

# Devil Summoner: Raidou Kuzunoha vs. The Messenger of the Dead

translated by Riza, Chatgpt and Deepseek

Kogetsu Discord

<https://discord.gg/rhUKtf8dgc>

Written by Boogey Toumon

Boogey Toumon's List of Works:

- Shin Megami Tensei: Khan's Garden ( X )
- Strange Days
- Missing Blue
- For All the Unforgettable Feelings ( )
- Suigetsu What This World Lacks ( ~ )
- Pia Carrot e Youkoso!! 3
- Refrain Summer
- Brilliant Summer
- Shin Megami Tensei III: NOCTURNE
- Detective Jinguji Saburo Early Days
- The City of Sprinting ( )
- Suigetsu Lost Mind This World's Falling Light ( ~ )
- Devil Summoner: Raidou Kuzunoha vs. The Messenger of the Dead

About Boogey Toumon:

Boogey Toumon primarily writes action, science fiction, and novelizations.  
Some of his notable works include:

- Suigetsu Lost Mind This World's Falling Light (Famitsu Bunko)
- How How (SoftBank Creative)
- Sky Girls (Konami Digital Entertainment)
- Friends / The Little Brave Ones: Gamera (Enterbrain)

Kazuma Kaneko

Kazuma Kaneko is responsible for the story concepts and worldbuilding of ATLUS' Megaten series, including:

- Shin Megami Tensei
- Persona
- Devil Summoner

He is also known as the "Demon Artist" due to his iconic demon designs in ATLUS games.

Other Work:

- Designed for Devil May Cry 3 (Capcom)
- Designed for Super Robot Wars Alpha 3 (Banpresto)
- Published his own artbooks (New Era Publishing)

Cover Illustration:

Illustration by Kazuma Kaneko

Table of Contents:

Wanderers of the Imperial Capital ( )  
Detective's Job ( )  
This Real World ( )  
Tokyo's Dark Feast ( )  
Crimson E247 139 111 375 (Unclear meaning, could be a chapter reference.)

Book Information:

Title: Devil Summoner: Raidou Kuzunoha vs. The Messenger of the Dead

Author: Boogey Toumon ( )

Publisher: Famitsu Bunko / Enterbrain

Character Introductions:

(First Kuzunoha Kyouji)

"The one who first inherited the name 'Kuzunoha' as a Devil Summoner."

A lone Devil Summoner under the protection of Yatagarasu.

While traditionally Devil Summoners work under orders, Kyouji was an exception, acting freely and independently.

Despite this, his achievements in battle were outstanding, making him a legend.

His spirit is said to still linger and continue watching over the current Kuzunoha line.

Though he frequently complains, he is actually quite attached to Raidou.

(Dormarth)

A Celtic underworld guardian, a hound that guards the gate between life and death.

Kyouji is said to have sealed away the gate during his lifetime, preventing unwanted passage.

However, it remains unclear whether he truly succeeded, or if the gate simply awaits its time to reopen...

First Generation: Kyouji Kuzunoha

A solitary Devil Summoner protected by Yatagarasu.

Feared even among Devil Summoners.

Known for guarding the Demonic Gate.

Fourteenth Generation: Raidou Kuzunoha

The protagonist of this story.

A young Devil Summoner who has inherited the title of Raidou the 14th.

Works under orders from Yatagarasu.

Travels across the land gathering intelligence, carrying a katana, and using a revolver to seal demons.

Student at Tsukigata High Normal School ( ).

Lives and works at Narumi Detective Agency, investigating occult cases.

Though he prefers a laid-back lifestyle, he has a strong sense of justice.

Tae Asakura ( )

A journalist who frequents Narumi Detective Agency.

Passionate about advancing women's rights in the Taisho era.

## ISBN & Pricing:

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## Story Synopsis:

The year is Taisho 20 (1931).

Rumors spread across Tokyo—"A dead man is walking at Tokyo Station."

Devil Summoner Raidou Kuzunoha investigates, only to uncover a dark conspiracy involving immortal demons and a shadowy plot.

But as he closes in, Alucard, an immortal demon, blocks his way.

Can Raidou defeat this foe—one even his predecessor, the former Raidou Kuzunoha, failed to stop?

And what is the true purpose of the mysterious Devil Summoner, Kyouji Kuzunoha, who suddenly appears before Raidou?

## Other Works Mentioned:

Persona 4 - Kirino Amnesia ( 4 )

Author: Kenichi Fujiwara ( )

Illustrator: Shigenori Soejima ( )

Publisher: Famitsu Bunko / Enterbrain

Summary: A Persona 4 side story about the Special Investigation Team confronting a new mystery involving a lost memory.

## Tales of the Abyss Novelization

Illustrator: Atsuko Nakajima ( )

Author: Sarasa Yajima ( )

Publisher: Famitsu Bunko / Enterbrain

Summary: Luke and Asch's intertwined fates, retold in a three-volume novelization.

## Final Fantasy XI - Daughters of Aht Urhgan ( )

Author: Miyabi Hasegawa ( )

Publisher: Square Enix / Enterbrain

Summary: A side story set in the world of Final Fantasy XI, following female warriors in the Aht Urhgan Empire.

## Hayarigami - Metropolitan Police Paranormal Files ( - 0)

Published by: Nippon Ichi Software / Enterbrain

Summary: A horror novel anthology based on the Hayarigami urban legend adventure game series.

## Suigetsu Lost Mind ( ~ )

Author: Boogey Toumon

Publisher: Famitsu Bunko

Summary: A psychological mystery romance about dreams, memories, and reality.

## Final Notes:

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Fuyuko hooked her toes onto the tobacco-stained dirt floor of the entryway, then kicked aside the neatly aligned footwear arranged in the shape of a departing ship and dashed into the dimly lit street.

“F-Father!”

Her momentum nearly sent her sprawling. Yet she managed to right herself—thanks to the desperate hope that the figure she glimpsed was real.

“Father...?”

Dust stirred from the soles of her sandals clung to the hem of her black mourning kimono. Beneath her fluttering eyelids, the sulfurous glow of gas lamps reflected in her eyes. But there was nothing. The world sank into a stifling darkness. Even in the imperial capital, night fell thickly, especially here, far from the bustling districts.

No trace of a human figure could be seen.

“Father...?” Fuyuko hung her head, chastising herself. She steadied her breathing and turned.

\*...An optical illusion, nothing more... He couldn't possibly be walking out there.\*

Her gaze returned to the lavish shrine-like altar inside the funeral hall she had just fled.

\*Father lies within that coffin.\*

Her uncle had told her that such grand altars were a recent innovation, limited to the capital. The funerals Fuyuko knew were simple: a coffin, a pillow table with a mortuary tablet and incense burner.

She shook her head briefly. Fatigue and emptiness weighed on her shoulders.

\*No disagreement with Uncle's words.\*

\*\*“Your father was a great man. He deserves a fitting send-off.”\*

Yet forcing these modern customs onto her father left a discomfort in Fuyuko's throat, like a fishbone lodged deep. Even this black mourning kimono—

\*Black is a Western tradition. Japanese mourning attire has always been white.\*

She recalled her father's stern face.

\*“When Emperor Meiji passed, foreign mourners arrived in black. After fifty years of ‘civilization and enlightenment,’ we Japanese realized the world mourns in black. Hmph! Adopting Western superficialities to send off our dead—is that not a disgrace?”\*

Her father was a relic, openly scowling at the ever-shifting customs of this era—Taisho 20.

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Black mourning clothes were becoming widespread, but Fuyuko hadn't wanted to wear them. She thought white would honor her father. Yet her uncle, overseeing the funeral, dismissed her outright.

“The Tatara family's reputation is at stake. With so many mourners, an old-fashioned funeral would invite ridicule. Worse, they might think we'd just bury him in a common grave. Your father will be cremated. Only three in ten are cremated now, but all the elite do it. After two great earthquakes, the capital has been reborn. This is a new era. The Tatara family moves forward. Mourning clothes \*must\* be black. A woman's duty is silence.”

\*So much for Taisho liberalism.\* Women remained appendages to households, their voices easily ignored.

"Would it not be sufficient to simply follow the proper customs? And yet, for Japanese people in Japan to send off the dead clad in black—can this truly be considered correct? To merely mimic the Western ways of mourning in appearance alone... is that not a profound desecration, a humiliation to our traditions?"

"Fool."

He was, in a way, a man of the past—an old-fashioned relic who openly frowned upon the customs that shifted with each passing era.

This era—Taishō 20 (1931).

The practice of wearing black mourning attire, which had never existed in Japan before, was becoming increasingly common. But Miyoko did not want to wear it. She believed that clinging to tradition would be a final offering to her father.

Yet, her uncle, who was overseeing the funeral, dismissed her resolve without hesitation.

"There is the honor of the Tawara family to consider. Many mourners will attend. If we carry out a funeral like those of the Meiji era, people will mock us. Worse, they will assume we are merely burying him in a common grave.

Your father will be properly cremated and interred. Cremation is still only practiced for about thirty percent of bodies, but all the distinguished families and high society figures have adopted it.

The Imperial Capital has been reborn after two great earthquakes. A new era, a new world. The Tawara family must embrace it as well.

Naturally, the mourning attire must be black. A woman need not concern herself with such things—she need only obey in silence."

No matter how much the new Taishō liberalism spoke of progress, it was clear that the status of women had not changed.

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Women remained nothing more than attachments to their households, their opinions and desires easily ignored.

Miyoko gazed at the road before her, as if she were looking into a mirror reflecting her own heart.

It was dark, empty, and stretched forward endlessly—perhaps even into the underworld itself.

And in a way, that was precisely the case.

Tomorrow, this very road would be traveled by the hearse that would carry her father's coffin into that world.

His lifeless body would not be transported in a palanquin or on an oxcart as in the past. Instead, it would be carried by an automobile.

No one could possibly keep pace with a moving car, so the traditional funeral procession, the nobeso ri (ritual funeral march), would likely be absent.

Would such funeral processions eventually disappear altogether in this new era?

Had her father still been alive, he would have furrowed his brow deeply, caught between anger and grief, unable to put his feelings into words.

And yet, it was Miyoko herself who now found her brow furrowed, a deep crease of sorrow forming between her eyes as she stared at the road.

Under the dim glow of gas lamps, the soft ripples of her kataginu cotton kimono swayed gently in the night breeze.

A familiar silhouette, a shape far too well known to her, moved like a shadow through the darkness, as though drifting through the depths of the ocean.

Roughly twenty-five meters ahead, a lone figure walked onward.

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Fuyuko stared at the road, dark and endless as the underworld. Tomorrow, her father's body would be transported not by palanquin but by automobile. No funeral procession could keep pace.

*\*Will processions vanish in this new age?\**

Had her father lived, he'd have furrowed his brow in anger or sorrow...

A flicker of gaslight illuminated a familiar figure in plain katabira cotton robes.

"F-Father...?"

He walked ahead, twenty-five meters—no, *\*fourteen ken\**—ahead. Her father had despised the metric system, insisting on traditional *\*shakkan-hō\** measurements.

"Father! Wait!"

She broke into a run.

*\*He's alive. Right there. This can't be a mistake.\**

"Don't leave!"

But no matter how fast she ran, the distance didn't close. Damp wind slapped her face; darkness clung to her kimono like heavy drapery.

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Fuyuko leaped—literally. Her mourning robes billowed into the clouded night sky.

A skeletal figure with chartreuse bones floated nearby, clacking its jaw. "Heyyy~! What's the deal with this lady~? We're s'posed to collect corpses, not livin' ones!"

A red-hooded creature with a powdered face shuffled alongside.

The skeleton's claws gestured at Fuyuko. "She's got wings! Blue ones! Giii! She'll be a corpse soon anyway~!"

"Killing humans ain't allowed!" the skeleton argued. "We're supposed to work *\*together\**! Slaughterin' lovers, tearin' out guts—*\*that's\** teamwork! But ya can't break the summoner's rules!"

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"Giiik!"

"What the hell are you gonna do with her!?"

Miyoko, dressed in mourning attire, floated high above—even taller than Itagaki.

It was as if she were lying on a bed of wind and air, but a closer look revealed something grotesque—black membranous wings, stretching from beneath her funeral robes.

Not that anyone could see her beneath the thick, dark clouds of the night.

"The orders were to collect the dead—I ain't been told to bring no living women!"

Directly below Miyoko, on the road, her father's corpse was gliding forward, as if skating on ice.

"Listen up! We were ordered to gather the dead, and only the dead!"

Dark figures moved through the pitch-black streets, their unnatural shadows blending with the night.

"Are you listening to me, damn it!?"

The wings that stretched from Miyoko's funeral robes laughed.

"Gi, gi, gi... She'll be dead soon enough. That's all that matters."

"Wait a damn minute! That ain't right! You can't just kill random people and say, 'Yep, now they're a corpse, all good!'"

"The blood of the dead tastes awful... Giik! But sometimes, I get the urge for fresh blood."

"And that makes it okay!? You're outta your damn mind!"

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A Gashadokuro, a massive skeletal demon, raised its clawed hand high above its head.

"Oi, oi, what about the rules!? We're demons, but even we gotta have some order! Cooperation matters, right? We're all in this together—ripping out intestines, cracking skulls, tearing humans apart piece by piece... All of it, together! But when we're summoned, we gotta follow orders, right? That's the basics!

Of course, even I wanna slice 'em up! There's nothing better than when you get a pair of 'em—parents, lovers, you name it. When one's head goes flying, and the other one just stands there, stunned, before screaming like a ripped-up rag... Ahh, it warms the heart.

Well, I ain't got a heart, but still!"

His empty eye sockets gleamed in the darkness.

"I want to do it. I NEED to do it. But we gotta do our damn jobs first! If we break the summoning orders and go rogue... Is that really okay!?"

A flash of red fabric suddenly whipped through the air in front of the Gashadokuro's face.

"H-Hey! What the hell, Nebiros!?"

"A human," said Nebiros, his pale, powder-like face staring ahead.

The Gashadokuro tilted its head.

The road was pitch-black, as if soaked in oil—nothing moved.

"A human?"

Its hollow eye sockets caught something—a shadow, shifting like seaweed in deep water, swaying ever

so slightly.

"A drunk? Standing in the middle of the street?"

"What do we care? Humans can't see us anyway."

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The skeleton's arm rose high—its fingers ending in sharp, curved claws.

A sickly green glow streaked through the air.

"Man, I really wanna slice someone up! I'm gonna do it! We're allowed to, right!? Slicing's all good, ain't it!?"

The flash of a blade split the night apart.

A sharp, metallic sound rang out—

A severed arm spun through the air, tossed aside like a discarded flypaper strip, twisting violently as it soared skyward.

"SLICING'S ALLOWED—"

The Gashadokuro's skeletal jaw clattered, its remaining arm trembling.

"But NOT ME, DAMN IT!"

A black coat fluttered in the air before the one-armed skeleton.

"You... A human!? You can see me!?"

The answer came in the form of a flashing white blade, lunging straight for the demon's jaw.

It pierced clean through—the tip of the sword emerging from the back of the skull.

The Gashadokuro stared at the wavy steel blade now embedded in its mouth, its serrated edge pointing upward like a grim executioner's tool.

A bad feeling crept into its hollow bones.

"O-Oi... Hey..."

If the blade was swung upward now, it would cleave its skull in two—right from the upper jaw to the top of its head.

And there was no escape.

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A blade flashed. The skeleton's arm spiraled into the air.

"Whoa! Who's cuttin' who here?!"

A figure in a black overcoat emerged from the shadows, wielding a sword that glinted with cursed energy.

"—\*Kirin Mujin\*," he intoned. "A blade forged to sever ill omens... and demons."

The skeleton's jaw clattered. "Y-You can see us?! What the hell are y—"

The sword split its skull.



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“—Kuzunoha Raidou.” The black-clad youth crushed the remains under his boot. “By Yatagarasu’s decree, I purge evils threatening the capital.”  
His student uniform peeked beneath the coat, a stark contrast to his porcelain complexion. A holster-like chest rig held thin, metallic tubes—\*Fuda\* for summoning.

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"Gi, gigi... Raidou Kuzunoha? Don't make me laugh."

The wings suspending Miyoko in midair spat those words with scorn.

"...I see you didn't hear me the first time."

The black-uniformed figure reached toward his chest.

Attached to his black gakuran was a chest guard, much like the ones used in archery tournaments for protection against arrows.

But unlike an ordinary chest guard, this one had small pouches lined up across it, resembling the cartridge loops of a gun holster.

Instead of ammunition, the pouches were filled with several slender, dull silver tubes, each roughly seven sun (around 21 cm) in length.

"Nebiros, begin the curse incantation. Gi, gigi! The boy wields a blade. It's no ordinary sword, but as long as he doesn't enter striking range, he's of no concern."

"Understood."

The red-hooded figure nodded.

"...You were planning to devour the woman, weren't you?"

A small metallic tube was drawn from the chest guard.

"Taking a nice evening stroll with the dead—is that a hobby of yours? I don't quite get it."

"Oh, you will. Soon enough."

The dark wings flapped with a sharp giggling noise.

"Soon enough, you'll be dead as well. And then you'll understand perfectly."

Their voice reverberated through the air like a shockwave, causing the very atmosphere to distort.

"AAAAAAAH—"

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A distorted ripple of space surged forward like a shockwave, aiming straight for the black-uniformed

figure.

Hmph.

The black coat left a ghostly afterimage in its wake. The rippled space, like a cutting beam, tore through the afterimage, splitting the ground apart with raw force.

His gakuran-clad body moved with blinding speed, faster than even a locust's leap.

"You avoided my voice attack... Gi, gigi! But there's no escaping from my incantation!"

Under the dark wings, the red-hooded Nebiros began chanting a curse song, his voice lilting in strange, rhythmic verses.

The black-uniformed figure's hand flicked outward.

A brilliant green light flared into existence.

From the glow of the tube, something emerged like a bullet—

A monstrous shape, manifesting into reality.

"Giii—! You brat... You're a Summoner!?"

## Devil Summoner: The Forbidden Art

A Devil Summoner—or, in ancient terms, a sorcerer of binding magic.

A wielder of forbidden arts, one who seals demons into mystic vessels, commanding them as their own.

Their tools varied in shape and material—before the arrival of steel craftsmanship, Summoners primarily used bamboo tubes as their demon-sealing devices.

Among such figures were the famed Izuna practitioners.

Legends tell of sorcerers who bound spirit foxes within slim bamboo tubes small enough to fit in their sleeves. With their mystic energy, they controlled these yokai familiars, striking terror into those who opposed them.

These Izuna practitioners were, without a doubt, the earliest forms of Devil Summoners.

It is said that Uesugi Kenshin and Hosokawa Masamoto, both renowned warlords, mastered the Izuna arts, using their enchanted bamboo tubes to command supernatural forces...

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A green light erupted. A demonic hound with steel armor and a Dutch-style haircut materialized.

"Dormarth," Raidou commanded. "Stun Howling."

The hound's howl shattered the red-hooded demon's incantation.

"Grah! But you're just close-range fighters!" The demon retreated, weaving hand seals.

Raidou drew a revolver. "Wrong."

A gunshot echoed.

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"A \*Gunslinger\*?!" the winged demon shrieked. "Who the hell are you?!"  
Raidou leveled his weapon. "I already gave my name."  
The demon snarled. "Liar! You're no ordinary human!"  
Dormarth growled. "Wanna find out, bonebag?"

## 21. The One Who Walks the Imperial City

Fuyoko's Thoughts

"Don't mess with me, you're just pretending. It might work as a threat on demons, but not on me."

Raidou

"What the hell are you babbling about, you winged bastard?" The dog demon shrugged its shoulders.

"---Door Master, the woman."

"---Pick her up."

"Kill her?" A smile appeared on the two-tone face.

The muzzle flash lit up as a student's uniformed underling fired. Flames flashed.

The rocket pierced through the funeral attire and exploded behind it, where the wings were tightly attached.

"Ahh, if you're going to kill the annoying hostage, let me do it."

"---I won't say it twice."

"But Raidou, how do you pick something up that's in the sky? And it's already been shot; the bullet hit her directly, and she's already dead. There's no picking her up."

Blue-gray wings tilted and ascended rapidly.

Fuyoko was dropped like an unnecessary fuel tank. No, it was more like a guided bomb.

With the black cloak and student uniform as the target, Fuyoko in funeral attire accelerated and began to fall.

Muzzle flash.

The barrel pointed upwards, firing again. Flames were released. The line of fire ruthlessly pierced through the woman's body, through her kimono's crotch... scattering explosive flames as the wings turned.

As Fuyoko fell back, her sleeve showed the mark from the first shot.

All the bullets pierced through the funeral attire, but only the fabric was damaged.

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"Pi-Pick it up, you say? Does that mean it's fine to do it after it falls? Is that alright? I-I wonder... how should I...?"

The dog demon, Door Master, kicked the white tip of its foot toward the black mourning attire being drawn toward the ground.

The student uniform, which had been standing in that direction, leapt far down the street.

Wardaive

Blue-gray

A rocket, fired while leaping, pierced through the blue-gray wings, which were rapidly descending.

The wings, closing in at high speed, grinned with a sharp "gik-gik."

"That's enough, kid. My wings are faster than your next cocking move."

A revolver cannot fire without performing the cocking action to raise the hammer.

Whether using the thumb to cock the gun or using the palm of the hand not holding the gun, raising the hammer before pulling the trigger is an essential operation. This requires at least a moment's delay.

The windstorm rushed toward the student uniform.

Apart from the blue-gray wings, nothing reflected light; its full form was unclear until it came very close.

Ah, so that's it!

"Gik-gik" — A large bat.

Bat Demon

It should properly be referred to as a bat demon. Although its body was human-like, massive wings resembling a flying membrane extended instead of arms. Its head reminded one of a Western-style helmet's skullcap, with deeply sunken eye sockets.

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In the large, gaping mouth, only the canine teeth stood erect.

From the back of the fangs, which were about to bite into the collar of the student uniform, a heavy breath leaked out.

The muzzle of the gun, pressed against the bat demon's throat, flashed with light.

Quick draw

"Gik... quick on the draw... but..."

While exhaling not breath, but gunpowder smoke, the fangs continued to close in.

The sound of the hammer striking the primer of the bullet's base was continuous.

The gunpowder exploded successively, firing the bullets rapidly from the muzzle. The intense recoil of the shot caused the barrel to leap high, sending the bat demon—just a moment ago pressed against the student uniform—flying backward.

"G-Gear... Why... can you keep shooting...?"

"Colt Lightning."

The wooden grip was readjusted, and the chamber's loading port was opened.

"It's a custom."

Turning the cylinder, Riado slowly approached the writhing bat demon on the ground, ejecting and loading one bullet at a time.

"Lightning..."

"Gik, lightning... A revolving pistol, the one Billy Kid used, huh...?"

This is a double-action revolver, meaning the hammer doesn't need to be cocked. Pulling the trigger alone fires the bullet. Billy the Kid's fast draw was accomplished with the Lightning revolver, wasn't it?

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"There is also a legend about that."

"I answered your question. Now, answer mine. What were you planning to do with the corpse?"

"And a weighted bullet, the Muramasa sword... What are you... Giiiiiaaah..."

The scream and gunfire overlapped at the end of the sentence.

"I didn't ask that."

The gun, aiming carefully, let smoke billow from the muzzle as the cold, merciless eyes beneath the school cap focused on the bat demon.

"Gii, Giiii, Are you going to kill me, kid? Can you kill me?"

"I didn't ask that."  
Another bullet was fired.

"Giiiaah, Aaaah! I'm immortal, you can't kill me!"

"I didn't ask that."  
The bullet sent the bat demon's flesh flying as it tried to rise.

"Agyaa, GiiiiGiiiGii, A kid like you can't do it. Even the real Kuzunoha Raidou couldn't defeat me."

"Have you fought the previous generation?"  
The words and the bullet were fired at the same time.

"Giiiaaa... What... What do you mean by 'previous generation'...?"

"The fourteenth generation, Kuzunoha Raidou."

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With the sound of gunfire, the name was proclaimed once again.

"Agii, The fourteenth generation...? Did you inherit the name? Did that damn thirteenth generation perish?  
Giiii, to think that someone like you would carry the name 'Raidou,' even the Yatagarasu has lost its touch."

"I didn't ask that."

All the remaining bullets in the cylinder were absorbed into the bat demon's body, creating a massive burst of smoke.  
From the rising smoke, the dull blue wings flared.

It charged toward Raidou's school cap at the speed of a thrown spear.

"I told you, I'm immortal, Aaaahhhhhhhh!!"

The school cap was directly in its line of attack.  
The gleaming teeth collided violently with Raidou's face.

Just before impact, the school cap flew off.  
It wasn't blown away by the wind pressure; it had leapt of its own volition.  
However, strangely, despite being far away, the cap was still atop Raidou's pale face!!

What had flown off was a black cat.  
Whether it had been overlapping with the school cap, or whether it had been hiding somewhere in the black cloak, it used the cap as a springboard. The cat flipped mid-air and clawed at the bat demon's eyes.

"Giiii"

With the scream from above, Raidou crouched down while sliding his feet forward.

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With lightning speed, Raidou thrust his arm upward, piercing the bat demon's heart with his sword from directly below.  
Even so, the dull blue wings flapped. The blade, stained with blood from the chest, was pulled out as the

demon ascended, attempting to fly away with increased lift.

"What a sight..."

"F-Fool... Immortal... Giii, the great Alucard will not perish!"

At Raidou's feet, the black cat, its emerald eyes blinking, spoke.

"After swallowing so many bullets, having both eyes destroyed, and having your heart pierced, you're still moving?"

"Giiii... The darkness is the same as within my womb, can you find me?"

The bat demon's form melted into the darkness.

Raidou lifted his cloak, his hand moving to the "tube" at his chest.

"Don't call for anything too large," the black cat meowed.

"Don't worry, Gouto. I'll call for a smaller familiar," Raidou replied.

"I don't really like it either," the cat retorted.

Within a small bag on the cartridge loop, a pale-colored object was stored, one of which had already been opened to summon the dog demon, Doamars. The seal on the "tube" had begun to glow. There were two more remaining, which meant that the number of demons controlled by the 14th generation, Kuzunoha Raidou, was precisely three.

"Jack-o'-Lantern!"

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From the glowing brilliance, a small pumpkin-headed demon took flight.

"Hee-hooo!"

The demon resembled a pumpkin itself, with round eyes, a triangular nose, and a jagged mouth carved into its surface. It wore a conical wizard's hat and carried an orange glowing lantern in one hand. Its body, from the neck down, was covered by a cloak resembling that of a Western child's nightwear.

"Mark it."

"Jack-o'-Lantern, use the flame lantern to search."

"Hee-hoo!" The orange light from the lantern emitted a beam of light.

"Hee-ho-hoo!"

A long tail of light, like a shooting star, streaked across the sky in a continuous display, like a fireworks show.

One of the beams caught the fleeing blue-gray wings of the bat demon in the dark path behind. The pumpkin-headed demon understood its task as a marker, raising its lantern and flying down the dark road. Raidou followed in pursuit, running after it.

"This is bad. Do you think you can catch up?" The black cat, Gouto, meowed from below.

"I will catch up."

"It's troublesome, though, dealing with an opponent that even the 13th generation couldn't defeat."

"You've seen through the eyes of past Raidous, haven't you? You witnessed the battle between that bat and the previous generation."

Page 28

"The thirteenth generation was a solitary demon fighter. He always preferred to work alone, and it was a struggle even to get close to him, let alone have him listen to my advice. Without reporting to Yatagarasu, he fought countless demons, probably more than anyone else."

The Jack-o'-Lantern floating through the air veered off to a side path, with Raidou following behind.

"—You haven't heard anything about that bat... Alucard?"

"No. But that name bothers me. It could be nothing, but the way it's written..."

The Jack-o'-Lantern turned a corner, resembling a castle wall. Raidou and Gouto followed suit, swiftly adjusting their pace and then coming to a sudden halt.

In the darkness, a woman in a hooded cloak stood leaning against the wall. Her clothing was dark, and her face was hidden by the hood, revealing only the lower half of her nose and below.

"Wh-why are you here?"

In response to the croaky meow from the black cat, Raidou muttered softly:

"—A messenger of Yatagarasu."

She was an intermediary who conveyed orders from Yatagarasu. The designated meeting place for such encounters was a nameless shrine on the outskirts of the Imperial Capital. Even when meeting at the shrine, the proper "prayer etiquette" — the number of claps and the ringing of the bells — must be followed precisely, or she would never reveal herself.

Page 29

"Step aside."

"Understood."

In the middle of the city, there was no reason to expect anything visible, yet...

"Step aside." The messenger's lavender lips moved.

Raidou didn't respond, his gaze fixed on the receding glow of the Jack-o'-Lantern.

"Wait, what's going on?" Gouto's emerald eyes gleamed.

Shifting his gaze to the messenger, Raidou slowly nodded in acknowledgment.

"Wait a second, Raidou—no, no, messenger, what exactly is this about?"

"—This isn't the usual messenger from Shinoda."

"Yes," came the response, the lavender lips speaking.

"Hold on a minute. I don't know which district's messenger you are, but the duty of the Imperial Capital falls to Raidou. How do you have the authority to stop this? No, to prevent a pursuit of the fleeing demon? Are you really a messenger of Yatagarasu?"

"The messenger will contact you again at a later time."

The deep hooded figure looked at the black cat.

"Later? You're being lazy! I want to know now. What reason could there possibly be to stop the pursuit of a bat demon?"

"The terms of the non-aggression pact..."

Page 30

"Non-aggression against demons? That's ridiculous."

"By the ancient pact of Yatagarasu and Yatagarasu's allies."

"What are you talking about... Hey, Raidou, you have some objections too, right... Raidou?"

With a sharp turn, the figure in the black cloak had already turned around.

"Thank you."

The messenger's voice continued with calm elegance.

"I am deeply grateful for your willingness to listen. Unlike some cats, you left without leaving any trace behind. Your dignified attitude—perhaps from now on, you should go by 'The Humble and Noble Prince, Fourteenth Generation Kuzunoha Raidou.'"

"I'll think about it."

Without turning around, the black cloak replied, and from beneath his feet, a disgruntled meow could be heard.

"Calling Gouto-Douji 'some cat'..."

"Hi-ho, hi-hoo!"

Above the figures of the walking people and cat, hurried orange light streaked across the air.

"Hi-ho, hi-ho!" The Jack-o'-Lantern swayed its lantern as it cried out, pleading.

Raidou: "You let me walk down this dark path alone, and now you're asking why I'm chasing after you?"

"Hi-ho?"

Page 31



The Walker of the Imperial Capital

"Did you get scared walking the dark road alone?"

The hat looks up at the light above.

"Hihon..." A voice, almost indignant, responds.

"Ah, I was just a bit surprised because there was no one behind me. I wasn't actually scared. Jack-O'-Lantern fears no one, everyone knows that."

"Hihou!" The floating little devil puffed its chest proudly.

"—Good work."

From under the black cloak, a "pipe" is pulled out, and the pumpkin head above returns inside it.

"Though you were scared, huh."

The black cat sneered with a snort.

"Still, really, how is it that you're so obedient to the Yatagarasu's messenger? Don't you have any doubts about such unreasonable orders, Raidou?"

"I don't think about it."

"What? That quick of an answer? For what reason!!"

"The messenger's... resembles..."

A night breeze sweeps Raidou's low murmur into the darkness.

"What? I couldn't hear that well."

The lip murmurs.

"The messenger's mouth's edge is—"

Page 32

The Walker of the Imperial Capital

"What about those purple lips?"

The black cat, walking at their feet, tilted its head.

"They resemble her."

"Raidou!"

"—Mother... she looks a lot like her..."

"Raidou, what the—!"

A shout from ahead drowned out the low mutter under the school cap.

"Hey, what's going on, Raidou? You make me pick up a woman, and then you go off with Lantern Boy, Nekomata, and start chasing bats?"

The mourning-clad Miyoko, supported by the demon dog Dormarth, approached with large strides. Raidou also increased his pace.

As the school uniform drew closer, a reddish hue lit up Dormarth's cheek.

"Well, it's not that I'm angry, you know. I understand you were lonely after calling me out and immediately leaving, but still, to be so... aggressive..."

With both hands spread wide, Dormarth gestured as if to embrace.

Both of the school uniform's arms also spread wide in return.

Nekomata was also watching.

"I... suddenly being hugged like this... I wasn't ready for this, ahh, Raidou..."

Page 33:

The school uniform swiftly brushed past the demon dog's side, rubbing against the thigh as it turned halfway.

Without hesitation, Raidou unsheathed his sword, spinning with the momentum and thrusting the sharp tip into the body of the dead man, Miyoko's father, who stood motionless, still in his ghostly state.

"You're not supposed to be here," Raidou declared, his sword's back edge flashing with light.

The outline of the ghostly figure distorted, and in a blur, it dissolved into a semi-transparent stream of light that scattered into the air.

"Hoh, so your physical form is already gone, leaving only the spirit, which has taken on the appearance of the living," the black cat meowed.

"With Muramasa's curse-breaking, has the wandering soul found peace?"

"No, I simply broke the demon's control. This spirit hasn't yet received Charon's guidance. It hasn't even reached the river of the underworld," Raidou explained.

"So, it's only just died," the black cat mused.

Charon is the ferryman of the Styx, responsible for guiding the souls of the deceased across the river to the underworld.

"It hasn't yet become a restless spirit lingering in this world, thankfully," Raidou added, a slight concern in his voice.

"No need to worry. It seems it doesn't want to leave its loved ones behind," the black cat remarked as it turned to Dormarth, whose eyes followed suit.

"Hey, Raidou!" Miyoko's voice sounded with a tone of protest.

"Me?"

The demon, wearing mourning clothes, watched as a semi-transparent stream of light flickered.

"The spirit... is that the father of the mourning-dressed girl? Before the funeral, before being guided by Charon, it seems he was being led by the bat demons... But to control a soul in its exact living form—such power isn't something ordinary demons could achieve. What exactly did they plan to do with the soul they took?"

Raidou shook his head briefly, showing indifference.

"Dormarth, take the mourning woman back to her home."

"Hey, Raidou, don't you think about the bat demons' intentions?"

"Would thinking about it help?" Raidou's school cap tilted briefly as he spoke.

"Maybe not, but I can't help but feel uneasy about it."

"Why should I worry about that?"

"Hey, Dog Demon, could you be quiet for a bit?"

"You be quiet, Nekomata. What's the deal, Raidou? You call me here, get me to pick up a mourning woman, and now you're just having me carry her?"

With a growl, the two-toned furred demon grumbled as the black cloak approached soundlessly.

"Dormarth, make sure you catch her before she hits the ground."

"It's not about that," Raidou responded.

### 35 - Wanderer of the Imperial Capital

"...Hmph. Good job."

"W-Well, yeah! Catching someone before they hit the ground is just common sense. I can read your orders like second nature, Raidou."

"—Finding the girl's house should be easy if you follow her scent."

"Of course it's easy, but come on! You left me behind without letting me fight, and now you're just using me for errands and carrying people around?"

"—I always appreciate your help."

Grumble.

"J-Just saying it doesn't make it any better! You always talk like that."

"I mean it."

Grumble, grumble, grumble.

"O-Okay, fine! I'll carry her this time, but if you keep using me for this kind of busywork, I won't let it slide!"

"—Dormarth."

"What?"

As she was about to take off, Raidou called out to the dog demon.

"Thank you."

Page 36:

Thump thump!

"Ugh, so noisy! I'm only doing this because I was summoned and given orders, so don't say that! Idiot, idiot Raidou! Sometimes you should just summon me freely, you know?!"

The dog demon, wagging its tail so hard it seemed like it might tear off, disappeared into the shadows of the imperial capital.

The drifting clouds once again concealed the moon.

"There's no need to thank me every time..."

Goldenbunkrr — Today at 12:44 AM

Page 39 - A Detective's Job

A thick-patterned tie was tightly fastened.

"Without even working..."

Narumi lounged around lazily.

"Ah..."

He was a tall, slender man with permed hair. A cynical smile was always on his face.

"Taking it easy, basking in the sun without a care in the world, huh?"

His long hair, which had a habit of covering his ears, partially obscured his expression.

Narumi glanced at the black cat, Gouto, curled up atop the typewriter next to the chief's desk.

"Must be nice to be a cat. Always just lounging around and purring."

"You'd be hard-pressed to find someone who lounges around more than you."

"Even though I just pulled an all-nighter investigating..."

"And yet, you haven't even written your report. Not to mention, you look quite obviously hungover."

Narumi ran his fingers through his wavy hair.

"Why is it that women are so gentle with cats, even when they just laze around all day? I can be five hundred times lazier than a cat, but I've never been treated kindly for it."

"Idiot," Gouto meowed.

Narumi, slumped tiredly in his chair, tilted his head slightly.

The cat seemed to be saying something, but he couldn't quite understand it. To him, it was nothing more than a simple meow.

Page 38 - 39

Sinking into a leather chair, Shouhei Narumi narrowed his eyes as if the brightness was unbearable.

From the large wooden-framed sash window right behind him, which reached up to the ceiling, the dazzling morning sunlight poured in.

From this third-floor window, one could see the Karuko River shopping district below.

They called it "Yamate Ginza", and for good reason. The neatly brick-paved sidewalks, separated from the dirt roads used by vehicles, looked like something out of a futuristic cityscape drawn by the writer Jūzō Unno. It was a modernized area, with telegraph poles standing at intervals. The streets were lined with parlors, Western-style restaurants, and many imported goods stores.

This was Tokyo City, Yone Ward, Tsukudo Town, a bustling downtown district that had thrived since the late Meiji era.

In Tsukudo Town stood its tallest and most modern building, the Gintrōkaku, and on its top floor—the third floor—Shouhei Narumi had set up both his detective agency and residence.

"Good grief..."

Even though Narumi's eyes usually looked sleepy, they narrowed even further as he checked his wristwatch.

"This early in the morning..."

Everything Narumi wore was of the highest quality—his French-made Cartier wristwatch, Italian leather shoes, and a British camel-colored three-piece suit. However, at this moment, his jacket was draped over the back of his chair, leaving him in just his white dress shirt and waistcoat. The shirt was high-collared with a striped pattern.

"T....."

There was no doubt about it. Only Devil Summoners could understand the voice of this black cat.

"...And I'm supposed to believe that?"

Narumi's cynical smile deepened.

He could believe in demons and yōkai without hesitation. He had encountered them countless times as a member of the Yatagarasu organization, and it was simply common sense in his line of work. There was nothing surprising about them speaking, either.

But this? This was just a cat.  
Not a nekomata with two tails.

Not a phantom cat that could turn invisible.

Just a regular black cat, nothing more than a lazy freeloader basking in the sun inside his office.

"...Hmph... Still, it's got a nice coat of fur."

A talking cat?

A voice only Devil Summoners could hear!?

What a ridiculous bluff.

He, Narumi, had spent years outsmarting his opponents in countless mahjong games from East to West, from Japan to the Chinese continent, reading their every hidden move. Women fell for him effortlessly just by walking into a room. He was a renowned detective, an unmatched charmer, a man even the legendary Great Sage Equal to Heaven (Seiten Taisei, a reference to Sun Wukong) couldn't best.

And yet, they expected him to fall for such a trick? Not a chance.

"Narumi, you have the look of someone plotting something suspicious," Gouto remarked.

"Really nice fur. Even the skin underneath looks flawless."

"As expected," Gouto meowed.

"Don't go getting any weird ideas about a cat, you fool."

"...Might fetch a good price... If I sold it to a shamisen maker."

Goldenbunkrr — Today at 12:51 AM

Page 41 - A Detective's Job

"Hey!"

Narumi, who had been slouching lazily, suddenly moved with surprising speed, grabbing the black cat and pinning it down.

"What!? You actually caught me? Hah! I suppose even a fool has their talents."

"Hey, if you're not just an ordinary cat, then you wouldn't mind if I skinned you alive, right?"

"What a barbaric thing to say to Gouto-Douji!"

"I need money, Gouto. Cooperate with me—your fur can help fund the defense of the Imperial Capital. We seriously need more money... If all you're going to do is laze around, at least make yourself useful."

At that moment, sharp claws dug into the back of his hand.

"You little...!"

"Ow!! Damn it!!!"

The black cat leapt away with the speed of the Tōkaidō Main Line, the express train that connected Tokyo and Kobe in just eight hours and fifty-five minutes, cutting down travel time by two hours and forty minutes—a true miracle of modern technology.

"Not the Tsubame Express, but a cat—where did it go!?"

Leaning over his chief's desk, Narumi twisted his neck, scanning the room.

The high, dark brown ceiling, the liganoid-coated walls, the rich wood grain of the spacious floor—all surrounded him.

At the center of the room sat a large table, which doubled as a mahjong table for guests, surrounded by four high-backed chairs arranged neatly.

Against the side wall, two large bookshelves stood side by side. Atop them were old, stacked wicker trunks, and beside them, in a side cabinet, Narumi could spot the latest phonograph gleaming in the dim light.

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"Damn it!"

Against the opposite wall, a lounge chair was positioned, and next to it—where Narumi's camel-colored jacket hung—was a folding partition that partially concealed a small washbasin at the end of the room.

"Cat! Gouto!"

"Is something wrong with Gouto?"

Standing right next to the chief's desk, holding a broom and dustpan, was a figure clad in a black overcoat.

"Oh, Raidou, look at this! Look at my hand! Gouto scratched me!"

The hat, which the figure always wore even indoors, tilted slightly.

"If Gouto's claws really did it, your entire wrist should be gone."

"Wait a second, Raidou—cheap bluffs don't work on me. Hmph, I caught Gouto, and then out of nowhere, he—"

"You caught Gouto?"

The school cap tilted again.

"...What's with that look? You're staring at me like I just said something ridiculous."

"Gouto getting caught? That's impossible."

"Raidou. Listen, really listen, Raidou."

"I've finished cleaning the office, now I'm heading to school."

"I said listen to me!!"

With a sigh, Narumi turned toward the washbasin.

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Narumi washed his injured hand under the faucet, then filled a glass with water and brought it over.

"As an apprentice detective, you work hard cleaning the office every day. Consider this a reward—drink up."

He set the wet glass down on the edge of the chief's desk.

"I'm such a kind guy, aren't I?"

Nodding at his own words, Narumi grinned.

"I care about my subordinates, I provide excellent service, and I'm a damn handsome man. Hah! Drink up, Raidou. Don't be shy—the water in Ginrōkaku is top-tier."

"—It tastes like rusty metal when I drink it in my room."

"Raidou, wait—hold on!"

"Just because something's true, doesn't mean you have to say it out loud! Sure, President Lincoln was forgiven because he was honest—but that was after he chopped down that cherry tree!"

"—That was President Washington."

"Don't interrupt me!"

"Listen, in situations like this, you chug the whole glass in one go, then bow your head and say 'Thank you very much.' That's just basic social etiquette. As a Devil Summoner's supervisor, it's my duty to teach you how society works. You should be grateful."

"—I should be grateful to Yatagarasu."

"No, you should be grateful to me!"

"Seriously, why the hell do you get a private room in Ginrōkaku equal to mine!?"

Page 43-44

"You're just a student and an apprentice, so sleeping in the office should be good enough for you, right? Hell, if you really need a place to sleep, I don't mind letting you crash by the entrance of my room."

"Besides, you're young! As a Summoner-in-training, you should be sleeping outside on the ground anyway. And really, wouldn't it be better to rent out your room and collect some rent money instead?"

"I've thought about doing that so many times, but in the end, I—"

"—It's about time for me to go to school."

"Listen to me when I'm talking!!"

With a deep sigh, Narumi grumbled bitterly before continuing.

"Ugh... Raidou, don't stand next to me. Move over there—right in front of my desk."

Otherwise, what's the point of me sitting with my back to the window?

The desk was strategically positioned so that the backlight from the window would give Narumi an intimidating presence, allowing him to control conversations.

Even though the direct sunlight was hot and blinding, he put up with it to maintain that dominant



positioning—but with Raidou standing beside him, the effect was completely ruined.

Narumi clicked his tongue in frustration.

"Come on, Raidou, move over there!"

"I'm fine right here," the school-capped boy muttered, completely monotone.

"No, it's not fine! I'm not fine with it!"

"If I'm in the way, can I just go to school now?"

"I told you to listen to me, damn it!!!"

Page 45 - A Detective's Job

"From the start, what exactly are you talking about, Narumi—"

"I've told you countless times to call me 'Sensei'!"

Breathing heavily, Narumi bent down, rummaging under his desk, and pulled out a thick stack of flyers.

"This! This is what I'm talking about!"

His Cartier wristwatch glinted as he held one of the flyers up in front of Raidou's cap.

[Universal Investigations, Fast Response, Accepting All Cases, Increasing Trust Among Clients – Narumi Detective Agency]

The flyer's illustration showed a handsome man with gleaming white teeth, smiling confidently as if to push the text aside.

For a few silent seconds, curly hair and a school cap met eye to eye, locked in an expressionless stare.

"Alright. Looks like you finally understand," Narumi said with a nod.

"Understand what?"

The school cap tilted slightly.

"God, you're slow, Raidou. Listen, this is the era of information warfare—which means advertising. Money isn't just going to fall into our laps. We need more detective jobs.

If possible, the clients should be women. But no grandmas. Preferably young, beautiful women.

And ideally, they should only bring in cases that are so easy that you can solve them alone, so I don't even have to bother stepping in.

That's the kind of clients we're aiming to attract with this flyer."

"—So... I'm the one getting the jobs, I'm the one doing the work... and what exactly is it that you're doing, Narumi-san?"

"Call me 'Sensei'!"

"—Yes—"

From outside the window, the chirping of a brown-eared bulbul (hiyodori) echoed, sounding almost like laughter.

"Hmph, you get it now, Raidou? Defending the Imperial Capital—our true duty—requires an enormous amount of funding. No matter how much money we have, it's never enough.

It's really not enough, damn it!

There's cafés, bars, dance halls... There's Matsuyo-chan the dancer, Toshie-chan the waitress...

Ah, man, defending the Imperial Capital is such a huge responsibility, don't you think? The money flies away like it's grown wings!"

Panting slightly, Narumi grabbed the glass of water from his desk and chugged it down.

"—Didn't you just recently request additional funding from Yatagarasu?"

"Raidou. Listen carefully.

Whenever your superior—someone above you—says something, your first response should always be 'Yes, sir!'.

This is a fundamental rule of being a decent human being. Got it? Say it. Right now."

"Good. Now, one more thing—budgets aren't always spent exactly as they're intended.

You're still a kid, so you wouldn't understand, but this is how bureaucracy works.

This is how adults operate—with wisdom and courage.

The additional funding?

I completely used it up for a top-secret mission I've been working on.

It was absolutely necessary for the defense of the Imperial Capital—for stock investments, futures trading, surveillance in bars and dance halls...

Oh, and I also bought some essential supplies for future operations.

It's all long gone—fully allocated and completely used up."

"—Those shoes are new, aren't they?"

"School."

Raidou's cap tilted downward slightly, facing Narumi.

"Not bad, huh? Custom-made to fit my feet perfectly—take a good look. And this suit—brand new."

Narumi, now under Raidou's silent stare, faked a cough.

"A-Anyway! That's why we're doing this advertising campaign! You're the one in charge—so hurry up and get going!"

"Congratulations on your graduation."

"—I haven't graduated yet."

"I need to go to Yumizuki High School."

Before Raidou could finish, Narumi cut him off and kept talking.

"Listen, this is on-the-job training. You're an apprentice detective, a staff member here. You want to become a great detective like me, don't you?"

Then this mission is five hundred times more important than school."

"...What exactly is this on-the-job training mission?"

"Find places where you can put up flyers without getting yelled at, and put them up quickly.

Anywhere highly visible is fine—but if someone tears them down right away, that's a problem.

Even if you get complaints, talk your way out of it. Think on your feet.

Sounds like a rewarding mission, doesn't it?

You need to put up all of these today.

There are four hundred flyers."

"...This? All of these?"

Page 48 - A Detective's Job

"Here, sling the flyers over your shoulder like a sash. Yeah, just like that—like a newspaper delivery boy. Oh-ho! It suits you perfectly!

You could totally work as a paperboy starting tomorrow. Just send your paycheck to the office, alright? You're free in the mornings anyway, aren't you?"

Raidou, now wearing a black overcoat with a bundle of advertising flyers strapped across his chest, furrowed his brows.

"—How am I supposed to stick these up? What about paste?"

"You've really spent all your time training and not learning anything about the real world, huh? Paste is made by boiling flour, you know. Don't tell me you didn't even know that?"

Narumi shrugged dramatically.

"—I do know that. But where's the flour—and we also need a brush to apply it."

"Figure it out yourself! Don't try to dump everything on me!"

I pulled an all-nighter investigating, and I'm so exhausted I could pass out. Just get going already!

Besides, you drank the water I gave you, didn't you? That means you accepted the job!

Or was that just free-loading? Don't screw with me! Water isn't free, you know—I have to pay the damn water bill!"

"—I drank the water because—"

"I just taught you that when your superior \*\*tells you something, you say 'Yes, sir!' first!!"

From the ground, dust and Narumi's shouting swirled up into the air.

## Page 49 - A Detective's Job

"Good grief... Why did Yatagarasu choose someone like Narumi as a supervisor?"

"—I heard that you got caught by that supervisor."

Raidou, still carrying the bundle of flyers over his shoulder, glanced down at the black cat walking alongside him.

"Tch... I let my guard down. Who would've thought someone like Narumi could actually pin me down?"

"So it really happened, huh—"

Even though Yarai Ward was considered part of Yamate Ginza, not all of it looked the same.

Once they left Karuko River Shopping Street, the two-story buildings completely disappeared, and the sidewalks became irregular and patchy.

Still, shops and houses were packed closely together on both sides of the road.

Tokyo City had expanded into 35 districts in 1918 (Taisho 7) to accommodate the exploding population, but the Great Kanto Earthquake had momentarily driven people away.

That didn't last long, though—farmland was quickly converted into residential areas, and the population of the Imperial Capital kept growing.

"Raidou! Hey, Raidou! Stop for a second!"

A peddler pulling a wooden cart passed by on the side.

The days of balancing goods on a shoulder pole were mostly gone, and now most merchants used pushcarts instead.

Further down the street, a teppanyaki food stall had stopped, and a group of children in kimonos had gathered around it.

"My forehead's itchy. Scratch it for me."

"—Like this?"

The black overcoat crouched down, and Raidou gently brushed his fingertips over the area just above Gouto's eyebrows.

"I didn't get caught because I wanted to be petted."

"By Narumi? Do you really think he's the type to do that?"

Even if he were, cats choose who they let touch them.

I'd never let someone whose hands only ever hold money pet me.

Mm... move a little higher... Use two fingers and scratch deeper."

"—But... You've never been caught by any demon before, right?"

As Raidou adjusted his fingertip movements, he asked.

"When it comes to money, Narumi displays strength beyond human comprehension."

"—And what does money have to do with you?"

"He tried to sell me to a shamisen maker."

"...What?"

A middle-aged woman in a kimono, holding a shopping basket, bent down and petted Gouto as she passed by.

She gave a gentle smile to the young man in the school uniform before continuing on her way.

While Western clothing was becoming more common, it was still mostly worn by company men or on formal occasions.

For everyday life, traditional kimono was still the norm, especially for women and children.

A gust of wind swept through, sending a flurry of flower petals dancing in the air.

One of the petals landed right on Gouto's nose.

"—A peony."

Just diagonally ahead, through a gap in a wooden fence, the deep peony-colored shadow of blooming flowers could be seen.

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Since peonies are shrubs, their full shape was not entirely visible.

"Now that I think about it, the equinox is coming soon."

"—Flowers—"

"You bastard!!"

Raidou suddenly stood up and approached the wooden fence.

"What's wrong? You craving peony rice cakes for the equinox?"

"If I don't accompany them..."

He gazed through the gap in the fence, staring at the peony blossoms.

Suddenly, a furious roar came from the side.

It was a policeman, his face gorilla-like in appearance.

"You there! Acting suspicious! You! Don't move!!"

A dark navy blue uniform, with stiff shoulders and a buttoned-up collar, stormed toward them with large, heavy strides.

His hat was starched and crisp, a thin mustache sat under his round nose, and from his waist, a saber hung at his side.

Though modern patrol officers had started carrying more practical short swords, this old-fashioned officer still wielded a long, narrow Western-style saber.

"I said don't move! Don't move, damn it!!"

The policeman barked a false accusation at Raidou.

"...I just turned around."

The saber, despite being mostly for show, had an elegant design—its hilt had a guard, a tassel-adorned cord, and its nickel-plated blade glinted in the light.

The officer likely believed his tactics were effective for intimidation.

His mustache also seemed to serve the same purpose.

His excessively loud voice was further proof of his overbearing personality.

"What's with that stack of papers?!?"

It's a strange hour for a newspaper delivery boy.

You're not distributing socialist propaganda, are you?!

If you're a working youth, then state the youth organization you belong to!"

Still turned toward the officer, Raidou glanced at his epaulets.

There were no stars, meaning he was a regular patrol officer—a low-ranking constable.

"What's wrong?! Answer me, damn it!!"

"I'm a student—I'm not part of any youth organization."

He replied briefly.

"A student?! Wandering the streets at this hour?!"

What about school?!"

Ha! So you skipped military training because you couldn't handle it, huh?! Weakling!"

A few years ago, during the Washington Naval Conference, Japan had been forced to reduce its military strength.

To compensate for the cutbacks, the government initiated a program to train students as reserve soldiers.

Military training became mandatory, and officers were sent to schools to conduct soldier drills as part of the curriculum.

However, not all students accepted it—some actively opposed the compulsory militarization of education.

"Unpatriotic scum! What's your name?!"

I need to report this to your school and guardian!"

Still silent, Raidou opened his overcoat.

"I told you not to move, damn it! How many times do I have to say it?!"

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Raidou gripped the sheath of his sword, pushing its guard forward so that the police officer could see it clearly.

Sweat broke out on the gorilla-faced officer's brow, and his expression changed.

"Wh... What the hell...?! You...!"

"Good grief... Finally, you get it."

At their feet, Gouto let out a low growl.

"If you're truly law enforcement, then you should recognize the Yatagarasu emblem engraved on the guard of this sword—and realize that he carries the duty of protecting the Imperial Capital."

"...You... You're under arrest under the Peace Preservation Law!"

"Wha—What?!" The black cat coughed in disbelief.

"What is that sword?! What the hell are you up to?!"

Carrying a weapon like that hidden under your cape—that alone makes you suspicious!

Don't move! Come with me to the police station!

I said don't move, damn it!!!"

"Are you an idiot? How am I supposed to come with you if I don't move?"

Gouto sighed heavily, as above him, Raidou spread both arms wide—a clear non-threatening gesture, showing that he had no intention of resisting.

"Y-You...! Not just a sword—you're carrying a pistol too?!"

The officer peeked under Raidou's open coat and froze in shock.

"...Are you a member of the Shichisei Gidan?!"

Roaming the streets fully armed like this—what politician are you planning to assassinate?!"

"Oi... Do you really think an assassin would just casually show off all their weapons?"

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"Good grief..."

Gouto's voice was completely drowned out by the piercing sound of the police whistle the officer had just blown.

In 1874 (Meiji 7), when the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department was established, the term "rasotsu" ( ) was officially replaced with "junsa" ( , patrol officer).

In 1881 (Meiji 14), the small police stations that patrol officers used as their base were renamed from "kōbansho" ( ) to "hashutsujo" ( ).

By 1888 (Meiji 21), residential police outposts (chūzaisho, ) were also established across Japan.

A hashutsujo ( ) was a station for rotating officers, while a chūzaisho ( ) was a permanent residence and workplace for a single live-in officer.

The regional policing system that continued into the Taisho era had already been fully developed in the Meiji era.

"Did you bring a brush? The flour paste is in that paint can."

The elderly officer spoke, his figure tinged orange by the sunlight against the brick wall of the police station.

The sun had dipped low over the residential district, and the sky was spreading into twilight, deep purple like a billowing cloak.

The cry of crows stretched long in the distance, gradually fading away.

By the time Raidou was forcefully detained, questioned, and then released, evening had already set in.

"I truly apologize for the trouble."

Bowing deeply, the elderly officer lowered his head in sincere regret.

Raidou simply touched the brim of his school cap in response, acknowledging the gesture.

Below them, Gouto let out an exaggeratedly long sigh.



"I deeply apologize for keeping you for so long.

You must be hungry.

If you'd like, please have this on your way home."

"It's daigaku-imo."

The elderly officer handed over a paper bag.

"Thank you very much."

"Raidou, there's no need to waste your time thanking him for such trivial things. Let's go."

Gouto let out a grumpy meow.

At the police outpost's entrance, the gorilla-faced officer stood ramrod straight, sweating profusely.

"Good grief... Times really have changed."

As they were formally saluted by both police officers, Gouto snorted.

"Even while stationed in a police outpost, there are officers who don't recognize the Yatagarasu emblem...

If that elderly officer hadn't stepped in, who knows how this would've ended?"

"Thanks to him, we got paste ingredients, a brush..."

"Don't act like daigaku-imo is some grand prize."

"...And sweet potatoes."

A sudden gust of wind swept through, sending several advertisement flyers flying off from Raidou's sash, fluttering noisily into the air.

"Gouto, let's find somewhere to eat daigaku-imo."

Raidou's hands moved in a blur—like the arms of a thousand-armed Kannon, his limbs stretched in multiple directions, effortlessly snatching all the scattered flyers before they could drift away.

He tucked them neatly into his overcoat.

"You can eat your damn sweet potatoes however you like."

"What do you mean?"

"It's not proper to eat while walking."

The black cat stopped, staring intently at Raidou.

He was carrying a ridiculous amount of items—a bundle of flyers slung over his coat, a paper bag of daigaku-imo in one hand, and a paint can filled with flour hanging from the other.

"Don't you think your appearance is what's really improper here?"

"It's hard to move, it looks terrible, and it'll be a problem if something happens, don't you think?"

"—It won't be a problem. More importantly, let's eat."

With a sigh, Gouto let out a low growl and led the way into a back alley.

It looked like an abandoned temple.

Or at the very least, a temple with no residents.

Just beyond the main hall, in faded, twisted calligraphy, the words "Yodobashi Honganji" could barely be made out.

The temple grounds were desolate, the earth uneven, and the belfry-like structure was overgrown with weeds and trees, nearly collapsed.

The space was completely hidden from the street, enclosed by a stone wall and rustling trees.

Sitting on the temple steps, Raidou opened the paper bag of daigaku-imo.

"Are you going to eat first and then put up the flyers?"

Gouto leaped onto the covered walkway behind them and asked,

"—Are you really going to eat?"

"Before that, I need to boil the flour and make the paste.

This place looks like it's safe to make a fire."

"Is that what a Devil Summoner is supposed to be doing?"

Honestly, just throw away that ridiculous advertising nonsense."

Raidou extended a piece of daigaku-imo, offering it to Gouto.

"I don't want it."

"You seem irritated.

It's not good to be hungry—you should eat something."

"I am NOT irritated because I'm hungry!"

"—So you're not going to eat?"

"...I'll eat."

A small voice answered.

At the base of the stairs, just slightly off to the side in the shadows, a young girl in a kimono was standing still.

Without changing expression, Raidou lowered his hand, shifting the piece of sweet potato toward her instead.

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The young girl suddenly ran forward, but then froze, looking up at him hesitantly.

Her wide, cautious eyes asked a silent question—"Can I really have this?"

"You don't want it?"

The small head beneath the stairs shook vigorously from side to side.

She was probably six or seven years old.

Her kimono was crudely cut down to fit her, as if it had been hastily resized.

The straw sandals (zōri, ) she wore were far too big for her small feet.

Her hair was cut short in an okappa ( ) style, framing her round face.

Her cheeks were sunken, and her hands and nose were completely smudged with dirt.

"—Wash your hands first." Raidou said.

"The well isn't working."

"—Why isn't it working?"

"It's broken."

As he met the girl's gaze, Raidou stood up and continued speaking.

"Open your mouth."

Without waiting, he pushed a piece of daigaku-imo into the little girl's mouth.

Then, he glanced around the area, taking in his surroundings.

The temple grounds probably got plenty of sunlight during the day, but now they were ruled only by deepening shadows.

"Where's your home?"

"Here."

She answered happily, still chewing.

"—Here?"

"A street child, huh?" Gouto muttered with a short growl.

"—Where's the well?"

The girl's small eyes were locked onto the paper bag of daigaku-imo, resting on the temple steps.

Raidou silently handed the bag to her.

Her okappa-cut face lit up instantly, eyes sparkling with excitement.

Before she could get too carried away, Raidou firmly warned her.

"—Hold onto it."

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"Hey, hey."

The young girl looked up at him, her expression seeming to ask, "Am I not allowed to eat?"

Without answering, Raidou handed her the paint can filled with flour, placing it in her small hands.

Then, he slung the wooden rod and the bundle of flyers across her kimono-clad shoulders.

The heavy load made her tiny body wobble unsteadily, swaying from side to side.

"—Hold onto it. All of this is important."

"Oi! That much weight on a little child—this is practically torture!"

Gouto protested, but Raidou ignored him, continuing his questioning.

"—Where is the well?"

A stream of murky brown water gushed unhappily from the rusted hand pump.

The well was right next to the main temple hall.

It may have once been sacred spring water, but now it was completely overgrown with weeds.

Still gripping the pump handle, Raidou turned back and spoke.

"—The small bolt connecting the handle to the push rod inside the cylinder is broken."

No matter how many times he moved the lever up and down, it failed to engage anything.

"Good grief..."

Gouto wrinkled his face, letting out a deep, exasperated sigh.

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In contrast, the little girl carrying all the baggage behind him was grinning from ear to ear.

"—I swapped in a new bolt, so now the wooden valve inside the cylinder moves up and down properly.

That means the water should start flowing.

It's best to pump it for a while—since it's a shallow well, there's old rainwater and rust sediment built up inside."

Before he could continue, Gouto let out a grumpy growl, cutting him off.

"What the hell...?!"

You seriously used a summoning tube as a replacement bolt?!"

"—It was a spare tube.

I wasn't using it anyway."

Raidou glanced down at his feet as he spoke.

"Spare or not, a summoner's tools are important!

And you just shoved one into a well pump like it was some cheap bolt?!"

"—If the main valve had been broken, the dimensions wouldn't have fit, and that would've been a problem."

"In all of Raidou Kuzunoha history, there has NEVER been an idiot like this."

As Gouto grumbled in disbelief, an eerie shriek overlapped with his voice.

A (reppaku) war cry rang through the air.

"You bastard!"

From the thick overgrowth of weeds, a figure wielding a bamboo staff suddenly leaped out.

With a sharp cry, the bamboo stick lashed out and struck Raidou mercilessly across the face.

Without changing expression, without shifting his stance, Raidou stood firm—the only movement was the tilt of his cap, now slightly bent from the blow.

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"Agh!"

"Y-You bastard!!!"

It was a wild-haired boy.

He looked a little older than ten, with sharp eyes.

His kimono had been crudely cut short, turning it into a makeshift jacket, and underneath, he wore half-pants.

On his feet were worn-out wooden geta sandals, the soles heavily eroded from use.

"I just hit you, damn it! Doesn't it hurt?!"

Raidou answered without any emotion.

"Of course, it hurts."

"Then why the hell didn't you scream?!"

The bamboo staff sliced through the air, swinging up for another strike.

A moment later, the staff struck the boy's own shoulder instead.

The movement had been so fast that only Gouto was able to see it clearly—Raidou had disarmed him instantly.

"It's not good to hit someone in the face with a weapon.

You could blind them, and the nose bone breaks easily.

If you're just playing around, you should only hit the shoulder."

"P-Playing?!"

"Go to hell!!!"

The boy, gritting his teeth, reached into his sleeve and pulled out a stone.

Raidou's overcoat briefly flared, a short motion, barely visible.

In the next instant, the boy, still clutching stones in both hands, was sent flying backward.

His scream pierced the air, just as the young girl carrying the bags cried out in shock.

Page 62 - A Detective's Job:

"Oni-chan!"

"What the hell? Tch, I thought you were a damn kidnapper."

Sitting on the main hall steps, Yoshio ruffled his messy hair as he spoke.

"It looked like she was tied up or something."

They introduced themselves as Yoshio, the older brother, and Otoe, the younger sister—the siblings living in this abandoned temple.

"She was just carrying your stuff, huh?"

Standing next to her brother, legs slightly apart, Otoe stared directly at Raidou.

Scattered around the temple steps were the sash, the bundle of flyers, and the other items.

Her small eyes frequently flicked toward the bag of daigaku-imo as well.

"So... you got the well working too, huh?"

"Tch... My bad, then."

As Yoshio spoke, the wooden window frames of the main hall rattled in the wind.

Most of the glass panes along the covered walkway were shattered, and scraps of old newspaper had been pasted over them—though they were far from enough to block out the cold.

The sky was already dark, and moonlight faintly illuminated the desolate temple grounds.

"—Your parents? Are they not here?"

Standing at the bottom of the stairs, Raidou asked calmly.

"We got separated five years ago during the earthquake... but, tch..."

Page 63 - A Detective's Job:

"Madan-shin? You mean that demonic quake?"

"What the hell are you talking about? It was the Second Great Kanto Earthquake! Do you even know what happened?!"

"—Ah. December 3rd, Taisho 15—the Great Earthquake."

Behind Raidou's black overcoat, Gouto let out a quiet snort.

"\*If the Madan-shin never happened, history itself might have changed.

Who knows what would've become of things?

Maybe the entire Taisho era would have been erased from existence...\*"

Raidou scanned the wind-torn temple grounds, his gaze settling on the main hall steps.

"You've been living here since the earthquake?"

"Hell no!

I was working as a servant for some cheapskate boss up until recently.

But that bastard was an idiot and a stingy piece of crap, so Otoe and I ran away.

He'd hit us all the time, and the only food we ever got was cold rice."

"—Cold rice shortens meal times."

"You get it!

Wait—have you worked as a servant before?"

"Only in the sense that I also dealt with a stupid boss."

As Gouto let out a low growl, the long, droning cry of an insect overlapped with his voice.

A moment later, another noise rumbled through the air—the girl's stomach growling.

Raidou tilted his chin slightly, gesturing toward the paper bag on the steps.

"—It's cold too, but eat it anyway."

"BANZAI!!!"

Otoe shot her arms into the air in celebration, then dove toward the bag of daigaku-imo.

Page 64 - A Detective's Job:

Yoshio clicked his tongue and snatched the bag away.

"I don't take charity. I'm not some damn beggar. That's not how we live.

We still work and survive properly."

"—Doing what?"

"Scrap metal work.

Iron, copper, and brass—brass sells for the most, but even iron goes for 15 sen per kanme (3.75 kg).

I appreciate that you fixed the well, really, I do.

But I was gonna pay you back properly.

I'm not about to take handouts like some orphan."

"—But you are an orphan, aren't you?"

"Wrong.

Our mom is still alive."

Gouto sighed, his breath trailing along the ground.

"\*I've heard that one before.

If it's just a separation, then there's always hope of meeting again...\*"

"What the hell's with that look?!?!"

"—This is just my face."



"Tch. Whatever. I'm not taking it.

I don't beg for food, and I'm putting this right back where it was."

Otoe's gaze followed the paper bag as it was set back down on the temple steps.

Her small lips pressed together tightly.

Raidou spoke in his usual flat, unwavering tone.

"What's sitting there is payment. Take it properly."

"Don't be stupid. I didn't do anything to earn it.

...Or do you plan to make me do something now?\*"

Page 65 - A Detective's Job

"—Otoe worked for it."

"Hah?"

"—She followed instructions and held onto all that luggage the entire time."

Yoshio folded his arms, thinking it over.

"Wait, isn't that kinda weird?

You're saying just carrying your stuff was enough to earn all this?"

"The stuff you put down—"

Otoe suddenly cut into the conversation.

"That includes this too, right?

All these papers... and the can... you're giving those to us too?"

"That's—"

Raidou instinctively glanced at Gouto.

He had only meant to give them the bag of daigaku-imo—but he hadn't expected Otoe to want the whole pile of advertising flyers too.

How should he respond?

Giving the papers and the paint can to them was simple, but that would mean abandoning the task he was assigned—equivalent to throwing away someone else's work.

He hadn't pasted a single flyer yet.

That meant he hadn't fulfilled his responsibility—and that wasn't something he could just allow.

As he shook his head, Raidou muttered to himself rather than asking a real question.

"—What would you even do with that?"

"If I have paper, I can draw."

Otoe's voice bounced with excitement.

## Page 66 - A Detective's Job

"With all this paper, we could patch up the broken windows instead of glass."

"That's great, huh, Aniki?"

"Wait. That's—"

Raidou started to step forward, but a sharp voice cut him off.

"Leave the supplies with them."

"But—"

"I can't just abandon my responsibilities."

"Oh, come now. Even if you actually went around plastering those flyers everywhere, all you'd be doing is making a mess of the city.

The kids will put them to much better use.

Besides, they're planning to use them as a substitute for window glass in the temple, which means—technically—Narumi's request is still fulfilled.

They won't be taken down right away, and they'll be placed somewhere clearly visible."

"Visible? Here?"

Raidou glanced around the ruined temple grounds.

"Quit sweating the details. Let's go."

The black cat turned on his heel.

"—We're just going to leave?"

Raidou watched his own shadow stretch out in front of him as he spoke.

"What else would we do?"

"We're just going to leave them like this? Without doing anything?"

## Page 67 - A Detective's Job

"Oi, oi, Raidou.

It's not like this is the first time you've run into orphans or kids living on the streets.

A Devil Summoner doesn't operate under charity laws, nor are we agents of Prince Shōtoku's Hiden-in (Buddhist welfare relief temples).

We're not priests, social workers, or government relief officers.

We don't have a duty to provide aid, and we certainly can't feed every starving person in the world.

There's nothing to be done.

That's just the way things are."

As Gouto walked ahead, Raidou's student cap shifted slightly as he shook his head.

"Wait, Gouto.

I still need to properly thank them."

"Thank them?"

The black cat turned his head slightly.

"If they're taking over my job and putting up the flyers in my place, I should at least compensate them."

"No need.

They wanted the flyers, and they got them.

That's already a fair trade."

"Gouto, taking advantage of someone's kindness just to make things easier for yourself is disgraceful."

"Wrong, wrong. This is simply the right person in the right place doing the right job.

Both sides benefit."

"If they benefited from it, then I should still thank them."

"Oh? Well then, since it's a fair trade, shouldn't we be getting something in return too?"

Gouto let out a dismissive snort and quickened his pace.

A moment later, the sound of pebbles scattering behind them grew louder.

Raidou half-turned—

Just as Otoe stumbled forward, bumping her forehead into his chest.

"What? If you're chasing after us, I'm telling you now—I can't do anything more for you."

Gouto's voice, as always, was nothing but cat sounds to human ears.

Yet, Otoe slipped under Raidou's coat, her small hands clinging tightly to his school uniform.

"Knock it off. No playing around. Let go of Raidou."

Suddenly, her tiny fingers undid the silver buttons of his uniform, then lifted the knit undershirt beneath it.

"H-Hey! What the hell are you doing?!"

"Just take it, alright?"

"—A talisman?"

A voice echoed from the shadows.

Yoshio emerged, stepping forward.

"W-What kind of nonsense is this?!"

She's still a child!

Raidou's way too young to be taking a wife!"

"Nee-chan insisted on giving it to you."

"I-Insisted?! What the hell is this?!"

Hey—quit yanking up his shirt like that!

Are you trying to force a situation and make it look like something happened?!"

Raidou's calm voice cut through the chaos.

"This is a sacred talisman of the temple."

Yoshio nodded.

"It was the last one left, buried deep inside the main hall's inner sanctuary.

It's a direct blessing from the temple's founder—this thing's over 300 years old.

If you keep it against your skin, you'll be blessed beyond belief."

Beneath the lifted shirt, Otoe pressed the sutra-covered talisman firmly against Raidou's abdomen.

A Detective's Job (Final Scene)

"—You sure know a lot about this."

"I sold one to an antique dealer before. That's what they told me."

"Good grief. Washi paper can last a thousand years, so maybe it really is an ancient artifact.

But if it couldn't even stop the temple from falling into ruin, how powerful could it really be?"

Gouto sighed beside him, but Otoe lifted her face.

"A thank-you."

She smiled as she spoke.

"—Thank you."

Raidou gave a simple reply.

Then, slowly, he turned his head toward Gouto.

"—I received their thanks."

"So it would seem."

"Just as you said, Gouto.

Since both sides benefited, they gave their thanks.

Naturally, that means we should do the same."

"Enough standing there with your stomach out.

Hurry up and pull your shirt down and button yourself up."

"Ah."

Raidou adjusted his uniform, fastening the buttons back up.

Yoshio tilted his head, watching him.

"Oi... are you seriously talking to that cat?

Are you okay in the head?"

"—I'm fine."

"Are you really, though? Because, uh..."

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Yoshio muttered to himself, pulling out one of the advertising flyers and holding it up in front of him.

"Oi, are you really a detective?"

"—I'm just an apprentice."

"Good enough. I'll hire you."

"What, you some kind of errand boy?"

"Well, whatever. If you're a detective, even a half-baked one, that'll do."

The trees beside the temple rustled all at once, shaken by the wind.

"Since you're a detective, I got a case for you."

Raidou answered immediately.

At the same time, Gouto let out an extremely displeased growl.

Scene Transition - Taxi Ride

"You ever heard of it, mister?"

A cheerful voice came from the driver's seat.

Kobayashi Ikuya, hands on the wheel, flashed a bright smile through the rearview mirror.

"Lately, something's been showing up near the red brick district."

The T-type Ford taxi rumbled along the Manseibashi intersection, passing the statue of Colonel Hirose.

"A ghost, maybe?"

"People say there's a dead man walking around at night."

Kobayashi was in an excellent mood.

After all, he had been paid the full fare up front—exactly according to regulations.

"Haha! A ghost, in this modern age?"

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Since taxis in the city charged a standard flat rate of one yen, they were commonly referred to as "En-Taku" (Yen-Taxis).

However, in reality, the fare was often settled through bargaining.

Forty sen, maybe seventy at most—haggling was just expected.

"But a bunch of different people have seen it, you know?"

Customers who paid the full one-yen fare without a single complaint were extremely rare.

"Uh... You want the South Exit, right?"

"—Drop me off before we get there."

No matter how unfriendly his passenger was, Kobayashi stayed in a good mood.

Raidou stepped out of the T-type Ford taxi, raising his chin toward the massive structure ahead.

Tokyo Station, The Red Brick Giant

Surrounded by arc lamps brighter than gas lamps, the massive train station loomed against the night sky.

320 meters in length.

A towering structure of sheer grandeur.

The largest red brick building in all of Japan.

Completed in 1914 (Taisho 3), the three-story steel-frame brick construction stood proudly.

Its red brick exterior was lined with bands of granite, creating a strikingly ornate façade.

Crowning its twin towers, two huge octagonal domes curved majestically toward the heavens.

"Good grief."

Gouto leaped out from under Raidou's coat, flicking his tail.

"You actually brought us all the way to Tokyo Station."

The black cat wrinkled his nose.

"Taking on such a pointless request... What a waste of time."

## Page 72 - A Detective's Job

The many illuminated windows on the upper floors of Tokyo Station were from the Tokyo Station Hotel, which was built as part of the station complex.

"Honestly, Yoshio's request is way too vague."

Built to rival the great Western nations, this was a massive, modernized hotel.

It had more rooms than the famous Imperial Hotel, which had previously been Tokyo's largest.

Its food was also highly rated.

The restaurant's sandwiches and hamburg steaks weren't yet common in city diners, so people lined up just to get a taste.

Tokyo Station Hotel was also the first place in Japan to use the term "coffee shop."

"He just wants us to find his long-lost mother because he supposedly saw her in Tokyo?

That's all he gave us?"

Many writers also stayed at this massive, cutting-edge hotel to focus on their work.

"She might not even live here.

She could've just been passing through.

She might have only gotten on or off a train.

Most likely? Yoshio just saw someone who looked like her."

A thin mist floated in the air.

With Gouto's voice trailing at his feet, Raidou slowly walked forward.

"Come on.

The idea that she looked exactly the same as she did five years ago?

That's impossible."

Up ahead, he passed through a tunnel-like brick arch.

Beyond it lay the boarding-only entrance at the Marunouchi South Exit.

On the opposite side, the North Exit was strictly for passengers getting off.

Ten years ago, right here at this South Exit...

As he was about to board a train,

Prime Minister Hara Takashi was assassinated.

73 - The Work of a Detective

"Oi?"

Other than the towering red-brick wall above, everything looked like the depths of the ocean. There was still time before the last train, and a few people could be seen here and there, but everything was blurred and hazy. As he walked, Raidou slowly turned his head, scanning his surroundings.

From the Imperial Guest Route at the Marunouchi Central Gate, the six-lane Gyoko-dori Avenue, lined with ginkgo trees, had completely merged with the night, making the darkness feel even deeper.

Each lane of Gyoko-dori was exceptionally wide compared to normal roads. Two rows of central dividers lined with trees ran down its middle, with an exclusive Imperial guest lane positioned at its very center. Since this route was reserved for only the highest nobility, it was rarely ever used, and no streetlights adorned it. At night, it became nothing more than a vast, black void.

"Well, since we've come all the way to Tokyo, shall we pay our respects to the Four Guardian Beasts?" Gouto spoke.

"—You mean those Imperial guardian gates?"

"Indeed. The Azure Dragon that is engraved upon the ceiling of the South Entrance's octagonal dome—it was originally placed there by Yatagarasu to act as one of the protectors of the Imperial Capital—"

Gouto's words cut off.

Raidou, who had been walking beside him, also came to a stop.

The mist was thick.

Too thick.

It was as if countless layers of dark curtains were flowing across the space before them.



Gouto's fur stood on end, and Raidou instinctively began to draw his sword.

The streetlights ahead, once shining brightly, now swayed like the flickering glow of an anglerfish deep in the ocean. They twinkled irregularly.

The people walking nearby moved like empty shells.  
They were not human.  
Nor were they demons.  
They were what had once been human.

"Well, well... when did we end up stepping into a place like this?"

Faded silhouettes of the dead strode through the mist, their lifelike appearances now mere echoes of what they had been in life.  
Shades of the departed, gathering in the darkness.

"Is this a rift left behind by the Demon-Severing Quake?"

"Hmm... I thought the Yatagarasu's Cleaners had taken care of all the unstable spatial fractures."

A thin film of distorted air separated them from the real world, and beyond it, the headlights of cars passing by shimmered like deep-sea creatures.

"This doesn't seem to be a complete Otherworld—the real world is still right beside us."

Despite the warped atmosphere, the grinding of wheels against the pavement could still be clearly heard, and even the exhaust fumes lingered heavily in the air.

"Well then, how do we get out of here?"

Another car approached.

From the darkness, two blazing headlights glared like the eyes of a beast lurking in a cave.

The roaring tires let out a ferocious howl as they sped toward them.

Detective Work – Page 75

It was unmistakably a cry.

Gurrin—

"Oboroguruma, Raidou! It's the demon car that always causes accidents!"

A demonic vehicle in the form of a London taxi, a black cab, came charging forward with a ferocious roar.

The body was that of a wrecked car—its chassis was warped, its fenders deeply scarred, and its bumper looked as if it would fall off at any moment. Despite rattling violently with instability, its speed far surpassed that of any normal automobile.

As the battered bumper closed in, the man in the black overcoat and the black cat split in opposite directions, each leaping aside.

Oboroguruma did not simply continue straight ahead...!

Its wheels skidded sideways, entering a full slip while tilting its body heavily toward Raidou.

However, Raidou's reaction was just as swift.

With a side roll transitioning into a forward tumble, he withdrew further while reaching inside his overcoat—his hand drawing forth a Colt Lightning.

Front Sight—

As Oboroguruma advanced, its body sliding toward him in a sweeping motion, Raidou aligned his aim and braced himself on one knee.

Cylinder—

Burst—

Cartridge—

The iron barrel responded with a sharp clang. The Colt Lightning's cylinder spun rhythmically, cycling with precision, as the explosive crack of gunfire echoed in rapid succession.

Each bullet left the chamber as streaks of fire, cutting through the air toward its target.

Bullet—

Standing Position—

Raidou planted both feet firmly on the ground, continuing to fire relentlessly.

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Beyond the haze of gunpowder, sparks burst forth.

The slipping wheels of Oboroguruma screeched violently as they scraped against the ground, sending up plumes of dust. The black cab's body dug into the earth, carving rough trenches as it flipped over, flinging debris in every direction.

And yet—it did not slow down, nor did it stop.

Even as it tumbled, even as it damaged its own frame, the demon car continued its advance toward Raidou.

The final bullet struck the rotating, cursed steel of its side body, bouncing off uselessly. Raidou twisted his body and broke into a run.

The gunshots had not caused it to overturn—it had done so intentionally.

Like a mechanical tiller, it spun toward him deliberately, attempting to drag him in and crush him within its body's relentless force.

The black overcoat flared against the wind.

Oboroguruma did not slow down, even as it spun through the air, its wheels howling like a monstrous whistle. A massive block of iron was closing in just behind Raidou's flowing coat.

Even while flipping, it moved at full automobile speed.

It would catch up in mere seconds.

At this rate, he would be flattened to death.

The gun had been useless. Would the blade be enough?

No—even if he successfully cut through it, the force of its movement would still hurl its remains forward at lethal speed. The shattered wreckage could crush him all the same.

A demon summon might be necessary.

But neither Jack-o'-Lantern's blinding flames nor Dormarth's stunning howl seemed like they would be effective against a demon car hell-bent on destruction.

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Raidou twisted his body, flipping through the air.

But he did not summon Jack-o'-Lantern.  
He did not call forth Dormarth either.

Instead, he reached for a third option.

From the green-glowing summoning tube, a brilliant emerald radiance burst forth.

The very molecular density of the space around his outstretched hand rippled, disturbed by the summoning force.

In the same instant—

The spinning demon car was crushed.

Not merely stopped. Not merely damaged.

It was flattened—as though a divine hand had slammed it into the earth.

And then—it rose.

A towering giant stood upon the now-metal-sheeted wreckage of Oboroguruma.

His form was wreathed in fire as he loomed over Raidou.

His face was carved from stone, as if hewn from a great slab of bedrock.  
His frame was monstrous, standing at nearly ten shaku (over three meters).  
He was clad in armor, reminiscent of ancient haniwa statues.

A steel muzzle clamped over his lower jaw, covering his chin and the sides of his face, muffling his words into guttural growls. His very breath rumbled like thunder within the mist.

Raidou spoke the name:

"Aterui."

The giant warrior gave a short nod.

Aterui, the Demon King of the Northern Lands.

A fearsome Oni General, also known as Akuro-ō ("The Dark Road King"), as well as the Great Duke.

During the Enryaku era (782–806), he singlehandedly crushed over 100,000 Imperial soldiers, forcing their entire military campaign to collapse into utter disarray. A legend of war and destruction—now bound in service to Raidou.

The deep, eerie growl of Aterui reverberated through the mist, like the howl of a foghorn in the night.

Raidou nodded at him.

"That was our agreement, wasn't it? I'll remove it."

And with those words, he reached for the muzzle around Aterui's jaw.

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Raidou formed a seal with his fingertips.

The mouth restraint fell from the giant's jaw, dangling around his neck like a necklace.

"Ra... Raidooo!"

A voice, filled with clear rage, thundered down upon him.

"Today... TODAY, I will not forgive you! If you had not broken the seal on my mouth, then right now, at this very moment, I would KILL YOU!"

"Kill me, huh?"

"OH, ABSOLUTELY!!"

Aterui's massive fist came crashing down toward Raidou's black cloak.

The ground trembled violently, splitting open as though it had been struck by an enormous mallet.

"—Well? Weren't you going to kill me?"

Amid the thick, churning dust—even darker than the fog itself—Raidou stood unmoved, just inches away from the freshly gouged earth.

From above, a voice like crashing thunder rang out:

"You're just as unreadable as ever, RAAIDO! You neither run nor defend yourself! Is it carelessness? Or do you simply know no fear?!?"

Raidou, as calm as ever, stared up at him.

"So... are you killing me or not?"

"AND ON TOP OF THAT, YOU DON'T EVEN LISTEN TO WHAT I'M SAYING!!"

"I'm listening."

"No, you are NOT listening! You haven't listened to a word I've said! Crushing you would be effortless! That's right! The so-called rule that summons cannot defy their summoners—IT DOES NOT APPLY TO ME!"

In the historical chronicle *Nihon Kiryaku*, compiled during the Heian period, Aterui was described as having a wild beast's heart, one that would never submit.

"Now then, Raaaiido! If you don't want to be crushed, then REMOVE THIS CURSE SEAL FROM MY MOUTH! From now on, you will let me wear whatever I wish!"

"Sing."

Aterui, the Akurou-ou, began to recite a poem.

"Ugh, that's too short! TOO SHORT!"

The act of singing was part of Raidou's summoning contract with Aterui.

"One single verse per summoning—that was our agreement."

"Just one verse?! That's not enough for a proper song!"

Aterui had been executed alongside his ally More by the imperial army, and even then, it was said that he had a poem upon his lips.

Even now, did he still wish to weave poetry? What meaning did his songs hold? What purpose did they serve?

Since Aterui never explained it, Raidou had never bothered to ask.

"Raido, you're STILL not listening to me!"

"Then... if you refuse to listen—"

Raidou's gloved hands formed a summoning seal.

"W-Wait, Raiiido! Just wait a moment—"

With the completion of the seal, the muzzle once again locked around Aterui's lower jaw, covering half of his face.

"Wait! My songs belong to ME! Are you breaking our contract? Ah—ahhhh—!"

"Return."

"Someone is coming."

As Aterui let out a muffled scream, his form was sealed away once more.

Raidou turned his gaze toward the swirling fog.

At his feet, Gouto landed soundlessly, appearing beside him.

"Tsk, sealing away the Akurou-ou without even letting him finish... Are you really allowed to just ignore the terms of your contract?"

"He doesn't seem too hurt by it."

"More importantly—"

Raidou furrowed his brows as he stared deeper into the fog.

A sound was approaching.

It started as a hurried walk, then became a light jog, then returned to a fast-paced step—a sharp, rhythmic sound.

"Hmph. Doesn't sound like the dead."

As the one man and one cat continued watching, the fog split apart, revealing someone running towards them.

A camera swung wildly from their neck like an elephant's trunk.

It was Asakura Tae—and she bowed deeply, almost too formal for the moment.

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She leaned forward slightly as she came to a sudden stop.

"Hogya!"

She had almost crashed straight into the dark overcoat standing diagonally in front of her, hidden within the thick darkness.

"H-Hey, wait a minute—"

The thick fog made it hard to distinguish the shape of the black overcoat.

Well, setting aside personal taste when it comes to fashion choices, standing firmly in the middle of the street like a statue was just bad manners. My heels were making plenty of loud clicking noises as I walked, and this cream-colored suit of mine wasn't exactly low-profile.

In other words, this person must have noticed a lady running right at them, yet they deliberately stood in the way, blocking my path!

"You! Don't think you can look down on me just because I'm a woman—"

The moment she straightened her back to start complaining, the strap hanging around her neck suddenly yanked upward.

At the other end of the strap was her camera—which swung hard and slammed straight into Tae's round

face.

Letting out a scream, her reflexes didn't go to her own face, but instead to her camera.

It was a Six-Sakura Palette. Even though it was a domestic mass-produced model, she had dropped a whole fifteen yen to get her hands on it. The leather case offered some protection, but she still worried whether the impact had damaged it.

"D-Damn, looks okay... H-Hoheh."

Her cloche hat slipped off her head and flew away. As she twisted around to catch it, her large black handbag, which was slung over her shoulder, bounced hard against her waist.

The force of the impact shoved her forward, making her stumble in an awkward tap-dance motion.

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Tae stumbled sideways in a dance-like motion, as if performing a tap dance.

"What is with this woman? Is she a comedian?"

"A... a cat?"

Hearing the meow, Tae turned toward the sound and looked at the feet of the man in the black coat.

But as she twisted her body too sharply, the tip of her heeled shoe slipped, and one leg kicked up high, like that of a dancer.

"Ahhh—!"

"An enthusiastic young lady."

"Y-you! What are you looking at?"

"You."

She hastily pressed down her skirt, her round eyes glaring at the man in the black coat.

His answer was far too blunt.

"I... I see."

Biting her lip, she took a good look at him again.

A modern boy...

He must be a student. Looking at him properly, he was still quite young. He was tall, but could still be called a boy. His pale face, well-defined features—they reminded her of a silver screen star. If only he changed his outfit... Yes, if he had a bowler hat, round glasses, and a pair of loose-fitting trousers, he'd be the perfect model of a modern boy.

Having a younger brother like this might actually be nice.

Tae deliberately spoke in a tone that made her sound like a mature older sister.

"Standing in the middle of the road is dangerous, you know. What are you doing here so late at night?"

"—Where did you come from?"

The boy responded with a question instead.

"Hey, you! If you're going to ask someone something, shouldn't you introduce yourself first?"

Only after saying this did Tae realize that she hadn't introduced herself either.

"I am Asakura Tae."

"Kuzunoha Raidou. Where did you come from?"

"Where, you ask? From the newspaper office, of course! I'm a reporter for the Teito Shinpo newspaper."

She placed both hands on her hips and puffed out her chest with pride.

"Just because I'm a woman doesn't mean I'm some errand-running 'boy'! I'm a proper member of the editorial department, conducting my own interviews and writing my own articles. My pen name is Asakura Aicho. Just recently, I wrote an article about the installation of public telephones on street corners within the year. It got quite a bit of attention—maybe you've read it?"

Raidou's eyes, visible under the brim of his hat, stared at her in silence.

Tae's face flushed slightly in response.

"W-What's with that look? You don't believe me? I know female reporters are still rare, but..."

She continued, her voice becoming more passionate.

"Just like Hiratsuka Raicho-sensei says, it's the New Women who will change the world! Women should actively participate in society. We deserve equal rights—like the right to vote!"

The pale face standing before her continued to gaze at her, as if trying to see through her very existence.

Tae blinked and, without thinking, glanced down at her own outfit.

Was there something odd about the way she was dressed?

She wasn't wearing a simple one-piece dress; this was a proper ladies' suit purchased from Mitsukoshi's main store. The skirt was long enough to properly cover her knees, and the bell-shaped cloche hat was color-coordinated with the suit. Her white heels were elegant, too.

Her Dutch-cut short hair had been neatly styled at a salon, and she had only lightly applied City-brand face powder, ensuring no risk of her makeup smudging.

As for lipstick, she didn't go for the small pursed-lip style but applied it fully across her lips. Her eyebrows, too, were left natural and not excessively thinned.



Besides, this "foreign actress style" wasn't unusual anymore.

More importantly, she had dressed this way to meet a certain esteemed person, so there shouldn't be anything inappropriate about her appearance.

"Listen, you... when speaking to a lady—"

"—Why are you in the Expanse?"

The boy in the black coat cut her off, questioning her first.

"W-Why? Because it's my job!"

She raised her voice slightly in protest.

"I was heading to the Station Hotel to meet with Edogawa Ranpo-sensei and request a manuscript for his serialized novel in our newspaper!"

As soon as she finished speaking, Tae let out a short sigh.

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The request for the serialized novel was not an order from the company. It was entirely my personal decision. Because of this, my superiors didn't make any disapproving faces. Every editorial department was eager for the manuscript from the popular writer, Edogawa-sensei. If I could successfully arrange for the writing, my position within the company would surely improve.

I do thorough research, take photos, and revise my articles dozens of times, yet in this male-dominated company, I am still treated like a "kid"... And I'm already 22 years old.

If I manage to secure Edogawa-sensei's manuscript, everyone will notice.

...As expected of Asakura-san... It's settled, the next department head will be Asakura-san... It proves that women are more competent than men, doesn't it?

"Asakura-shachou, please stamp this document..." "Please follow the instructions of Asakura-buchou..." Everyone will follow Asakura-buchou's example and become great journalists.

"Heh," I said, placing both hands on my waist and straightening my back, then noticed a strong gaze from directly in front of me. My face turned red.

I turned further.

#### Arcane

The atmosphere was dark, with a deep mist. I could faintly see lights lined up in the distance, but they seemed less like light and more like fire. As I peered into the darkness, I could see people walking, partially shrouded in mist.

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"Where is Tokyo!?"

"How did you enter the otherworld?"

A question was thrown from the figure in the black coat.

"I see."

"Here, nothing's changed, we haven't entered Tokyo yet, right?"

The boy, who introduced himself as Raidou, looked around with a wary gaze, and Taë also turned her head again.

"Um, Raidou-kun, I have a question, don't think it's strange, but... which direction is Tokyo Station in? It's not that I don't know, I should have been heading straight towards the South Exit."

"Cat, kitty, is that your pet?"

Taë glanced at the black cat that was meowing at Raidou's feet.

"This girl seems to have been caught up when this otherworld space was created."

"—Created?" Raidou muttered.

"Yes, it seems so. The path that was once normal suddenly changed, and this girl proved that."

"So, someone must have created this space."

"The one who summoned the Oboroguruma and used it as a subordinate, I assume."

"For what purpose...?"

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"Um, just a minute..."

Taë pressed the corner of her eye with her fingertips and interrupted the mumbling in front of her.

"Not even answering a woman's question and muttering such nonsense—are you perhaps drunk?"

"Who are you?"

"Taë, Asakura Taë, I already properly introduced myself."

"—What is the purpose of the otherworldly descent in a place like this?"

"Purpose? I told you, I came here for work," she said. "Hey, Raidou-kun, you keep asking me questions, but what were you doing in the middle of such a dark street?"

Her gaze returned to him, eyes questioning.

The pale face beneath the school hat looked as if it was the first time it noticed Taë was standing there.

Was he just joking around, or was he mocking her just because she's a woman?

"Excuse me, Raidou-kun, who are you? Are you really a student? I told you the truth, so you should answer me too."

She asked with a strong interrogative tone.

"I'm a student, an apprentice."

Taë nodded. With men, it's always better to be firm. If you act too submissive, men will always take advantage of you.

Page 88:

"What are you an apprentice of?"

Ignoring her words, Raidou began walking to the side.

"Hey, I'm asking what you're apprenticing at!"

Without turning around, he pulled a piece of paper from his black cloak.

"What's this... an advertisement for a detective agency? Taking all kinds of cases?"

"Don't get away from me."

"Stay close."

"That's my business! It's not like we're lovers or anything, so why are you telling me not to leave?"

"What's with this, a line of seduction?"

"Well, it's possible you've fallen for me at first sight, but I haven't even asked about your hobbies yet. Also, even if you're about 15 centimeters taller than me... there's still the age gap... I don't really mind though, I believe in gender equality. Anyway, I like coffee and anmitsu, but what kind of food do you like, Raidou-kun?"

The darkness surged.

A strong wind blew from above, and a jet-black veil struck Taë across the face.

The veil swayed, revealing a crowd of shadowy figures.

"Hey, what is this? It's dangerous! We're going to crash!"

But there was no sensation of colliding with any bodies.

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"Hoah!!" Taë's eyes widened in surprise.

Her arm suddenly shot out from her chest.

It was a man's hand. The hand retracted, pulling back further inside. There was no pain. "Aahhh..." she trembled, her lips quivering, and she quickly turned her head towards the presence right behind her, like a wind-up doll.

The arm came out from the back of the suit.

It was the arm of a man dressed in traditional clothing. The arm, having just passed through her mind, swung briefly, and the man gave her a polite greeting of "Excuse me."

Taë could only make her wide eyes even rounder.

The wind kept attacking, and the figures, half-transparent, pierced through the cream-colored suit one by one. Several people's bodies passed right through hers.

Her vision blurred, and her knees wobbled.

It felt as if the ground beneath her feet had turned to muddy water, and Taë collapsed limply.

Spreading his coat, Raidou swung the pipes he held in both hands.

"Jack-o'-Lantern, use the Flame Lantern to search for the source of this magical energy. Door Mars, carry the fainted female reporter to a safe place as best as you can."

Page 90 Translation:

Turning back.

"What's this, am I a basket case again?"

"Hi-ho!"

A small demon with a pumpkin head floated in the air, emitting light from its lantern.

The beams of light sliced through time, capturing the whirlpool at the edge, creating a vortex behind the drifting dead.

The darkness ahead spanned roughly 30 meters. It wasn't just a shadow—it was a solid, pure-colored shadow.

"Gii, gii."

Standing firmly on the earth, the demon had enormous wings instead of arms.

"Alcard..."

"No doubt about it, the bat demon I let slip last night."

"This otherworld... is your hobby—letting the dead take walks?"

Raido asked monotonously while loading his Colt revolver.

"Gii, do you lack learning ability, Fourteenth? My body is immortal, a gun will not kill me."

"I see."

With a muzzle flash, the trigger was pulled, and a flame shot from the barrel. The bullet pierced the bat demon's feet, opening the ground beneath it.

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"What's wrong, gigigi? As quick as ever, but your aim is completely off."

The eruption swallowed Alcard's mockery. From the impact point of the bullet, a massive pillar of fire rose.

"GYAAAAAH!"

"——It's a fireball. I've increased the incendiary fuel to the maximum limit."

More flames were shot from the Colt.

"——If I can't shoot you dead, then I'll just burn you alive."

"Have you forgotten that I have wings?"

"It's burning."

In the darkness, the winged hands, trailing flames, soared high into the air.

"——Dormarth!"

Raidou shouted while running.

"Yes, yes!" The demon swiftly ran alongside.

"——I'm going to fly. Lend me your back."

"Again with that? It hurts!"

"——Endure it."

The demon clicked its tongue while kicking off the ground. Raidou also jumped.

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The soles of the shoes left a lingering afterimage as they ran up Dormarth's back, and he forcefully struck the back of his head near his ear.

Using his jumping companion as a stepping stone, Raidou soared up into the air, matching the bronze-colored wings.

Dormarth was falling, clutching his head beneath his feet.

"Gee, a human can get this high?!"

"——This is the end."

"Gee!"

"Gear?"

A flame bullet shot directly from the Colt's muzzle and struck the bat demon.

The rising flames enveloped it in a blue hue.

While screaming, however, Alcard's movements showed no signs of slowing.

The enormous wings of the giant bat approached, accompanied by a blast of hot wind.

"Fourteenth, you're the one who's done for!"

With a sharp turn, another bullet followed.

Wrapped in wind and flames, Alcard's fangs closed in.

"Those without wings are defenseless in the air, Gee! Now you'll fall, and during the fall, your trajectory and posture can't be altered. This is an incredibly easy target."

The black cloak spinning in the wind flipped.

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As he spun around, he moved horizontally.

"Hee-ho!"

"Ridiculous, how can a human change direction while falling?!"

The Jack-o'-lantern floating at the hem of the black coat grasped it.

Using the pumpkin head of the lantern as a stepping stone, the student uniform leapt again. It was right above Alcard's head.

Bullets struck the face of the bat as it turned around.

"Gee, Giiiiirrrr!!!"

Raidou's feet landed forcefully on the blue-colored wings.

With the muzzle of the Colt pointing downward, flame bullets were consecutively fired.

The sounds of gunfire and eruptions overlapped in the wind as they continued their descent.

A thunderous column of fire fell from the sky.

"Raidou!!"

Dormarth, who quickly rushed over, was knocked by the shockwave of the fire column that had plunged into the ground, rolling along the dirt.

The heat and black smoke swept across the entire area.

"Ra—Raidou, Raidou!!"

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Dormarth, lying on the ground, desperately shouted her summoner's name.

The black smoke made it difficult to see. The incoming hot wind singed her black-and-white fur. The flames and explosions were overwhelming, and from the immense height of the fall, it was hard to believe she could remain unharmed, even as a Devil Summoner.

"Raidoooooooo!!"

"What—?"

A familiar voice reached her from just behind.

"Raido?"

The black coat flapped in the wind behind her.

"Why—why did you fall with that bat demon?"

"—I disengaged just before landing."

"Are you—okay, Raido? You're not burned, are you?"

"No, I'm fine."

"This coat is woven with the Serpent's Pattern Stone and Hornblende from Kuzunoha Village."

As her arm extended, Dormarth placed her hand on his.

"I can stand on my own."

"Is that so?"

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"What is it?"

The arm that had been extended was pulled back, and Dormarth couldn't help but grit her teeth. She threw her legs out and sat down on the ground with her butt.

"What's wrong?"

"You're always unreasonable and forceful, so if that's the case, you should just ignore what your companion says and stay forceful like always."

"What are you angry about?"

"Someone like me, I'm just good for being a palanquin or a stepping stool anyway."

Raido's palm touched the back of her head.

"Did it hurt, or is your fur all messed up?"

During the jump, her head had been struck by the sole of a shoe, and now Raido was stroking her head, smoothing out her fur with his hand.

"Th-that's fine."

"—Is that so?" His hand pulled away.

"It's fine, I mean, you can keep petting me," Dormarth said hastily.

Raido knelt down and continued brushing her fur. The residual orange glow of the fire columns cast an equal orange shadow on both the black cloak and the demon sitting on the ground.

The wind, flowing intermittently and with varying strength, served as an interlude between their heavy breaths.

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"Ra, Raido"

Dormarth murmured with a high-pitched voice.

When she narrowed her eyes, the remnants of the fire seemed almost like the flames of Megiddo. Before the great destructive fire, here they were, huddled together. The deep darkness and mist, the howling

wind, the drifting shadows of the dead—everything seemed to provide a gospel for the two of them.

In this wonderful place, a city recently destroyed, it felt like they were on a date.

"Your... fur's quite nice, Raido."

"—Gouto often orders me to do it."

"My fur's more excellent than Nekoma's, don't you think?"

"—I don't understand complicated foreign words."

"Excellent means..."

"Hiho!"

The little devil holding the lantern bumped it into Dormarth's mouth.

"Ah, hot! W-wait, what's this?"

The pumpkin-headed lantern floated and rubbed against the sleeve of Raido's student uniform.

"—Did Jack-O-Lantern get hurt too?" Raido's half-body turned towards her.

The hand that had been gently combing her fur now moved, replacing it with a rough touch on the little devil's awkward head.

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"Are you picking a fight with me, Lantern boy?"

"Hi-ho!"

A glowing jack-o'-lantern is thrust in front of Dormarth's face.

"Ah, so bright!"

"Hi-ho-ho, hi-ho!"

".....A candy-like girl who doesn't match her appearance... What's this? Are you happy being pampered like a baby?"

Dormarth shouted, her cheeks flushed bright red.

"N-No, that's not it! I just... I felt like Raido wanted to groom me, and as a familiar, it's my role to follow my summoner's wishes, so I just... let him do it."

"Then get out of the way, I want to be groomed too!"

"Ho-ho-ho, hi-ho-ho-ho-ho!"

Standing proudly, Dormarth glared at the jack-o'-lantern's glowing pumpkin head.

"What's this? You're just as candy-like as it is."

"Hi-ho!" it responded with a look that said "Yes, that's right."

The demon clenched its fists. Its hands trembled with the strength of its grip, and black claws dug into the palms, with dark crimson blood flowing out.

"...Looks like the Lantern boy's head could use some makeup. Maybe a ton of pushpins will do."

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"Damn... Would you rather I hammered in about a hundred five-inch nails, or... yes, something that would make Raido hesitate to stroke you?"

"Hi-ho!"

Perhaps sensing the murderous intent, the floating pumpkin head drew a half-circle and fled into the shadow of the black cloak.

Gritting her teeth, Dormarth clenched her canine teeth.

Does Lantern boy even understand? The one who had it the hardest was Raido. He had to jump so high, and crawl through fire. Out of everyone here, the one who deserves to be petted the most is Raido! Does he understand that?

Dormarth's eyes suddenly widened.

...That's right... He's shy, so he doesn't show it in his words or actions, but deep down, he probably wants to be "petted"... He must want it... He definitely does. And the only one who can do that, the only one who could do it, is me. If I let Lantern boy's jack-o'-lantern scratch him, it would burn him! Nekoma's paws are like rotten fish eyes, all soft and squishy, and Aterui is out of the question... It has to be me, only me!

Staring at her own hand, dripping with blood, Dormarth observed her five human-like fingers. They were jet black, and though the claws were a little longer, humans often have long nails too. It's the same.

Dormarth licked her palm.

Her fist was clenched so tightly that blood was flowing, but the saliva quickly stopped it. She licked it and cleaned it up.

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"It should be done. After all, it's Raido's head that I'm petting. If it's even a little bit dirty, he might dislike me."

She licked her hand repeatedly, wiping it on her fur, and then licked it again carefully.

"Ah, hey, Raido..."

She started to stretch out her hand but suddenly stood up from her crouching position, noticing the academic hat.

The black cloak swayed in the wind, moving away from Dormarth's hand. "W-what, is my hand still dirty?"

When she began licking her palm again, the remnants of the fire pillar erupted with an explosive sound, and dust danced in the air.

From the gouged earth, the bat demon Alcard rose.



"Gi, gi! I told you I was immortal!"

"---It seems like you're sufficiently burnt."

Raido replied as he loaded a new fire bullet into his Colt.

"This won't be enough to stop me. My body is immortal, and no one can defeat me."

"---I see."

The gun's muzzle was raised.

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In an instant, the Colt was blasted away.

"---Huh?"

The handgun slipped from his hand, tracing a gentle arc through the air. Ignoring it, Raido quickly scanned his surroundings.

What just happened? No, he could tell that the gun had been knocked away by some kind of impact, but what was it? Who fired something from where?

For the fourteenth generation Kuzunoha Raido himself, to not sense something like this?!?!

"Gi, what's wrong? Aren't you going to pick up the gun? Gi-gi-gi-gi!"

The sound of a large bat's laughter was overlapped by the regular sound of shoes.

Raido turned his academic hat toward that direction, and at the same time, both the Jack-o'-lantern and Dormarth turned their heads as well.

A part of the mist cracked open, and light poured through.

White light, a humanoid glow.

With the regular sound of footsteps, the figure slowly approached.

The figure had a dazzling halo of light around it.

No... that's artificial light, it's the glow from arc lamps and the windows.

Behind the approaching figure, the brightly lit Tokyo Station, with its splendid architecture, appeared as the darkened surroundings parted, casting a glow as if to split the darkness.

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"Excuse me."

"Raido, why is it that only the scenery of the real world appears on his back?"

"Meaning—he is the one who rules this otherworld."

A voice, tinged with rust, echoed from the shadow of the figure.

He stopped, about thirteen paces away. The man wore a white evening suit, his hair slicked back, and his long sideburns and old-fashioned beard were also white. He appeared to be middle-aged, possibly slightly older, but still had a solid physique, towering over Raido in height and width.

"I thought it was just another cleaning agent sent by Yatagarasu," he said, with a deep wrinkle between his brows.

The man's face was sharply chiseled, with deep lines marking his forehead, adding to the impression of age and authority.

"To push back someone like Alcard to this extent—it's an impressive skill for someone so young."

"I am not a cleaning agent," Raido replied, his hand resting on the hilt of his sword.

"I too am one who has received Yatagarasu's orders."

The figure radiated an overwhelming presence.

Even though he stood there defenseless, it felt as if an immense pressure was bearing down on Raido, like an ant facing an elephant. He had never faced such an imposing figure before.

"Ha-ha... Yatagarasu's orders, huh? You must be 'Raido,' the one entrusted with guarding the Imperial Capital, right? Which generation are you from?"

Page 102

"Fourteenth generation, Kuzunoha Raidou."

"Oh, so it's already that much."

The voice carried a sense of awareness.

"—I see you as an enemy of Yatagarasu."

Drawing Muramasa, the blade is directed towards the white shadow.

"Heh, and if I were an enemy?"

"Summoning magical cars and bat demons, and still toying with the dead. You've created this kind of otherworld in the Imperial Capital. This is something worth striking down."

"You're quick to come to conclusions. This otherworld was created to ensure no harm reaches the surroundings. Fourteenth generation Raidou, our objectives are the same."

"Trying to confuse me with nonsense? It's no use trying to deceive me with lies."

"Our objectives are the same. That is precisely why I have come to meet you personally. I knew you were a messenger of Yatagarasu, and I expected you to be one of the 'cleaners.' But I never thought you were Raidou. I apologize for my rudeness, and I will call off my soldiers."

"Call off your soldiers?"

As if to continue the words, Dormarth screamed from behind the black cloak.

"Ha, don't joke with me, old man. The only soldier you have is the bat demon burning up next to you, right? I don't care if he's immortal or whatever, but standing is all he can manage."

page 103:

103 Detective Taru Work

"There's no need to retreat, or anything like that!"

Like how veins branch off deep in a mine, the mist flowed in lines.

The man in the white tuxedo bowed politely.

In the flowing mist, the figure of a Kuramatengu appeared.

Raido had heard of this demon before. Its other name is Ootengu. Unlike the tengu commonly told in folk tales, it doesn't have an unusually large nose or a beak-like mouth. Its expression could be described as resembling an "oni's Noh mask." The Kuramatengu clan is known for having taught swordsmanship to Ushiwakamaru (the young Minamoto no Yoshitsune).

Dressed in the robes of a yamabushi (mountain ascetic), with a ring of iron at the hem instead of a hood, it spread azure-colored feathers from its back. In its hands, it held a spear, a sword, and a conch shell.

But the Kuramatengu that appeared wasn't just one.

"Hi-ho!"

Along with the Jack-o'-Lantern's breath, Dormarth's high-pitched voice overlapped.

"What is this? How many are there? When did they surround us?" Dormarth said, her voice trembling.

There were too many to count.

Among the rows of tengu, multiple Gashadokuro, Nepiros, and Oboroguruma could be seen. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the army of demons, instead of the darkness, blocked the view.

page 104:

"How did you do it?"

Raido asked while still holding his sword in a ready stance.

"I see."

"What do you mean by that?" The white-clad gentleman casually stroked his chin.

"With this much demonic setup... there's no way I wouldn't have noticed."

"But you didn't notice. Heh, there's no need to lament your weakness, you're still young."

"Only Yatagarasu can do something like this."

"What!!"

"Is it the real one?"

A small black shadow appeared in front of Raido.

It was the black cat, Gouto.

"What, it's the real one?"

At the voice asking, the white gentleman's brow furrowed deeply.

"That cat, is it perhaps Gouto Doji?"

"Oh!" Gouto responded.

"So your soul is sealed within a cat now, huh? Heh, the last time I saw you, you were a giant salamander."

"That was hard to move around in."

105 - Detective Work

"—Gouto, do you know him?"

Raidou asked in a low voice.

"I've met him several times, many generations ago, but I never once received direct orders from him."

"—Who is he?"

"The answer has already been spoken aloud."

The black cat's head slowly turned toward Raidou.

The student cap-wearing youth met Gouto's gaze, his head tilting slightly from side to side.

"If there's someone capable of assembling such a force without the current Raidou noticing—"

"—Yatagarasu."

"Indeed," Gouto let out a long sigh.

"—That man... is Yatagarasu?"

"He is one of the very few who have been granted that family crest. In other words, he is someone Yatagarasu recognized as its extension—perhaps even as a son. But regardless, 'Saiga' belongs to a legitimate branch family. Isn't that right, Saiga Magoichi?"

(Saiga Magoichi)

Raising his chin, Saiga stroked his white beard, his gaze locked onto Gouto.

Gouto sighed deeply once more.

"Just last night, Yatagarasu's envoy spoke of 'the Pact of Non-Aggression' and 'an ancient covenant'..."

Luka

"So all that talk was about you, then. What is your goal?"

"...The same as the Fourteenth Raidou standing there."

A faint, bitter smile accompanied the words.

"Protecting the Imperial Capital, is that it?"

"I protect the individual. That is my purpose, and my mission as a Yatagarasu."

"Summoning Western demons now? So, you've gotten over your hatred of the Bateren?" (Bateren = derogatory term for Western missionaries in Japan)

"Means no longer matter. Only the fulfillment of the objective does. It is the most logical conclusion—protecting the Imperial Capital takes precedence above all else."

"Good grief, you've gathered an army at Tokyo Station—just what the hell are you preparing to fight?"

"...You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

There was a note of loneliness and sorrow in Saiga's rust-tinged voice.

"If you don't say it, how can anyone believe you?"

The mist shifted.

A faint stench, like rotting algae, began to spread through the air.

Gouto immediately recognized it—it was the stench of the dead that lurked beyond the darkness.

"...It is coming."

Saiga's rusted voice echoed through the mist.

"...It will appear... soon... very soon... There is no time. We must hurry."

Page 107: Detective Work

"What is coming? What do you mean by 'appearing'?!?"

"...Even if I told you, you would not believe it."

"Not this again," Gouto sighed openly.

"Even the Yatagarasu organization refused to believe it. That is why I must do this alone."

"Like the first Saiga Magoichi three hundred years ago?"

"...The first Saiga's judgment was correct."

"But that time, Yatagarasu ended up fighting Yatagarasu."

From Genki 1 (1570) to Tenshō 8 (1580), for ten years, during the Ishiyama War, under the banner of

Yatagarasu, Saiga Magoichi led the Saiga Ikki in battle.

Their enemy was none other than the ruling power of the time—Oda Nobunaga.

In his attempt to crush the Ikko-Ikki (the militant Buddhist sect based at Honganji Temple), Nobunaga dispatched his vast army, waging ten years of relentless warfare against Ishiyama Honganji.

This was not merely an invasion or a conquest. It was an act of cold-blooded, absolute extermination. Nobunaga's orders were clear:

"No living thing shall remain in that land—not even the beasts of the field."

The war dragged on, and in the end, Ishiyama fell.

The Ikko-Ikki forces splintered, scattering to different regions.

Page 108

"Nobunaga was a demon king."

Saiga, dressed in a white tuxedo, murmured.

"Not metaphorically—the real thing. To protect the national polity, Yatagarasu had no choice but to rebel. However, the only Yatagarasu that actually did was the Saiga branch."

"The Yatagarasu does not interfere in politics."

Gouto's meowing voice echoed, while Raidou listened in silence.

"Heh... so they claim, yet they killed Nobunaga at Honnōji? That was the main branch of Yatagarasu's solution? If that was the case, they should have sided with the Honganji faction from the start to take down the demon king."

"Well, the Honganji monks also imposed heavy taxes on the people, and Nobunaga was the ruler of the time. Besides, I wasn't the one who made that decision."

Gouto let out a small cough.

"—And?"

Raidou asked while keeping Muramasa at the ready.

"Hmph, we share the same goal—protecting the Imperial Capital, do we not? There is no reason to fight, nor any need. Let us consider this an agreement of mutual non-aggression and part ways. I have no time to waste—time is hard to find and easy to lose, and I must hurry."

Saiga bowed slightly and began to turn away.

"—And those drifting dead souls over there—what are they?"

Page 109: "Detective Work"

"Do you not understand the meaning of 'non-aggression'?"

The man in the white tuxedo turned back toward them.

"Very well."

"—Alucard has been gathering the dead. The spirits have materialized into their living forms... This can only be controlled through magical domination or a forbidden technique."

"Hmph... Raidou-kun, listen well."

"—You are disturbing the Imperial Capital."

The moment those words left his lips, the black-cloaked figure leaped forward.

Gouto's voice commanded him to stop, and Dormarth's cry echoed behind him.

Ahead of Raidou's rushing blade, the Kurama Tengu immediately formed a barrier with their bodies, shielding the man in the white tuxedo with remarkable speed.

Saiga's sharp command rang out, and the Tengu instantly parted to either side.

"Hmph... Not even willing to listen to my reasoning? You truly embody the recklessness of youth."

Nothing stood between Raidou and the white tuxedo now.

The wind surged into a streamlined current, rushing forward.

The man's arm lifted—his finger pointing directly at Raidou.

In that instant, the flow of wind reversed violently.

"—!!"

Raidou's entire body was forcefully turned around, his vision flipping upside down.

Page 110

His body was being pushed back.

No, that was too mild a way to describe it.

He was being blown away.

"Rest assured, I have no intention of killing someone who shares my purpose."

The figure of Saiga, who had been approaching just moments ago, was now retreating into the distance.

"But I cannot allow you to recklessly display your youthful bravado any further."

This was the same force that had just blown away his Colt revolver.

"For now, you should remain on the ground for a while."

Was it coming from Saiga's fingertips? What exactly was this?

There was no light, no sound, yet an overwhelming pressure was assaulting him.

Was this some kind of condensed energy projection?

"The barrier for the defense of the capital is reaching its critical limit."

Static noise and the sounds of impact were pounding into Raidou's eardrums.

Page 112:

"Science!"

"Oh! You've regained consciousness, I see. As expected—this is the triumph of my science!"

In his refocusing vision, a face with the pallor of death emerged.

"This is the victory of science! Science, science—science is wonderful!"

Silver hair wildly disheveled, both hands clad in black rubber gloves spring into motion.

The man in the white coat stood at an imposing six and a half shaku (approximately 197 cm / 6'5"). His nose and mouth were large, his jaw was angular, and beneath both eyes ran reddish-black surgical scars.

It was rumored that he had been born in 1810, but from appearances alone, he looked no older than his late forties or early fifties. If his birth year was indeed true, that would mean his actual age had long since surpassed a hundred years.

"Victor."

"...Victor."

Propped up on his elbows upon a hard, black bed, Raidou repeated the name of the man in the white coat.

As he tried to rise further, his gaze dropped to the electrodes embedded in his throat.

His clothing was absent—aside from his hat and a six-shaku fundoshi (traditional Japanese undergarment), he was practically naked.

Electrodes were also pierced into both sides of his torso and both legs. Across his abdomen, a long, thin piece of paper had been affixed.

Tilting his head slightly, Raidou recognized it—a sacred talisman given to him by Otone, inscribed with Sanskrit (Bonji) script.

Page 113 - "This Present Reality" ( )

Victor, being no stranger to theological and occult studies, must have assumed that such treatment methods were simply the norm for Devil Summoners. Perhaps out of consideration, he had refrained from "defiling" Raidou in the process.

The man in the white coat spun around, practically dancing with excitement.

"Oh, Kuzunoha! Did you witness the power of science?!"



"Science... You mean this?"

Without hesitation, Raidou forcefully yanked the electrodes from his body. Blood splattered from his pale skin, leaving crimson dots scattered across the blackened floor of Victor's laboratory—the Goumaden.

"Thanks to my scientific prowess, you were able to awaken!"

The laboratory was dark, vast, with an unnaturally high ceiling. Giant generators and gears lined the walls, humming with mechanical life.

"Science! Science, I tell you! Had it not been for science, Kuzunoha, you would have remained in slumber forever!"

Victor had explained before that after wandering across various nations for decades, he had finally settled in Japan—a land rich in the materials he sought for his research. His lab was located beneath a warehouse in Tsukudo-cho, not far from Ginroukaku.

To fund his experiments, Victor sold imported goods, though it was unclear whether they were smuggled or just highly obscure. In any case, his research facility remained largely unknown—partly because of the secrecy surrounding his work, and partly because he only emerged at night.

Still seated on the bed, dressed in nothing but his fundoshi and hat, Raidou muttered in a low voice:

"How... did I get here?"

Victor, still grinning, shrugged theatrically:

"Regrettably, not by the power of science."

Page 114

"—Who carried me here?"

"The dog."

Raidou turned his head.

Lying in the shadows next to the generator, Dormarth was sprawled on her back.

"What did you do?"

A demon is always cautious.

There is no way she would willingly expose her belly and sleep defenselessly.

Raidou's glowing eyes locked onto Victor.

"I did nothing. The dog just collapsed on her own. Well, as payment for awakening you, I did take a small amount of her blood."

"How much?"

"Demon blood is rare, you know. It's a valuable research material... and an ingredient for certain magical elixirs."

"How much?"

Raidou repeated, his voice sharp.

"Just a small amount—a gallon or so."

Converted to shōbottles, that was roughly two bottles' worth—about 3.8 liters.

"D-Don't curse me, Kuzunoha! I only drained a little blood. Then she just collapsed on her own!"

"You're a doctor, aren't you?"

"You should know how much blood a body needs to survive."

"She's not a human body," Victor retorted.

"So don't glare at me like that, Kuzunoha. She's not dead, I assure you."

Page 115

"—This Reality"

"No matter what happens, death is not permitted in my laboratory. My specialty is immortality."

"—Immortality—"

Placing his feet on the floor from the bed, Raidou furrowed his brows as if recalling something.

"Victor, I've heard before... that you yourself are immortal."

"I do not die."

The white-coated scientist dramatically lifted both arms into the air.

"—There is an immortal demon among the enemy. How do I kill it?"

"Oho?" Silver eyes beneath Victor's disheveled hair gleamed with interest.

"Its name is Alucard. He takes the form of a bat—"

The corners of Victor's mouth twisted into a grin.

"Alucard! You mean the very same Alucard that Vlad III once summoned? Hah! Well, let me tell you something."

"The reason I am immortal is because I acquired the blood of Alucard's kin. Using it, I successfully created a regenerative serum that allows my cells to endlessly regenerate.

...Of course, the side effect is that I can no longer stand sunlight."

"—If you are exposed to sunlight, will you die?"

"If I were a vampire, at the very least, my bodily functions would slow dramatically."

"—Then what is the surest way to kill him?"

Page 116

The gears along the walls began to creak and turn, grinding against each other with an ear-piercing metallic sound.

The tall man in the white coat lifted his chin and pressed all the fingers of one hand against his forehead.

"What's wrong, Victor?"

"I want Kuzunoha blood. If possible, I want flesh as well—bones would be even better."

"Mine?"

Caught off guard by the sudden request, Raidou pointed to his own chest in confusion.

"That's right. I want to study Kuzunoha blood—Devil Summoner blood. Well, as part of the research process, I may drink a little, but I assure you, consumption itself is not the goal."

"I've told you before—my name, 'Kuzunoha Raidou,' is inherited. Devil Summoners do not pass down their abilities through blood. There's no meaning to what runs in my veins."

"That is for science to determine—in other words, for me to decide."

Between the massive generators, emerald-colored sparks erupted from the discharge panels.

"Let me drink Kuzunoha blood—no, let me research it!"

A wet, slithering sound—his tongue licking his lips—accompanied his voice.

"Victor—why are you suddenly saying this?"

"It's a logical exchange. The method to kill Alucard is, in essence, the method to kill me.

"Of course, I am not a true vampire, but when it comes to the secrets of immortality, I have come dangerously close."

page 117:

"I will not kill Victor."

"Mary Shelley said the same thing."

Victor had a look of disappointment, his eyes gazing far away.

"Understood... Please collect the blood. But no more than a pint. Half a go (180ml) would be fine."

"Only 90 milliliters? Well, if you could also provide a piece of meat, maybe a steak, that would be great."

Victor raised his index finger, wearing black rubber gloves.

"Western cuisine, I've never had. Since you say 'one piece,' does that mean it's thin?"

"Very thin, about 300 grams."

"Half a pound—about 240 grams."

"It's small enough to hold with one hand."

"Of course, that's fine... Just the blood, please."

Victor, happily grabbing a saw from the side table near the bed, looked back at Raidou.

"Well then, how about cutting off two fingers? That should be fine, right?"

"No, don't do that."

"I could cut off a toe, if you want."

"Victor—let's forget this conversation ever happened."

page 117:

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"Victor—let's forget this conversation ever happened."

The naked figure clad in a six-foot fundoshi stepped away from the bed.

"Wait—just one finger will suffice. Cut it from the second joint. That should cause no issues."

Without turning toward the voice, Raidou walked across the darkened floor.

"Enough! Then blood alone—but only one gou! I cannot yield more than that!"

"—Tell me first."

“The method to destroy a vampire,” the voice rasped, “is to pierce its heart with a wooden stake. Steel or iron won’t work—it must be wood. Crush its skull, burn its body to ashes—it’ll regenerate endlessly. Of course, a vampire who once served Vlad III won’t let you strike so easily. Alucard has endured since the 15th century, after all.”

“—I heard even your predecessors failed to kill him.”

“The reclusive demon hunter... How I coveted the blood of the 13th generation too.”  
The wet sound of Victor licking his lips echoed behind Raidou.

“Speaking of which, Kuzunoha—couldn’t you spare me two gou of blood?”

Dormarth dreamed.

In his dream, he had become the supreme being.

Even awake, drinking that brackish pulque would plunge him into the same delirium.

119 - (This Real World)

She could perhaps feel the same way even if she were awake—  
Drunkenly intoxicated, filled with euphoria.

Yes, "ecstasy" would be the right word.

Dormarth was being carried in Raidou’s arms.

And Raidou was naked.

Aside from his gakuran and a six-shaku fundoshi, he wore absolutely nothing.

Bare-chested, his arms wrapped securely around Dormarth—one beneath her knees, the other supporting her shoulder blades—lifting her effortlessly against his chest.

His steps were light, as if he were floating.

Right in front of her eyes, his pale chest gleamed, carrying the scent of sweat, blood, and the familiar fragrance of Makogou incense—the scent that always clung to his school uniform.

Blood?

Her hazy vision, still blurred by exhaustion, focused on Raidou’s exposed body.

And then she noticed the wound on his throat.

Shifting slightly in his grasp, she stretched her neck upward and licked the wound.

“—It’s fine. Just from the electrode needles.”

Even so, Dormarth continued licking.

The world was dark.

At times, flashes of yellow-green lightning streaked across the sky, resembling fragments of Megid Flame.

A perfect dark realm.

And in the midst of this darkness, illuminated solely by the lightning, she was being carried in Raidou's arms.

He was holding her dearly.

This had to be a dream.

It could only be a dream.

But then a thought surfaced—

Even if it was a dream, where exactly was Raidou taking her?

Her mind swayed, as if intoxicated by deep inebriation.

Her skull felt light, her vision blurred beyond recognition.

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It didn't matter where they were going.

As long as they were together.

Even if her eyes had closed at some point,  
Even if her consciousness faded into the void,  
Dormarth's tongue continued slowly, softly,  
Licking the pale wound on Raidou's skin.

Tomorrow, the day after, the day after that—

Every night, until she died, she wanted to see this same dream.

As dusk approached, a scene unfolded at a street corner.

A coffin was being dragged along the ground.

A seated burial casket—a traditional zakan used to position the deceased in a meditative pose.

Commonly known as a "hayaoke", a barrel-shaped coffin.

Its shape wasn't unusual in the slightest.

Since the Edo period, such barrels had become a widely used method of burial among commoners.

Now, in the Taisho era, there were even crematoriums specifically built to burn these types of caskets.

In such places, large rectangular Western-style coffins could not be used for cremation,  
So barrel coffins remained the norm.

And yet—

Even though it was commonplace, a few of the pedestrians walking along the street turned their heads,

Drawn by the sight of the coffin being dragged through the dust.

“Dahh—sha~”

The gravedigger groaned as he hauled it forward.

A thick rope slung over his shoulder, tightly wrapped around the barrel.

Looking closer—

One could see that the coffin wasn't simply resting on the iron platform beneath it.

No—

It had been embedded into the black metal,

Fused with the base itself.

121

“Dahh—sha~”

It was likely a measure to keep the barrel stable, ensuring it wouldn't wobble.

However—

The platform beneath the casket had no wheels.

As pedestrians glanced back, those who noticed this detail hesitated.

The iron slab was thick—at least four sun (~12 cm), easily surpassing ten centimeters.

And it was massive, large enough to carry a coffin.

The sheer weight of the slab alone was immense, but it was also carrying the barrel and whatever lay inside.

There was no way it could be dragged so easily.

Yet—

The robed man pulled it without struggle, hauling it forward with ease.

How?

Did he possess inhuman strength? Was he a master martial artist?

Even as the road's surface fluctuated with bumps and dips,

His steps remained unchanged,

His hakama robes swaying with each unwavering stride.

Several pedestrians turned to look back,

First at the barrel, then at the man pulling it.

And every single one of them—

Immediately averted their gaze.

“Dahh—sha, dahh—sha~”

His wild, unkempt black hair completely covered his forehead.

His sharp features evoked a distant, unplaceable memory—

High cheekbones, a well-defined nose, and a wide mouth twisted into a thin, eerie smirk.

Beneath the long, messy bangs,

The gleam of his eyes flickered—

Like spearheads, catching the blazing sunlight.

No one mistook him for a normal person.

But that wasn't why they turned away.

No—

It was something deeper.

Something primal.

A feeling buried within human instinct itself.

It wasn't fear of a gangster or a criminal—

It was the fear of something unnatural.

▯

122

“Dahh—sha.”

Since ancient times, humans have instinctively feared the darkness—

That primeval dread was ingrained in them, passed down through generations.

Even now, they still tremble before the unknown,

Because somewhere deep in their minds, they remember—

That something lurks within the abyss.

Something that should not be seen.

They do not know what it is—

And they do not want to know.



Because if they were to realize its true nature—

If they were to encounter it—

They would never return alive.

Thus—

People avoid "it."

They pretend it isn't there.

And if they sense they might come across it—

They flee.

Above, the sky darkened,

Storm clouds drifted like bruises spreading across the heavens.

The man in simple robes continued to drag the casket,

His low, rhythmic chant blending with the sound of scraping wood.

And not a single soul dared to meet his gaze.

(Narumi Detective Agency, Ginroukaku, 3rd Floor)

Narumi sat at his desk—

Cursing the fact that he was an adult.

If he had been a kid, things would've been so much simpler.

If this were just a child's quarrel,

Then there'd be no hesitation—

Punching, kicking, or even shooting—

Wait, wait, okay, maybe not shooting.

But at the very least,

If he were a child,

He wouldn't have to hold back.

Even if it was a woman,

He could just punch her outright.

Because kids do that.

And no one would complain.

Muttering, Narumi stretched out on his chair, reclining back in an exaggerated manner. There was no choice but to laugh it off and forgive them. But if it were up to him, he'd just beat them senseless.

Short-range jabs, hooks, straights, and uppercuts—if it's me, they'd be down in one shot.

"Man, I wanna be a kid again."

Narumi leaned back in his chair, stretching. The creaking sound of the backrest was accompanied by overlapping voices from either side.

"Damn it... I really wanna punch these guys."

Muttering again, Narumi let his face fall onto the desk, his fingers running through his messy hair.

Then, suddenly, his head shot up.

At the far end of the room, beyond the short staircase leading to the landing, the door—the entrance to the office—was slowly creaking open on its hinges.

A dark figure in a black overcoat appeared in the dimly lit doorway.

Narumi let out a sharp tsk, turning his head casually toward the window behind him. The sky outside was clouded over, as if it had been painted in heavy, smothering layers, driving away the last remnants of the setting sun's orange glow.

The army of the night was taking over the world.

"Pretty big-shot entrance for an apprentice."

After being gone for more than a full day—nowhere to be seen in the office, no signs of having attended school—just where the hell had this kid disappeared to?

Even if he had urgent Devil Summoner business to take care of, as his supervisor, Narumi figured he at least deserved a bow of respect before Raidou went off on his errands.

Because otherwise, I'll end up having to clean this damn office myself.

Well, cleaning wasn't the problem—

124

"If you weren't gone, I wouldn't have had to deal with those clients who made me want to knock their teeth in..."

Narumi stood up from his chair, took a deep breath, and prepared to scold his absent apprentice.

"Raidou, what the hell were you thinki—"

"Oh, Raidou-kun!"

Before Narumi could finish, two voices called out ahead of him.

Yoshio and Asakura Tae were already running toward the black-coated figure descending the stairs from the landing.

Yoshio and Tae barely got close before a camel-colored vest rushed in ahead of them, cutting them off.

"Good morning, Chief!"

Narumi scoffed and corrected him immediately.

"It's late morning. And call me sensei."

As he spoke, Narumi grabbed Raidou by the arm and started pushing him back, nostrils flaring in frustration. The detective's teeth ground together audibly as he continued shoving. Raidou found himself steadily backing up toward the wall.

"What's wrong with you? You look like hell."

"...Just woke up from someone else's bed."

It wasn't a lie.

"I see... Well, regardless of the reason, you skipped work without notice, and that calls for strict punishment. Your salary will be docked, with added interest for damages—"

Page 125 –

"I'll make sure to deduct it properly."

"—I haven't received a single paycheck yet."

"When your superior says something, the first thing you should say is 'yes,' like I taught you. By the way, Raidou—"

Before Narumi could finish, a high-pitched voice interrupted.

"This phonograph is the latest model, isn't it? Wow, this detective agency must be making a lot of money."

"Yo, Raidou-nii, is your investigation actually going anywhere?"

Tae and Yoshio spoke up from right behind Narumi's camel-colored vest.

"Raidou-nii, this pretentious guy here is totally useless. He just sits back in his chair calling himself a 'great detective,' but unlike Akechi Kogorou, he's kind of a total idiot."

"Narumi-san, you say you believe in equality, but the constitutional government's coalition cabinet made a huge mistake with the universal suffrage law. They claim to give equal voting rights to all people, but they don't even grant them to women! If they call that equality, it makes my blood boil!"

With one hand still pressed against Raidou's black coat, Narumi bowed his head deeply.

A low mutter of "I want to punch someone..." slipped from his lips as his shoulders trembled.

"...So, Raidou, who the hell are these two? They just waltzed into the office like they own the place and

are yelling right into my ear."

"Raidou-kun, oh? That little kitty isn't with you today?"

Page 126

Tae's voice was quickly followed by Yoshio's.

"Yeah, yeah, I brought some cat grass for your black cat. You know how cats eat grass to cough up hairballs, right?"

"Gouto is out on an investigation in Shinoda."

Narumi raised his voice again.

"Raidou, who the hell are these two!?"

"I already told you, Raidou-nii is taking our case! We're clients! How many times do I have to say it before you believe me!? Man, you really are dumb."

"Narumi-san, right here it says: 'Swift response, reliable service—gaining the trust of our clients daily!'"  
Tae pointed at the flyer.

"It also says you accept all kinds of requests. So why are you refusing ours!?"

Both Yoshio and Tae were holding copies of the detective agency's advertisement flyers.

Narumi twitched slightly. Then, narrowing his eyes, he leaned in close to Raidou and whispered in his ear.

"So these two idiots actually showed up because of the flyers, huh?"

"I put those up to bring in real clients, damn it!"

"This is supposed to be the best detective agency in the capital, and now we're stuck finding missing dolls and babysitting wannabe feminists?"

"You seem to know these two, but tell me—do they have money? What's their background?"

Raidou calmly responded in a low voice:

"A stage performer—and—a temple kid."

Narumi's eyes immediately lit up.

"Wait. A temple?"

Page 127 – (This Real World)

Narumi's face lit up with color as he processed what he just heard.

"A temple, huh? So that means he's rich. Yeah, that makes sense. They say priests make money without lifting a finger, don't they? Raking in cash from offerings, donations, ceremonial goods, and funeral services—it must be a goldmine. But... this brat looks pretty ragged for someone from a well-off family."

"——That's to avoid kidnappers.  
They live modestly."

"A kidnapping prevention measure? Well, that's smart for a rich family. Hmph, keeping a kid modest is the best way to go. That temple's got the right idea—letting a kid carry money is an insult to the gods and Buddha alike. Same goes for you, Raidou.  
Don't carry cash. If you ever get any, just hand it over to me."

Raidou tilted his school cap slightly in response to the words spilling from Narumi's mouth.

"——What about Otone-chan?"

"Otone-chan?" Yoshio echoed.

"You got a sister?" Narumi suddenly shouted.

"A-ah, yeah, I do," Yoshio replied, glancing up at the tall, curly-haired man in confusion.

"Is she pretty!?"

"If you want a request, you can ask her instead..."

"Alright!"

Narumi clapped Raidou hard on the shoulder.

"As the boss, I'm ordering you to take this kid's request. No complaints!""

Page 128 Translation:

"Okay."

"That's why Raidou-nii has already accepted my request."

Ignoring Yoshio's words, Narumi continues.

"I'll personally deliver the report to your sister, so make sure you handle all the work leading up to it properly. Got it? OK."

Humming a tune, Narumi strolls over to his desk while singing,

"That's okay, I swear it's okay, okay, okay~"

"Hey, wait a minute, Narumi-san! What about my request?"

Tae's voice cuts through.

"What? What the hell is this?"

"Hey, Raidou, this so-called 'New Women's Association wannabe entertainer' over here—she's not actually some chieftain's daughter or something, right? Hahaha!"

"You don't know? It's that famous skit about the geisha apologizing, 'The Chieftain's Daughter!'"

"Your stage name was Tae-chan, right? How about changing it to 'Lava-san' next time?"

"Oh, and by the way, political satire isn't popular. You should probably drop it."

Slipping into his camel-colored suit jacket, Narumi smirks.

"Hah! Women's liberation jokes aren't funny. Well, as a great detective, I knew from the start that you were just putting on a show, so I could at least sit through it calmly."

"Oh, and just so you know, I fully support gender equality. Men and women should be equal, and there should be no discrimination whatsoever. Every day, I sincerely pray for it."

Page 129 Translation:

"...I truly pray every day that an equal society will come soon, so that the boundary between men's and women's baths will be abolished. Discrimination is a terrible thing, isn't it?"

"W-what are you saying... Narumi-san... I'm not making these claims as some kind of performance—"

"Don't be shy. Being a performer is an admirable profession. But with your current style, the audience might start wondering what happened to her to make her like this? Well, do your best."

Narumi put on his derby hat and approached Raidou again.

"I have an important job to do—an urgent mission. I have to leave now. The rest is up to you."

His voice was a whisper.

"...Another stakeout at a café?"

"Tonight is a crucial battle. I'll be back late. One of the waitresses has a variety of... interests, and I need to find out all the details, including her three sizes. She's from Aomori, and it turns out her brother will be moving to Tokyo soon. I don't care about the brother, but if they start living together, my chances could be ruined. Tonight is make-or-break."

"...Toshie-chan?"

"Kikue-chan."

Without acknowledging Tae at all, Narumi hurried out of the office, his camel-colored three-piece suit disappearing through the door.

As the sound of the door closing echoed, Tae nearly sent her cloche hat flying in frustration.

Page 130 Translation:

Tae turned her face toward Raidou.

"Why!?"

"What?"

"Why did that man—Narumi-san—call me a 'performer'!?"

Raidou tilted his cap slightly, recalling the introduction given by the suited woman standing before him.

"Ah... Even Gouto can make mistakes sometimes."

The sound of polished tiles being stepped on echoed through the space, and beneath the dome, a white figure appeared.

"The 14th Raidou, is it?"

The voice carried a thoughtful tone. The man nodded to himself several times, then placed his fingers on his white-bearded chin.

Deep within his retinas, the afterimage of a charging school-capped youth brandishing a blade remained.

"He has good eyes."

Clear, unwavering, and without even the slightest hesitation. A true embodiment of self-discipline and perseverance. Perhaps that is why he was chosen to bear the name Raidou. If that young man were to grow... perhaps, just perhaps... he might be able to stand against him.

"I struck his meridian system directly with a concentrated force. At the very least, he should remain unconscious for three days—at most, a week."

page 131:  
This Reality

"Is it happening?"

Saiga slowly lifted his chin.

There was no time. He could not afford to wait for Raidou to grow stronger at a sluggish pace, and even if he could wait, there was no guarantee that Raidou would be able to achieve absolute victory against the "enemy" that had been seen through clairvoyance.

The presence of an overwhelming adversary was increasing by the day. There was a strong possibility that it could reveal its full form tomorrow, or even the day after. There was no longer even a moment to spare.

Looking up at the vast octagonal dome above, Saiga prayed.

"I am the only one who can protect the Imperial Capital... No, I must protect it. There is no other way."

The dome above him spanned three floors, and with the skylight above, it reached the height of a four-story building.

Its ceiling was nearly circular, but in precise design, it was an octagon.

"An octagon is the magic circle of Mars, the Solomonic magic circle—this Tokyo station was built for that very purpose."

At the four corners of the domed ceiling, the Azure Dragon (Seiryu), Vermilion Bird (Suzaku), Black Tortoise (Genbu), and White Tiger (Byakko) were etched into stained glass, standing as sacred gatekeepers.

"The guardian gates of the Imperial Capital... just as the Rajomon Gate once protected the city of Heian-kyo."

The Rajomon Gate had been the main entrance to the ancient city of Heian, protecting it from demonic intrusion.

"And in this era, the Imperial Capital of Tokyo has taken up that role."

Page 132

The Great Kanto Earthquake, and even aftershocks, left the red brick buildings completely unscathed—thanks to this dome.

Still gazing upward, Saiga murmured with a solemn expression.

"If the octagonal protective dome of Tokyo collapses, the imperial capital will be doomed as well."

From all around Saiga's white tuxedo, minuscule particles of light began spiraling upwards.

"But the reverse is also true. If I amplify the barrier of this dome beyond its critical point, it will become an immense force that seals off the entire imperial capital. I must do it! I must enhance the spiritual power of the Octagonal Guardian Gate and suppress the great calamity that seeks to consume this city!"

The particles drifting towards the ceiling resembled a semi-transparent celestial veil.

The light flowing from all directions accelerated, layering over itself multiple times, before being absorbed into the stained-glass depictions of the Four Guardian Beasts.

The entire dome was now enveloped in a soft, radiant veil of light.

"Still not enough spirits."

"Giiih!"

"Alucard, is it?"

From a dimly lit area beyond the veil, a human-sized bat-like shadow emerged.

"Gihihhi... So today, I can really do as I please, right?"

"I will take the necessary confirmations first, of course."

Page 133 - (This Present World)

"What the hell is that?!? Are you seriously asking for permission before killing someone? I can't imagine there are many people who would willingly agree to that!"

"Fear not. There are many warriors who would die for their country."

Saiga spoke in a calm, collected tone.

"Gih... I'm sick of gathering the dead all over the city. Just let me do as I please."

"I am counting on you."



Saiga's words were met with a sneering flap of blue wings from the darkness.

"...Why the sudden change of heart? Weren't you the one so adamant about 'not killing for the sake of gathering'?"

"There is no time."

"Then you should have done this from the start! Dragging bodies from crematoriums and graveyards—what a waste of time, Gih! What a joke!"

"It was not a waste."

Saiga continued, still staring at the particles flowing up into the dome's ceiling.

"Alucard. Come here."

".....Gi... Gyaaah?!"

The bat demon hesitated just as it was about to take flight.

"What's wrong, Alucard? You refuse to obey your summoner's orders?"

Page 134

"I can't go there..."

"Now you understand why it wasn't a waste."

The wandering souls and lingering spirits have transformed Tokyo's Octagonal Guardian Gate into a boundary on the brink of an unprecedentedly massive barrier.

Just a little more.

Just a little more, and the threshold will be breached. Once that happens, the barrier will expand rapidly, spreading its influence over the entire Imperial Capital.

Saiga glanced at the pocket watch he retrieved from his coat.

"It's about time. The dead will call for more dead."

Meanwhile, Asakura Tae leaned forward over the table.

"So, listen. There's a social gathering happening today."

It was a Chinese-style table positioned at the center of the detective office, its four corners intricately engraved with ornamental designs.

The chair's backrest was so tall it nearly touched her neck, yet it wasn't uncomfortable to sit in.

To her right sat Raidou, facing her directly.

"I want you to come with me to the social club."

It would have been nice if Raidou had sat closer, right next to her.

That way, they could talk more easily—his voice would be closer, and it would just... feel better.

Tae glanced over at the Chief Detective's desk.

Pressing his face against the window and staring out at the view was Yoshio, the boy from the temple.

It must have been his first time seeing the cityscape from the third floor.

page 135:

(This Present Reality)

Tae nearly said, "I could just move over and sit next to Raidou," but instead, she kept her tone in her usual professional manner.

"That's my request."

Tae reached for the teacup in front of her.

She quietly sipped the bancha that Raidou had brewed. It was good. She thought so, honestly.

But the pale-faced young man sitting across from her remained silent.

"See, it says right here in your office's advertisement—'We accept all requests.'"

She pulled out the flyer she had received when they first met.

"In other words, it's not an investigation request—it's a protection request. You've heard the rumors, haven't you?"

Her voice grew a little louder as she continued.

"They say the dead are walking around Tokyo."

The hanging ceiling light flickered for a moment, dimming slightly before returning to full brightness.

"I'd been hearing that rumor for a while, but I thought it was too far-fetched. I mean, how can you even tell someone is dead if they're just walking around? But... you saw them too, right, Raidou? Those people—their outlines were all blurry... and one of them just passed right through me...!"

She moistened her lips with another sip of tea.

Page 136 Translation

"I-I mean, I do plan on investigating that rumor at some point, but today's about something else... A completely different matter. But, well, I will have to pass through that area, and, well... The social gathering is being held at the Ha-no-ma room in the Station Hotel. So before I even get there, if I end up running into another march of the dead again, I— I won't faint or anything! I won't collapse, but... before meeting Edogawa Ranpo-sensei, I'd rather not mess up my makeup or hair, you know?"

She placed an invitation on the table.

“I had to go through a lot to get this! Only notable figures and noble families are invited.”

It resembled a military draft notice.

“See, it says right here— This ticket admits up to two guests.”

The red paper bore the black text:

"Gokoku Shokon - Second Earthquake Reconstruction 5th Anniversary Celebration."

“Edogawa Ranpo-sensei, along with the well-known mass painter Nagamatsu Takeo-sensei, are expected to attend. There’s a rumor going around that Hochi Shinbun is offering Ranpo-sensei a serialization deal. You know how Hochi is one of the Big Three Tokyo Newspapers, right? If that’s true, we at Teito Shinpo can’t just sit back and lose to them! I have to meet him, somehow!”

Tae tapped the invitation lightly with her fingertips, looking at Raidou.

He didn’t reply.

...Was it because he didn’t want to be a plus one for some high-society party?

“Raidou-kun... Is it really no good? You’d just have to come inside, eat whatever you like, and—”

Page 137 Translation -

“...And on the way back, you’d be my escort again.”

“You’ll need an evening tailcoat or formal dress attire for the party.”

Finally, the boy in front of her spoke.

“Y-You’re really coming?”

He nodded in response.

“If I’m going inside the venue with you, my current clothes aren’t suitable.”

A tuxedo would definitely suit him. Tae felt a rush of excitement in her heart.

Me, escorted by Raidou in a night party dress, walking together across a red carpet.

A tall, handsome young man leading a stunning beauty—meaning me—through an elegant ballroom, just like a scene from a foreign film.

The thought alone made her giddy. She’d have to make sure someone took a picture.

Then, noticing that the face before her hadn’t changed expression in the slightest, she hesitated before asking again.

“You’re really going to wear a tuxedo and go with me?”

“I was already planning on going to Tokyo Station.”

His hat bobbed up and down.

“...You know, that means you’ll have to walk with me—arm in arm, maybe even holding hands. I-Is that really okay? I’d hate it if you just wandered off on your own, ignoring me while I trailed behind you, like

some outdated Meiji-era man! That would be so boring—no, completely unacceptable! It'd be a total breach of etiquette! If you're going to be my escort, you have to act like a proper Western gentleman and stay by my side, holding my—"

#### Page 138 Translation

"Will you hold my hand?"

"Alright, I'll hold your hand."

At his response, Tae smiled gently.

#### Chapter 4:

##### Tokyo Station's Banquet

#### Page 140 - Tokyo Station's Banquet

Storm clouds veiled the moon, steadily thickening as they drifted eastward.

The stars scattered in the void were nowhere to be seen. A thin mist hung ahead, its minute droplets of condensed vapor tinged by the night air, deepening the darkness even further. The entire field of vision seemed to be draped in a brocade of black gradients.

A dull whistle echoed through the night.

The overlapping sounds of automobiles, murmuring voices, and laughter blended together, as elegantly dressed people moved about as if passing through an unseen curtain.

At the source of these sounds stood a towering spectacle of brilliance.

Rows of arc lamps, the glow from countless windows, and the radiance of the station's entrances—these many flickering lights bathed the red-brick Tokyo Station in an almost ethereal glow.

Intertwining her fingers with the hand extended from the tuxedo, Asakura Tae stepped through the southern entrance of Tokyo Station.

The ceiling soared high above. Numerous Dutch-style columns stood in orderly rows, each linked to the next by iron beams engraved with ivy patterns. The southern entrance was designated for boarding only, and in the diagonal distance ahead, the ticket booths for first and second-class passengers could be seen.

#### Page 141 Translation – Tokyo Station's Banquet

Even after nightfall, there were plenty of people around—leather shoes and a variety of sounds echoing off the pillars and walls. All these sounds, merging into one and flowing overhead, seemed to celebrate the safe departure of those embarking on journeys as well as the safe return of those coming back, like the song of an invisible orchestra.

Surpassing Tae—who was walking alongside in a tuxedo—men and women in tailcoats and dresses hurried toward the baggage claim.

As she watched the back of one of the dresses, Tae lowered her gaze to her own attire.

Though she was wearing her usual work clothes, she thought this suit was one of the more stylish ones in

the city. Even attending the banquet in it would probably not look too shabby or be extremely disrespectful—after all, she hadn't come here merely for pleasure.

"But..."

She thought, "Perhaps I should have at least prepared a necklace."

Lowering her chin to glance at her throat, she noticed the black strap of her camera—could that be my necklace?

"Well, that's fine... No, that's exactly fine."

I take pride in it.

Someday, I'll surely become a top-notch reporter, write my own book, and prove that even a woman can do it...

"Wait—just a minute!"

She called out to the man in the tuxedo who was holding her hand.

Page 142 Translation

"Alright."

"Okay."

Narumi:

Putting aside the camera, it's probably best to leave the black bag at the baggage claim. A woman's freedom and her proper consideration and thoughtfulness for the occasion are two different things. At a party venue, a woman hanging a large bag and a camera around her neck is just too unrefined and comes off as disrespectful to those around her.

A thin mist drifted into the premises as well.

Noticing his well-slung derby hat, he suddenly looked at it as if he'd just remembered something. Narumi nodded to himself, as if reassuring himself, and carefully extended the key for his hat.

"What was I trying to do? Throw this imported luxury item at my feet?!?! That would be utterly foolish—a momentary burst of idiotic frustration resulting in me slamming it on the ground and dirtying it. That's completely unlike a cool, composed detective like me."

He briefly whistled and then placed the derby hat on his head.

In the first place, I wasn't even angry. It was merely the downside of being such a sharp-minded detective—perhaps the price one pays for having intuition that's too keen.

"I do look pretty handsome, don't I?"

The two of them then gazed at the disappearing brick arch, resembling a tunnel.

Page 143 – This Present World

"I'm way more handsome, you know!"

"Not my older brother, though."

At the far end of the arch, in the drifting night mist, the waitress Kikue and her brother disappeared.

"By all accounts, I'm the more handsome one!"

The two of them, the moment they met, immediately grasped each other's hands, nearly rubbing their foreheads together as they stared at each other so passionately that if no one else were around, they would have undoubtedly kissed.

"Not to mention, not even my own brother."

Besides, if they were truly siblings, the older would call her "Kikue-chan," and the younger would be addressed without honorifics. And even if she were the younger sibling, would she really call her own brother "Kazuma-san"? That's absurd—what kind of way of addressing is that? Moreover, when they clasp each other's hands and rub from the waist up, what kind of siblings are they, when they don't even look alike at all?

"In my estimation, they're nothing more than childhood sweethearts."

Of course, ordinary people might not notice that they're impostor siblings for at least three years. But a great detective's keen eyes can see right through such deception. When your intellect and intuition are too sharp, you inevitably confront the truth of life.

"I may be handsome, but I'm even more so..."

Narumi lowered his gaze to the tips of his Italian-made shoes.

Page 144 – This Present Reality

"Alright."

"Okay."

Narumi (or "Naru-mi")

Aside from the camera, it'd be best to leave the black bag at the baggage claim. A woman's independence and her ability to adapt her manners and consideration to the situation are entirely different matters. At the party venue, a woman hanging both a large bag and a camera is simply too unsophisticated—and downright disrespectful—to those around her.

A thin mist drifted into the building.

Noticing his well-flung derby hat as if suddenly reminded of something, Narumi nodded to himself.

"What was I planning to do? Throw this imported luxury item at my feet?!?!? Slamming it on the ground in a fit of foolish, momentary irritation and soiling it—now that would be the height of idiocy, completely unlike a cool, composed detective like me."

He whistled briefly and then set the derby hat firmly on his head.

In truth, he wasn't even angry—it was merely a drawback of having a mind and intuition that are too sharp.

"I do look pretty handsome, after all."

Narumi then gazed at the tunnel-like brick arch that had swallowed them up.

Page 145 – Tokyo Station's Fierce Banquet

Without waiting, Narumi began walking in the opposite direction.

"I told Raidou I wouldn't be late, but now, how could I go back without being a bit past curfew?"

Narumi walked back toward the direction where Kikue had greeted the man who was supposedly her brother.

"I'm not done drinking yet."

Pushed forward by the drifting mist, Narumi's feet moved toward Tokyo Station's north entrance.

The elevator girls in traditional Japanese clothing at Tokyo Station were famously beautiful, and since the elevator itself was still rare, people would visit just to see them during the day.

But now, however, instead of the "girl," a man in a neatly buttoned railway uniform, slightly overweight, operated the elevator, which was referred to as "Poi."

Probably, in the evening, the shifts changed between men and women. It wasn't because of discrimination saying that women should work at night, but rather due to the societal perception of women who worked those hours, which wasn't particularly favorable. The shift changes likely took the elevator girls' return time into consideration.

With the sound of the chains rattling above, Tae absentmindedly pondered.

If that's the case, then what happens to the female bus conductors?

Next time, I'll have to do some research on that.

## Page 146 – Tokyo Station's Fierce Banquet

The floor vibrated strongly, and the elevator's accordion doors opened. Then, the door connecting to the floor slid open, and Tae stepped out onto the third floor of the Station Hotel.

A long, wide hallway was covered with a red carpet.

The "Hōrai Room" for the party wasn't hard to find. As soon as the elevator doors opened, everyone, both men and women ahead in the hallway, converged at one location.

"Oh, I see, this is the largest banquet hall, then."

Laughter and conversations echoed from the crowd.

"I heard the event is hosted by a noble who has been staying long-term at this hotel."

"Has it really been five years since the Great Kanto Earthquake?"

There was a desk nearby.

"I hear some military leaders and heads of the zaibatsu will be attending as well."

Holding hands with the man in the tuxedo, Tae continued to follow the flow.

The hallway widened like a carved-out passage, leading to a huge double-door that opened like a folding screen. In front of the doors, a hotel bellboy gently tilted his head as Tae presented her invitation.

His gaze was directed toward the tuxedo-wearing man standing next to her.

"What's wrong? There's no problem, is there?"

Yoshio, still holding Tae's hand, shot a sharp glance back at the receptionist.

"Good thing you're with your mama," the bellboy said with a forced smile.

Page 147 – Tokyo's Fierce Banquet

"No, that's not it... I'm not a mother yet."

"You're holding things up. Let's hurry, Tae-chan."

Yoshio tugged on her hand.

"Geez, 'Tae-chan,' that's a bit too familiar. Will you let go of my hand already?"

"Can't do that, you know. Rideau-nii said to stay close and keep holding your hand."

"This is troublesome... What if they mistake me for your mother again? That bellboy, he really got on my nerves. Why do I look like a mother? If only Rideau-kun had told me about this kid beforehand, I could've prepared a proper outfit."

"Hey, Tae-chan, this room is huge."

From the ceiling, brilliant decorative lamps hung down, and several round tables were lined up, each with appetizers and glasses. Behind the elegantly dressed people, a massive stage could be seen.

"Nice place."

Raidou placed a paper bag on the table.

"There's Calpis in the thermos."

It was the first-class ladies' waiting room, tucked away on the second floor of Tokyo Station, in a more secluded area.

Page 148 – The First-Class Ladies' Waiting Room

This room is reserved for female guests only, so unless the door is opened, it cannot be seen from the hallway. The walls are half wood-paneled, and the upper half is painted white up to the ceiling. In the center of the room, there is a low-legged large table, with longer armchairs placed on either side of it.

On one edge of the chair sat Otoe, who smiled as she looked at the thermos on the table.

"Calpis is said to kill cholera bacteria, right?"

"—That's what they're advertising. If we run out of drinks,"

Raidou crouched down and pointed toward the corner where the restroom was.

"—The water is over there, and there's a washroom too."



Perhaps because the only train available after this was the night express, the waiting room was mostly empty except for a man in a black coat and a small Ambrose figure.

"Where's Yoshio?" Otoe asked.

"Yoshio is working."

"He's helping with Raidou-chan's work, right?"

Nodding, Raidou stretched his legs.

The reason Yoshio had been staring out the window at the detective agency for so long wasn't to enjoy the view, but likely because he was worried about Otoe, who was waiting anxiously in front of the Ginrōkaku building.

"—Don't leave this room," Raidou warned.

He hadn't planned on bringing Otoe to Tokyo, but he couldn't send her back to the temple alone either.

Page 149 – The Cursed Feast of Tokyo

"Even so, I can't leave her in the office, not knowing when Narumi might return."

Raidou lightly bit the tip of his thumb, rubbed the blood into his palm, and pressed it onto the table. As he guided his fingers along the Muramasa, he formed a seal. The coat billowed dramatically.

"I've set up the Kuzunoha barrier."

"?," Otoe asked, raising her head in confusion.

"Monsters can't enter here."

"Don't worry, it's safe because of the barrier."

"I'll be coming back after work to pick you up."

"Take care."

As she spoke, Raidou turned his face toward her at the door.

"The one who will come to pick you up will probably be Yoshio or that older sister, Tae."

"Ehh, it's not going to be Raidou-chan?"

"Whoever comes to pick you up, go with them."

"Raidou-chan won't come?"

Without responding, the man in the black coat pressed the door handle and stepped out into the hallway.

As for Otoe's pick-up, it's unlikely to be Raidou. Even if he's alive, who knows if he'll be in any condition to come; if they were to fight, it would be a success if they both walk away.

Saiga is strong.

Page 150 – The Cursed Feast of Tokyo

Saiga possesses power equal to that of Yatagarasu. Furthermore, his subordinate, Alucard, is immortal, and the forces led by Kuramatengu exceed a hundred strong, making for a formidable army. In contrast, our own forces are limited to only three creatures within the "pipe," and we lack a decisive blow against Saiga. How do we deal with that man in the white tuxedo!?

Walking down the long corridor on the second floor, heading toward the South entrance of the hotel building, Raidou swung his arms and summoned his demons.

"Jack-o'-Lantern, use the Searching Flame Lantern to locate Saiga's position."

"Are you okay?"

Under the floating voice of the demon Jack-o'-Lantern, the back of the dog demon, Dormarth, swayed lightly.

"R-Raidou, I'm glad you're okay! I wonder when I was summoned back."

"Get to work."

"Of course! What should I do?"

"Protect the city. Destroy Saiga."

"How scary! What about that red cloak of his?"

"Apparently, he's been walking around the night-time city, just a madman, I suppose."

The murmur of well-dressed guests flowed toward the entrance of the party.

Page 151 – The Cursed Feast of Tokyo

"That's enough, let go of my hand."

"Is that so?"

Tae glared at Yoshio, who was still walking beside her.

"It's because of the promise with Raidou, I can't let go of this hand."

"That's enough. We're just supposed to hold hands until we arrive at the venue, that's the deal."

"Right, look, there's food on every table, feel free to eat as you like." Yoshio's gaze shifted toward the waiter who was bringing the dishes to the table.

"This is a Western-style standing buffet, so you can choose whatever you like. See? Go ahead, you were told by Raidou to join the party, right? If you don't eat, you haven't really participated."

"Ah, right, you're right, eating is part of the job, isn't it?"

Finally, Yoshio let go of her hand.

Tae gritted her teeth and, as a waiter passed by, she took a flute-shaped glass from his tray. It smelled like champagne. She wet her lips and drank it all in one go.

"Western alcohol is so weak, isn't it?"

She returned the empty glass to another waiter's tray and picked up a sour glass instead.

She couldn't resist drinking it.

"Ugh, what was Raidou thinking, he didn't really want to be escorted by someone like that."

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"Ugh, there's no way I'd accept such a request, seriously, it's infuriating!"

She continued to drink from the wine glass, goblet, and Collins glass, then refreshed her mouth with straight liquor before finally letting out a sigh. However, she still wasn't satisfied. She thought she could have at least five more drinks to freshen up and get in the mood for work before starting.

Approaching the table in front of her, she grabbed a bottle of Olag beer and poured it into a glass by hand.

Suddenly, she felt a gaze and tilted her head. From the table to the side, a middle-aged overweight man was staring at her with wide eyes. His gaze was like someone peeking into a sideshow.

"What's wrong? Is it so rare for a woman to drink alcohol? It's normal for a Taisho gal, you know?"

She emptied the glass in one gulp and straightened her back.

She wasn't drunk. She had a high tolerance for alcohol. No matter who she drank with, they were always the ones to get drunk first.

"Still watching?"

With the middle-aged man's gaze on her back, Tae moved toward the stage.

"Well, about Edogawa-sensei..."

That was her real objective.

The hoarse voice echoed above through the microphone.

On the giant stage, a man in a military uniform was passionately speaking about something.

Tokyo Station's Sinister Banquet

"The Washington Naval Conference forced us to reduce our military forces, and the reduction in personnel has..."

Tae instinctively tensed up at the mention of military reductions.

"The strength needed to defend our nation, our capital, has diminished, and this situation..."

A faint laugh came from the side, and Tae immediately strengthened her posture, turning her attention to the surroundings. Most of the guests were busy chatting amongst themselves. The voice of the man in military uniform flowed from the speakers, but it seemed few were paying attention.

A faint smile curled on Tae's lips.

Despite the soldier speaking from the podium, no one stood at attention or listened seriously. Instead, people were casually eating and drinking, laughing as they did so. It felt like some kind of bad joke, or as though they had stumbled into another world entirely.

Even in elementary school, and even in higher elementary grades, children were taught to stand still and listen when a military person spoke during ceremonies. Was this crowd different?

The sound of glasses clinking, laughter, cigarette smoke, and quiet voices filled the air.

"Freedom," Tae murmured.

Those who wanted to listen to the speech could do so; those who wanted to eat could eat. If one wanted to laugh, they could laugh without restraint. It was a world where everyone could live as they pleased. At least for this moment, it had become the kind of ideal society that might someday exist.

### Tokyo Station's Sinister Banquet

It felt good.

As Tae began walking, the gentlemen ahead of her made way for her, ensuring she was not obstructed.

"To protect the capital with your life—do you have the will, the mindset, and the guts for it?"

Responding to the voice from the speaker, the man in a tailcoat who had just opened the path for Tae laughed.

"Ha ha ha, of course, I would throw my life away for it!"

"Well, the baron is truly a man of character."

A middle-aged woman in a dress facing the man in a tailcoat smiled.

"Ah, a ceremony?"

"No, no, everyone here shares the same sentiment. This is a gathering for national defense and honoring the spirits of the fallen."

"Oh, the distinguished military officer over there, he's an acquaintance of the baron, isn't he?"

"That's Major General Munakata of the Army. We exchanged greetings as soon as he arrived, but... Oh, he's already leaving?"

"He's probably a busy man, what with the host's greeting and the ceremony to come. It's understandable."

"Apparently, the host will be making a large donation to the military, and then..."

As they ascended the narrow, dimly lit employee stairs, Narumi was confirming his direction.

"I think this staircase is the shortcut."

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### Tokyo Station's Fatal Banquet

Tokyo Station is not unfamiliar to me, but since the new "Yaesu Entrance" was built on the east side last year, with more corridors and stairs, I was a bit confused. In any case, to head toward the south wing where the hotel is, I had to pass through the newly built east entrance.

"Yaesu Entrance... That's the place where the North Town Magistrate's Office was during the Edo period, right? The huge inner moat is still there. At night, it's pitch dark; even when you go out, all you see are multiple train tracks, and there's nothing else."

As I opened the door at the top of the stairs, a red reflection jumped into my view.

A carpet stretched out on both sides, leading into the second-floor guest area of the south wing.

"Okay, as expected of me, the great detective, I hit the jackpot with this shortcut."

On both sides of the passage, there were heavy wooden doors arranged at intervals, stretching endlessly. The Station Hotel, with 72 rooms, surpassed the Imperial Hotel in terms of guest rooms, which had previously been the largest.

"What's this? A little gossip session in such a hallway?"

Ahead, there was a gathering. I shrugged and walked closer.

It led into a large space that connected to the stairs.

Hotel staff wearing uniforms with frills were trying to move a light with a ladder.

Around them, middle-aged women dressed in dresses were gathered, chatting loudly.

"Hey, could you turn the lights on again, please?"

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"We should move it soon," said the uniformed employee.

"Isn't it fine? We're the guests, show us," one of the middle-aged women replied.

With an expression of "what can you do?" the employee began to operate the light.

Even though the lens was facing upwards, an intense flash was sent out, causing Narumi, who was behind, to instinctively pull his hat down over his eyes.

In the light, the voices of the middle-aged women overlapped.

"It's much brighter than the lights at home or in hotels."

"That's a carbon arc lamp used in the streetlights in Ginza," the employee said, sounding a bit proud.

"It's like the sun," one of the women exclaimed.

"The metal halide lamps used here were invented in Europe. They are known for emitting light wavelengths closest to sunlight," the employee continued.

While the employee spoke, Narumi was looking up at the wide staircase.

"What, they're having a party here?"

Classical music and the murmurs of the crowd flowed quietly in the background.

Adjusting the collar of his suit, Narumi began to ascend the stairs.

As he reached the third floor, a boy pushing a cart of food passed by right in front of him.

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Tokyo Station's Fatal Banquet

In front of him, a few elegantly dressed people were having a conversation.

"By the way, I'm a little hungry," Narumi muttered.

The Station Hotel's cuisine was provided by Tsukiji Seiyō-ken. It was said to have a flavor that surpassed even the Imperial Hotel.

"Well then, in front of me, there's free food and free alcohol," Narumi thought, calmly walking down the

red carpeted corridor and observing the huge entrance that seemed to be for arrivals. "Seems like a fine social gathering. Hmph, you can't get in without an invitation, huh?"

An elevator opened ahead on the corridor.

A man in a tuxedo, his plump body squeezed into the suit, hurriedly stepped out. His greasy face reddened as he nervously looked around.

Narumi quickened his pace.

"From my instincts, that fat guy is looking for something," he thought.

Still walking quickly, he hid behind a gap in the wall. It was a narrow, short passage leading to the men's restroom.

Taking a handkerchief from his camel-colored suit pocket, Narumi wiped his hands.

As the heavy footsteps drew nearer, Narumi quickly stepped forward.

He collided violently with the plump man in the tuxedo who was turning toward the restroom.

"Wh-what's the deal with you?" the man yelled as he stumbled back.

Narumi hastily reached out to steady him.

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Tokyo Station's Fatal Banquet

Narumi quickly helped the man back up.

"Ah, sorry, I was in a hurry," he apologized.

"I was in a hurry too, you rushed out like a child," the man responded.

"Are you hurt? I'm really sorry," Narumi said.

While holding the handkerchief in his hand, he quickly rubbed the inside of his tuxedo pocket, simultaneously showing concern for the plump man.

"I'm fine," the man said.

"Yes," Narumi replied.

"I truly apologize, I feel awful about causing such a thing," Narumi said, bowing his head and removing his hat.

"Well, well, for a young man, you're surprisingly polite," the man commented.

As Narumi brushed the dust off the man's tuxedo with the handkerchief, he continued, "I deeply regret it, please, I sincerely ask for your forgiveness."

"Yes, if all the youth of the Imperial City had your straightforwardness and respect for others, it would be a much better place," the man said as he opened the restroom door.

Narumi bowed once more at the man's back as he walked into the restroom.

Returning to the red carpeted corridor, Narumi pulled out a red invitation from his handkerchief, almost as if performing a magic trick.

"That was easy," he muttered.

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He adjusted his derby hat and laughed.

"I properly apologized to that greasy old man."

Waving the invitation, Narumi walked lightly towards the "banquet hall."

"Heh?"

"I mean, I'm an honest guy, well-mannered, and I'm good-looking too. There must be some cute reception girls at the party, right? If there are, I'll make sure they won't forget me. What are they going to do about me? Well, it's still about protecting the Empire, though. Checking on the safety of the reception girls, a proper job. But man, I'm working too hard. I should get a bonus from the Yatagarasu. I wonder if they'll give me one... of course they will. Money is crucial for the defense of the Empire, after all."

"Raidou?"

The Jack-o'-Lantern floating ahead shook its head, seemingly troubled. The meaning was clear.

Dormarth behind, equally perplexed, muttered something as well.

A faint white mist hung in the air around them.

Walking in a line, the one and two companions could see the entrance to the North Dome ahead.

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In the wide, long central corridor on the first floor of Tokyo Station, many people were coming and going on either side of Raidou in his black coat.

It was still before the last train, so it wasn't unusual to see passengers walking through the station. However, the people walking by made no sound, and everyone's outlines were somewhat translucent.

"Hi-ho?"

"Huh?"

The dead... A crowd of souls forming the shapes of their former selves...

However, the immediate problem wasn't the procession of the dead.

"—Again, the same corridor?"

Raidou murmured as if confirming.

"This is the second time," Dormarth said, keeping an eye on the rear.

"Before, we were also forced into Saiga's otherworldly space..."

It wasn't a different world they were in. The floor was certainly real, and the high walls and ceiling were made of actual building materials. They were definitely inside Tokyo Station.

"An unusual outcome."

"Raidou, we've been going back and forth through the same corridor."

"Yes, but not really."

With the demon's question lingering in the background, Raidou in his black coat moved swiftly toward the front.

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"—What lies ahead is always the dome. It must be calling us there."

"That's a trap, Raidou, it's a lure."

"Yeah, that's probably the case. We just need to break through."

Even if they turned back, it would just be a repetition. Although they should have had their backs to the dome, as they continued walking, the entrance to the North Dome was always visible ahead. Then, the only thing left to do was to move toward that place, which was always positioned in the direction they were heading.

"—Dormarth, can you smell anything?"

"Only the smell of the dead."

"Jack-O'-Lantern?"

"Hi-ho~."

"Nothing from the searchlight either?"

Raidou and his two demon companions stepped into the North Dome.

It was a tall, open space, three stories high, with an octagonal ceiling. The North Exit ticket gate could be seen at the far end, but the only ones passing by were the dead. It wasn't dark; the lighting spread evenly throughout the area.

The air and light fell silently.

Far above, in the eight corners of the octagonal ceiling, carvings could be seen.

Tokyo's North Dome boasted this, while the South Dome was protected by the Four Guardians. Yaesu...

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The small window facing the direction of the wind was slightly open, likely to allow the breeze flowing from



the east to enter. Tokyo Station serves as the gate of the Imperial City, and it is fortified with layers of magical barriers such as the octagonal magic circle, feng shui, and the Four Guardians, all acting as protective wards.

Raidou lifted his chin.

The sound of wings echoed.

The eagle sculpture had its wings spread, and when looked up from below, it appeared as though the wings were in motion.

In reality, they were flapping.

The figures changed into Karamatengu with the speed of the wind, swooping down in a sudden dive to attack Raidou.

The surrounding applause echoed, guiding Tae's attention to the stage.

The lights of the venue were dimmed.

She wondered what was about to begin.

In the darkness, countless people seemed to turn toward the stage.

Though she could hear someone's voice through the speakers, after deciding that she didn't need to stand at attention for the military speech, none of the following speeches caught her attention.

The sound of microphone adjustments echoed.

"The battleship Tosa, which was scrapped by the Washington Naval Treaty, will be revived here."

The white cloth covering the center of the stage was removed, and the stage lights placed on either side were turned on.

It was a strong light, most likely a metal halide lamp or a carbon arc light. I've covered street lighting in Ginza before, so I'm fairly certain.

The bright light made the crowd murmur.

Tae was no exception.

It wasn't the brilliance of the carbon arc light that surprised her, but the murmurs of the object it illuminated. "The battleship Tosa, a model made of pure gold."

The words echoed.

Narumi, who had been leaning on the marble counter, almost dropped his whiskey glass.

"Pure gold?"

He stretched out to get a better look at the stage, but quickly hid his face with his derby hat.

"Why are there so many military personnel here?"

He had already recognized several familiar faces among the crowd.

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What kind of social gathering is this?! I can see even the stiff-upper-lipped senior officers, who would never attend a party like this. From the way they're relaxing, it doesn't look like a routine inspection, but maybe the heads of the military special high police or the secret service are hiding somewhere. If that's the case, there's a high chance that they'll recognize my face...

Narumi took a sip of his whiskey, glancing at the stage from the crowd.

But pure gold? That model has to be more than a meter tall. How much could that possibly cost? You couldn't buy that with just one or two fortunes.

On stage, the man in the white tuxedo bowed.

"I would like to donate this battleship Tosa to the military."

A round of applause rang out, and Narumi almost spit his whiskey out.

"What a waste, giving it to the military. It's gold! They're just throwing money away."

The actual Tosa was sunk at the bottom of the sea due to foreign pressures.

"Why are they being so generous? If that's the case, why don't they give me some gold too? Just one of the turrets from that model, no, even just one cannon would do."

The man in the white tuxedo continued.

"As for the disposition of this Tosa, I leave it entirely to the military's discretion. Whether to display it, melt it down, or whatever. Though, there's no need to melt it down, its value as pure gold remains unchanged."

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Laughter and applause overlapped.

"I see..." Narumi took another sip of his whiskey.

"So, this is a blatant bribery show." The car has already been prepared to make use of gold ingots, and the military doesn't feel guilty about accepting them in bulk, rather than sneaking around with gold bars. I don't know if he's some businessman, but clearly, he's trying to establish some very strong connections with the military.

"Well, yeah, if you're going to get a solid chunk of pure gold like that, of course high-ranking officers will come rushing in. When you have a party at the Station Hotel, rich people will be all too happy to show up."

Narumi snorted in amusement.

He blinked his eyes quickly.

What's going on... my body's vision is getting blurry, and the lighting's dimmed, is there smoke filling the air? No, surely the mist couldn't have gotten in here.

The other guests didn't seem to notice any change in the atmosphere. Everyone was mesmerized by the

dazzling brilliance of the display on stage. The golden battleship, flashing under the lighting, gleamed beside the white tuxedo man and the military officer, who were firmly shaking hands.

"A great donation. Saiga's patriotism will surely crush even the enemies from across the seas."

They raised their glasses in a toast.

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The entire audience raised their glasses, and Narumi hurriedly followed suit.

"Before we make a toast, I have one simple question for everyone."

The man in the white tuxedo continued into the microphone.

"Many of our predecessors gave their lives in order to protect the Imperial Capital. The people gathered here, should the time come, are you prepared to sacrifice yourselves for the defense of the Imperial Capital?"

"...I'd rather pass on that."

Narumi's muttering was completely drowned out by the collective cry of the crowd.

"What? Are there really so many people like Raidou here?"

Looking up at the stage, Tae placed her finger on her round chin.

"Something about this question feels strange."

Of course, she hoped the world would be peaceful and that the Imperial Capital would remain safe forever. She didn't want to die willingly, but for the sake of saving loved ones or helping others, she might stake her life. However, the man's tone on the stage didn't seem to suggest that he was talking about such emergencies. It almost sounded like he was asking them to sacrifice their lives for the defense of the Imperial Capital right now.

"Is that just my impression?"

"Ah..." Tae nodded to herself.

One of the oddities was the part where he mentioned the predecessors giving their lives to protect the Imperial Capital.

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Tokyo Station's Disaster Banquet

What is he referring to, and from when?

"Cheers!"

If he's referring to the collapse of the Edo Shogunate, that's something that couldn't be compromised. It had to be.

The crisis where people gave their lives to protect the Imperial Capital—the rice riots of 1917, the

assassination of Prime Minister Hara in 1921, the financial panic of 1927, the assassination attempt on Hamaguchi Yuko last year... all of these were major events, but they didn't seem to align with what the man on stage was talking about.

"For the defense of the Imperial Capital..."

Pulled along by the surrounding wave of responses, Tae also raised her glass.

As she listened to the voice from the speaker, she tipped her glass of red wine.

The liquid that slid down her throat, caressing it, made her recall something she had forgotten.

The purpose of this gathering was the "Protection of the Nation, Soul Rally, and the Fifth Anniversary of the Reconstruction."

The people who fought and sacrificed their lives to protect, in essence, were meant to represent the victims of the two great earthquakes. Although it's not a very apt description, it is true that the buildings now standing exist on top of the sacrifices of over 100,000 victims in the First Great Kanto Earthquake and nearly 30,000 in the Second. What the man on stage seemed to want to say was, "Never forget the eulogy for the victims..."

The sound of the toast and clinking glasses echoed in the darkened room where the lights remained dim.

"For the people who sacrificed themselves for the defense of the Imperial Capital."

Echoing the voice through the microphone, Tae stopped the tilt of the glass near her lips.

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Why is it in the present tense?

The phrase "for those who sacrificed their lives for the earthquake victims" would be the correct usage.

I looked around to see if anyone else had the same puzzled expression. There were voices preaching about risking one's life for a cause, about the importance of putting everything on the line.

The voices of the men bragging and lecturing—those were all I could hear.

"..."

The only thing I could see were the women laughing as they hammered away.

Is it because I'm a newspaper reporter that I'm so fixated on the phrasing, on every little nuance of words? Maybe it's just me. I slowly turned my head back.

After all, everyone makes mistakes in how they speak. There's no need to make a big deal out of it...

A small figure suddenly stood right beside me.

An elderly woman. She hadn't been there just a moment ago. It's a standing buffet-style party, so it's not unusual for people to move around, but what was odd was that this woman was wearing a cotton kimono. To be frank, it was a rather old-fashioned, commoner's everyday wear, not something one would typically wear to a social gathering.

What made it even stranger was that her cotton kimono reminded me of distant memories.

It was the "Yagasuri" pattern that my grandmother used to love.

And her hair was styled in a "Migaki-kaeshi" fashion, which was the style favored by stylish Meiji women—just like my grandmother.

I had unconsciously been drinking my wine.

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### Tokyo Station's Fateful Feast

My grandmother had long since passed away. I couldn't be there when she passed. My beloved grandmother was taken away while I was on a field trip in elementary school. When I came home full of excitement, there was no one to greet me in her usual yagasa-patterned kimono. I had so much to report and so many things to say, but I wish I hadn't gone...  
I was laughing, having fun, while my grandmother had passed away!

"Taé..."

A familiar voice reached me from beside me.

"That's not good, Taé, a lady shouldn't drink like that."

"...Gr...Grandmother...!!"

"But I'm glad to see you're well."

The grandmother who was supposed to be dead was smiling right beside me.  
Half-transparent, I could make out the outline of the yagasa kimono.

Gunpowder smoke and white mist blended and lingered in the air.

Dormarth, twitching her nose, turned around and, at the same time, forcefully slapped the back of the Jack-o'-Lantern that was floating behind her.

A spearhead, trailing a streamlined arc, sharply pierced the space where the lantern had just been floating.

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### Tokyo Station's Fateful Feast

"Hiho!" The white eyes of Dormarth glared at the Jack-o'-Lantern while holding her head.

"Don't complain," she said, her black claws gripping the base of the spearhead that was thrust towards her. "Which would you prefer? Having that pumpkin head pierced with a spear, or just getting stabbed?"

She responded, twisting the base of the spearhead with her black claws, then raised her knee to bend the spear, attempting to snap it. However, the force of her movement caused Dormarth to float upward.

"Ahhhhh!"

In the white smoke, the Kuramatengu, gripping his weapon, raised his arms straight up.

The long spear, held high, had the demon attached to the tip. The black claws that tangled with the spear didn't release their grip. The shaft of the spear, twitching with a sort of squirming motion, bound her wrist tightly.

Dormarth clenched her canine teeth.

The formation was falling apart. Raido, back to back with her, had positioned the Lantern Boy between them to provide support from behind. However... I had fallen off, and the rear of the black coat was now completely exposed. The Lantern Boy alone couldn't form a complete defense.

From the dome's ceiling, the sound of wings descended. A new group of Kuramatengu emerged from the eagle relief.

Under Dormarth, flailing in the air, the floor of the dome already had the clothes of a yamabushi scattered about.

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#### Tokyo Station's Fateful Feast

The pieces of brick rolled about, and Raido continued to fiercely clash with the remaining three tengu, battling with his sword.

"Hee-ho-ho."

From behind the black coat, the Jack-o'-Lantern floated up.

It cast several beams of light from its lantern towards the ceiling.

The flash of light directly hit the faces of the Kuramatengu in the air, just as they were about to strike at Dormarth, disrupting their indigo-colored wings and slowing their movements.

"This fool, stop worrying about me and assist Raido!"

"Wait, I just helped you, and now you're complaining? Shut up, it's nothing, just get back down!"

Dormarth shouted at the pumpkin-headed figure, and despite her wrist being bound by the spear, she grabbed the spear's shaft with her remaining limbs. The plan was simple: break off the part below the spearhead, and she would be freed. The long spear tilted like a metronome.

She quickly twisted her body to avoid a direct collision from the front, but her head and back were relentlessly slammed against the dome wall.

"Ugh!" Chunks of brick fell, scattering.

On the floor, the Kuramatengu holding the spear raised both arms again.

With a swing of the long spear, dust and debris trailed from its back as the dog demon leaped into the air.

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## Tokyo Station's Fateful Feast

"It doesn't hurt, this is nothing."

Dormarth bit into the tangled strands of the rope around her wrist. From both sides, the pressure of the wind rushed toward her.

The reinforcement Kuramatengu, with their brightly colored feathers, launched an attack. Still affected by the lingering glow of the Jack-o'-Lantern's light, Dormarth's vision seemed to be dimming, but that didn't mean the sharpness of her blade was weakening.

Like the sound of a Japanese drum, Dormarth spun around the spear she was bound to.

She kicked the approaching Kuramatengu in the face and used her claws to crush one of its eyeballs.

Letting out a scream, Dormarth used the robes of the monk-like figure as a springboard, leaping into the air, and with her free arm, she ripped a wing from the back of the Kuramatengu she had landed on.

As the indigo-colored feathers scattered like fireworks, the long spear tilted sharply, and Dormarth was dragged away.

A fierce wind swept across her body, and the wall quickly rushed toward her.

She bent her knees and tried to land on the wall with the soles of her feet, but the impact hit her from the side.

The blade sank into her shoulder blade.

In rapid succession, her back was slashed.

The ceiling had eight carvings, and from them, eight more Kuramatengu in monk-like attire appeared as reinforcements. Two of them had sustained significant injuries, but the remaining six were unscathed. Half surrounded the spearhead in midair, while the others moved toward the floor. Even the Kuramatengu that had fallen after losing a wing could still move; it couldn't fly, though.

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## Tokyo Station's Fateful Feast

It was simply a matter of time. The number of enemies against Raidou was increasing. She needed to support Raidou. Raidou!

She tried to call out the name for summoning, but Dormarth had her mouth filled with brick fragments.

The blades of the flapping Kuramatengu pierced the back of the demon, who had been slammed into the wall face-first.

To hide her face from the military personnel, Narumi pushed the brim of his derby hat up with his fingers.

"What is this?"

Suddenly, the number of people in the room had increased.

The lighting was still dimmed, and because of the mist-like substance in the air, it was hard to be certain,

but it seemed like the number of shadows in the spacious darkness had doubled.

“Hmm? Am I drunk?”

Unknowingly, Narumi had been drinking more. Ah, that must be it.

He was a man who was naturally delicate and too kind-hearted. He was like Roberta, someone whose good qualities were limited to his face, head, and attire—qualities that were about as thoughtful as anything. He was the opposite of brute force... He never shouted or rampaged.

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Tokyo Station's Fateful Feast

“Work clothes?”

Without any pretense... I tried to comfort myself quietly with a drink, nursing my sorrow over Kikué-chan... Well, it's a party, so there are many people and it's loud, but... I ended up drinking more than I should have.

The number of drinks wasn't because of the “free booze.” I'm not the kind of stingy man to worry about that. I'm a man with a big heart. I fully support gender equality, and if that happens, I'll make sure to visit the public baths every day and contribute to the local economy. I'm not stingy, I have a big heart, and I contribute to the economy. On top of that, I'm kind. Even toward the old man attending the social gathering in his work clothes, I have no complaints. Yes, freedom is the true essence of Taishō democracy.

Narumi gazed intently at the old man in work clothes facing the tuxedo-wearing man next to him.

The outline of the shabby clothes seemed to blur and fade. Was it the alcohol?

Old man, there's no way you should be wearing work clothes. Even the senior military officers are attending this party. It's either bad form or a lack of manners. You're wearing dirty, hole-riddled military gloves and a hand towel around your neck—are you coming from the fields?

The man in the work clothes facing him, who had been slouching, suddenly burst into tears.

“Don't cry in front of people.”

Narumi sniffed and muttered, then downed the remaining whiskey.

In that moment, the high-alcohol liquid surged back up from his stomach.

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Tokyo's Fateful Feast

The neck of the man in the tuxedo in front of me was blown off.

Instinctively, I quickly stepped back to avoid getting the blood on my camel-colored suit.

What the hell! Something attacked from above at an angle... It looked like blue wings, descending rapidly... It passed through the man in work clothes... and snatched the head of the tuxedo-wearing man...

In my ears, screams, shrieks, and the sounds of people falling—both large and small—swirled and



reached me.

"What... what is happening...?"

In the wide, dark space, a massive form was flying.

Beneath it, the movements of the people were not uniform. Some were fleeing, some were frozen in place, while others continued to casually converse.

"What's going on...?"

One of those conversing was wearing old-fashioned clothes, and their outline appeared vaguely transparent.

Intermittently, beams of pure color descended, piercing through the transparent figures, slicing through the tuxedo-wearing individuals they were speaking to.

"...The dead..." Narumi finally realized.

The figures with unclear outlines were not human beings of this world. They had no physical form. That's why the bats could pass through them easily. The sudden increase in the number of figures in the room was because the souls, the dead, had appeared.

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It was because they appeared in such large groups.

Narumi ran.

"Idiot."

...Why the hell are you all just standing there, you're going to be killed by those bat-like creatures. Why the hell are you having a conversation with the dead?"

More than half of the people in tuxedos, military uniforms, dresses, and various other outfits, just like Narumi, were running desperately. However, there were also many who stood frozen like statues. These people, who weren't moving, were each having some sort of conversation with the dead. They were speaking passionately. Some were even crying while talking.

"Do as you like," Narumi thought. "If you want to talk with some dead person, go ahead. That's your 'freedom.' I'm good, though." He didn't know what was going on, but the Thirty-Six Stratagems say that if you can't win, run. A wise man doesn't approach danger.

From somewhere, the sound of a dying scream echoed, followed by the sounds of plates shattering one after another.

"Okay, it's not that big of a deal."

Given the size of the place and the number of people, the enemy was just one. With only one enemy, they couldn't attack all of these people, and there was enough space to escape in this wide area.

Narumi quickly scanned his surroundings. Without slowing down, he ran up to the stage.

Tokyo's Wicked Feast

"!"

"Huh...?"

The man in the white tuxedo had disappeared.

After placing his hands together over the soldier's body, who had fallen on his back, brain scattered,

Narumi grabbed the pure gold model of the battleship Tosa.

A smoky mist swirled around, and the podium was in the opposite direction of the exit. The panicked people didn't notice. Even if they did, it was clear they were far too distracted. Narumi mustered all his strength to tear something off the battleship, but the turret and the bridge wouldn't come off easily.

He was prepared to use any sharp object, but unfortunately, he didn't have a knife on hand.

"Break!" Narumi kicked the pedestal, sending the Tosa crashing onto the podium.

The impact caused tables around the area to topple, and the sound reverberated in the air like a clap of thunder.

Then, a deep voice joined in.

"You're as stubborn as ever, monk. You haven't changed a bit since you were a kid."

A man with a wide family crest stood right next to Narumi.

".....O-Ojiki, you should have died long ago, so why... are you still here?"

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Tokyo's Wicked Feast

As she spoke, she had already deduced the answer herself.

It was a dead person.

The outline of the figure was faintly transparent.

"Ah, Grandma..."

Tae collapsed to her knees.

A blue bat suddenly swooped overhead. The shaped cloche hat was torn apart and blown into the dark distance. If she hadn't knelt down, it wouldn't have been the hat that was blown away, but her own body.

However, Tae herself was completely oblivious to this.

"Grandma, I want to do something for the liberation of women..."

"That outfit suits you."

"Really? Truly?"

At the back, a similarly dressed woman talking to the dead was sliced cleanly across the body.

A massive amount of blood spurted out, flowing to the feet of the octopus.

Tae was happy.

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## Tokyo's Wicked Feast

"Boy, what's with that Western-style flashy getup?"

"...Uncle, from now on, it's the era for sharp suits."

Despite the retort, Narumi was unable to move. His mouth worked, but his limbs were immobile. The people conversing with the dead, standing frozen like statues, were probably in the same predicament.

"You've always been like this, always caring about appearances."

Each figure that appeared was from the past.

Familiar faces, voices, even the scent of their clothes was something Narumi could distinctly remember. Everyone was immobilized, likely because they were faced with those they had once loved.

A type of mental curse. Like the child who was about to become an immortal sage but broke the rule and spoke to his mother in front of the lord. This person, too, could not be ignored. They had to be listened to. Damn it, my legs won't move. So even gods have their human side.

"Listen, boy, a man's worth lies in what's inside."

"I don't have time to listen to this lecture, Uncle. Take a good look around."

"Boy, you always divert the conversation like this, still as crafty as ever."

"...That's why... I know, I know, Uncle, you were the only one who really scolded me seriously when I was a kid, and I understand that well, but still, why are you showing up now of all times?"

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## Tokyo's Wicked Feast

The dining hall, once filled with screams, had transformed into a mysterious low resonance.

The people who had been fleeing were now all facing the dead, or had become the dead themselves.

The unmoving humans were being sliced one by one, and the figure spinning toward the stage was doing the work.

"Boy, listen closely."

Narumi absentmindedly thought that his uncle's tone was exactly like his own.

He grabbed the mantle floating in front of him, resembling a Western child.

"He-ho?" Jack-o'-Lantern turned in confusion.

"Escape this dome."

"He-ho-ho!!!"

As the fast-moving Karamatengu's blade swung, Raidou spoke.

"This is less of a trap, and more of a delay," he said. "It's obvious, isn't it?"

He deflected the blade with Muramasa and spun his body.

"Jack-o'-Lantern doesn't want us getting any closer to 'something.' Find it out. You're the only one who can escape. Track down Saiga's location."

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Tokyo's Wicked Feast

"That's right, alone."

The blades clashed violently, sending blue sparks flying.

"He-ho!"

"He-ho!"

"Even if no one is behind me, it's not bad. Jack-o'-Lantern fears nothing. Everyone knows that."

"If I can't go, tell Gouto, who found Saiga, or the 15th Raidou."

"Go!"

Ignoring Jack-o'-Lantern, who was about to say something, the mantle was swung with force.

While spinning, he used centrifugal force to blow the pumpkin away.

Around Jack-o'-Lantern, who was being blown toward the dome exit, Colt Lightning created a barrage.

"Don't look back!"

He shouted at the small figure of the mantle down the passage and slashed upward with his sword, dealing with the Karamatengu to his side.

A new sound echoed.

At the upper corner of his vision, on the wall, the unmoving form of Dormarth reflected. Her back had multiple...

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The sword is thrust deeply, and the front of the body has sunk into the brick.

The enemy consists of eight new figures descending from the sky, and three remaining on the ground, making a total of eleven—far from an easy number to avoid. The story of teaching swordsmanship to Ushiwakamaru is not a lie; the sword skills of these tengu are on par with those of the dojo masters from Kuzunoha Village.

"Atterui." Raidou pulled the last one from his pocket.

Would he obey without complaint this time, considering his anger over the previous failed summoning?

But that worry was unnecessary.

The blades attacking from three directions were met by his outstretched arm, and his blood sprayed across the ground, his fingers also spattering with blood.

The metal tube, still not emptied, had not yet shone with its emerald light. He could not summon Atterui.

The storm of blades was closing in from both sides.

Raidou sprinted while raising his Muramasa sword.

He quickly struck the enemy's blade while targeting a blind spot, slashing upwards with his sword.

Although he wasn't sure whether or not Atterui would follow his instructions, the plan to use the giant form of the "Oni King" as a shield had already fallen apart. His handgun had been exhausted in an attempt to cover Jack-O'-Lantern's escape, and there was no time to reload as he faced off against numerous swordmasters.

Eleven against one, with only this single sword in his hand.

The clothes were torn in several places, and blood flowed through them.

Still, without changing color, Raidou swung his left hand in an arc, scattering countless black spots in the air.

These were spare bullets.

The area where they scattered, even if it was diagonally above, had no real significance. After all, the bullets alone wouldn't be of much use.

Raidou aimed at the group of black spots.

The sound of cracks echoed in succession as gunpowder and sparks scattered, and the bullets splintered into the air.

The live ammunition would explode upon striking the ground, and the propulsion from the blast would launch the bullet at the tip.

Raidou had struck that part with his sweeping sword.

No matter how skilled in swordsmanship, even Raidou couldn't strike the primer of all the bullets in the air, and because they were fired without a barrel, their direction was unstable. They couldn't generate the same high acceleration as the bullets fired from his Colt Lightning.

However, the enemy was close, and the effect was sufficient.

Like fireworks, the weighted shells, impact shells, and incendiary shells scattered, hitting the surrounding Kuramatsukami.

With a slash to the side, Raidou cut through the Yama-bushi's clothes. As he turned his body, he swung the bullets through the air once again.

"Jouhei."

With the sweep of the sword, smoke and explosive flames danced, and a large number of projectiles flew through the air like fireworks.

One of the trajectories of the shot narrowly missed directly beneath. It was indeed a bullet, and where the fire aimed was uncertain. However, no matter where it flew, there were only enemies around.

As Raidou sped forward, the sound of spent shell casings hitting the floor echoed, and the sounds of cloth and flesh being cut by bullets followed as the Kuramatsukami were struck down.

A mist and gunpowder filled the dome.

"Are you alive, Dormarth?"

He called to the demon on the wall, but sensed a presence behind him.

It wasn't the presence of malice. It wasn't an enemy. Rather, it was the opposite.

A voice quietly called his name.

It was a name he had already abandoned. Even Gouto didn't know that name. Since his childhood, when he first became a candidate for Raidou in Kuzunoha Village, it had long been his training alias. No one knew his real name. No one alive in this world should know it...

"Jouhei, no, Raidou Kuzunoha the Fourteenth."

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Tokyo No Kyouen (Tokyo's Malice)

Slowly, I turned around to the nostalgic voice.

A kimono of indigo-dyed kasuri with a sash, smiling at the edge of its color.

"Mother♪"

"Raidou."

The figure and voice of my deceased mother, and the voice near me, froze me. I couldn't move at all.

From the ceiling's carvings, once again, the eight Clamategu forces appeared.

They headed directly toward the motionless Raidou, each one lowering their weapons and diving straight down.

On the third-floor landing, facing upward, Saiga in a white tuxedo slowly raised and lowered his arms in a "V" shape.

In front of him, numerous translucent beams of light ascended into the air. Their contours were hazy, but the brightness of these lights was clear. It could be described as mist that trapped light within it, like something not of this world. One after another, the lights were sucked into the South Gate Dome, into the Four Gates stained glass windows in the ceiling.

"Patty is a big success." Saiga smiled faintly.

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From the space, the dead bring other dead, overflowing into this place. It is truly a national summoning. Yes, the name of this place, the medicine, is considered to be the immortal paradise of Busan, where those who visit shed their unnecessary flesh, becoming eternal, never decaying beings, and are then led to guard the empire.

"For this, the conduit was established."

The power of the Yatagarasu, invisible to the eye.

Saiga lowered the arms he had spread. There is no need for me to lead any further. The spirits of the martyrs for the country are gathering here.

By tonight, the octagonal gates of Tokyo will become the edge of a huge barrier that has never been seen before. Once the spirits of the dead gather, we will surely surpass the critical point. The octagonal gate will quickly unleash its power to shield the entire empire. Any force will be rendered useless within the empire from now on.

"Then we will be able to stop that enemy."

"What's wrong?"

The spirits rose toward the ceiling, and the entire South Dome became enveloped in a faint, beautiful glowing membrane.

At the sound of the direction, Saiga tilted his head.

One of the Kurama Tengu flew toward the rear passage. It did not approach the landing, it could not. Just as Alucard could not step in, the glow of the dome reaches a place where magic is not allowed.

187:

Tokyo No Kyōgei

The beings become incapacitated.

"What's this? The intruder in the North Dome? How could this happen to Raidou...!!!"

Saiga placed his finger calmly.

"The report on the intruder, I thought it was just another cleaning job sent by the Yatagarasu... But that young man, how did he awaken? There's no way he could be moving so quickly..."

With his back to the dance floor, the man in the white tuxedo walked toward the Karamatengu that continued to report.

"Unbelievable, already two squads have been annihilated! Despite having such loyal allies, to think that a single Devil Summoner has been able to send off sixteen demons... Does the clan, known for its bravery and swordsmanship, not feel ashamed?"

While scolding, Saiga smiled.

"The fourteenth generation Kuzunoha Raidou, he has sharp eyes."

As the white tuxedo man walked, the surroundings became eerily silent, like something was buried beneath tombstones.

"So now we've sent in the third squad?"

The sound of Saiga's voice was the only thing that echoed through the road.

"Whether or not to send in the fourth squad... This is a war of attrition..."

Tokyo is a world of death.

Monsters and the dead rampage, and the breath of the living is steadily fading.

page 188:

### Tokyo's Demonic Feast

The true ruler was Saiga. "We can send as many squads as needed to the North Dome. We must take every precaution. However, no matter how much Rai-dou holds out, he is reaching his limit. Within the barrier, all the dead behind the people will come to the forefront. Of course, as long as Rai-dou is alive, he will not be exempt. Those long-forgotten dead will either paralyze him or create a fatal opening or lapse in judgment. It would be a pity to kill him, but the young man's mission is also to protect the empire. If he can reunite with the dead and become a spirit, contributing to the power of the Eight-Sided Gate, then his purpose will be fulfilled."

"Mother?"

Rai-dou kept his sword lowered.

"You've grown well."

"—Why—why is Mother here?!"

His thoughts drew close without his realizing.

Was it an illusion, or was it a change brought by the demons?

"I've been able to face you with this beloved face, and that is enough for me now."

"—Why—?"

No, it wasn't a disguise. There was something undeniable in her words.

"It doesn't matter, quickly, you should strike me down."

age 189:

A violet-colored mouth spoke.

"If the Muramasa blade cuts through the curse, it can erase your mother."

Sensing a gust of wind, Raidou raised one hand.

Scattering a large number of bullets into the sky, he kept his sword directed straight at his mother, and with a swift motion, he raised the sword above his head.

The explosion was deafening, like bamboo splitting dozens of times, and the clash continued with the Crow Tengu.



Shell casings and fragments of flesh rained down, along with pieces of burning monk robes.

“—Why—erase my mother?”

Raidou narrowed his eyes in the smoke.

"It seems she was summoned from your back by a technique."

“Behind my back?”

"You must have heard of it—close spirits always watch over the living from behind."

“Guardian spirit?”

His mother nodded.

“However, what you see is only a fragment of the deceased's spirit. People are always haunted by some kind of spirit, but it is just a fragment of someone from the past. It has no consciousness, nor is it the full being—it is merely the light that they once brought. To see the form of the deceased exactly as they were, lingering behind you, is nothing but a demon, a creature of the dark.”

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"If my mother were a demon..."

"—My mother is not a demon."

Raidou spoke with a stronger tone.

"She is a demon, indeed. The 14th Raidou, you must defeat her."

The smoke swirled and flowed in the air.

"What is wrong? Quickly, defeat her!"

"I cannot defeat my mother."

"How weak..." The lilac-tinted edges of her lips twisted.

The peony-patterned obi drew near.

"Your mother is already as a demon. You must defeat her, no matter what."

"—Why—"

"I told you, she was summoned through forbidden techniques. From the fragments of the guardian spirit, her very soul was drawn out. It's as if her whole body was lifted by a single hair being pulled."

"Was she summoned here?"

"For the party."

Raidou exhaled deeply.

The words "Summoning. Second Earthquake Reconstruction. Five-Year Anniversary of the Record" floated in his mind. The invitation...

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Tokyo Station / Malice Art

"Saiga did this, didn't he?"

"I don't know who exactly, but in any case, once a demon has been summoned, I must follow. Being able to talk like this and convey my will is thanks to my training in the Kuzunoha village. However, this conversation, too, is the will of the summoner."

"Talking?"

From above, the sound of wings flapping could once again be heard.

"To converse, to scold, to praise, and then to merge and guide."

"Where to?"

"Here, there are conduits, invisible pathways leading somewhere. The guiding is beyond that. I don't know where exactly, but to a spirit, it feels wonderful."

"Mother, you're only being made to feel that way."

"That's probably true. But I cannot resist; I must go there, the two of us together."

"Even the spirits at the party are saying the same thing!!"

The sound of descending Karamatengu grows louder.

Raidou threw the bullets into the air.

However, the enemy had already anticipated his action and prepared a countermeasure.

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A tornado descended, scattering bullets into the air, spinning them and stirring the wind with its grass-colored wings.

Even so, it only cuts through the wind.

"Mother!"

Along with the wind, a Kurama tengu attacked.

One of the enemies, lifting their sword from behind a blue-dyed kimono, swung it high.

The black cloak's back slid upwards. With both wings fully extended, I leapt from my mother's side and, in

an instant, cut down the Kurama tengu who had raised its sword.

"Mother, are you alright?"

"My mother is already dead."

"I will carry the dead mother."

A long ribbon extended from the belt.

"Raidou, that is a foolish thing."

I struck its head with Muramasa, kicking it into a stick-like form.

"No matter how much this mother is slashed or pierced—"

"—I won't let that happen."

I heard the breath leaking through the wind and realized I was biting down hard.

"My mother no longer feels pain, and everything will pass through."

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Tokyo Station / The Calamity

"I understand."

"I cannot remain silent while the blade is directed at Mother."

From the front, the cutting strike of the blade approached.

With a harsh friction of his shoes, Raidou circled behind his mother. He struck with the hilt of the raised sword. After flicking his wrist to return Muramasa to a proper stance, he slid his foot forward. The face of the Karamatengu was split in half vertically.

"Raidou, don't you understand yet?" The mother, facing away, spoke.

"No, I don't. The very fact that Mother is speaking like this is already the enemy's strategy. The souls are summoned to speak. Raidou, don't you have a place you must go? Hurry and pray for your mother. You cannot go while she is here."

"I will not cut Mother."

"If you try to protect me, unnecessary movements will increase. It will create openings, and that is exactly what the enemy wants."

Three Karamatengu charged from the right.

A stream of air rushed from the outside, and Raidou charged as well.

Just before the mountain priest's attire, he hunched his back as if woven. He pushed away the Karamatengu that tripped over an unexpected obstacle, stretching his knee. Still in mid-air, Muramasa was sharply swung upwards, and one of the enemies' heads was severed. With a returning slash, the

blade was horizontal...

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"Mother!"

The remaining two demons had become mere vessels, releasing blood-like water.

"I will protect you."

Raidou threw his sword at the approaching Kramatengu that was attempting to swipe at his mother's indigo-colored kimono.

"It's unnecessary. If you're trying to protect your mother, you're in the midst of the enemy."

The figure in the monk's clothing, pierced by Muramasa and leaning forward, collapsed onto the floor.

"They are unmistakably the dead. Even if they are cut down, they do not feel pain."

"I will not let you cut my mother."

Raidou pulled the cursed sword from the fallen monk's body.

"This is a futile act. The 14th Raidou, you should swear your oath to your true purpose, and yet, you let another mother distract you. It is shameful."

"I will protect the Empire and my mother."

The Kramatengu's sword surged toward him.

Raidou leaned back, evading the enemy's blade, and swung Muramasa high.

The enemy's sword was deflected, and with a forceful strike, they were sent flying. The cloak fluttered wildly.

From the side of his mother, the Kramatengu was attempting to strike both her and Raidou. However, Muramasa's blade collided with their weapon, sending a brilliant spark.

"I will protect you."

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Tokyo's Tragic Feast

"To slay this mother, and if you don't, you cannot fulfill your mission."

Raidou stood in front of his mother, sparks still flying as he clashed swords with the enemy using his Muramasa in his right hand.

From the left, right, and directly above, the Karamatengu charged towards him.

He flicked a bullet with his thumb, turning it into a small stone. The bullet hit the enemy's face, piercing the

eyeball, and causing their speed to drastically slow down. With his opponent distracted, he launched an upward strike with his Muramasa. The three Karamatengu were swiftly repelled.

As Raidou prepared to launch more bullets at the remaining enemy in front, a momentary lapse in his defense occurred. No, he realized, it was too late. His opponent was faster.

Before the stones even reached him, the point of the enemy's blade reached its target. The Muramasa remained embedded in the enemy's head, but Raidou had no way to defend himself. While he could possibly search for another sword, his mother was right behind him. Searching for another sword meant risking her being pierced by the blade.

A sword wind from the front enveloped Raidou's entire body.

Raidou spread his arms wide.

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Tokyo's Tragic Feast

"Gouto!"

The wind barrier that had enveloped them suddenly unraveled, scattering in all directions like scattered shards.

The Karamatengu, wielding the blade, recoiled.

Blood splattered from its face, and large black fur clumps stuck to it.

"Hey, there's more coming from the side!"

"Good grief."

The Karamatengu, who was recoiling, briefly turned its head toward the side where a black cat, Gouto, was.

Raidou had already leapt into action. Pulling the Muramasa from the falling cloak of the Yama-shiro, he swung it down in an overhead stance, aiming at the enemy to his left.

The falls continued, and the flow of the drifting white smoke became disrupted.

With both hands and feet stained with blood, Gouto landed on the floor.

"What a thing to happen—being pierced by blades and still protecting a soul that is not even alive... the Fourteenth's foolishness... no, well, that's just the Fourteenth's..."

"Gouto-douji, I see."

Gouto continued speaking, after making a polite bow towards his mother, rumbling his throat.

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Tokyo's Tragic Feast

"That may be the strength of the Fourteenth, but..."

The remaining Karamatengu, still alive, was regaining its stance at the edge of the dome.

"Did you meet with the envoy of Yatagarasu?" Gouto asked.

"Well, how should I put it, I managed to arrive in time to address the crisis, but it seems it's already too late, and there's an issue at hand."

"What exactly is going on? What is Saiga's scheme?"

"Did you rush in without knowing anything? At least you should have waited for me to return," Gouto's black-colored eyes glanced at his mother's soul.

"Good grief, even if you had waited, it would have been the same outcome."

"Explain it to me."

"Saiga's goal appears to be the complete activation of Tokyo's Eight-Faceted Gate. He wants to absorb the dead and use their spiritual power to activate the core barrier of the Four Gates to its limit. In other words, he needs spirits as a source of energy. It seems he's been abducting the dead nightly for that purpose."

"So, the walking dead in Tokyo are the result of that?"

"That's the way it seems."

"Yoshio..."

Raidou muttered the name of the young client.

"The mother he saw must have originally been one of the dead. Saiga, with the disaster, is..."

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Tokyo's Tragic Feast

"I don't understand."

"It seems he has also been gathering those who have not yet received Charon's guidance, those who have not yet reached the path," Gouto continued.

The remaining Karamatengu launched a series of furious thrusts.

"What happens to the dead absorbed into the Eight-Faceted Gate?"

Raidou raised his sword and asked.

"Indeed, they are the Four Beast Gate's victims, they disappear without completing reincarnation or becoming guardian spirits," Gouto replied, his claws shining as he also targeted the opposing mountain monk.

"Why does Saiga need to increase the power of the Gate's barrier?"

The sound of flesh being deeply gouged echoed as the sound of Muramasa resonated. The defenseless bodies of the creatures slid across the floor.

"It seems Saiga has been slowly gathering the dead. If it had been only a small number, Yatagarasu might have turned a blind eye. Strengthening the gates of the Imperial Capital is not inherently bad. However, the love he's gathered is too much. What's worse, without giving any reasons, he has secretly gathered a large number of them in Tokyo. It's no surprise that people might start suspecting something is off."

Persistently, a swarm of Karamatengu appeared from the ceiling.

This time, it came in quick succession. As soon as eight appeared, another eight followed, and yet another eight came after that. The onslaught showed no signs of stopping.

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Under the flapping of wings that sounded like a whimper, Gouto said bitterly, "The scavengers sent by Yatagarasu, who were dispatched to stop the request for cessation, have all failed to return."

"Too many."

With a flick of his cloak, Gouto loaded real bullets into the rotating chamber of the Colt Lightning as he looked up at the ceiling.

"The problem starts here." Gouto's voice, as though spat out, reached Rideau's ears.

"What's the problem? Just destroy Saiga and release the imprisoned souls."

Rideau searched with his eyes for the object he had dropped.

"That's the problem!" Gouto continued, "Saiga seems to have hastened his plans. He had the eyes of Yatagarasu, but now he's truly hit the mark. Just yesterday, he was only gathering spirits from the dead, but now he's trying to take them from the living. Your mother is proof of that. He's summoned guardians from the backs of people to their guardian ships."

"I know that already."

"The problem starts here."

The large group is waiting for the right moment.

"In short, the mountain monk army could drop down at any time."

They are calculating the slightest gap in our defense. Gouto is aware of this too. Though he speaks, he does not act. If he shows a wrong move, they will drop down all at once. They've gathered quite a number.

page 200:

Tokyo Station / Malefic Arts

"00 means... I will certainly use the unbeatable techniques of the Tengu clan. The Winged Formation..."

Reluctantly, the Yatagarasu decided to forcibly expel Saiga from Tokyo.

"The location of Atelui's 'is confirmed."

"A decision that breaks the ancient taboos."

However, as soon as they ran to that location and picked up "whatever that is," the Yatagarasu sent in their cleaning agents.

"I don't understand. Those agents have been sent countless times before, only to be defeated by Saiga every time."

The mist became disturbed.

"Raido, this cleaning agent is the real issue. More than Saiga's plans, this man could be the true problem."

The air was manipulated by a strong force. The group of Kuramatengu on the ceiling performed large rotations with swords and spears pointed downward, coming toward the floor. Raido was running toward Atelui's "."

A twisting slash.

It falls like a massive drill. Countless—

The outline of his mother could be seen behind him. He couldn't escape her; it was the summoning command, after all. But Raido didn't mind. His mother was there with him. He longed to touch those gentle hands, but in order to hold them, he would have to become a spirit as well. He understood that.

page 201:

Tokyo Station/Disaster Arts

It was as expected. That was also Saiga's aim.

At the party venue, perhaps, beings like his mother were speaking to the people. You would want to hold their hand.

Want to embrace them, talk to them forever, and stay together.

"Yoshio—"

The drill-like fierce wind from above collided with the horizontal wind.

Outside, the motion of withered leaves danced through the air.

Countless fragments of brick flew through the air, and at the same time, the Karamatengu scattered into mist.

In the blurred view, the figure of his mother surrounded by particles of light appeared.

Instinctively, he stretched out his arm.

His mother's kimono sleeve also stretched out.

But it couldn't be grasped. There was no way to touch her. The smiling mother distorted, and the half-transparent light strands vanished as they became a sinister force.

Raidou felt no bad emotions.

This glow was the same as the curse-breaking of Muramasa.

Somewhere, at some point, he too would be close to it.



But his mother was different. Freed from Saiga's summoning, moving toward a world where she would no longer be bound. The shards of that light were always behind him, different.

The explosion of flames rushed toward him.

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Tokyo Station/Disaster Arts

A ringing in the ears resounded loudly.

"Dashaa!"

In the depths of the swaying vision, the figure of Dormarth slid down from the crumbling wall. Black and white were swirling, dominating the world.

Falling, surrounded by dust.

"Dashaa~"

"Dashaa!"

Raidou barely managed to take a defensive position on the cracked floor. Even so, he was blown away.

He couldn't kill, and he rolled away. The impact was tremendous. What exactly had happened? Had the curse-breaking light been released? Was this enemy not defeated? The entire dome was still in motion.

From beyond the scattered bricks, a voice that seemed to laugh was heard.

In the depths of the drifting haze, a tall figure swayed.

It was dragging something large behind it.

A figure in white robes. No, this white kimono had curse marks engraved on the hem and sleeves. Moreover, what was wrapped around the waist of the kimono was not an obi belt, but a gunbelt. The sound of footsteps suggested that they were wearing boots.

page 203:

Tokyo Station/Disaster Arts

From the man's neck, long strips of pitch-black cloth were flowing, not the usual wrapped fabric.

He didn't seem like an enemy.

He was approaching.

"You're in the way."

If he were one of Saiga's subordinates, he wouldn't hesitate to act with me lying there, and it would be reasonable to think he was the man who released the curse-breaking flash explosion.

As Raidou stood up, shaking off the fine debris, the flowing man approached him in a straight line.

Even though he should have been directly in front of him, the man didn't change his course at all.

They collided shoulder to shoulder.

It would be more accurate to say it was done deliberately.

"Move."

A voice with a sharp tone echoed.

Raidou was pushed, his body spinning half a turn and thrown sideways.

"How..."

Just by making contact with the door, to be forced with this much power?

His body was skilled. In Kuzunoha Village, he had always been among the top, standing out more than anyone his age. If that wasn't the case, he couldn't have inherited the title of Raidou. But what kind of man could knock the 14th Raidou away with just a shoulder bump?

A black cat was at his feet.

pages 204 and 205:

Tokyo Station/Disaster

"Gouto?"

"That's why he's the problem cleanup."

"Who is it?"

He was looking at the figure behind.

The thing being pulled behind him is a coffin of some kind. There's no sign of wheels, but it's being dragged effortlessly across the cracked floor. The back of his white robe has a rectangular shape, which is said to be the Seven Star Sword.

At his feet, the black cat sighed deeply.

"You're familiar with this name, right?"

"Death."

The figure in the flowing robe stopped suddenly.

"I don't like being talked about behind my back."

The figure turned around with an angry expression.

Beneath the robe, it was clear that cloth was wrapped tightly around his body. While the details were unclear, it seemed like something was tightly binding his torso and limbs, almost like a deal being made.

"Talking behind my back like this... are you badmouthing me?"

With wild, untamed bangs partially obscuring his eyes, the eyes behind them reminded one of the scorching sunlight glinting off a spear.

"Good grief..."

"But, I can tell you're talking behind my back. As soon as I showed myself, you stopped talking."

"I wasn't hiding, I was just standing behind you."

A massive fire pillar erupted from the floor where Gouto was standing.

"Was I not talking in the middle of my sentence?!"

One arm of the figure stretched out.

At the wrist, between the cloth's gap, the end of something sharp glinted. The lid was opened. As he stretched his arm, it seemed like something was summoned and immediately shot out, creating the fire pillar.

Raidou tilted his head slightly.

"Where did the summoned demon go?"

"And also, when you say 'behind,' you mean my back, right? Behind means unseen. Doesn't that make it hiding? What is this?"

With a sigh, Gouto appeared from under his cloak.

"If it wasn't for me, you'd have been swallowed up by the fire pillar. Wasn't that a bit too much for a threat?"

"You're still alive, huh? Tch."

"Hey, what's with that 'tch'? What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Smells bad, damn cat."

Just behind the figure, the reflection of a blade flashed.

Page 206

"That's why..."

The remaining Kuramatengu raised his sword with an expression of fury. It was clear that he was a master of swordsmanship. The sword and arm transformed into a flowing line, and even the scenery beyond could be seen through it. There was no time for Raidou and Gouto to exchange words. At a speed that surpassed even a lightning strike, a white-glowing blade fell upon the shoulder of the man in the flowing robe.

With just a single swing of his elbow, the backhand struck the Kuramatengu's face.

"I was still talking, you know!"

"I'll kill you, damn it!"

Without even turning around, the man in the flowing robe continued fighting with his bare hands.

"He's already dead."

"I'm not talking to you, fool!"

"Calm down, crazy man."

Once again, a pillar of fire erupted from where Gouto stood, and Raidou instinctively pulled back.

"No, that's not it." The man in the flowing robe swung his arm.

"What...?"

The mouth on the outside swelled into the shape of a cat.

"How rude. At least properly call my name."

"If you're not crazy, are you just some eccentric?"

Page 207

Once again, a fire pillar shot out. The target was Gouto, but Raidou, who was on his shoulder, was also caught in it.

"I am Kyouji!"

Raidou thought he had completely seen through the situation, but a part of the flame licked his shoulder and ignited.

"I am the first Devil Summoner, Kyouji of the Kuzunoha!"

He detached something from the outside to extinguish the flames.

"What? The name of Kuzunoha and the duties of a Devil Summoner, carried out by you, a practitioner of Onmyoudou..."

"It was recognized by the Yatagarasu. From now on, Kuzunoha isn't just about Shinto."

"However, in Onmyou techniques, summoning abilities should be inferior to Shinto..."

"What did you say? Want to die, Gouto?"

Kyouji's arm was raised.

"How many of those 'things' are hidden in your hand?" Raidou asked.

"You noticed, huh? Looks like your eyes are still good, 14th Raidou."

"Do the demons you control get disposed of after a single use?"

"Hoh, you're quite observant."

The laughter of the man in the flowing robe echoed, his long bangs swaying irregularly.

"Because I was directly targeted."

Despite thinking he had seen through everything, the pillar of flame continued to chase him. This extraordinary power, the desperation of the final moments, must have been the result of the lingering force of death. It was likely that Onmyou magic was applied in the sealing of this power, and upon being unleashed, the demon's magic was fully activated and then controlled, reducing its strength.

"That's some insane summoning."

"You think you know what's going on? Fourteenth Raidou, it's because you didn't do a damn thing, that Saiga came all this way to do it for you."

"I appreciate the power, but defending the imperial capital is my duty."

"I told you, you didn't do a damn thing. You're just in the way. And this is a cleanup job. Kids like you should stay out of it."

"Kyouji, are you planning to put Saiga in that coffin and proceed?"

"Smell that? I'm talking here! Don't interrupt me!"

The man in the flowing robe swung his arm.

This time, it wasn't a fire pillar, but a massive amount of flames were scattered.

What appeared was a burning warrior. Over two meters in height, with flames pouring from every part of his body, he wielded a flaming sword and shield in each hand.

"You're summoning a normal demon too?"

"You guys never listen. Play with your Sodom here. If you manage to survive, I'll praise you. Bet you'll be happy being praised, huh? Fun, right? Laugh."

The man in the flowing robe turned his back.

"Wait, Kyouji, let's join forces."

"I told you to laugh, fool!"

"I'm going too."

"Go ahead, straight to hell. Goodbye. I'm not going to a place like that."

"We're both Kuzunoha."

"Eventually, Kuzunoha Kyouji will replace Kuzunoha Raidou."

With a strange shout of "Dasha!" the man in the flowing robe dragged the coffin.

The Gladiator Sodom's flaming sword blocked Raidou's path.

"Four squads from the North Rodome were annihilated in an instant?"

As he walked down the red corridor, Saiga questioned the men on either side.

"Thirty-two flying troops. Fourteenth Raidou was able to defeat them instantly with the demons he summoned."

Page 210

"Is that even possible?"

The Kuramatsuri floating beside the man in the white tuxedo spoke in an unnatural voice.

"Is it different? Has the Yatagarasu's cleanup crew arrived?"

Saiga traced his finger across the vessel.

"That's the cleanup crew. I can't be careless, but they're advanced sorcerers, masters of assassination missions, their skills are top-notch... but to annihilate four squads in an instant? That's no cleanup. That's practically a combat unit. Do you think the Yatagarasu has such a thing now?"

Suddenly stopping, Saiga tilted his head, listening.

Had he misheard? He thought he heard a sound.

This world was silent. No matter how loud the sounds of the massacre at the Party venue, they wouldn't reach this corridor. The sounds of the battle at the North Rodome were the same. A solid barrier was formed. Everything was meant for the peaceful path for the spirits...

"What? They destroyed the walls and broke through?!?!"

Saiga quickly moved towards a wall, shaking his head and turning toward the Kuramatsuri floating at his left.

"Foolish. If they break through the barrier like that, my barrier is connected to the real world... I can't even begin to understand what kind of destruction it could cause in actual Tokyo. Are they really the cleanup crew? This goes against everything the Yatagarasu stands for, they're supposed to operate in secrecy."

Page 211

The hall shook as if an eruption occurred.

From directly ahead, a figure in monk robes with wings outstretched flew toward him.

"...What... the Yatagarasu's cleanup crew broke through the first and second-floor defense and magical barriers?" Saiga doubted his own words.

"Who are they? No, first I need to restore the broken barrier... a new summoning will be required... Alright, pull them to the third floor, the largest room. This sudden intrusion must mean they came to rescue the

people, even if their goal was just eradication. If there are too many people around, they won't be able to fight."

"Dashaa~! Dashaa~!"

As he dragged the coffin up the stairs, Kyouji Kuzunoha twisted his mouth into a smile, glancing at the Oporoguruma that was parked in the red direction.

He looked left and right, then back at the coffin.

"Are you crossing there? I see, I see, as expected, this is what you call 'guiding the way' for me."

The engine of the Oporoguruma started up.

"Get out of the way."

Page 212

"Get out of the way."

From the front, only two vehicles were visible, but judging by the tremors, there were likely three or more tightly connected behind them.

Kyouji raised both hands as if to admonish.

The slight sway of the left and right, with three spikes in between them, became apparent. The engine sound approached from the front.

As the Kyouji in the flowing robe half-turned, his left hand was extended, facing the opposite direction of the approaching tremor.

Three spikes were fired between them.

Amid the brilliance of the sound, the cries of countless victims and the sound of bones crashing together reverberated.

"What?"

The approaching Gashadokuro swarm behind, burned and carbonized one by one in the flames, collapsing into fragments as if they were at a furnace.

"Did you think you could take advantage of that? You tried to sneak up amidst the noise of the Oporoguruma. On one side of the hallway, it's clear something is wrong."

The half of the Gashadokuro, now scorched, tilted and swung its arms threateningly. "You think it's strange, right? I'm asking you!"

Page 213

Kyouji's left hand reached out, effortlessly snapping the raised iron arm at its base.

The sound of engines and vibration rushed toward Kyouji.

The three spikes were caught between his fingers.

Three consecutive eruptions ran across the floor, carving through the two rows of Oporoguruma vehicles.

Where the flames had passed, remnants of London Taxis, resembling black cab models, lined the walls. In the center, a path was cleared wide enough for Kyouji to walk.

"I told you to get out of the way."

"I'll return it."

While dragging the coffin, Kyouji noticed that he was still gripping a Gashadokuro's skull in his left hand.

One arm had completely turned to ash, and the other had been torn off. The skeletal demon was still trying to approach the back of Kyouji's flowing robe with its fangs.

He casually slammed the skull into the Gashadokuro's cranium with the handle and started walking.

"Dashaa~"

His hands, completely red, hung limply as he sat down with a thud, dragging something massive behind him, as if he had struck with a gigantic mallet.

Page 214-215 Translation:

"Aterui, thank you—"

Raidou formed a sealing gesture with his fingers and released the giant man from his command.

Diagonally to the side, the shattered fragments of the bone gladiator Sodom lay scattered.

"Ra-Raidou, my hands feel like they're burning!"

"They are burning."

Raidou turned his head and called out to Dormarth, who was barely standing, using the wall for support.

Her shoulders were uneven in height, and she walked like a wounded beast, her tail dragging behind her.

"H-Hey, Raidou?"

"Can you move?"

"Of course I can! I'm coming with you, Raidou!"

Her black-and-white fur was matted with drying blood, and one of her eyelids was swollen shut.

"—Prepare some water for Aterui's hands," Raidou said.

"W-What!? You're making me do chores again!?"

"Stay here and rest with Aterui."

"No way! I'm going with you, Raidou! I won't get stuck in the bricks this time, I promise! I can help! I'm useful, I swear!"



"No."

"Why not? Am I really that useless?"

Dormarth's voice gradually grew quieter as her head drooped.

"Your comrades matter."

Gouto suddenly leaped to Raidou's feet.

"—Because you are important, Dormarth."

"I-I am...?"

Her ears twitched.

"For now, just focus on healing with Aterui."

"R-Raidou! Say it again!"

"For now, just focus on healing with Aterui."

"No! Not that! The thing you said before that!"

"—Your comrades matter."

"Raidou, you're teasing me, aren't you?"

Raidou gently placed his hand on the demon's fur.

"—Once you're healed, I'll need your strength again, Dormarth."

"O-Okay... I get it... I'm just a burden right now... I'm in the way, huh?"

Page 216-217 Translation:

"You were never a burden. Not even once."

"T-Then why is it that whenever you ask me to do something, it's always some boring task!?"

"Is that so? I don't recall ever asking you to do chores like cleaning or laundry."

"W-Well... if you really insisted, I guess I could do the cleaning and laundry for you..."

Dormarth's tail swished back and forth.

"B-But, you know... you could summon me inside your room once in a while too... I-I wouldn't mind..."

Beyond the dome, in the white smoke, Raidou's coat and the black-furred demon disappeared into the haze.

Aterui tilted his head, watching Dormarth, whose tail was still flicking around wildly.

"My hands are burning."

"I told you, they're literally burning."

"I need water."

"I know, I know. Raidou asked me, so I'll do it properly, okay?"

The wounded canine demon limped forward, dragging one of her legs as if she were made of bruised mochi.

Aterui, still seated, muttered to himself.

"Raidou... he left his mouth unsealed."

"Yeah, that's right."

"Good for him, huh? I bet he wants to say something."

At the dome's exit, Dormarth glanced back briefly.

"We're all unsealed now."

Her voice echoed back from the fog-covered passageway.

"This is a first... As a summoner, this is something that should never happen..."

Her voice faded into the mist, not returning.

"Heading into enemy territory with all three of them unsummoned... What kind of Devil Summoner does that?"

Aterui looked down at the ofuda hanging from his neck and slowly continued.

"...Are you planning to die, Raidou...?"

If a summoner perishes, their demons are released. However, if they are still bound by ofuda, that rule no longer applies.

"My hands are burning."

Aterui's voice resounded through the North Dome.

The place was overflowing with death.

page 218:

Raidou shook his head left and right in the red-tinted surroundings.

A burnt rubber-like stench struck his nostrils. White smoke, thick like flames, drifted through the passage. On one side, charred Gashadokuro corpses lay in a heap, while on the other, the melted wreckage of multiple Oporoguruma cars stretched along the corridor.

"...Kyouji?"

At his feet, Gouto nodded.

"It seems that guy is using Sodom's Fire. It looks like he has it sealed within him. Still, his control over fire, the way he wields it so effortlessly, is monstrous. The name Kuzunoha is no joke.

"That Oporoguruma... we struggled to take down just one of them, yet here—how many are there? Eight?"

Raidou's eyes followed the trail of burning vehicle remnants, clearly leading forward.

"Kuzunoha Kyouji... he's got dozens of those things hidden in his robes, doesn't he?"

Gouto sighed.

"Most likely. He relies on sheer numbers.

Onmyoudou summoning is inferior to Raidou's Shinto-based techniques in nearly every way.

"So, to compensate, he relies on overwhelming force. He summons demons as disposable tools, pushing their magical output to the absolute limit. It's the nature of their school—Onmyoudou doesn't just use summoning techniques, but rather channels power through substitutes and mediums."

Suddenly—

A Kurama Tengu burst through the wall ahead.

page 219...

Shattered wall fragments tumbled to the ground, and suddenly, the once-silent corridor was filled with chaos.

Crashing objects. Continuous explosions. Screams. Shouts. Unintelligible howls.

Raidou didn't waste time glancing at Gouto—he was already sprinting towards the breached wall.

"DASSHA~!!!"

With a feral cry, Kyouji launched himself forward, kicking off a table to gain momentum.

In both hands, he gripped his sword—the Seven Star Blade.

As he swung, two Kurama Tengu were bisected midair, their torsos splitting apart like paper.

Without slowing, Kyouji used his blade's momentum to spin himself. His leg bent sharply into a hooked shape, and from his hidden elbow holster, three enchanted bullets flashed—

A volley of fiery spears erupted forward, burning through everything in their path.

The moment his feet landed, they crushed something beneath them.

A head.

Human? Demon? It didn't matter. Kyouji had no interest in finding out. Whatever it was, it was dead now.

Using the recoil, he launched himself again.

Midair, he bent his knees—and from the fabric wrapped around his legs, two rockets ignited.

A squadron of Kurama Tengu, having just taken off, didn't even have time to react before they were engulfed in Kyouji's fire.

page 220:

Tables, spirits, and even several people in tailcoats and dresses were all impaled along with the spears of fire.

"Dassha~!"

Kyouji didn't care in the slightest.

If anything—he was laughing.

As he landed, his setta sandals nearly slipped on the spreading pool of blood, but the laughter never faded.

"You're too damn fat."

Blood continued to flow.

Kyouji stabbed his Seven Star Sword into the gut of a particularly large man who had collapsed.

"Watch yourself, fatass. You almost made me slip. Too much blood, man—way too much. Let's drain some of that, huh? Here, let me help."

With a sharp exhale, Kyouji suddenly turned his head toward an approaching sound.

Two men in military uniforms rushed forward, their faces frozen in fear.

"Ahhh! Y-You're human, right?! Yes?! Help us!"

"Y-You have a sword! Good! Take care of those monsters, now!"

Kyouji lowered his shoulders slightly, staring at the two trembling soldiers.

"Aren't you guys supposed to be military? Why the hell aren't you fighting for yourselves?"

"W-W-W-We... There's a Tengu behind us!!"

The Seven Star Sword suddenly flashed upward.

"I'M TALKIN' HERE!!!"

The soldier on the right was cut clean in half, his body splitting in a jagged "V" shape, mirroring the Kurama Tengu that had been lurking behind him.

Now moving on to page 221...

"T-T-T-T-T-T-T-T—?!?!"

The remaining soldier, his legs shaking like a frightened child, looked up at Kyouji's flowing robes.

"T-T-T-T-T-?"

Kyouji scratched his ear, as if trying to make out the stuttering words.

"What? You wanna sing a song or somethin'?"

"T-T-TAKE ME WITH YOU! PLEASE HELP ME!"

Kyouji smirked.

"Sure thing."

"Saiga!!!"

With a single movement, Kyouji drove his blade through the soldier's forehead.

"There. Now you don't have anything to worry about anymore."

He twirled his Seven Star Sword and wiped the blood off on the soldier's uniform.

Suddenly—

A tremendous force pressed down on the room.

Kyouji turned his blade toward it instinctively.

The presence was undeniable.

The spirits in the air quivered—and at the center of the stage, standing atop the podium, was a man in a white tuxedo.

Saiga.

Kyouji grinned.

He ran across the tabletops.

Saiga, standing at the podium, extended a single finger—

And grabbed someone by the collar—

Ripping off their face.

Page 222

Dasha.

"The First Generation."

A projectile released from Saiga shattered the shield, making it smaller and smaller. But from the human holding the shield, blood sprayed. Flesh was torn away, and bones—Kyouji collapsed onto the floor.

Tears streamed down the face of the woman in the dress. He lifted her up.

Using a new shield in front of him, he rushed forward onto the stage in one swift motion.

"You say you've come. A cleaner? What are you?"  
Saiga asked.

"Too slow!"

"Kyouji."

"Kuzunoha? Instead of saving people, you bring ruin. You disgrace the name of Kuzunoha!"

"If anyone's causing this mess, it's you, Saiga."

Kyouji, without hesitation, tossed aside the tattered woman in the dress with a look of utter disgust.

Right in front of him, a man in a camel-colored suit was kneeling in seiza, facing a spirit.  
But of course, Kyouji paid him no mind. He would cut them both down.

"You have no intention of saving people?"  
Saiga raised his fingers as he spoke.

Kyouji lifted his Seven-Star Sword from a low stance and swung it upward.  
Page 223

## Tokyo Station's Dark Feast

Narumi, kneeling on the stage, thought to himself: When will this old man's sermon finally end?

Even a Tengu had appeared in the midst of this scene. Flames danced through the air, and a rough-looking man in a yukata was wreaking havoc.  
Narumi wanted to escape as soon as possible, but he couldn't move from where he sat—before his spirit-bound father.

The rough-looking man in the yukata rushed up onto the stage.

"Kuzunoha?"  
He heard someone mutter the name.

Who the hell was this guy?  
Was he somehow related to Raidou?

The blood-soaked figure of a woman—was she a real person or just a doll?  
Narumi watched as the man in the yukata tossed her aside.

Then, right beside him, that same man raised a large straight-bladed sword overhead.

"W-Wait, you're kidding, right? That thing's gonna hit me!"  
"This isn't funny! That blade is way too dangerous to be swinging around here!"

The shining edge of the sword came crashing down toward Narumi's camel-colored suit.

The sound of forged steel clashing rang through the air.

Muramasa's thrusting blade had intercepted the strike, stopping the Seven-Star Sword in its upward arc—  
Just inches from Narumi's neck.

"Stand down, Raidou."

Page 224

"—Kyouji."

"You're in my way."

With their swords locked together, their shadows slowly shifted.

"Saiga will escape. I'm the only one who can take him down."

"—Why do you kill innocent people? Are you just a common prisoner?"

"It's for my goal."

"—Is your goal simply to kill people?"

The clashing blades rang out like temple bells as they sharply separated.

Outside and on the stage, the two combatants faced each other.

Both had their sword tips aimed at their opponent.

"Ah! You still don't get it, kid—Fourteenth Generation!" Kyouji sneered.

"Saiga is gathering spirits. All these guests here? He plans to slaughter them all, turn them into the dead, and then transport them elsewhere. So if they're going to die anyway, it's better to kill them first."

"Your Seven-Star Sword and that Muramasa of yours both hold the power to sever curses. If we cut them down with these blades, their spirits won't wander. They won't be taken by Saiga. His plan will be ruined."

"If people are in danger, I'll just get them out of here."

"Hah! Sure, but using magic alone isn't enough. For this mission, my powers have been sealed. Even as a Devil Summoner, I don't have the luxury of just sparing people. It doesn't matter how many guests I kill."

Page 225

"As long as I don't create wandering spirits, I can disrupt Saiga's plans. He won't be able to collect spirits as planned. He'll be crushed. It's simple, isn't it?"

The two swords flashed through the air.

"But there's an easier way—just evacuate everyone."

The force of their sword clashes created mirage-like distortions in the air above them.

Kyouji spat.

"You really are a damn fool, kid! This whole place is Saiga's barrier. We don't know where the enemy is hiding or where they might appear from. Even if they escape this room, they'll just be killed in the hallways or on the stairs. That would be exactly what Saiga wants."

"That's why it's better to kill them here."

"If you really want to save people, get everyone out of here alive."

Kyouji scowled.

"My top priority is burying Saiga's plan. Anyone who gets in my way—dies."

Their swords clashed, slicing through the air.

Raidou and Kyouji closed the distance in an instant, moving faster than the eye could track.

Two white slashes intersected, sending sparks flying from their clashing blades.

At the moment their swords locked again, Kyouji smirked.

"Goodbye."

The fabric on his arm lit up.

A fire rocket fired from his sleeve, striking Raidou in the chest.

Page 226

Raidou was thrown backward, his body twisting in the air.

Kyouji's knee shot up.

This time, flames erupted from his sleeve.

The black cloak was engulfed in flames, and Raidou was sent flying from the stage.

For a moment, everything went dark.

He was only unconscious for a few seconds—he could tell by his internal clock.

When he came to, he was lying at the edge of the stage.

He shook his head lightly and tried to sit up.

Right in front of his blurred vision, Yoshio knelt beside him, looking worried.

"Narumi-san! Wait, why are you even here?"

Raidou had wondered that ever since he jumped onto the stage.

But between the fight with Kyouji and the chaos, he hadn't had a chance to ask.

"Where there's a case, there's a great detective."  
Narumi smirked.



"As your boss, I should have arrived sooner, Raidou."

"...Sorry."

The venue had fallen silent.

Not a single spirit remained.

The heavy atmosphere that once filled the air had completely disappeared.

"Kyouji—where is he?"

His figure was nowhere to be seen.

"That thug disappeared at some point. Not that I'm complaining."

Page 227

Did he go after Saiga?

Raidou turned to Narumi.

"Are the spirits gone?"

Narumi nodded.

"Ah... Oh, you mean my old man?"

Yeah, when you got blown away, you hit the flames.

The fire must've burned him away."

So that's it...

Since Kyouji's flames were cursed, any lingering spirits touched by them were likely forced to pass on.

The barrier flames surrounding the area had also vanished.

As expected of the Kuzunoha clan's protection stones—they acted as a fireproof ward.

Raidou moved to get up, and something blackened fell from his clothes.

It was a kunai—charred and unusable.

He had prepared it specifically for Alucard, meant to pierce his core.

But now, it was worthless.

He sighed and turned to Yoshio.

Had he met his mother's spirit?

Had he finally realized that she was already dead?

"—What's that?"

Raidou noticed something shining on Yoshio's tuxedo.

"Heh, my own invention." Yoshio grinned.

"I smeared butter on the fabric and sprinkled it with saccharin.  
You know how spirits tend to glow around the edges?  
This tricks them into thinking I'm one of them.  
The Tengu were totally fooled!"  
Page 228

Raidou glanced down from the stage.

Several adults had also coated their clothes with saccharin, just like Yoshio.

One of them, a man with round glasses, spoke up.

"Yoshio-kun, your idea is fantastic.  
I'd love to use it in my next work."

"...And you are?" Raidou asked.

"My name is Edogawa."

A familiar-sounding surname...

Raidou couldn't shake the feeling that he'd heard it somewhere before.

He rose to his feet.

Now might be the best chance to evacuate everyone.

Maybe they could escape through the hole Kyouji made.

But Kyouji was a Devil Summoner.

It was likely only he was able to pass through that way.

If ordinary people tried to follow, they might end up trapped inside.

Raidou tilted his head in thought, then placed a hand on Yoshio's hair.

"Go to the women's first-class waiting room on the second floor.  
Yoshie is there too."

The barrier should still be holding.

It wasn't clear how strong it was,  
but a Kuzunoha barrier couldn't be completely negated by Saiga.  
Page 229

"I'd go," Yoshio said hesitantly,  
"but Raidou-nii, Tae-chan passed out.  
She's not moving."

Raidou turned to Narumi.

"Narumi-san—"

He had planned to ask him to help carry Tae.

But Narumi shook his head.

"Raidou, I think I'll stick around a little longer."

"Why?"

"Call it post-case investigation.  
Just a detective's intuition."

Narumi's gaze lingered on a golden battleship model lying on the stage.

"If we're going to get everyone out, we need to deal with Saiga first."

Raidou turned toward the large double doors.

Almost as if responding to his thoughts—

BANG!

The doors flew open.

A figure in pure white stepped inside.

"—Alucard!"

Raidou drew Muramasa.

Kyouji, now pulling a bucket, halted his steps.

All that remained was snow and silence.

Page 230

It was the large hall in front of the ticket gates.  
On one side, shops lined the walls, and overhead, steel beams crisscrossed the ceiling, which was more than two stories high.

"What the hell?

I thought this was already over since all the wandering spirits from the party venue were swept away at once.

But when I chased after you, it turns out this was just a trap to lure me in?"

At the back of the hall, near the entrance to the dome, Saiga stood, waiting.

His white tuxedo gleamed as he threw his arms wide.

"It's almost complete.

Just a little more, and the Octagonal Demon Gate Barrier will break through the critical point."

"Like hell it will.

Not as long as I'm here!"

"Kyouji, you are far too dangerous.

I've seen enough.  
Even if the barrier is completed, I can't rest easy knowing you're still alive.  
A barrier can seal movement, but it can't fully stop a human's will.  
Though frankly—  
I don't even want to acknowledge you as human."

"Enough with the lectures already."

"This will be the graveyard of Kuzunoha Kyouji."

With a sound like flapping wings, creatures emerged from all directions—  
Above, below, in front, behind, and directly overhead.  
A massive swarm of Kurama Tengu and Gashadokuro had arrived.

"Well, this is boring."

"Still trying to act tough?  
No matter how strong you are, you can only handle attacks from two, maybe three directions at most.  
No one can fight on all fronts at once.  
It's simply impossible.

You only have two arms, and your eyes can only see forward.  
There will always be a blind spot."

The sound of wings grew louder.  
Page 231

By sheer coincidence, Narumi stumbled over the tripod stand of a spotlight.

The stage flooded with light, illuminating the entire area.

"—What's this light?"

"Sunlight?"

Alucard's once-blazing movements slowed drastically.

Raidou, still holding his sword, turned to Narumi.

"If I recall—it's a carbon arc lamp.  
It's supposed to be the closest thing to sunlight."

Raidou turned and fired a bullet at the golden battleship model that had fallen nearby.

Narumi screamed in response.

Ignoring him, Raidou grabbed a shattered piece of the model and inspected it.

It was real gold.

Its reflection was strong.

"—Yoshio, turn the other spotlight on the bat!"

He ordered Yoshio to adjust the lighting.

However, keeping Alucard within the beam's range was difficult.  
But if they could attack him from two angles, his movements would be limited.  
Page 232

Raidou threw the gold fragment into the air.  
He fired several shots, shattering it into golden dust.

Again, Narumi screamed.

"Giih! GIGIGIGIGIGI!"

Raidou repeated the process, throwing gold fragments and shooting them into powder.

A cloud of golden dust swirled in the air.

The fragments clung to Alucard's wings and body as he flew.

As long as he kept flying, he couldn't shake them off.

The gold dust reflected the arc lamp's light,  
forcing him to glow even outside the spotlight's reach.

His movements grew sluggish, making it easier for Narumi and Yoshio to aim.

With a shriek, Alucard's body shrank.

For a vampire, this artificial sunlight might as well be the real thing.

The gold fragments pierced his shrinking skin and fur, burrowing deep.

As he grew smaller, his body turned more golden.

Raidou holstered his gun.

Now fleeing the scene, Alucard had shrunk to the size of an ordinary bat—  
The kind you'd see in a park at sunset.  
Page 233

But his body remained golden.

For now, this was fine.

Raidou thought.

His opponent was immortal.  
There was no way to kill him right now.

If he attacked recklessly, Alucard might break apart into fragments and reform later.

It was better to leave him in this weakened state.

Chasing an immortal enemy would only waste time.

"Da-sha!"

The survivors needed to be evacuated first.

Suddenly—  
Flames burst forth from Kyouji's entire body.

There were no blind spots.

An All-Range Attack.  
Page 234

From his ankles to his torso, flames erupted from every fabric lining his clothes.

A storm of explosions swirled around him.

A giant wave of fire surged, engulfing Kurama Tengu and Gashadokuro alike.

Heat scorched the battlefield, and flashes of lightning-fast attacks tore through his targets.

Everything in his path became like dolls thrown into a washing machine.

Screams and wails mixed with explosions, echoing throughout the hall.

"You said three directions was my limit, huh?"

Kyouji laughed.

A loud, cackling laugh.

"Saiga, is this all?"

You said you had power rivaling Yatagarasu,  
but this is all you've got?

There must be more, right?

Come on, fight me until we're both dried up!"

Dragging his coffin, Kyouji advanced toward the South Dome.

Ahead of him, in front of the white tuxedoed figure,  
two massive pillars came crashing down.  
Page 235

They were huge, twin pillars of stone.

From somewhere within the rubble, Saiga's voice echoed.

"I must commend you.  
That was impressive.

But in your full-range attack, you've surely exhausted your supplies."

Kyouji scoffed.

"Hah. You idiot.

I can kill you with my bare hands."

"Then... can you handle this?"

The two stone pillars began to move.

They were the legs of a Great Tengu,  
easily over ten meters tall.

Raidou lifted his gaze at the thunderous impact,  
his eyes catching a familiar light.

A brilliant but comforting glow.

"Hiho!"

A Jack-o'-Lantern approached from the South Dome.

"Hi-ho! Hi-ho-ho!"

"Hi-hooo!"

"That area is off-limits to demons?  
Saiga must be in the South Dome."

"You did well."

Raidou glanced at the pumpkin-headed demon,  
then pointed behind him.

"—In the North Dome, you'll find Dormarth and Aterui."

Leaving Jack-o'-Lantern behind,  
Raidou rushed toward the South Dome.

Kyouji lifted his coffin from the ground—  
Page 236

He slung it over his shoulder.

"Da-sha."

It was heavy—as expected.

He ripped off the talismans sealing it shut.

"What the hell is a 'Great Tengu'?"

You idiot."

A shockwave exploded outward,  
darkness flooding the hall.

The bridge he had been dragging—

It wasn't a bridge at all.

It was a colossal weapon.

"—GOMORRAH!"

Page 236

Kyouji had summoned Gomorrah, a demon legend says once destroyed an ancient city.

From beneath the table, a hand shot out silently.

With lightning speed, faster than a soaring swallow, the hand grabbed a bat hidden among the wine bottles.

"I did it... I got him!"

Holding Alucard in his grasp, Narumi danced in excitement.

Though he had initially evacuated, he snuck back into the party venue—just to get his hands on this golden prize.

"After all, it's pure gold."

That idiot Raidou went and shattered the whole thing into pieces.  
Such a waste.

"But if I gather enough gold dust..."

Narumi slammed the struggling Alucard onto the table.

"Stop squirming. I'm not your enemy. I don't care if you're a demon or whatever—I don't even want to hurt you.

In fact, I'm doing you a favor.

This gold stuck to you? Must be annoying, right?  
I'll scrape it off for you."

He scratched at the skin with his fingernail.

Only a tiny bit of mist flaked off.

But... the color didn't change at all.

Page 237

Which meant—he couldn't remove the gold.

"Huh?"

Narumi frowned.

"I thought I could just scrape it off."



He picked up a toothpick from the table.

The bat wriggled violently.

"Stay still. If you struggle, you might hurt yourself."

Narumi licked the tip of the toothpick and began to scrape it along Alucard's skin.

A tiny speck of gold flaked off.

"Alright! This method works!"

Alucard thrashed harder.

Narumi pressed down more firmly.

"Hold still, damn it!

Come on, you're a demon, right? A little poke won't kill you."

"Hey, stop struggling! You're only making it worse for yourself."

"I—oh. Whoops. That went in deeper than I meant."

He had accidentally stabbed the toothpick straight into Alucard's chest.

For a moment—

The bat convulsed.

Then, it crumbled into dust.

Page 238

The gold dust scattered, vanishing into the air.

Narumi frantically reached out, but—

There was no way to recover it.

"...Wha... What the...?"

This was Alucard—the demon summoned by Vlad III, the very inspiration for Dracula.

Neither the previous Raidou Kuzunoha nor the current Fourteenth Generation had been able to kill him.

But now...

The immortal vampire had been accidentally slain by Narumi, the detective—

Because of a wooden toothpick stabbed straight into his heart.

Page 239

Meanwhile, at the entrance to the South Dome, Raidou gazed at the demon Kyouji had summoned.

It was black.

Its shape was vaguely humanoid, but its back bristled with appendages.

It had coarse fur, and its limbs ended in split claws.

It was at least four times larger than Aterui.  
And if you counted its limbs—it was twice as large again.

"Yo, Raidou."

Kyouji stood behind Gomorrah, chewing on the remains of a Great Tengu.

"When I'm done here, I'm gonna hunt down every last survivor.  
So don't get in my way."

"Then I'll just evacuate the people."

"You still don't get it, huh?"

Kyouji let out a sigh.

"Defeating Saiga is all that matters."

"You should do it, then."

"Idiot! You think I'm not trying?!"

If I take too long killing Saiga, he'll have gathered all the spirits by then.

That's why I said—we have to make sure he can't."

Raidou drew Muramasa.

Page 240

"What the hell are you planning?"

"Gomorrah!"

"I'm stopping you."

"Useless. You already lost once.  
And this time, I won't hold back."

Raidou dashed forward, turning into a blur of wind.

A massive clawed limb swung down to crush him.

"I told you—I won't hold back!"

The ground exploded like fireworks as the massive limb struck.

Raidou was already airborne.

Kyouji lunged after him.

"Don't screw with me!"

Raidou thrust his Seven-Star Sword upward.

Blades clashed, sending sparks flying like a festival of light.

Then, suddenly—Raidou turned and ran.

Page 241

Kyouji chased after him.

Raidou ran straight into the South Dome.

"What the hell are you doing?"

Instead of answering—

Raidou dropped his sword.

"Not using a blade?"

"You idiot. Do you even know what 'idiot' means?  
It means saying stupid things."

"You think you can beat me without a sword?"

Kyouji raised his blade.

With a single swing, the force shattered the tiled floor.

"So, this is the famous Fourteenth Generation?  
Pathetic."

Kyouji threw his Seven-Star Sword to the ground.

"Fine. You wanna brawl?  
Then come on—fight me."

"I never said I was fighting bare-handed."

Raidou, still in his student uniform, raised—

A Colt Lightning revolver.

Page 242

"What?!"

Before Kyouji could finish his sentence—

Raidou pulled the trigger.

The bullet tore through Kyouji's right hand, blasting it off.

"Y-you... b-bastard...!"

The chamber rotated.

Another bullet fired.

Kyouji's temple split open, blood and bone bursting onto the floor.

His skull was cracked wide open.

The hammer of the revolver clicked back—

Then, a voice called out from the side.

"Oi, oi. The head might be a bit much, don't you think?"

"Did I say that?"

"You did."

It was Gouto, peering into the dome.

"Wouldn't it be smarter to leave his brain a little intact?"

"But if I shoot the head, at least he won't be able to think of stupid ideas anymore."

"Even so... he is still your clan brother."

"Fine. Then I'll just aim for his arm instead."

Page 243

Kyouji's blown-off elbow was still smoking.

From above, something massive descended.

"Saiga."

Raidou kicked off the wall.

A white tuxedo was visible on the third-floor balcony.

The brick wall had enough gaps to serve as footholds.

With ease, he climbed to the second floor.

Nothing fell after him.

He leaped to the third floor.

But—

A white-gloved hand shot out.

Saiga's arm wrapped around his neck.

Raidou was dangling off the ledge, held by the throat.

He reached for his gun, but—

Saiga's other hand fired a blast,  
knocking his gun belt and Muramasa to the first-floor ground.  
Page 244

"Raidou. The Fourteenth Generation."

"Saiga."

Raidou tried to fire, but—

Saiga tightened his grip.

"I was so close...  
Just a little more, and the Octagonal Demon Gate Barrier would have covered all of Tokyo."

His arms were pinned.

"Such a shame."

The barrier's pull was growing stronger.

Raidou's coat fluttered as the void swallowed him whole.

Page 244

"What is coming?"

"No one believed it."

A brief silence filled the air before Saiga finally spoke, his brow deeply furrowed.

"—?"

"—That is why...

It is a shame."

"The battleship will rise, and it will trample upon the Imperial Capital."

"Those who possess supernatural power will bring it forth."

"Where are these people?"

Saiga let out a bitter laugh.

"Even I could not see that far."

A forceful impact suddenly pierced Raidou's abdomen.

"I wanted to claim the Imperial Capital for myself."

His uniform tore open, fabric ripping apart and flying into the dome.

From Raidou's exposed abdomen, a protective talisman peeked out.

"That is... from Honganji?"

For a moment, the strength in Saiga's arm faltered.

"The ritual... it was just..."

Raidou seized the opportunity.

With one swift motion, he pulled up his leg and kicked off the railing.

Saiga, dressed in his white tuxedo, lost his balance.

His body tilted, and in an instant—

Both he and Raidou plunged downward together, falling into the dome below.

"...Sorry. I couldn't fulfill the request."

Raidou spoke to Yoshio.

It was nearing midnight in Tokyo.

The people who had escaped would probably never believe that something like this had just happened here.

"I wanted to see my mom, even if she was a ghost.  
I wanted her to stay with me."

Yoshio's voice was quiet.

"She's there."

"Look behind you."

"...Where?"

"What are you talking about? There's no one there."

"And yet... she's behind you again now."

"Stop messing with me!"

"She's always behind you, watching over you.  
She's just never in front of you."

As they walked, the small boy kept glancing over his shoulder.

"H-Hey, if I keep doing this, I won't be able to walk straight!"

"Then face forward when you walk."

Page 249

Raidou spoke quietly.

"That's just... common sense."

"If you want to walk straight, always look ahead."

"W-What are you even saying?

Of course, you have to look forward to walk straight!"

"Then do it."

A train whistle echoed from the station platform.

"See? Just look ahead and walk."

Yoshio stood in the South Dome, looking at Raidou.

"You gotta keep your eyes forward, or you won't be able to walk straight."

Watching the young siblings, Gouto let out a soft sigh.

"Saiga... in the end, he saved you, didn't he?"

He had fallen along with Raidou into the dome,  
and now, the man in the white tuxedo lay beneath the detective's coat, unmoving.

Raidou lifted his arm.

The wounds he had sustained were light—  
at most, it seemed they were only surface-level injuries.

"Kyouji disappeared at some point."

"...That guy will be back."

Page 250

Raidou muttered, his voice flat.

Before long, the newspaper serial "The Vampire" was published.

It introduced a new character—a boy detective.

His name? Kobayashi Yoshio.

Meanwhile, in the city, the manga "Golden Bat", based on a story by Nagayasu Takeo, had become popular.

It was an unusual work, featuring a golden-colored bat-human as the protagonist.

Then came the Tokyo Air Raids.

The octagonal roof of the dome was engulfed in flames.

The city suffered a catastrophic loss—

Over 100,000 people perished.

More than 300,000 homes were destroyed.

Over one-third of the Imperial Capital was reduced to ashes.

Page 251

Devil Summoner: Kusunoha Raidou vs. The Messenger of the Dead

The End

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Mizuki Lost Mind

Author: ???

Illustrations: Tsuchiyama Niu / Kaburagi Norifumi

"The light that rains down upon this world..."

2002-2004 F&G-FO01 FANDO.CO.JP KID

Between mystery and dreams, between reality and memory—

The protagonist, Tōya Nōtō, awakens with lost memories.

Supporting him as he cowers in fear is a maid, Kotonomiya Yuki, who takes care of him as if offering herself.



However, as he lives his gentle life with Yuki, doubts about his past begin creeping in, tormenting him.

A highly popular adventure game (ADV) makes its long-awaited novelization for consoles!  
Famiitsu Bunko

Published by Enterbrain  
Hayarigami (Occult Police Files)

Author: Takashi Yamashita & Others  
Illustrations: Sugawara & Others

"Urban legends—horrors lurking just within reach."

A mysterious incident linked to folklore passed down in the Tohoku region is revealed.

Written by the official scenario writers, this book contains three famous urban legend cases.

A ritual that elementary school students began out of curiosity soon uncovers a shocking truth hidden behind its eerie facade.

Nippon Ichi Software presents this unique horror adventure game as an anthology novel!  
Tales of the Abyss: Crimson Melodies (Volumes 1-3)

Author: Sara Yajima  
Illustrations: Atsuko Nakajima

"The story of the promise between Luke and Asch!"

Kidnapped and having lost all his memories, Luke spends seven years in isolation.

Then, he meets Tear, a girl targeting his swordsmanship master, Van.

This encounter forces him to embark on a journey to discover the meaning of his existence...

A novelization of the popular RPG, told from the perspectives of Luke and Asch across three volumes!  
Final Fantasy XI Online: Daughters of Altana 2

Author: Miyabi Hasegawa  
Illustrations: Eiji Kaneda

"We've returned to Altana!"

After getting tangled up in the wrong side of a merchant's business, the thief duo Pasha and Neri find themselves on the run all the way to China.

But they can't just keep running forever—so with their newfound allies, they make their way back to Altana!

The second volume of this exciting series arrives!  
Persona 4: Kirino Amnesia

Author: Ken'ichi Fujiwara  
Illustrations: Shigenori Soejima

"I don't want to lose another senpai..."

To uncover the truth behind the incident, the Special Investigation Team members—Yosuke Hanamura, Chie Satonaka, and Yukiko Amagi—venture into the fog-covered realm.

There, they encounter a woman who was supposed to be dead...  
Boogey Toumon

Author: Norifumi Kaburagi

A writer specializing in action, science fiction, and novelizations.

Notable works include:

- "Mizuki Lost Mind: The Light That Rains Down Upon This World" (Famitsu Bunko)
- "Hau Hau" (SoftBank Creative)
- "Sky Girls" (Konami Digital Entertainment)
- "Tomodachi / The Little Braves of Gamera" (Enterbrain)

Kazuma Kaneko

The legendary "Demon Painter", known for shaping the Megami Tensei series, including:

- Shin Megami Tensei
- Persona
- Devil Summoner

He was responsible for story concepts and world-building across Atlus's MegaTen franchise.

He also contributed character and demon designs for other games, such as:

- Devil May Cry 3 (Capcom)
- Super Robot Wars Alpha 3 (Banpresto)

Additionally, he has published multiple artbooks featuring his distinct demon artwork.

Maken X After

Author: Norifumi Kaburagi (Boogey Toumon)

Illustrations: (Possibly Kazuma Kaneko or another Atlus-affiliated artist)

"A future where the mind is no longer your own..."

A world dominated by the Psi Order, where thoughts can be controlled, rewritten, or erased.

A young girl, Kay Murasame, awakens to a power that allows her to link minds with others. But in this age of psychic warfare, where truth and lies blur, she must wield the Maken, a demonic sentient weapon, to carve her own destiny.

The afterstory to Atlus' legendary Dreamcast action game, now in novel form!  
Famitsu Bunko

Published by Enterbrain

## Kogetsu Kuzunoha vs. The Red Star

Author: Runnosuke Enryū ( )

Illustrations: Soryan Hakki ( )

First Edition: July 23, 2009

"A body torn apart, a soul divided, a name cursed by fate..."

1963, Karakucho. The streets of Tokyo are home to ghosts, demons, and the unburied past.

The heir to the Kuzunoha name has fallen.

Kogetsu Shinaya—once a rising Devil Summoner—has been captured, drowned, and left for dead. But instead of death, he finds himself split in two, an impossible existence torn between Kogetsu and Kogetsu.

Now hunted by the Masked Man, pursued by those who would claim his power, and shadowed by the specter of Royta—the unrelenting Soviet machine— Kogetsu must reclaim his fate before his soul is devoured forever.

A tale of identity, fate, and supernatural warfare, drawn from the darkest depths of the Megami Tensei underworld.

The first volume of this groundbreaking occult thriller!

Famitsu Bunko

Published by Enterbrain, 2009