he tosses something at Kamijou.

Upon receiving it, it is the chain, along with its crucifix, accessory that was attached to Vento's tongue.

"Either way, it doesn't matter that it be destroyed with your right hand. It's just another useless accessory. Destroy it, and Vento can't use [Divine Punishment] any longer. The people suppressed by it would immediately recover. Rest easy, for through that you could be able to defend Academy City's peace."

"Hold it!! I didn't agree to this!!"

Kamijou clenches his fist, but Acqua pays it no mind.

"Let me tell you one thing."

Acqua turns around in a dignified manner, and then says,

"I am a Saint. Pick any unreasonable fight with me and I will shorten your life span."

An **BAM!!** uncanny sound of earth being kicked is heard.

By the time Kamijou blinked, both Acqua and Vento were nowhere to be seen. He can't find out which direction they're heading. Or perhaps they're probably flying above. In any case, Kamijou knows it's only a matter of a very incomparable speed.

Even with the battle over, there are still questions yet to be resolved.

But on the other hand, he feels that would only bring in an even bigger battle.

(...I'll put an end to this.)

The Roman Catholic Church.

And Academy City.

(Damn it all. I'll definitely put an end to this.)

In the downpour of rain, Kamijou looks up at the night sky and grumbles.

There's no indication of the dark clouds clearing up.

Epilogue: The paths which the winners and the losers must go through. *The_Branch_Road.*

Acqua went outside Academy City, carrying Vento under his arm.

With Vento's vestments being destroyed, the street dwellers were probably waking up one after the other. That magic is not a symptom, but a mere rendering of opponents helpless, meaning it's an ideal large-scale suppression magic, but even that is lost here.

After this, such a skillful matter cannot be said anymore.

The next time they clash, large amounts of blood might surely flow.

"A detestable world."

Letting out a really gloomy voice, Acqua again lifts his unconscious colleague.

This time a mobile phone rings.

Acqua, both his hands occupied with Vento and his umbrella, looking at both his hands, appears annoyed, and then throws aside his umbrella. Even though he's designated with the water element (Aqua), he looks glum being beaten by the heavy raindrops.

Displayed on the mobile phone screen is a number he's familiar with.

"Terra?"

["That's right. Terra of the Left. Are you finished there, Acqua?"]

It was in a metal-grating, ear-hurting voice.

Acqua throws a look at Vento, who he's carrying with one arm.

"Vento is done for. Now doing recovery and heading for the support unit standing by at the Academy City outer district. Damage sustained is over seventy percent, so we're temporarily suspending the pursuit for Kamijou Touma as well as the capture of Academy City. Their situation management is in accordance with what you've suggested beforehand. ...Though it's incomplete, the [Angel] coming out and getting us done for means your predictions, as expected, were off."

["Thank you for your efforts."]

"No rebukes?"

["How can I show ill will to you... not to mention Vento. However, if she's done for, there's a high possibility that her vestments too were broken, weren't they?"]

"Looks like you have no attachments."

["Well from the start, Vento's [Divine Punishment] has the properties of [Divine Fire (Uriel)]. I'll be frank, I have no attachments towards vestments. To begin with, we're beings quite different from normal magicians. Apart from what we control individually, we cannot use them at all. Just what is the worth of a meaningless tool, the [Divine Healing (Raphael)] I possess? Even you can understand from your [Divine Strength (Gabriel)], right?"]

Acqua instinctively exhales.

Everyone in the [God's Right Seat] is a self-centered bastard.

"I've recovered Vento, but I can't get in contact with the [support unit]; what happened to them?"

["As usual, they were annihilated with a single blow from the [Fallen Angel]"]

"We don't even have to say this, but I'm sure we have the strength even against them, and we even have the numbers. Surely—"

["They were conclusively destroyed."]

A smooth answer returns.

["It looks like the persons deployed for local interception at Academy City's outskirts were recovered by the science side."]

Acqua is merely silent.

"Then what we have under control are dead."

["Physically no doubt about it, and their mental injuries are really something. They'll barely make it, but if we deduce from this, it's simpler to replace them with fresh talent."]

That's the unique way of thinking for the two-billion-strong Roman Catholic Church.

Acqua again hefts Vento, who's on his side, then says,

"Well then, I'll be picking up the remains."

["You? Must the [God's Right Seat] bear mundane tasks like corpse recovery?"]

"Even now I'm carrying a defeated (Vento). This is because of an opportunity. I can permit even if the ruins more or less increase in number. Besides, I wouldn't be doing it if there were chances of survival."

["A splendid matter."]

"Dead or alive I'm recovering them. A walker like me will save time only by walking."

Sigh, Acqua exhales, looking bored.

While continuing to be rained upon, he continues to talk.

"What next? If it suits you, I don't mind going back right now and cutting off the target's head."

["Let's pass on that one. Even you can see it, right? Interesting gossip is flying about among the public, you know. After I heard your full story, I should have thought on how to bring down Academy City."]

"...Bring down Academy City?"

["Doesn't that suit you?"]

"I'm conceding according to your opinions, but I have a feeling it would be faster to head back right now for Academy City by myself and cut down Kamijou Touma and Aleister. I'm not good in trickery. It's much easier for me to defeat an enemy head-on that should be defeated. Do it now and I might even keep the civilian deaths down."

["Forget it. Let me tell you why, okay? Surely it's easier to crush them, but you didn't consider just how they might be of use. Like that [Fallen Angel] for example. Indeed, isn't that something intended for us the [God's Right Seat]?"]

"..."

["I want to sort out the enemy whom we must defeat and the things which I want to leave. Surely you do not want to start a battle at the museum should you do it now, right?"]

"I'm not into looting at battlefields."

["Haha. A typical expression for a former knight. Nobles are refined with their words. Unlike what you've said now."]

"I'm not a knight. I'm a rogue out to ruin mercenaries."

["Yes, a rogue that places value on battlefield morals. Well, in any case, please bring Vento and head back immediately. These are instructions from [Fiamma of the Right]."]

"Understood."

Acqua turns off his mobile phone, and then turns around only once towards Academy City.

—It's easier to crush them.

—I want to sort out the enemy whom we must defeat and the things which I want to leave.

After thinking on Terra's words, he next remembers another person's words.

["Step back from Vento."]

The words from a lad he met some time ago.

["The woman's hostility towards science is a mere misunderstanding. Even she herself knows that is true. If the [God's Right Seat] had been here, she wouldn't have surpassed her emotions no matter how much time passed!"]

And from now on an enemy he would unmistakeably turn his sword against.

"Just as I thought..."

Acqua grumbles as he picks up the umbrella he tossed aside.

He even has to worry about his enemy's circumstances while he remembers the target's face.

"...You consider Academy City to be an insubstantial existence, Terra of the Left?"

"!!"

Kamijou Touma looks at the gargantuan angel.

With Index's measures over, the countless wings connected to Kazakiri's back are disappearing one by one. Both the 10-meter long and the 100-meter long types are disappearing at a constant rate. The limp wings are disappearing at equal intervals like a countdown timer — until the final wing is gone.

"All right... You did it, Index!!"

Plamp.

Kazakiri Hyouka listlessly drops to her knees on the ground, then collapses sideways. Her long hair is trailing her as if slowly following her movements.

"Kazakiri!!"

Kamijou instinctively shouts and rushes over to her, but considering the Imagine Breaker in his right hand, holding her is hazardous. Besides the hesitant Kamijou, Kazakiri places her hands onto the wet ground, and slowly raises up her upper half.

"Thank goodness...you're safe..."

Helping out even if unable to lend a hand, Kamijou heaves an unnecessary sigh of relief. He's thinking about what he should do if she can't get up.

"Which part of you hurts? You look terrible. I think you're perhaps all right since Index did it, but answer me for once. She's also worried for you, so if you have no more problems let's finish what we have to finish fast, check on everyone, and then go and show ourselves before Index."

Kazakiri lets out a strange face to Kamijou who had just finished.

And then, she says.

"No, you can't."

"Eh?"

"Don't think I'm all right..."

Kazakiri's lips move up and down.

Those eyes aren't for Kamijou. And now Kamijou knew where those eyes are aimed at. Kazakiri Hyouka is dumbfounded looking at the totally destroyed town scape. Everything was swept aside: her own body running berserk, and the [Angel] she was dragged into without anybody able explain why.

"...Why, why must this happen..."

Perhaps, this was the street Kazakiri admired for a long time.

Here, where everything was totally destroyed. In front of her very eyes.

"Everything, everything is all my fault! If I were not around here, at least I wouldn't cause damage to my surroundings. Why, why am I the only one who's not hurt? Can't you see this is strange, this occurrence?"

"..."

"Just what am I after all!? I can't meet with everyone, and if I come closer even for a bit I end up doing this kind of destruction! So why was I born?! So I could just be supported by the AIM diffusion field?! So I am to be a monster that exists due to the ESPers' powers!!"

Perhaps, she herself is at a loss on what she is saying and what to try to say.

She is feeling pain.

"I believed it took me a lot of trouble to call that girl [friend], and at least be closer to a person. And then those wings came out, scattering vicious sparks, and striking down everyone! For this I am really a monster!! I hate myself for this! Please make this entirely end by hitting me!!"

For Kazakiri, an existence of assembled AIM diffusion fields, she's probably aware what will happen to her if she were put in contact with Kamijou's right hand. Since she knows this, perhaps this is why she said that.

What monster, Kamijou thought.

Just what kind of a monster is she for her to be shaking, and yet not even once plead for her life in concern for everyone. She's very much a [person], more of a person than even Kamijou who's only good at clenching his fist and exchanging blows.

Having thought those, Kamijou relaxes his lips.

"...W, why are you showing that face now"

"Because I'm relieved."

Sigh, he mutters.

"I can't accept your request. And I don't know why this kind of power is residing in my body. But at least it wouldn't be for that purpose. If it's for wiping out my own [friends], it would be a useless right hand, and I'm all for cutting it off right here."

At a word, Kazakiri opens her eyes.

At the said word 'friend'.

"Wh, why?"

"You yourself didn't know. Those luminous scales were created by you. You did protect everyone. You're unable to know what's occurring in yourself, and from this unable to find out what is happening, and yet during that time you took great effort in guarding everyone. For that, your thoughts are no different from a [person]. Among your [human] friends, that is sufficient enough."

Kazakiri didn't have words to say anymore.

In the down-pours of rain, only Kamijou's words continue,

"You're certainly, through and through, an even more fine [person] than hopeless high school student like me. Be proud of it. Stick it with your heart, show it to everyone; continue fighting for people you don't even know and you, who had defended everyone to the end, won't even have a single reason to bend your head down."

Even so, Kazakiri Hyouka's head doesn't rise up.

A nose-sniffing sound can be heard.

Kamijou laughs for a bit, and shifts his gaze from Kazakiri towards the distance. If the problem's settled, then they'll meet up together with Index, but he gave his mobile phone to her so it looks like he can't contact her. He did use Last Order's mobile phone a while back, but that wasn't a message for a private rescue.

"Well then. They might be all right thanks to your scales, but let's check them out just in case some of them need medical help. From what I've heard, the town facilities are fast recovering and rescue is on the way, so we don't have to worry about that."

Kamijou tells her optimistically.

"Let's go home when this is over. Index is returning to my dorm too. You can't know when you'll vanish, so until then, you're going to meet with Index, or that girl might end up really angry. ...And oh, since it's your first time coming to my room. Well, it's a bit dirty so please bear with it, okay?"

"Uhh, ah...?"

Kazakiri tries to say something, but she can't do it well, as it was held back by her sobbing and shaking.

However, Kamijou answers while laughing,

"*Why*, you were saying? Because you've always been our friend."

Accelerator leans onto a desk inside the abandoned office.

"A, are you all right!?"

Index, who had released herself from her meditative singing state, pitter-patters over to him. At best, the current Accelerator cannot understand other people's words. For some reason, through her facial expression and loud voice, he just about grasped the fact that [she's probably worried].

As Index checks him for injuries, she looks over at Accelerator's back, those pale hands patting over them.

"??...Nothing at all...?"

Surely those demonic wings must have come out, but there are no traces left. Not even signs of torn clothing.

[(...The power field was similar to [Telesma], but substantially different. In the first place, the utility of the demonic arts are different in treatment as compared to the usual [Telesma]. ...With such great power, I'm not sure whether or not a Saint could even control it...)]

Index mutters to herself, but then,

["Hey! Just what the hell happened after all!? Ever since that song, no matter what I say you really have no response! Looks like those huge wings are gone, but are you really all right!? The black-clads were all taken out, but you'd go to them if you need help!?"]

Upon hearing the voice from a mobile telephone, her head suddenly rises up as if she's taken aback. In any case, it seems Index is placing priority on Accelerator and Last Order's terrible health condition.

"W--wait okay? I'll be calling for a doctor!! That girl is already safe, so don't you go dying on me!!"

["H, hey can you hear me!?"]

Index rushes out from the empty office. And as Accelerator watches her idly,

(...uhh, gh...)

He's entirely useless with language, but now there are more worrying things than that.

Accelerator shifts his head.

Below a dirtied office desk, Last Order's tiny body is limply lying down. Her condition is that he doesn't know whether or not she's really been saved. For now, the rampaging angel spreading outside the windows has settled down, but he cannot make the connection between the [disappearance of the angel] and [change in Last Order's condition].

Is she all right? What happened to the virus? How's the contact with a doctor? Normally he should have one thing or another that should be considered, but with the battery dead, he can't even make one bit of an opinion. Even his body is battered from the last battle — it's utterly unmovable.

From afar, new footsteps can be heard.

They're not from Index. And there are several of them.

["Accelerator. We have something to talk about, is that all right with you?"]

Even Accelerator in his current state can understand the incoming voice.

The voice wasn't heard through hearing. It's probably some kind of ability where it involves direct brain intervention.

Accelerator shifts his focus to location where several people had come into the empty office. The silhouettes are over twice as fat as a normal person. Everything from head to toe is covered with what seems to be nonmetallic materials. Cracks run along at the joints due to bending. The line on shoulders, neck, and head are smoothly fastened and joined. A light-colored backpack is at the back—probably the battery. Every time their limbs move, a tiny motor sound echoes.

Those are powered suits.

The person, swinging on his stout armor, turns his dome-shaped head, and observes Accelerator with countless cameras. A tiny whirring sound reaches Accelerator's ears due to the auto-focus.

Accelerator, who had [thought] up to this point so far, suddenly scowls.

(...My calculation...abilities...?)

They have returned, to a certain degree. It's still far off from ESPer level, but at least it's on a level where it's unlikely he'll have problems with normal thinking activities.

One of those newcomers talked to Accelerator, who had seemed to be able to do deal with [questions].

Only that person is different from the surrounding power suits.

A thin line of a silhouette, dressed smartly in black.

And as expected, even its face is hidden, its characteristics unknown.

["We have ESPers for several forms of telepathy. With our language and operation abilities being linked to you, we'll maintain a condition where interaction is possible, though for

exceedingly short periods. We should be able to understand the language that came out from you. Excuse me, my bad, but ESP is an exception. This is because we cannot compensate for the [personal reality]."]

["...ESPers, eh?"]

Accelerator says to him with a gloomy face.

["Even we were having [outside] work. Right now, the recovery unit is retrieving Tsuchimikado Motoharu, but we will be quickly returning to the [inside]."]

Tch, Accelerator tut-tuts.

Except for the Sisters, he hasn't heard of an existing special unit that uses both firearms and abilities. Units like [Judgment] should be on the level of [try to experience it through training]. Speaking of danger levels, they're beyond Kihara Amata's [Hound Dogs]. On top of it, these bastards were precisely onto Accelerator and Kihara Amata's movements. If it were not for that, they couldn't have leisurely chose the end of Accelerator's battle as the time to step in.

Perhaps, they are for sure Academy City's darkest of the darkest of the dark.

This means Accelerator has finally met the lot of them.

["The hell you want?"]

["Ah yes. A very important matter to discuss."]

["Fine I'm listening, but before that, answer my question first."]

What would that be? The man easily replies.

Accelerator says,

["What happened to Last Order? What happened to the virus?"]

["It has stopped for now, but those would be careless words. If I were to say it, a gear was taken out from it, so it's only in a condition where it's uselessly running. After all, that's as far as they can go. With the virus advance rate being stopped, readjustments can be feasibly provided if the [Testament] is used."]

["Enough with your pretentious behavior! Doctors and researchers have a clue for that!!!"]

["I see. Well then, there will be no problems leaving it to them."]

Accelerator spat out.

They seem to have everything in their hands: battle strength, resources, even public relations.

["...What's the main question?"]

["Survival through cooperation,"] these careful words come back. ["This time, We were thinking of discussions regarding a series of turmoils you instigated, and the damage Academy City has sustained."]

["..."]

["We'll continue, okay? First off, the monetary issues. When we accumulate expenses for physical damage to buildings and establishments, medical recovery and compensation for the damaged [Hound Dog] personnel, and information management towards civilians, we will incur a bill of roughly 8 trillion yen. Next is concerning the attack on a member of the general board of directors, Thomas Platinaburg—"]

The man explains on and on, but his tone is light. Accelerator tiredly looks back at his face.

["And as reparations, I'll be hacked into pieces and turned to research material?"]

["That is also a choice, but we would like to suggest another option."]

The man raises up his index finger.

["Are you willing to come along with us?"]

["You said what?"]

["Your powers as it is, pragmatically speaking I believe, is useful military-wise, and it would cause an inflation in value of the defense industry. Have you considered how much a fighter craft and a battleship is? Well, if you take the job of a single armada, you'll pay off the roughly 8 trillion. It takes more or less time, though."]

Tch, Accelerator tut-tuts.

["So Academy City is damned in a hurry for something. And using around people who were done for like me is one fucked up way of thinking. You people intending to start a war somewhere?"]

["That I cannot answer."]

["I see. Well whatever your answer is, I only have one word to say."]

Accelerator glares at the man, then says.

["—Enough with the bullshit!"]

["Oh?"]

["The fuck with damage compensation. The fuck with damaged sustained by Academy City. From the start, if I were to say it, the reason is all because shitty bastards like you come and gather!!"]

Accelerator howls as he sits, leaning his back onto the office desk.

["Why must *we*, done for up to this point, have to follow what you say any further!? You're trying to get yourselves killed!! This is the part where you bow your heads down! I don't know what the hell you guys are stealthily doing behind the scenes, but me and that brat are staying away from it!!"]

A sound argument.

A sound argument came out from his mouth when he shouldn't be saying anything sound.

["Academy City's in a critical situation here."]

["Are you even listening to what a person is saying?"]

["If worse comes to worst, we would be saying '*fallen*'. We are here to stop this, and we want you to help us. Well, We won't force you, but try to think properly for once. For example, if Academy City is totally wiped out, is there a place for us ESPers? Also, it's the same thing for those **other technology**."]

["—"]

There are ten thousand mass-produced for-military-use ESPers — banned under international law, and considered inexcusable even within Academy City. There, girls have no place to go [outside]. At worst, it's possible that they'll be in a pinch by being sent to a military research center more inhuman than they are in now. At any rate, Last Order and the girls are invaluable important beings that shoulder some kind of a great plan.

For the sake of the girl Accelerator must defend, and the scenery she loves, Academy City is now important. He may not know why the enemy is there, but he won't let them destroy the town right under his nose. In spite how unsightly it may seem, Academy City is the world for small, small children.

The [teachers], so-called the general board of directors, may be dirty bastards, but without them, Academy City would lose its function as a [school]. And with only this much means there's no resolution for even [students] going berserk.

In the end, there's only one path one must go through.

He tut-tuts, then resolves himself for the worst.

He says before the man in front of him,

["Tell me only one thing."]

["What would that be?"]

["The name of the ringleader for the incident this time. I have an idea of who, but I have no positive proof. So tell me. I'll lop off the head of the person who turned that brat into this. You can bring that into the contract terms."]

["I don't have to answer that; at any rate, he's a scapegoat anyway, right?"]

Accelerator stays silent for a bit.

["...I see. This means it's a valuable person worth holding back your answer."]

["So, **how about it?**"]

["Have it your way."]

["A good answer."]

The man brings out a handgun from behind his back.

Its muzzle is aimed at a sitting-down Accelerator.

["It's a pleasure to meet you, newcomer."]

Successive gunshots *BAM! BAM!* reverberate.

Hit by anti-riot rubberized bullets, Accelerator's body rolls onto the floor. The man gives out instructions to his surrounding colleagues as he returns his gun to the holster.

"We're withdrawing. Erase all traces of the battle. Proceed with course B for the wounded and course G for Accelerator."

Two men take hold both of an unconscious Accelerator's arms and pull him out.

He, who had finally felt a little of the light, once again falls down into the heart of the darkness.

This time for sure, towards the very depths from where he can't crawl up ever again.

The frog-faced doctor went back to the hospital.

Although, the preliminary work for that took quite some time and work. Letting the Sisters go ahead into the building to check for enemy soldiers waiting in ambush and for bombs left behind as gifts is taking them more than an hour.

(Goodness, letting the patients help with the work...)

With serious aversion showing just a bit, the frog-faced doctor exhales. From now on it might be better to just employ a person who'll become his own hands and feet.

The important casualties had finished their treatment inside the [hospital buses], sightseeing bus-sized special large-scaled ambulances. After checking the empty beds, then returning the patients to their respective wards, they've finally completed the first phase... such was the situation.

Sitting on a chair in the examination room, he absentmindedly gazes at the ceiling for a bit.

And then, his hand reaches for the desk telephone.

After pressing the button for an outside call, he presses the '#' key several times. It seems chaotic, but there's a definite rhythm to it. After that, he successively punches in a special number.

Placing the receiver near his ear, he doesn't hear the usual ringing sound.

It didn't even take one ring, for he immediately connects to the opposite party.

"Good morning, Aleister. How's the severe feeling of raging on whenever you want to?"

["Very quite. I can say it finally shifted to the second stage. And it's still too early to call it 'whenever you want'."]

With the sound quality surprisingly clear, one would harbor doubts whether the same telephone line is being used. He could even successfully persuade someone by saying that a totally different cable is connected to the telephone.

But, this is all-too-familiar for the frog-faced doctor.

He is what even Accelerator himself stated. An old-timer when it comes to knowing the darkness.

"Still early, you say? Just until when do you intend to fully use Accelerator and Last Order?"

["Who knows. More than that, it's concerning whether or not you'll hold on to them until the very end. The work to input the numerical settings of the AIM diffusion fields to the vector control

unit is finally over... but then, this is already one side of completion. There's also the process with Accelerator, Last Order, and Fuse Kazakiri as the Trinity, but that is overly optimistic. I should go ahead of that."]

"Furthermore ahead...of Level 6?"

["Otherwise, there's no significance in purposely bringing over the Imagine Breaker from outside."]

"Aleister. There's only one thing I must tell you."

["What is it?"]

"I want you to stop from making my patients your toys."

["Heh."]

A laugh came back.

The general board chairman says to the silent doctor,

["What will you do if I don't listen? No, make that 'what can you do'."]

"I know."

The frog-faced doctor, sitting in his pitch-black examination room, quietly said.

His expression unseen by everyone.

"You know, in fact, what I can do, even to you, who has had the power up to this point?"

Mind you, the doctor says.

"And yet, those children are my patients."

["..."]

"And so I am a doctor. No matter what kind of person are you, Aleister, I cannot deviate from being one. You know that, Aleister. You know my resolution."

The frog-faced doctor is applying more and more force into the telephone receiver.

In a low, quiet voice, he continues on.

"At one time I saved your life."

Silence fills the pitch-dark examination room.

Both the frog-faced doctor and Aleister do not say anything for a time.

Before long, Aleister sighs.

["...The me at that time was really about to die."]

The doctor frowned at those words.

It's one of those asking-for-favors situations, in order to be deeply worried.

["It was the remote countryside in Great Britain. I, pursued by the state's religious magic suppression organizations, rolled down like a split bag. It was *you* who did everything to me: meeting me there, sheltering me from that country Great Britain, presenting me with the life-support system, introducing me to Japan, and helping me with constructing with Academy City."]

"..."

["Are you regretting those?"]

"Are you asking that seriously?"

["Now is the only time to remotely stop the life-support system."]

"Please get over it if you're making a fool of me."

Is that so, Aleister seems like he's laughing softly.

["With you having said that, I'm afraid I have to make an adversary out of you then."]

"..."

["I had made various enemies, from the Golden Dawn Magic society, said to be strict even within Christianity and said to be the world's best, to even my country and family... indeed, there are still things to part with upon coming here."]

"You're not changing your intentions?"

["You for sure know my reasons."]

"...Indeed."

["I cannot be stopped. I'm already past that stage."]

It was a decisive parting of ways.

It was sorrowful. And rash because they were not adversaries from the beginning.

Aleister finally says,

["Farewell then. My kind and wonderful adversary."]

And then the phone goes dead.

The thin line that was the last connection disappears, and only a monotonous tone remains.

The frog-faced doctor remains unmoving for ten full seconds.

He slowly places the receiver back.

In the unlit, pitch-black examination room, he softly exhales.

(Don't forget, Aleister...)

The frog-faced doctor looks toward the windowless building. It can't be seen from his position, but the windowless building should be standing in that direction.

His back small.

An undignified, small-backed man, silently thinks,

(That even you were one of my patients.)

On that day, Academy City officially confirmed the existence of a magic group.

Reports are coming in that the Roman Catholic Church **has a scientific ESPer development system, code-named [Magic]**, and that the areas outside Academy City has sustained damage from them; within the same day, it was taken up by news programs from every country around the world.

Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Church has confirmed the existence of an [Angel] within Academy City, and the Pope himself criticized Academy City for performing research considered blasphemous under Christian doctrine.

Both sides scoff off each others' claims as [preposterous], and so they only throw each other their own demands. Indications of concessions or compromises in there were not seen at all; instead they were even taken as movements that was seen to intensify hostilities between them.

The battle has started.

It's a direct confrontation between Academy City and the Roman Catholic Church.

This might be, for the third time, a large-scale world war.