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Seven Nights - Volume 01 Chapter 00-04 Part 1

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Novel Illustrations

These are the novel illustrations of 7 Nights



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Prologue

Prologue[[edit](#)]

FSSSSH HH SSSHHHHH INNNGGGGGG

In the darkness, the white-blue shining tip of the blade slashed through the monster, burning away its outer shell.

GRRAAAAH! SPLORGH HH

The monster moaned, but only for an instant. It swung its serrated, scythe-shaped claw towards us at full speed!

“Heh...”

I quickly dodged the attack. The claw slashed through the air, crushing the asphalt and creating a huge hole in the ground.

I am tired... but I make sure not to show it. I keep my distance from the monster and my eyes focused on the prey. Inside my hand is a metallic cylinder-shaped handle, and coming out of it is a shining blade, creating rays of blue and white light.

“GIII... GIIGIGIII!!!”

I point my ‘Laser Blade’ at the monster who is taking its time pulling its claw out of the crushed asphalt. Its head resembles an upside-down triangle, with multiple eyes on each side of its face. It glared at me. The wound I gave it must have made it angrier, as it was gritting its jaws so hard that I could hear it clearly. The monster turned its disgusting body to face me, its 4 legs coming out of its torso allowing it to stand up.

Illuminated by the lights of the neon signs, this monster, if you describe it as a normal insect, is closest to a praying mantis. Although, calling it a ‘praying mantis’ when it’s over 3 meters tall is a bit of a stretch.

“A small praying mantis is scary enough, but this isn’t fair!”

I remember watching the scene of a praying mantis feast when I was a kid. Just

like how the grasshopper got devoured, will I have my body ripped apart piece by piece by this monster? You are kidding me! This has got to be a joke!

“__GI!!!”

Suddenly the monster lunged forward! The gigantic figure covered the distance within seconds. It was fast! Even if I back away, it will still catch up to me. All I can do is stay and fight... Can I do it?!

“GIGUIII~!!!”

The monster jumped with no wasteful movements and lashed out at me with its deadly claws! I managed to avoid a direct hit, but there was a burning pain in my left shoulder. The serrated, scythe-like claws must have ripped into my flesh. No matter! Without hesitation, I kicked off the ground and launched myself straight at the monster. Gripping my Laser Blade tightly...

“Hiyaaaah!!!”

I stabbed the monster in it's torso, landing a deadly blow!

“Gi...Giyuuuuu!”

The monster let out an ear-splitting screech. I thrust the shining blade deeper into its chest cavity. The dying noises were just as bad as the smell that came from its burning insides.

“a...Haa... haa... haa...”

It seems this shall be my victory. Now to make this screeching to stop. I pushed the blade in up to the hilt.

“Ga!”

As soon as the monster noticed the drop in my guard, it quickly got its claw hooked in the back of my leg.

“Arghh!”

With the claw firmly embedded, it gave a strong jerk. Losing grip of the sword, I started to plummet towards the ground. Unfortunately for me, the monster's other claw was waiting for me! I was suddenly impaled and lifted into the air. I already stabbed it! I stabbed its chest already with my own two hands! Why is it

“Giuuuuuuuuuu!”

The monster screeches. The half-closed eyelids have now completely opened up, and if I look at it even with my blurred sight, I see a praying mantis jumping and screaming and rolling around like crazy. The stomach area and below had been blown off.

I think ‘back-up’ has finally arrived. I have been released by the monster, and had been dropped to the ground.

“Guh... Cough...! Heh...”

Then something pops in my head. I swallow all the blood whirling in my mouth, stretch my hand to reach, and grab the toy blade.

Despite my shaking body, I stand up, but I’m wobbling unbalanced. Then I focus my mind onto the ‘toy blade’, and the plastic object turns into a sharp metallic blade. The object starts to shine blue and white. This isn’t enough! I must put in more energy!

“Wuoooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!”

I focus even more. I use all my willpower and sharpen my consciousness. The lighting blade shines stronger, and starts to become gold. All the power causes the air around me to mix in and creates many explosive noises!

The praying mantis, having half its body blown off, is still crawling around using its scythe-like arms and is trying to get up. It did well for an insect, I can say I’m impressed. But...

“It’s over now!”

I dived to the praying mantis! But that moment I felt the biggest pain come back right into my entire body... But, that doesn’t matter! As if drawing a semicircle, I swing down my blade right in front of me...

“Gi...”

The praying mantis head flies off! My blade keeps cutting through and chops its arms off. The monster's body, without a base, drops to the ground. I, so exhausted myself, fall to the ground also.

“I... I beat it...”

I was panting really hard, panting really fast without a break. The dry ground absorbs all of the blood streaming out of my body. It's okay that I defeated that monster, but at this rate, I'm gonna die... Well, at least it's a lot better than being eaten alive by a praying mantis...

"Sakuya!!!"

My mind, which was floating away, quickly came back because of that loud voice calling me.

"Sakuya! Are you alright? Sakuya!" A girl in school uniform speaks to me. This girl, who is usually aggressive, is unusually caring towards me. She is leaning over me. In the girl's hand is a Hand Gun. That is what saved my life.

"! You have a terrible wound..."

The girl, not worrying about the blood staining her clothes, puts her gun on the ground and leans over my head.

"Akeno..."

My voice which mumbled the girl's voice was a lot worse than I thought.

"Thanks for that. You saved my life. Are you okay yourself, Akeno? Have you received any wounds?"

"You should worry about yourself, not me! Sakuya... What should we do? This terrible wound..."

"It's okay, this is just a dream, just a nightmare... I won't die, probably..."

"'Probably' isn't good enough! If you die, who's going to protect me!?"

She frowns at me. I'm glad, because it's just like Akeno to add extra irrelevant words into everything she says. Even if her voice is trembling and tears are running down her eyes.

"W... Why are you smiling? I'm seriously worried about you!"

"I know... I am glad that you're worried about me, but..."

"But... What?"

"You're usually tsun-tsun (snobbish) so... Your worried face is cute... Kinda..."

“Wha-”

Akeno looked surprised, and maybe in another situation she would've blushed... I think I just did a confusing thing.

“You... You idiot! Even if you compliment me like that I'm not happy! You have a bad personality!”

“May... Arghh*cough*!”

“Sa-Sakuya!?”

I coughed blood out again. I've lost so much blood already... There's still more!? I think I've lost too much... Thanks to that I don't have any blood left in the edges of my body... So I don't feel anything on my fingers and even my head... It feels weird... If I realize the pain has gone too...

“Just wait a sec... I'll give you treatment!”

“Yes... Please...”

I'm becoming tired and sleepy, I can't keep my eyes open and I'm getting so tired it's hard for me to even talk.

“Let... Let me rest... o... ra...”

“No! You can't sleep! Open your eyes! Please!”

Akeno's voice starts to fade away. I can tell she's shaking my body. But... Give me a break... I'm so tired... I really need to sleep... It... It feels really good like this...

“G...Night...Ake...o...”

I just managed to say that sentence, and then I rested my body into a deep, deep sleep.

Part 01

Chapter 1 - The woman warrior dances in the night - Part 1[[edit](#)]

My name is Sakuya Hoshi

I go to Suijou Academy

I'm in high school, from the 1E group, and my student class number is 33.

I'm just a normal high-schooler.

Or rather, I think I should say I 'was' normal. These past few days, I've been involved in some rather strange events.

It started... yes, it started 3 days ago---

“.....?”

When I realized it, it was nighttime and I was standing in the middle of a park.

“W... Wha?”

I looked around, and all I saw was playground stuff such as swings and slides. I was standing in the middle of this park, wearing my school uniform.

“What... What's this all about?”

I was supposed to be in my room, on my bed, wearing a T-shirt and underpants. That's what I last remember. Maybe someone brought me here? Wait... If I'm standing up right now, that would mean someone hypnotized me? If it wasn't that...

“Did I sleep walk all the way here...?”

Mumbling, I shook off each possibility of what happened one after another... I don't understand the current situation at all. It's useless to think about how I came here.

I put my hand in my pocket... And, it was there, my mobile phone. I took it out, unfolded it, and checked the time. It said 2:14am. Today is Monday, the 25th of

June.

“It’s the time where even the plants sleep...”

Most places will probably be closed by now. The only places open would probably be the Gyuudon-shop, the convenience store, and the police station. So it’s not very likely for anyone to have spotted a sleep-walker at this kind of time.

“So I wonder, how far away has this sleep-walker walked?”

I don’t think that this place is too far away from home... Besides, I kind of think I’ve been here before.

“It was over here? Yeah I remember now.”

Just as I thought, there was a map of this area on the sign post. This small park does not have any light-posts, so I use my mobile phone to light up the map and the first thing which got to me was the park's name. Which was...

“Shiraishi city park... Shiraishi!?”

I shouted it out. This is crazy! Why!? How!?

I can’t help but question my current situation over and over again. The city I’m in at the moment is the neighboring city of my city... I was currently a 1 hour walk away from my place.

For me, Shiraishi City is a city filled with memories. When I was young, I lived in this city, and I played in that park. But, when I was in middle school, I moved houses and since then, I haven’t even visited this city once.

If the situation was different, I probably would’ve been glad I came here. But, unfortunately I am dreadfully worried. I just want to hurry up and go home.

I remember this area vaguely... But still I know how to get back home. My house is located in Naobi City, which is to the north of Shiraishi City, so I must advance north and enter the shopping district, then I must enter the station and go through the south exit to the north exit, pass through Suijou Academy and arrive home. The average time that would take is 1 hour, but after trying it for real, I disagree.

“Damn it... Why on earth did I... go to such a far place?”

Around this area, everyone's house lights were turned off, and it was so quiet it was actually scary. The outside lights were strangely all off, and the moonlight was the biggest help of all. This place is just like a ghost town. Since this is the case, I would be more than happy to hear the noise of a truck or some other loud noise. Also, I really want a taxi. I wonder if I'll find one once I exit the station.

"Oh..."

Where I walk, I see a building with light. It's the convenience store! The banner which shines green and white says "Cran Mart".

"I wonder why... I'm just so happy!!!"

Inside the store would be really cool, with the air conditioner working well and, while listening to the radio, I would stand and read some magazines. And then I'll grab an ice-lolly and bring it to the nighttime shop-keeper who has a blunt looking face, give him the money, receive the change, and have a great time. I've thought of an awesome plan indeed!

I happily open the door-

"Wha?"

I was standing at the door, the air conditioner was on. But, there was no radio, and there was no shop-keeper.

"Hello? Is anybody here?"

Maybe the shop-keeper thought no one was going to come at this time of day and decided to read manga over around the corner? Or maybe he's sorting out the products around the corner? Either way it's strange... If I were a bad person, I could've swiped a couple of things and went off.

Either way, there's no reply.

"Helloooooo~!?"

I shout out into the room behind the cash register, still no reply. Is he ditching his job by taking a nap?

"Hello? Please reply back! Your lack of security is over the limits!"

I walk in and check inside the room.

“Not there.”

The room had no one in it, on the desk was some magazines, and the computer was left on. There were many boxes filled with products which had passed the use-by date...

“Wait a minute... Is this a joke?”

Why doesn't anyone answer? Why isn't anyone here?!

“Hello!? Hello!? Anyone here!?”

I shouted from the top of my lungs. Even then, there's still no reply. All I can hear is the sound of the computer and the fridge buzzing. That noise makes me lose my temper even more.

“Damn... Damn it!!!”

I can't stand it anymore, so I dash out of the store and shout.

“ANYBODY HERE?!!!”

I shouted as hard as I can. But even that gets sucked away by the night's darkness. There's no change and, again, it's just silence. What... This is as if... This is as if I'm the only one left in the world!!! What the hell!?

“Somebody! Answer me!!!”

Isn't there... Isn't there anyone? I need a way to confirm that I'm not the only human being here... That's it! Mobile phone! I take my phone out of my pocket, who should I call? Home? No, calling the police is the quickest solution, right? I try to call 110 and I was so freaked out I even forgot to breathe.

2:14am.

All of my previous thoughts just floated out of my head in an instant. I just stare at the time with no expression. The seconds tick away, “56... 57... 58... 59... 0”, but, it's only the seconds which move, and the minutes don't change at all. It stays as 2:14am. Is this even possible? Is it some kind of trick? Someone's trying to scare me? I'm too confused. This situation I'm in-

“.....!?”

A loud scream wiped away all my panicking thoughts. There's someone else

besides me!

“Kyaaa~!!!”

It's a voice of a girl. Even though I'm filled with joy, now's not the right time to be happy. It's clearly a voice calling for someone's help! I run towards where the voice came from. Is it a molester or something? Even if this weren't a ghost town, it's certain that there are no people here. I have to help her!

“! Are they over there!?”

I hear someone's footsteps, getting further away from me.

“Hey, wait!”

I can't save anyone if they keep moving. Then for a moment, in the corner of my eyes, I see a figure of a girl who disappeared around the corner of the alley.

“Wait...!”

I increase my speed. I've finally found 'someone' here besides me. I must not lose sight of her. I dash into the alley and—

BANG!!!

All of a sudden something hit me, and I see stars. The dull shock I received has gone all over my body, I'm dizzy and I fall over and land on my butt.

“Wha... What?”

Why am I... Why am I sitting down...? I can't think about it properly. My vision is blurry and I am dizzy. Trying to fix that, I shake my head and, *KIIN!* -I receive a huge headache and I curl my body up. Right next to me... I hear footsteps. Is... someone there?

“.....”

I lift my head up. In my blurred vision what I saw was... a girl. She was a cute girl, who is probably the same age as me. The uniform she's wearing is something I am very familiar with.

“Owww...!”

The headache came back, and I dropped my head down again. Then while falling down, what came in my sight was a wooden bat. The bat slowly lifts up,

and my eyes follow it back up. My eyes caught the girl's eyes. The girl was staring at me, and in those eyes I saw fear. She was breathing hard. Was it because she ran? Was it because she fears me? Or is she worrying about what she's about to do next?

"...u..."

What the hell is she doing? Why is she glaring at me like that? The thoughts confuse my mind. But, because I was smashed before, my tongue isn't moving properly. The words don't come out of my mouth. My confused body just won't order my mouth to speak.

"haa...haaa...ha...!!!"

The girls pants even harder. The bat she lifted up, is being swung straight down towards my head! Shit!!!

"Shi-"



"ARGHHHHHHH!"

While shouting so, so hard that my throat could've exploded, I wake right up.

"Meooooooooow!"

Right next to me on my bed, my cat Miiko screams and runs out of my room.

"Whohhh, oohhh this place is..."

I don't even need to confirm it, it's my room, in my home, in my city. It's not in Shiraishi City, nor is it nighttime... The sunlight coming out from the gaps of my curtain confirms that the sun has already risen.

"Wha... Dre... Dream?"

My heart is beating really quickly. Sweat has covered my entire body. Was this because of that dream, or was it because it's just a hot day?

"Tha... That was a dream, right?"

I can't help but question myself. It was that much of a realistic dream. I remember it perfectly. The nighttime town, with no sign of people, the footsteps... and even... the massive pain I got from the girl who smashed me in the head...

“.....”

I carefully touch my head with my hands... With worried thoughts, I slowly rub my hands around... But my head does not have a bruise, nor is it damaged in any way... My hand does not get covered in blood and the pain is not there anymore.

Part 02

Chapter 1 - The woman warrior dances in the night - Part 2[[edit](#)]

“-yeah, that’s basically what happened in my dream last night... Even now, I kinda think that it might’ve been ‘real’. It seemed so damn realistic...”

Teru-san, who was listening to me talk, seemed pretty confused...

On my way to school this morning, I passed by my senpai and friend, ‘Teruhiko Hiruma’ (nickname: Teru-san), so I started talking to him about the dream last night. To me, it was a topic that was so extraordinary, yet when I try to put it into words, it’s hard to explain properly... So it ended up making no sense and becoming a very boring topic, but even then, Teru-san listens to me, watching me with his sleepy eyes, hiding behind his glasses.

“Hmm, that’s sure an interesting story.”

Then, after a minute of silence, he said it as if he remembered just then.

“...Yeah, that’s interesting, especially how it actually... ‘Hurt’ you.”

While scratching his messed up hair, he continues mumbling.

“It’s interesting how it ‘hurt’...?”

When I asked the question, he says “for example...” and stretches his arm towards my face!

“Owowowow!!! Stop!”

Then he suddenly pulled my cheek!

“It hurts! What are you doing!?”

I quickly back away and glare at Teru-san. He doesn’t seem sorry and he just said,

“It hurts, it’s not a dream.”

“...Yes?”

“It hurts, it’s not a dream. Haven’t you ever heard of that quote?”

“I have... In manga and dramas... What about it?”

“It’s a pretty old quote now... But what the quote says is true.”

“Um... And?”

“So, in dreams, there’s no pain.”

While saying that Teru-san starts walking.

“Inside a dream, people can ‘hear’ and ‘see’. Those are the two main senses you use in a dream. Other than those, when you touch something, you use ‘feeling’, and when you eat something you use ‘tasting’ and ‘smelling’.”

“Yeah... You’re right... I do feel a lot of different things when I need to take a piss in a dream...”

“The way you feel things is different for everyone. It depends on each person and what is happening. But ‘pain’ is a part of ‘touch’, and in most cases you’re not supposed to feel it...”

“Yeah... You’re right, because I’ve never really had a dream before which ‘hurt’ in the past...” When I think about it, I kind of feel special. The creepy experience I had ends up being a unique experience, which is strange... That’s pretty unfair...

“Also it’s interesting about the time... A watch came out in your dream, and time inside a dream flows with your own thoughts, so it doesn’t count each second and each minute. Maybe the reason the time stayed the same was because of that?”

“That makes sense...”

While I was being impressed with Teru-san, we reach the school gate. All of a sudden, I realize that there were many other students walking around us.

Private School Suijou Academy, the school I go to, is the biggest school in the city.

There’s a medium school and a high school, and the corresponding uniforms have small differences. I in high school first year, while Teru-san is in the second.

“Also Hoshi-kun, was the girl you met in the dream truly someone you don’t know? For example, a relative, classmate, or even an idol you like?”

“Well, if she was an idol, she was closest to, umm Yun Yuzuki?”

“...Yuzuki... Who?”

“Yun Yuzuki. She’s a recently popular pinup girl.”

She’s even on TV a lot recently, Teru-san’s knowledge is really one sided...”

“She was similar but definitely not the same person. She definitely was someone I don’t know. Why do you want to know anyway?”

“That’s pretty interesting... If you say it simply, dreams are there to tidy up your mind. And the ingredients used to create dreams are your own memories or an over exaggerated imagination of your own. So it’s actually highly likely for the girl to be someone you already know.”

“Is that... so...”

I think about it over again. That girl was... oh yeah, the uniform she was in was the ‘middle school’s uniform. She had twin tails and... Yeah, she looks just like the girl passing through the school gate...

“WHA-”

“What?”

I quickly swallow the ‘T’ back in.

“It’s that girl!!! It’s that girl!!! She came out in my dream!!!”

“Hmm? The one with the twin tails?”

I don’t know what he means by ‘twin tails’ but, it’s that girl!!! I leave Teru-san and dash at full speed!

“Hey...!”

My voice was a lot louder than I wanted. The girl and her friend walking next to her got freaked out and turned around and looked at me with puzzled faces.

I gazed the girl. The uniform, the hair, it’s exactly the same. She has the cute and young face. Even though, this is definitely the first time I’ve seen her in real

life. I've never spoken, seen, or heard of her before.

"...Excuse me, but what do you want?"

Because I was staring at the girl, her eyes changed into a mean look.

"Sorry for suddenly calling you back. But can I have a talk with you?"

"What do you want to talk about with me?"

"Umm... I don't know what to say, it's very hard to explain..."

Shit. I called her back but, how should I put it out? -"We met last night in a dream, didn't we." - isn't gonna work. -"Do you know me?" - What kind of idiot am I? -"Haven't we met before?" - I'm not asking her out!!!

"....."

The girl gives me an annoyed stare, and the girl next to her seems excited. I think she's misunderstanding what I'm thinking... She probably is thinking that I'm gonna ask this girl out or something... Oh man I must look like an idiot.

At the rate this is going, nothing's gonna move on. It's just giving them less trust for me by the second.

Stop thinking! Just do what you want to say! I'll say it right now!

-

-

-

"Haven't we met before?"

".....What?"

Oh shit I said the wrong thing!!!~

"Do you know me?"

"No... I don't know you..."

Thought so... I don't know you either! Nooo that's not what I wanted to say!!!

“We met last night in a dream, didn’t we.”

“... uh!?”

The girl had a surprised look.

“...huh?”

I thought for sure that next thing she would do was to shout at me. Her emotion was stoned, so I didn’t know what to do. Her wide opened eyes, stare at me with surprise.

“...that’s...bullsh*t...”

By her reaction, is it that she also remembers me from the dream? Are you seriously saying that we actually both remember the dream?

My heart pounds faster and faster. Each pound makes me remember the pain I had from being smashed in the head.

“Is it really you...? The one who tried to kill me in the alleyway...”

I took a step closer to her. The girl looked freaked out and suddenly-

“No! Stay away!”

And pushed me with all her might.

“Oh, ohhh, ahhh!”

I fall back and lose balance, and my hands which are wobbling around,

“Wha-?”

Grabbed the girls wrist.

“Wha, wait, kyaaaa!”

The girl couldn’t shake me off, nor push me away, and just came down with me.

“-uh...!” I fell on the ground and hit my back. I managed to not hit my head my head, but now the girl falls down towards me!

I catch her with my arms, and she was a lot lighter than I thought. She proved to be just as elegant as she looks.

“.....”

She was soft and elegant. I felt that as our bodies stacked together. The girl's hair, which was moving across my face, had a great smell.



“Ou...Ouchh...”

“Are...Are you alright?”

“Uh... Sorry! I'll get off right away...”

The girl quickly tries to get up, and I try to help out by holding her and-

“.....”

“.....”

We both froze.

She is in a horseback riding position above my waist. And my hand is touching her-The hand which tried to hold her up is on the girl's breast. The soft lump touching my palm softly bounces a bit with the squishy feeling. Our faces are close together, and if I let go I have the feeling that our lips are going to have contact, so we stared at each other for awhile. People around us were saying unwanted words as they walked past.

In the insecure feeling silence, the girl's face goes all red, and she started shaking.

“You...Freak...”

“C... Calm down, this was an accident. It wasn't on purpose, you know that

too, right?!”

“You pervert! You freak!”

She flattened her hand and, with a nice, soothing sound, I was slapped.

And I saw fireworks...

Part 03

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 1 - The woman warrior dances in the night - Part 3[[edit](#)]

I rushed for my classroom at the first-year corridors of the high school building. I usually still have time when I arrive every morning, but I lost it this time as I dusted myself off at the shoe racks.

"Good morning..."

Passing through the classroom door, it's 8:25 as I looked at the wall clock, 5 minutes till HR period. Most of the students are already inside, amusing themselves with morning talk.

"Yo, Hoshi! Got all dirtied up, *ne*?"

"Yup, got up late and had to run..."

With a vague smile, I replied to my friend's back carelessly as I hurried to my seat, breathed a sigh of relief, and slumped myself into the desk. My backside still throbbed from the pain, my face red from that slap. What a messy morning.

After that, Teru-san interfered and the incident was settled. After the girl thoroughly scowled at me, she left with her shoulders squared. I looked at the swinging twin ponytails at her back as I massaged my swollen face.

Due to the accident at the school gate, I was the center of attention for many students. Someone seen in that acquaintance would probably burst flames from his head and burn to death --

"Sa-kun!"

A sweet girl's voice knocked at the back of my downed head.

Raising my head, in front of my raised eyes is a sweet smile. Kure Nazumu. My

classmate since 3rd year middle school, she's still my closest classmate among the girls.

I've got it; right now she's all cheery.

"... morning, Nazumu"

No way -- As a wary me replied cheerfully, Nazumu smiled brightly.

"*Iiyaa*, Sa-kun's unexpectedly daring, *ne*?"

Gaaah! I knew she witnessed it!?

"What do you want!? Is it Vittoria's Montblanc ...!?"

"You're way ahead--! Anyway, for hush-hush, I wish for the Montblanc from that well-known cake shop, and I won't say a word♪ Well, I wanted to say 'give me', but then..."

"I... I'll think this over..."

"All riight! I like Sa-kun♪ I'll be so tight-lipped so don't worry, *ne*"

"*Phew ... safe ...*"

"*Moou!* And I talked to you seriously ..."

After Nazumu puffed her cheeks, she lowered into the chair in front of me (after going around me in the back).

"I'm not telling anyone anything, and I'm giving you some good news. What are trying to hide from me? Acchan's a good friend!"

Nazumu stuck out her chest as she spoke.

"Acchan? Who?"

"Yup, Akeno-chan"

"A-ke-no?"

"... eh?"

We stared each other for several seconds.

"A, ah! That very girl!"

"That very girl!?!? What do you mean? You didn't even know her name when

you confessed to her?"

"Well, that's no confession ..."

"What's with your sudden shyness? With such audacious confession♪"

"So you mean, 'You didn't even know her name when you confessed to her'?"

"In short, you're taken with her at first sight, *ne*"

Ah, *mou*, what are you talking about. Get back on topic!

"Anyway, they call her Akeno, right? Just who is she? What's her relationship with you?"

"So you don't know apart from jokes..."

As Nazumu murmured "love is blind", she answered seriously with earnest.

"She's Kasugamori Akeno-chan. She's one year junior than us, probably class 3-C. I played lacrosse with her until last year."

"I see, you knew each other through club activities"

Nazumu's with the lacrosse club. Juniors and seniors play separately, so that explains the "I played lacrosse with her until last year."

"Anyhow, isn't she cute? Besides her nice character, her success rate's terrible. Every month, she was confessed to --"

"12 boys in one year!"

"*Nya*. Summer vacation, festival, graduation seasons included, well about 20 ... eh, are you serious?"

Nazumu talked herself into astonishment. She recalled the girl going for me at the school gates. Then her eyes must have turned to disgust . It's as if she was unable to notice.

"And you didn't go steady with anyone despite of your looks Anyway, be on your guard. 'Strengthen your defenses, how many have fallen before impregnable defenses' they say. You hear?"

"Hm? Right, I'll keep that in mind. Thank you."

"*Mou*! Freshen up! No matter how desperate, don't despair. Don't ever lose

hope. Until that day your feelings reach her, keep on attacking! ... Ah, but stalking or depression is a no go, *ne*. Keep on moderation your heartsickness and agony, and you'll keep on moderation you amusing me.

"That's your real intention, you're wicked."

"Well, if Sakkun and Acchan were stuck together, don't you think that's a happy thought?"

"Sorry, won't happen either way. My bad if I can't live to your expectations."

"Oh. If you want to make the arrangements, just say it anytime.♪"

Just as Nazumu stood up from the chair, the opening chime rang. As the students chatted while returning to their seats, the HR teacher enters the classroom.

(What a nice character, ne.)

My mind murmured as I suddenly remember Nazumu's words. The way I see it, she's but a violent character, dreaming or not. Well, at least she's cute.

"....."

That time, I recalled the sensation my palms felt on that hidden thing, just as my face reddened. My heart, due to my shortened breathing, began to thump.

"Stand -- !"

Today's order resounded in the classroom.

Part 04

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 1 - The woman warrior dances in the night - Part 4[[edit](#)]

Classes end at 6 in the evening. Even though it's past summer solstice, the sun's still high and it's too bright to call it "evening". And it's hot.

I walked on my way home, my body smelly and drenched in sweat from club activities. My typical, singly detached house is on the corner of a residential district 15 minutes by foot from school. While it is comparable with the old traditional houses of Shiraishi-cho, there are numerous new houses in Nanaobi. Our house, like most houses, was built by my father in 3 years with funds from a 30-year loan.

"I'm home--"

The smell of curry greeted me as I entered the entrance hall.

"I'm home. Is it curry for dinner?"

As I entered the living room, Mom's voice from the kitchen greeted me again.

"Welcome home. You're just in time. Please help me with dinner preparations. Ah, wash your hands before that. Take out the laundry, too."

"*Ha-i.*"

I took my sports bag to the bathroom. Opening it, I took out my dirty tennis gear. As I threw them into the washing machine, the words "Ah-, table tennis ..."

Right now, I'm a rookie tennis player, but I was an active table tennis player in middle school. I had intended to continue playing table tennis in high school also, but the table tennis club was dissolved before I could enter high school, so I moved to the tennis club. I enjoy tennis as a game, but there are times I miss the

ping-pong ball. That's it for my side story.

"*Mya-*"

As I did my laundry, something purred at my feet. Mi-ko, a Siamese tabby, approached my shins.

"I'm home, Mi-ko. Have you been a good cat?"

Crouching, I held her just like holding a woman on both sides. As I kissed the cat just like kissing a maiden, Mi-ko too licked my lips with her rough tongue. What a cute cat.

Carrying Mi-ko, I returned to the living room.

"*Hai*, here Mi-chan!"

Mom placed a small dish with some cat food on the floor beside the table. Despite Mom's sweet call, Mi-chan pretended not to hear it. She refused to let go from my leg.

"*Uuu*, when will she grow accustomed to me, I wonder ..."

I could only smile bitterly at her childish words.

"It's too early to be depressed. It hasn't been that long."

Today's the fourth day since Mi-ko came to live in our house. She was originally raised in my childhood friend's house, but circumstances forced them to relinquish her; my Mom took the cat in. I'm the only one in the house whose acquainted with the cat, and so she's attached only to me.

"Only the first night's a cheat, I wonder."

"But it's great that I got along with her well. Just keep at it, and don't lose patience."

"I'll do that."

Mom laughed, as she returned to the kitchen. Just to make sure, I nudged the dish closer to Mi-ko.

Suddenly, a familiar tune sounded from the left-on television. A new movie was being introduced from the variety show. "Cosmo Wars Episode 3", the sixth from the world-famous science-fiction epic, will probably open to the public in the

middle of the next month. A laser blade toy from said series even lies in my closet.

"Sakuya-, Can you clean up the tableware for me?"

"Ah, right, I'm on it."

Going around and avoiding a still-eating Mi-ko, I went to the kitchen.

Part 05

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 1 - The woman warrior dances in the night - Part 5[[edit](#)]

".... eh?"

By the time I noticed, I was in a park.

"A ... again?"

I was totally taken by surprise. No doubt about this place. The same children's park from last night. I'm even wearing the school uniform. Taking my mobile from my side pocket and checking, it says 2:14. Date's Tuesday, June 26, one day in advance.

I should be in my T-shirt and short pants and retiring in my own bedroom. Is this the same dream from last night?

I don't think I'm in a dream, my five senses tell me. Just to be sure, I pinched my own face.

"Ow. This mean this is no dream ..."

If I'm not dreaming, then I'm sleepwalking. I'm worried if that's the case.

Well then, what to do next? I wanted to wake up if this was a dream, but I didn't know how. Even yesterday, I unexpectedly awakened-. Will somebody hit me for me to wake up? ... not a chance. Then, how about lying down and close my eyes? ... riight, I'm totally awake.

"What a pain, might as well explore this dream."

As I was puzzled about what landed me here last night, I hadn't payed much attention to the surroundings. Tonight's the second time, so I was more composed.

"How nostalgic ..."

I scanned the entire garden. This reminds me, this is the place where I first met Mi-ko. When my childhood friend carried the still-kitten Mi-ko in his arms, my face read "cute! cute! cute!".

I haven't met my childhood friend (Akane Shun) for nine months. I used to play with him during elementary school days, but since my relocation to Nanaobi, I only met him in school, and rarely since I got into high school (Shun's in 3rd year middle school at Suijou); well, so much for an association. Shun ... I wonder if he's fine.



Leaving the park, I scanned the same road I went through last night. There really is no one standing in this town, even in the convenience store.

"... phew, tastes good."

After drinking some cola from the convenience store, I continued my exploration. With the cola's sweetness, coldness, and acidic strength, I again began to doubt with thoughts of, "Is this really a dream?".

I got also some beef jerky, a flash light, and a parasol for self-defense. Even with no one manning the counter, I placed the exact amount there. Once, my thoughts varied between, "It's a dream, swiping stuff's fine," and, "It's a dream, my money won't come down." In that place, I want to keep my morals in check.

Incidentally, I can say that this town is 'almost uninhabited', but it doesn't mean that it's 'totally uninhabited'. At least I'm here. That Akeno girl from last night too was here last night. It's totally plausible that someone other than me would be here tonight.

And that's the problem. Right now, there is that feeling on my back, just who is that person?

"....."

I stopped and listened intently. In this quiet space, and without my own

footsteps, surely I'll be able to perceive the person approaching me. A step, then another ... probably the sounds of regular footsteps. Somewhere, these footsteps sounded strained. This one's approaching steadily.

I definitely say my encounter with someone other than me in this ghost town will be anything but welcome. A hidden killer would be terrifying. If it's that girl again ... what next?

Anyhow, I've decided on facing him. I know a thing or two about going through narrow alleys. Shun and I, in our elementary days, used to go through them as shortcuts on the way to school. I'll hide myself there in the darkness, and I'll be able to observe him as he passes through. If I'm found and attacked, I'll ambush him head on.

"... good."

I turn back, entering the alley where no one will find me...

"---- gah-!"

Suddenly stars burst before my eyes! A slow shock spreads from my head throughout my body, and staggering, I completely fall backwards.

"Gu tsu ...!!!"

I groan from the head-splitting pain. This pattern, it's the same as last night...!?

Resisting the urge to vomit, I tried to focus on my shaky field of vision and caught sight of a stretched, slender leg from my loafers.

That girl was looking down on me.

"You ... the hell are you!"

Brandishing a bat, she spoke between short, wild breaths. With those words, I was expecting her to question me, but looks like she won't. From her eyes glaring at me, she totally lost her sense of reason.

The girl seems unaware who I am. I was able to see her face clearly thanks to the moonlight, but I don't think she can see me clearly. Moreover she's showing clear hostility towards me.

" ... to, ma ..."

Shit, I could not speak clearly. Will I get the bat again? That would be a good way to escape from my dream. If not, I would only end up crumpling down. A shitty way to die.

On the other hand, I think it's difficult to avoid that bat with my woozy body. If that's the case, then flying towards her would be fine. I might take in a bit of pain. So...

"--Haaaaaaaah!"

And before the girl could scream and swing her bat, I kicked. It connected smack in her face for a stun!

"Kya--?!"

For a strike, it sure is overkill. The girl quickly and disappointingly went down, and I continued with my attack.

"L... let me go!"

She struggled with me on top of her, striking me with her fists.

"Tch... !"

The feeling of nausea and fatigue recurred again.

"C... calm down!"

I feel awkward with my rough treatment of her, but I'm taking no chances. I grabbed her wrists and slammed them into the ground, stopping all resistance.

"H... help! Somebody!"

Even now, the girl's voice changed to what sounded like she's crying. Damn, this girl's sneaky. Even if I'm the victim and I'm doing it for self-defense, I feel like I'm the attacker here. From the sidelines, it seemed like I'd be caught red-handed for rape.

On the other hand, to stop her rampage, I can't just step aside. How will I be able to calm her down? "Nobody's coming even if you scream, so shut it-!" would only reinforce the suspicion of rape. In such cases, I must quickly put an end to this. Ah, got it-!

"Akeno!!"

I called her name quickly and sharply.

It had an immediate effect, and the girl replied "Ha...". The screaming stopped. In that instant, I wove my words slowly and precisely.

"Kasugamori Akeno. Suijou Academy, middle school 3-C. Lacross women's team member. ... I presume?"

"H... how did you know me?"

The girl shivered weakly for a change. Am I her acquaintance or her stalker. I bet she could only decide between them two.

"I heard it from your senior. Her name's Kure Nazumu. I'm her classmate."

So it would put everything in order.

"Kure's... classmate... ?"

"That's right, Suijou academy, high school 1-E. Hoshi Sakuya. That's me."

"Hoshi... "

From her murmurs, she's probably searching her memories for my name. But I'm not sure she met me before; I haven't introduced myself.

It's impossible to do a one-sided introduction. Since the girl calmed down, I slowly released my grip on her wrists and stood up releasing her.

"Sorry for my rude introduction. As for what happened... are you hurt?"

I held out my hand to the rising girl.

"Th ... thank you."

The girl hesitated, but grabbed my hand. Standing up, she brushed the dust off from her entire body.

"Hm... I'm fine. I'm so sorry for hitting you so suddenly. Are you all right? ... no, you can't be all right. I struck your head with all my strength with my bat..."

"Ah, it's only a scratch."

Impossible, it hurts like hell. But I endured it, smiling like a gentleman. The girl looked at me for the first time with a modest expression.

"..... ?"

Her gaze unexpectedly sharpened. She then stared at me hard.

"You... where did..."

She finally recognized me. Now, how should I answer her? "Sorry, but we've met before" would only give a bad impression, even to me. Hmmm, if that's the case, I must speak words that would definitely convince her. In other words --

"Last night, I met you in a dream, didn't I?"

"----- !?"

I repeated the same words to the girl I met that morning. Her expression changed as she gazed at me...

"You're the pervert that morning! And you've been stalking me since yesterday!"

I have been humiliated with those words. With my reputation on the line, I have to deny this right now. "What happened that morning is totally an accident. Moreover, I'm not a stalker. I don't know what the heck you misunderstood me for but ---"

"Misunderstanding!? Let me tell you my side! You have been stalking me since yesterday, this morning, and even tonight. If that isn't stalking, I don't know what stalking is. Let me tell you something, if you don't get it. For all I know, it is plainly stalking --- admit your crime! Reflect on that if you understood it. Don't show yourself in front of me again! Do it and I'll have you expelled from school. I'll even report to the cops!"

"....."

With the girl deciding everything, I can only stay silent. Well, if we only consider her situation, her reasoning could be valid. Had she been more considerate, this might not have happened. If that is the case, I should state my case more clearly!

"That's a total and overly self-conscious misunderstanding! You may think that way, but I have no interest in you. Popular or not, to me you are a 'dangerous

girl! You've hit me with your bat without restraint, just what the hell's going on in your head! You have made quite an injury! And it's attempted murder!"

I spoke as severe words went through my head. I'm getting angry.

Her expression paled, as her mouth could only open or close. Well, she'd still be cute if she could maintain her demeanor but... far from dejection, she kept on glaring me.

"This is a legitimate self-defense! I'm only watching myself for some pervert following me. There no way a pervert would complain like that!"

"Enough with your accusations! I have not shadowed you even once! Or should I say you're the one shadowing me...!"

"Did not! Why would I!? There's no reason why I would be shadowing you!"

"Quit playing dumb! I've always noticing something on my back –"

-- back? That's strange, and I paused. The one following behind me, there's no way he would be waiting in front of me.

"Wh... what's that..."

As I quickly shut my mouth, the girl half-stepped back, confused.

Oh damn it. It's possible that I inevitably got knocked down for no good reason; damn I totally missed that in the first place. With someone following me, I went through the alleyway to find out just who was stalking me. If that "someone" is not this girl...? If we were quarreling that loud, someone else might notice where were quarreling by now; we didn't notice it if it was approaching closer, on the other hand.

"... .."

With that, I slowly and silently turn around. There –

A dragon is approaching.

I thought I misjudged at the onset. However, looking at silhouette from the block wall looking into the alley, it's obviously not human and more like an abnormal giant reptilian head. The skin, reflecting the moonlight, is covered with

numerous scales, and a goggling eyeball is looking pointedly at me. It's nose is merely two meters from me.

My mind blanked for a moment. Am I looking at a vision? Am I going mad? No, I'm only dreaming. Only a fantastic creature would only confirm that I am in a dream.

dragon growling

Dragons are revered, whether in games, manga, or movies. Sometimes they led the heroes, sometimes they fought alongside heroes, sometimes they stand in the heroes' way. I think it would take many boyhood experiences in exchange for being in a hero's position.

Then what was the relationship when it met us? In this case it's neither "guide", nor "ally", nor "enemy". I cannot see any sense of intelligence looking at its inorganic eyes. The eyes are the only organs useful for locking on moving objects. Our relationship is more primitive, that is: 'hunter and hunted'.

"Wh... what's this thing?"

I was suddenly snapped to my senses by a girl's voice. My white field of vision became clear. The next instant ---

"---- !!!"

The dragon opened its large mouth, its head thrusting into the alley! I instinctively jumped back, grabbing the girl's shoulders and diving for the ground! Taking the full brunt of the girl's weight, we tumbled along the asphalt.

"Ouch, ouch...!"

I can say it's awfully painful, but it's nothing compared to being eaten by the dragon. I was certain the dragon's fangs went for my ankles. Any slower, and I'd be caught by my ankles. From a hopeless position I'd be dragged along and swallowed whole.

dragon growling

Furious that it didn't catch me, the dragon roared. My skin and eardrums vibrated like from an electric shock. Thank god for the narrow alley. With the mammoth lizard caught in the fence, it couldn't reach us by a few centimeters.

“Ne! What is the meaning of this!? Is this really real...!?”

“There’s no way this is real. This is must be the dream’s creation.”

“But it looks real...”

“Ah... at this moment, you could say it’s the 'real thing' in this dream”

“Which way!?”

“I don’t care! Anywhere would be fine. Anyway ---“

dragon growling

The dragon further pushed itself in. Cracks are running on the concrete walls at both sides. Shit...!? “RUN FOR IT!”

Determined, I turn my eyes away from the terror. Turning my back to the dragon, I grabbed the hand of the confused girl and ran.

crash --- I hear the sound of crumbling rubble behind me. The fence must have been quickly demolished. Nevertheless were still in a small alley. There’s no way a behemoth can go in ---

“It’s coming --- !”

As I reply to the girl’s screams, the approaching dragon’s body leapt into my vision as it destroyed the fence!

“Shit! Shit! Hurry!”

“You don’t have to say hurry!”

Our stamina’s different, our steps are different. The dragon’s quickly approaching!

Tap-tap, the dragon’s footsteps are lighter than I thought. Its movement’s quicker than what I typically imagined for dragons. As we listen to the approaching scream, we ran without hesitation, without looking side to side.

Just ahead of the alley lies a private house’s fence. We’re going to jump into the streets, ...

“Head right!”

I stopped in a pinch. With the power forced onto me by the girl, her legs

turned to the right without stopping.

“Hyaaa --- !”

However, the girl tumbled forward and ran from the alleyway. Immediately after that ...

slam

An attack came from my flank, and I felt a floating sensation! My vision blurred and flowed from left to right. And then another crash! I hear a sickening sound from within my body. If I could feel it myself, I was tumbling onto the ground.

coughing

Feeling something warm blocking my throat, I coughed. Large amounts of zinc tasting like liquid began to overflow from my mouth. The rich smell numbed my nose. It can't be...blood?

“Sakuya --- !!!”

A voice calling my name. That girl --- is Akeno calling my name?

I got it. I'm in no case lying down. I'm perfectly awake. So run on ahead of me... I thought, but I couldn'tt say it. A whistle-like sound escaped from my mouth.

Shit! I can't hear why my body's saying. This is way different from the time Akeno hit me. Not even close. Somehow, I could only move my eyeballs.

“.....”

Soon I saw the dragon beside me.

Within the swirling dust, stepping on some fallen block fragments, the elephant-sized lizard looked down on me. Indeed, I might be charged on and blown off.

growling

With the dragon's growl, its opened mouth suddenly covered my vision! I instinctively put out my right arm to protect my head. And then that arm's bitten.

“Ga .. ah?”

The sharp fangs plunged onto my arms! And then my body was dragged along, and lifted into midair...!! With gravity pulling me down, the monster's fangs won't let me go. The sinews in my arms are tearing apart. Blood dripped from where the sinews were torn apart onto the ground below.

"Stop it...! Stop it! Let go of him!"

Akeno's bitter screams called my fading consciousness back. She still standing there! You idiot, run. Run away!

I'm not worried about myself. This is a dream. If I get myself killed in a dream I don't really die... I want to think that way. Or should I say, let me wake from this dream! Or grant me superhuman powers. If all else fails... somebody help me!

"... ya! Stay tight, Sakuya!"

"....."

crash goes my body as it fell down. I think I was let go, this is the moment I've been expecting for.

dragon growling again

Going through a nerve-wracking pain in my right arm, my body again felt light. The dragon's once downward pointing mouth is now pointing up.

Ah, I got it. This is the way crocodiles throw their prey into their mouths. I then fall, being sucked into the opening void. The warm night swallowing me ---?

dragon screaming in pain

I thought my eardrums were split open by the loud sound. My vision, that should be gone by now, is somehow perceiving the moon (a bit bigger than a half-moon) above.

My body was hit severely, by this scraggly flat ... asphalt? Did the monster disgorge me?

It must be either good or bad luck that it ended without me dying. I must have fallen from two meters, my body still in one piece. My ribs are dislocated to my left shoulder, my right shin ... I know here and there my bones are broken. The blood in my throat, I can't help but vomit it out.

My head was alive with a thumping sound. The ground before me is still swaying. Damn dragon, releasing me almost dead, just what the hell is it doing?

“Sakuya! Are you all right!?”

I thought if I heard a voice beside me, it must be Akeno peering at me.

“... I’m alive...”

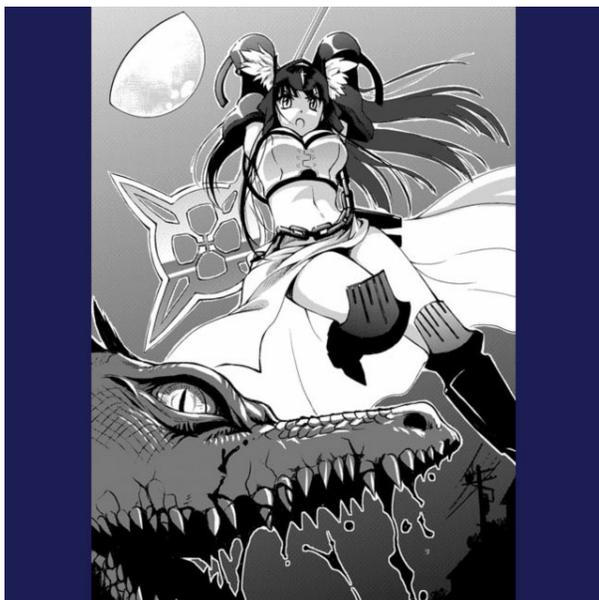
I answered, because I don’t even have the courage to bluff I’m all right. Along with my words, my blood vomited out.

“...!? Hang on! What to do? What can I do...”

“... the dragon... is it...”

Since Akeno rushed to me, does that mean the dragon’s threat is receding? Even if I can immediately hear its roar...?

“It’s all right... look.”



I can’t trust Akeno’s reply. For my uneasy, doubtful eyes, I turned to the direction of the sound. Only my eyes moved, locking on what the girl is following.

There, I saw a battle maiden.

The battle maiden, garbed in a feather-plumed helmet and fantastic-looking armor, danced in the night.

In both of her hands was a golden lance. Its spear tip was like a loop enclosing a cross, glistening in the moonlight just like those divine halos in Christianity. Flashing in the moonlight, it easily went through the monster’s hard scale,

leaving a straight red line in the behemoth's body.

dragon screaming in pain

Even with the dragon's rage, its awful fangs could not reach the woman. She easily flowed from left to right, making fun of the dragon, and the dragon could not land a hit. And then ---

“----- !”

With a short scream, the battle maiden unleashed her weapon to the sky. The lance, streaking through the night sky like a meteor, pierced right into the monster's forehead!

dragon again screaming in pain

The dragon reared up, its forelegs raised high up. It let out another scream into the night sky.

But it's on its last legs. Its power suddenly gone from its large body, it was pulled down by gravity, and it went down to the ground with a loud crash. There it remained still.

With her back on the dragon's spine, the battle maiden landed softly on the earth.

With her elegant dress,

with her long hair fluttering about in the wind,

with her clear eyes sparkling in the moonlight,

--- with her hot figure, I ---

held my breath,

my eyes blurred,

the pain in my tormented body forgotten,

--- as I could do nothing but watch her in awe.

Part 01

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 2 - Wield the fabled blade - Part 1[[edit](#)]

June 26, Tuesday.

"---- he's born on 1856, to an Austrian Jewish family. He became a psychiatrist with the help of a neuro-pathologist ----"

As our ethics teacher Awashima-sensei explained in an disinterested voice, he writes the keyword on the blackboard with chalk. There are unfortunately few students who take notes seriously. Must be because ethics is one of our minor subjects ---. Here and there one can find students tragically down before the agreeable combination of "blue sky after the rain" and "air conditioning's cool breeze".

"... .."

Speaking about myself, I'm at my desk resting on my cheeks, my eyes absently looking at an opened book at the top of my desk. It is neither textbook, nor reference book, nor notebook. It is a console game guide book titled "Neverending Fantasy 13". On the opened pages are the profiles, status, visuals, *etc.* of a support character named "Battle Maiden Valkyrie".

"Valkyries", originally appearing in Norse mythology, are probably "demigods" (not a traditional name), and are typically depicted as beautiful women wearing plumed helmets, body-fitting armor, a sword or a spear for a weapon, and a shield. Even the Valkyrie in this game is depicted as the same.

"Compared to this Valkyrie, that one's subtly different ..."

That "woman" I met in the dream has a more fantastic appearance than the game valkyrie. Her "armor" revealed more skin than it should, her parts which

should be protected were unprotected.

"... .. she's pretty ..."

Nevertheless, I'm sure the woman who danced in the night was a battle goddess. Neither with her night-tearing spear, nor with her shining armor, nor with her sparkling eyes my heart was taken captive. Even with my eyes closed, I could recall my thoughts clearly. Her fluttering hair, her dignified voice, her beauty ---



"She", her back to the defeated dragon, danced down into the ground. I forgot myself as I looked at her (so was Akeno).

... .. as the corpse of the monster was enveloped in a faint, gloomy light. What happened just now? As Akeno and I looked on, the corpse unexpectedly became clusters of sparkles and floated up to the night sky. Before our eyes the behemoth disappeared, not even one trace remained. Only the spear remained in front of us; with its support lost it tumbled down the ground.

"She", graceful as ever, lightly picked up the rigid spear and turned to us. "She" walked to us, her hard footsteps resounding.

"... .."

I felt Akeno's wariness from her long breaths. It's true "she" saved us from the dragon. But is it all right to judge "she's our ally"? "Her" strength and even her clothes are too different from us, common sense is telling us.

... well, if it turns out "she" is our enemy, we have to resign to our fate. "She" can bring down a dragon easily. Even if not on the verge of death, we don't have the guts to get away from her. I think Akeno has the same idea. With my head on her knees, she wouldn't move.

"She" stood at my feet. With her spear at both of her hands, "she" slowly hoists her spear above. Akeno's hand embraced my head even harder.

"---- recover!"

"She" muttered something. And, I see, the spear's halo gives out a powerful radiance, at the same time my body was enveloped in a warm light. I began to feel at ease --- the pain is subsiding.

"... .. what's ... that?"

Akeno gazes at my body. Even I am surprised. The pain should be withdrawing, my injured body instantaneously recovering! No, not only my injuries, my stained clothes, where I stained them with my blood, is being cleaned.

"... whoa"

After the light faded, I felt totally healed. My clothes were as clean as the time when I noticed that I was in the dream. I could get up on my own. My injured (now healed) right arm was firmly reattached to my torso. I could flex my fingers

"Are you still injured?"

The dignified voice feels good in my ears. In front my eyes of my raised head, "she" stretches her hands out.

"I ... I'm okay. I'm no longer injured, thanks to you ..."

I hesitatingly took her hand. As I stand up, I applied power to my legs then.

"err ... !?"

My own body, at its own, regained its vigor enthusiastically.

"! I'll do fine"

She's holding a staggered me. Her soft and her so-called "cushion" softened the impact. In an instant, I didn't know what happened next, but I'm feeling the smoothness or warmth; it's not rough like armor. In short ---

"Uaah!? So, sorry ... !!"

In haste I jumped back. Though this was unintentional, somehow I buried my face!

But in contrast to a flustered me, "she" stands looking blankly. It looked like she didn't understand what to apologize for. Well, is it all right for her mood to remain unchanged ...? As I try to calm down my beating heart, I gazed again at

her.

"She" is probable older than me. Her stature is probably between Akeno and me. Her body armor revealed skin, even her dangerously exposed breasts glistens in the dark. Looking there makes me so embarrassed, I cannot look straight at her for several seconds.

"What's wrong? What's with you wavering?"

But her casting a strange look to my suspicious behavior reveals that she probably unaware of the word "ashamed".

"Well, er, that"

Well, to touch that spot would probably be unnecessary.

"Thank you very much for rescuing us. We escaped with our lives thanks to you."

I express my thanks. She nodded with a smile.

"Hmm, you've encountered a tough situation. Good thing you're safe. It would be sad for you to die."

"? Errr Sakuya, is she your acquaintance ... ?"

Akeno inquired hesitatingly. She probably felt I was pulled in with "her" words. But,

"No, it was supposed to be our first meeting ... don't you think?"

I tried to remember, but nothing came out of it. It is impossible to forget a beauty when you met her already. It must be her unique outfit; had she worn a more common outfit, maybe she would really be an acquaintance

"She" neither nodded, nor shook her head to Akeno's question, "So I should probably say 'Nice to meet you' to this conversation", she said while showing a faraway look.

"In short, you haven't met her, right?"

"Yeah. But Sakuya, it's possible that she doesn't know me. So, do the introductions."

"Ah, ha ..."

Though I knew her vaguely, Akeno has totally no clue about her. I could do nothing but nod.

"You can call me 'Valkyrie'."

"Valkyrie ..."

Her outfit is appropriate with her name.

"You're not intending to tell us your real name ... is it?"

Akeno's glance to "her" hardens. Surely, "she" who calls herself "Valkyrie" would appear to know the current situation, and would not reveal her true intentions; if that's the case, then we clueless ones would be worried.

But though the Valkyrie is not timid, she shook her head thoroughly.

"Forgive my rudeness. Though, revealing my past would only compound our troubles. There is little significance in my name. In this world, only my role and status matters ..."

"I don't know what are you talking about. Don't go in circles explaining. Just who are you? What was that monster? Why are we in this kind of world! Just where are we !?"

Akeno is pressing for answers. The questions, they're probably turn to words as soon as Akeno thought of them.

"This is the 'Nightmare', a fictional world made of dreams and adventures."

As the Valkyrie reveals this, her expression did not show any signs of jokes of satire, only indifference. Her nose twitched.

"... ... the awakening's close. We'll meet again."

"awakening ... ?"



As Akeno's words interrupted, we were experiencing a strange experience. In the next instant, "she" was right in front of my eyes.

She placed her lips into mine.

"----- !!!?"

My heart was beating through my chest. I was entwined with the Valkyrie's eyes. The softness of her lips, the fragrance of a probable woman ... these unknown stimuli are making me dizzy. As my vision turns to all white ...

"Wh -----"

As Akeno is about to say something, I lost consciousness.

Next thing I knew, I was in my own bed. As I lay down with my heart throbbing and my eyes opened, my Siamese cat Mi was licking on my lips.

... .. somehow, it was strange.

"... .."

Oh no, my heart will throb again if I remember her ... Even if it happened in the dream, it was a first kiss for me (kissing with parents don't count, of course); I'll never find out the reason for this, but there's no way a kiss from a pretty lady like her be unpleasant. It doesn't matter in this case! A innocent boy's heart is already beating furiously, stretching against my chest ---

whack

"owwwww !?"

Whacked at the back of my head, I suddenly came back to my senses. Jumping up and turning on my back, I saw Nazumu strangely smiling.

"Whaaat's with you grinning alone. So you've fallen in love, eh--♪"

"! Th, that's not it!?"

Even if I deny it right away, I've stammered. This could backfire on me, it would only confirm her suspicions. Well, she got it right anyway!

Anyhow, classes ended without me noticing. With the teacher gone, my classmates have started eating their lunch at their desks. The classroom is full of noise that could only occur during lunchtime. And that time, I was the fool on my desk with my opened game guidebook. I'm sure am crazy. As Nazumu faced a shocked me with her smile,

"Be happy, kiddo!! Your lover has arrived!"

The rear door of the classroom slid open. Outside, a lone girl is leaning back on the corridor barrier. A twin-tailed lass in a middle school uniform ... it was Akeno.

"Ya, what have you done? What trickery have you done? For you to catch Acchan!"

"Catch? ... you said what?"

Was it that again? The continuation to yesterday's misunderstanding!?

"Oh, you lady-killer♪ The young heartthrob!"

"I told you that was a misunderstanding!"

"Oh --- if it was a misunderstanding, what can you say about this! How will you explain these situations? Acchan came to me pleading to call you, Sakkun on love-mode is so absent-minded he didn't even notice class has ended! If this is no mutual love, what do call it ... !?"

"Ah --- --- ---"

Okay, I got it. Can't be helped even with this explanation. From the sidelines, it would probably be "Brave girl coming in front of a senior-year boyfriend" and "Boyfriend impatiently waiting for his girlfriend". But truth is, we probably talked in this "dream".

"You listening, Sakkun? There are many boys after Acchan, don't even think of neglecting this relationship. Do it even once, and someone will take her away from you. OK?"

It's no use denying it Like that, thanks to Nazumu's "advice", even my classmates uninvolved in this were taking notice (from the boys' evil glances, i'm probably not joking)

"Thanks for calling me, Nazumu. And for your information, it's not what you think."

Leaving behind words not only for Nazumu, I went for the door. From behind, cheers of "You're kidding ~♪" came, but I pretended not to hear.

Akeno's blunt face met me as I went out into the corridor. The girl looked cute in this sunny place.

"Thanks for waiting"

"You're late"

"... .."

Correction. She's cute with her mouth shut.

Now, now, I'm not offended this time. I'm think I'm having an ominous feeling with her unreserved gaze drilling onto me for a while. I'm more or less resigned to receive her wrath.

"What are we loitering here for, shall we go somewhere else?"

I think it was unexpected, but I don't think she could calm down at this place, hence the proposal.

"Ah ... okay"

She unexpectedly and obediently nodded.

While we feel Nazumu's or my male classmates' eyes piercing our backs (no doubt they're probably sticking their heads out of the door or windows and following us), I go out into the corridor.

"Anywhere would be fine. How about the canteen?"

In this school there is a canteen that all students use (store included). Since I

don't bring my lunch today, we'll talk there while I eat lunch but ..."

"I've ... brought my own lunch."

She said that awkwardly. I see, there's a lunch box inside the bag she's holding.

"I see. Then, it means we won't be eating at the crowded canteen. I'll just buy some bread from the store. You just keep up with me for a bit longer."

"... well, that won't be necessary"

Well, what will I say to this oddity? For some strange reason, she stood there embarrassed. She just stared into space looking for words. And then,

"I have some boxed lunch"

"? uh, that's why I suggested getting my own lunch at the store ..."

"No need, I have some boxed lunch. apart from my own"

She said that with a downcast look. Somehow her face reddened ...

"In other words ... eh? 'For me too', you mean?"

As I point to myself, her head jerked upright.

"Wh ..."

In that instant, Nazumu's nonsensical words crossed my mind. Does this mean this girl is interested in me? Even as I thought "No way!", my face blushed by itself. She glared at my reddening face.

"Uh, excuse me, can you stop guessing wildly? This has no other meaning in particular. Only gratitude for last night. A gratitude for saving me in that dream"

"All right, I got it, I understand."

The words 'gratitude' chews inside my heart. Did you get it? So pipe down, my palpitating heart.

"I accept your gratitude."

OK, now I can smile normally. Well then, where to ...

"Where will we eat? In the quadrangle?"

If it's in the quadrangle, we'll be isolated from the school annoyances by a

fence. A refreshing breeze would pass through there too. I think it's a good choice but,

"I've thought about the quadrangle too ... I can't stay calm there."

She again shot it down clearly. Though I've thought of "is that it?", it's surely not a place to calm down if I think clearly about it. Not only is the place noisy, it was a place where couples ate together. At least, it's not a place for boys and girls not acquainted with each other.

"This is troubling. Classroom's a no-go too, the canteen and quadrangle too ..."

The roof deck's too hot for this season There must some other place where we can talk in peace ---

"Ah, got it! That's right, let's go there."

"You thought of a good place?"

"That's right, the clubroom."

Part 02

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 2 - Wield the fabled blade - Part 2[[edit](#)]

Though Suijou Academy (our school) has both middle and high schools, it doesn't mean that the grounds they are on are separate. Located where both schoolhouses can use, there is a canteen, a gymnasium, and a clubroom building. The reinforced-concrete, three-story clubroom complex was, in a single word, "chaos".

"Like there's a weird smell or something ..."

From the start, garbage and junk from the various clubs are occupying both sides of the narrow corridor.

"Ah, but this is bliss. The stench of garbage everywhere makes you feel good."

"My god You could keep a cool face around here."

"You'll get used to it. Is this your first time here?"

"It's not my first time, but I'm not as used here as you are."

"Well get used to it. Or you'll have to think of some other place."

"I'm all right here. I think I'll be all right if I get used to this place. I'll lose my appetite if it smells really bad."

As she is speaking those lines, I led her to a room on the second floor. She's looking up on the name plate on the door,

"SF Study Group ... ? You sure have a strange interest."

"Sorry, but I'm on the tennis club. This is my friend's place as club chief."

BTW, because the thrown away stuff like tennis uniforms and towels (already

used) in the tennis club room is mixing with the humidity and heat giving off a very nasty smell, it's definitely not a good place to eat.

Knocking at the SF's door, I slid the door without waiting for a reply. The door opened readily, being unlocked. There was no one in the club room.

"Come in"

"S ... sorry for intruding ..."

Akeno looks hesitant in entering. Then she let out a scream.

Well, that's probably a normal reaction.

Six mats wide, the club room was surrounded by bookshelves. The bookshelves themselves are closely packed with novels and manga. Above the shelves are figures and plastic models large and small lining up, the ceiling is filled with anime posters, video games new and used jam below the TV rack, above the PC desk are software a high school student should not be able to buy, trading cards are scattering about in the table. I too was drawn in when I first entered this room.

"Had enough?"

"... sorry about that"

I guide her (who's prepared for the worst) to the bench, and I lowered myself on the chair in front of the table.

"Well, we can talk here, we just don't mind the surroundings."

As she said that with a bitter smile, she brought out two lunchboxes. The smallish, pretty, pink box must be hers. And the normal-sized, blue, angular box -
--

"Here"

"Th, thanks"

I awkwardly accept the lunchbox handed over by Akeno.

"You must be nervous and worried ..."

"I guess that can't be helped. This is the first time I got a lunchbox from a girl. Why would it happen like this I don't know ..."

"It's my first time too. But, I think I must return the favor for helping me. This is the only thing that I can think of."

As she say that plainly, she lowered her eyebrows for her next punishment.

"Then, I must apologize. I'm sorry ... for inflicting injuries to you many times."

She says that with her head lowered.

"I .. it's all right. For that to happen within the dream doesn't mean it will happen in reality. Besides, saving you, I think, is what is expected of me."

I said my intentions for following, but then,

"... .. well then, won't you accept it?"

Her face unnecessarily frowned.

"No, well, that's not what I mean. I mean I'm thankful I received the lunchbox. So, there's no "lending and giving", right?"

She finally smiled. I think her smile's sneaky.

After regaining our composure, we dug in on the food (itadakimasu!). And open the lunchbox lids. Croquette sprinkled over the cooked rice and salad was the lineup. My mother would prepare my lunchbox from basically last evening's leftovers, but this one looked especially prepared. Not bad for Akeno's mother.

Separating the croquette with my chopsticks, I bring a piece into my mouth. Compared to the others on the lunchbox, this one's crunchy and not soggy, the taste of potato and minced meat spreading throughout. Not bad!

"... .."

Goes, as I met Akeno's eyes. Akeno did not touch my lunchbox, and watched me tasting it with a stony face.

"? what is it?"

"Ah, nothing How's the taste?"

"Very delicious. More so than my mother's, if were talking on croquettes only."

I express it frankly. Muttering "thank goodness", her expression softened.

"I've prepared the lunch hurriedly in the morning so I have no confidence on it,

but it seems you were able to enjoy it. I'm flattered but happy, thank you."

"... .. eh"

snap, my chopsticks stopped. On impulse I look at her. Those words, it would mean that ---

"eh? Is it true, this ... you prepared it ... !?"

"Yeah, it's true so?"

"... .."

Just what is this! So this is what the boys desire for, a lunchbox made by the girls themselves ... !!

"Wh, what is that for! Don't be surprised that I made it. I, too, can quite cook!"

"No, that's not it, that's not it ..."

Ah, I wonder what is the best of of conveying my feelings? The boys in most romances must have a hard time understanding their girl's feelings ---.

"... I tell you, I thought at first your mother prepared this lunchbox. For you to actually prepare this, you're actually quite good, well ..."

"... ah, thank you. For you to complement ... I'm abashed."

She hung her head bashfully, and to hide it she began to eat her own lunchbox. Perhaps this is what Nazumu is saying. With the way it's going, she too has a nice personality. Now I know why boys fall in love with her. So, listen up Sakuya, so even if you receive this handmade lunchbox as a token of gratitude, this does not mean that she's finally interested in you, got that?

While these are fighting within me, I stuffed myself with the food from the lunchbox when ...

"... .. uuuhhhh ... "

Out from nowhere I heard a groan.

"! what's that now ... ?"

Both Akeno and I looked around the room worriedly. Must be because of the nightmare last night we have become cowards. Even as we thought "there's no

way that would happen", vigilance is a prudent course of action.

"... .. uuuu ... uhn ... "

We've heard it again! It's close, was it within this room? But we can't see anything weird no matter how much we scanned the room.

"----- kya !?"

Akeno let out a high scream. A leg was sticking out onto the bench. As I clearly saw the whites from within her skirt, I instinctively dropped my chopsticks.

"Below!! There's something below ... !!!"

And, she's clearly not fascinated. She jumped back from the bench and ran for the door. I stood up and looked down the bench across. From an opening, I see something creeping. It is creeping about as it makes a rasping sound.

"This" has two arms, two legs, and a head. "Its" body was wearing indoor shoes, slacks, and a suit, in other words, a human.

"yawn"

As "it" gets up it made a loud yawn. With unkempt hair and a pair of glasses,

"Ah, it must be Sakuya-kun. And then ... and, well, this girl?"

"It" was Teru-san.

"You, of all the places to come out ..."

I smile bitterly. Akeno is still totally dumbstruck.

"It was just a short noon rest. Quite wonderful, no? I'm covered there, so I don't worry about being found by a patrolling teacher."

"I see, so Teru's been skipping morning classes and slept here."

"Correction. I was allowed to escape from PE."

"*sigh*, and is that allowable for you, a scholar?"

"As long as I study, the scholarship office won't be mad at me."

Hiruma shamelessly shrugged his shoulders as he said that.

In Suijou Academy, there are students on "special course". Compared to

normal students, these "special course students" (scholars) are primarily given financial support. Depending on the students' grades, various benefits apply like tuition fee discounts, free tuition, uniform stipend, and monthly stipends. Teru-san is one of them.

"You're the one from yesterday ..."

Akeno greeted him as she calmed down. Which reminds me, the two are engaged in idle talk yesterday morning (Teru-san didn't recognize Akeno, since probably he can't remember other people)

"Let's do the greetings again. He's my friend and chairman of the SF group, Hiruma Teruhiko ... eh ..."

As I say those words I was seized by an uncomfortable feeling. Just like that the two of them are looking suspiciously at me.

"How should I put it, shouldn't we introduce ourselves first ...?"

"Ah .. which reminds me,"

I do not at least hear the names from her own mouth. Teru-san has watched curiously at us hidden in depressed feelings.

Having introduced ourselves again, we resumed eating. As Akeno and I are eating our lunchboxes and Teru-san his cup ramen, we discussed our two days worth of dreams. (The club room has some reserve instant ramen and an electric pot to heat water).

The really deserted town, the misunderstanding and quarrels between me and Akeno, the monster dragon attacking us, the woman calling herself Valkyrie saving us, what happened in Akeno's dream and in my dream ... just about everything matches. This means,

"Two people experiencing the same dream might be a valid conclusion"

Teru-san looked worried as he crunched on.

"But it's not 'experiencing the same dream by chance'. Hoshi-kun told Kasugamori-kun of his own name and class in the middle of the dream only. For her to obtain the information, it only means she visited him, thus the meeting. In short, an information interchange is happening within the dream. How

intriguing. And of great interest ..."

As he sipped the ramen soup, he easily nods in assent. It appears that he's more interested in that than either the all-too-real-dream or the dragon appearing within it.

"Two strangers meeting each other in the same dream ... that I cannot understand. Because of that the entire incident cannot be explained fully ..."

"Eh, then it can be explained if we're talking about its logical opposite ..."

"Ah, of course. What you two have seen is a 'lucid dream'"

"Lucid dream?"

Teru-san brought out a bottle of ginger ale from the refrigerator and handed us (whose heads were shaking in doubt) a glass each, then began to explain.

"If it can be explained easily, your dreams where your consciousness say it really is one are 'lucid dreams'."

We experience some strangeness when we were totally aware that we were in that dream, but there is an explanation for that phenomenon and, rare as it might be, is not probably that mysterious. As a result from a half-conscious brain, it results to a condition where the consciousness was preserved while within the dream. The five senses were used too in a lucid dream just like in reality.

"As for that lizard-like monstrosity, it's obvious that it is the by-product of that dream. It's possible it spawned because Sakuya-kun probably wished to be the knight for the damsel-in-distress. Or it's because Kasugamori-kun probably wished to be the damsel-in-distress"

As Teru-san infers this, Akeno's lips shoots out,

"I didn't wish for that. Even if I did, I would have chosen a reliable person for a knight."

"Hell I wish for that too. Remembering that horror, I'm not cut out to be a knight. Besides, I'm not the one who brought down that monster."

On hearing my harsh words, Akeno closes her mouth. I prepare a follow-up for Teru-san,

"Or how about this, isn't it strange that random persons are chosen to become partners?"

"That's it, that's where we were stuck at. Even Valkyrie herself must have hesitated at that point. Is she the product of this dream? Or are there really three persons within it?"

As Teru-san slumps down on the table, he gulped down the ginger ale. Akeno looks at him with amazement on her eyes. I too downed my share the juice in one go.

"For her to exist, is it possible? I think she would be a superhuman if she really exists."

"Not actually. In this reality, she cannot hold that much power. Only within the dream is where she becomes superhuman. She must have the means to control this dream."

"A way to control this dream?"

"In a normal dream, there's no way for a person to recognize that he's seeing one. So even if something out this world happens, only he follows what he sees as common sense. To be able to do superhuman stuff involves some degree of mind control."

Sure, for example I could make everyone within the dream wear *fundoji*; and I thought "this is madness", I too might be in *fudonji*.

"But your intentions are crystal clear within a lucid dream. You know it's a dream. You're aware that where you're standing on is the product of your id. In that world, your intentions take precedence over even common sense and laws of physics. Wearing fantastic armor, taking down dragons, using magic, all are possible. Everything can change according one's wishes. Even you guys can change it."

"Even us? Are you sure?"

"First of all, start believing in yourselves. If you're stuck to common sense and to "I can't do that"-like attitude, you cannot do anything."

Teru-san raises his bottle for the last drops, before placing it back on the table.

"Good, for the trials tonight, sleep along with some toys. With luck, you'll have those within your dream, and you might be able to use them for something. You might be able fly if you attach *taketonbo* on your heads."

"A *taketonbo* can become a futuristic toy?"

"That's it. Listen, if you lose your tools, you might still be able to fly. It should be easy to imagine."

Tonight I might be in the same dream again. So I'll be following Teru-san's advice. We'll still be meeting here tomorrow after school, so we're dismissed for today.

Finally Teru-san handed me and Akeno each a piece of paper.

"There are only three people here now. If not for you two, this club would have been abolished and that would be problematic. Please think of it as a give and take ---"

Written on each of the papers was "SF study group registration form".

Part 03

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 2 - Wield the fabled blade - Part 3[[edit](#)]

After school.

"Nice work ---"



With my tennis practice over, I join with other freshmen and left the court behind us, our tennis gear left behind on our clubroom, and already on our school uniforms. Whenever I'm with my fellows on our club activities, we would always walk along until the train station or return quickly home, but today I took a detour in the school premises and visited the juniors' area.

"Oh now, now"

In the grounds where I used to run until six months ago, I found the girls' lacrosse team. Checking the pleats of their collars, the girls on uniforms are running on a temporary court, their crosses on their hands passing along a ball. During that time I think their fluttering skirts are fouling up the boys (even though they're wearing leggings).

"Found you, Akeno"

Along with the girls, Akeno was shining noticeably. Even with the sweat from the summer heat, she's still on that refreshing smile. That damn girl, showing her innocent face in front of her friends ...

This club activity will take some time before it ends. For now, to wait for her, I proceeded with searching for shade within the school building.



After her club activity, I invite her to join me leave the school. Akeno, on receiving the invitation, was suddenly quite obedient unlike during noontime; from the middle school shoe racks to the bicycle parking lots (she went to school on bike), we spoke little as we left school. I made up my mind and I was about to ask her something,

"Going to a place where there are my friends, I was really worried that time."

As Akeno pushed her bike, she bashfully acknowledge that.

"I see ..."

I see. When I called out to Akeno, she came out along with her friends, them plainly examining me. I think they're probably with Akeno yesterday morning.

"That would be embarrassing ..."

"I would be embarrassed too ..."

"I was embarrassed too, during that noon break"

"I know that. So there's no reason to complain about it."

"I wouldn't do that if it was a bother."

"But, it would be difficult to get in touch with each other if were that to happen ..."

Akeno says that worriedly. But, to get in touch with each other, how could we do that? As I incline my head in deep thought, she nodded once,

"Shall we exchange our phone numbers?"

She unexpectedly proposed that.

"Well ..."

"Don't you have a mobile phone?"

"No, I have one, but ..."

"Well, we've only met for two days, we don't want to disagree over something but ..."

"No that's not what I mean. I was only a bit surprised."

Because she's probably the type who would turn down every boy's love confession, I think I have to be overly cautious with private information.

"But, that would be convenient for you. Just to make it absolutely sure, you know. Because I think we wouldn't call each other first."

With that situation, she appeared she did not mind. Is she that confident in me, or is she the one who prefers convenience over privacy. Well, probably the latter type ...

"Well, we didn't go past exchanging each others addresses. I say it's a-OK then."

Taking out our respective mobile phones, we exchange our numbers and email addresses.

From school, we head south. We pass through the shopping district along Nanaobi Station.

By the way Akeno's house is in that direction. Probably in Shiraishi-cho, it is about 45 minutes by foot.

"And my house is about 15 minutes north from school. That easily means we're an hour separated by foot."

"That's reasonably far. And for us to experience the same dream ..."

There's something else I don't understand. I started twice in the children park twice in my dream, but Akeno probably started twice in Suijou Academy.

"You're wondering why our starting locations are fixed?"

"Which reminds me, isn't our outfits fixed? I've been on this uniform twice ..."

"I'm on this very uniform too. I can understand 'School and uniform', but 'Park and uniform' is a mystery ... are location and outfit two different matters?"

I can understand why on our school uniforms. For us, we are on this outfit for most of the time, which probably means we're familiar with it. But I don't know why about our starting locations. Schools can be childrens' park There must be a place in my memories of old, but it's a place from my past come to think of it. In truth, I forgot the park I visited in my dreams.

I'll ask Teru-san about this tomorrow.

Soon we're out of the shopping district. We were in Shiraishi-cho.

"... .. Here. This was the place."

My childhood friend and I used to pass this shortcut from my old house to Shiraishi Elementary. Here, in my dreams, I met Akeno, and went through here while being followed by that monster.

"That was really a dream, wasn't it?"

Where we expected to see the dragon totally destroy the block wall, it still stood there just like before.

"Looks all too real to me."

"You're right."

We look silently for a bit at the pathway, as we remember clearly what happened before.

The Valkyrie said "We will meet again". She would for the third time. I have a feeling that it would happen in tonight's so-called dream.

"Na, Akeno, shall we meet tonight?"

She must be thinking too about my request.

"Okay!"

She immediately replied that.

Part 04

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 2 - Wield the fabled blade - Part 4[[edit](#)]

For the third night I'm all sure and set. I'm expecting to see the children's park at the dead of night. Just like what happened twice before.

Well then, to check my stuff at hand. Before hitting the bed, I've placed various things around my bedside. A saw (I'm really using this as a weapon), a shiai (I've bought this one for my PE class), a golf club (Dad's), a laser blade (I used to play this toy when I was a kid), and my table tennis racket (for some unknown reason); perhaps within this dream somehow I would have something? I looked down and,

"... .. uu--n .."

I groaned instinctively. On my left leg a plastic tube lies (laser blade). That's it. No racket, no saw, no shiai, not even a golf club. None of them lay on my feet.

"Why this Well, it must have a good impact."

To sum it up, even my memories have gone old. I really used to play with Shun "Cosmos Wars" make-believe games.

"Tch ..."

For a test run, I drew the grey plastic tube from its holder and wielded it. But nothing happened. Unlike what would happen in the movies where a beam of light would appear from the saber.

It would be good if even an edge had come out. I pull out the blue-green colored bamboo shoot-shaped blade from the plastic tube.

"Wow, how nostalgic ... !"

Remembering my past, I set up my sword in a cool-looking way. To prepare myself, I swing the blade again and again. It only made a buzzing sound, cutting the air.

"Nothing changed ... at this rate it should have been turned to a weapon, somehow it's not happening? Looks like plastic no matter how I do it ..."

I hold my breath, shut off my emotions.

This is a dream. There is no common sense. Therefore cast away common sense. Imagine it. Imagine your thoughts coming to life in this world. So ---

"... .."

Beside me is a tree. I imagine it as my old enemy Darth Gazer. Closing my eyes, I imagine that one scene from the movie. My entire body tenses up. I swing my weapon with all my might ---

scream

I have swung forcefully! In the next instant,

clang

"Aaaaagh!!? My treasured item's ..."

As the blade struck the tree trunk it merely bent, no make that broken! As I pick up the tip tumbling on the ground in hot haste, the core of the blade (etc) was completely destroyed. I see, this is what happens when you hit a plastic toy ...

"I ... it's all right! This only a dream, a dream --- !"

That house that was destroyed by that dragon was not in reality! It's all right, it will be AOK as before if I wake up from this dream! So calm down, you. By the way might there be some other worrying matters? Because in the end I have nothing to be able to use as a weapon. Unarmed, in short.

"This is gonna be difficult, ..."

If I'm spotted by a monster I have no choice but to run away. I wonder if will I be able to meet up with Akeno ... ?



I've promised Akeno to "meet up in school". We haven't decided the time (time stops within the dream); I try to use the phone, but as I thought, the lines are dead.

I should be like "Go hide somewhere safe until I find you"-kind of a knight this evening, but as expected my equipment's fit for an average level 1 hero, a fruit knife from the convenience store. By the time the need to protect the princess comes, (in a change of situation) it's not unlikely I will be protected by the princess. Honestly, I would not win even against a slime ...

Though I could just throw this reminiscent item, this broken laser blade, away within this dream, I couldn't go on incognito, so I carried along the remaining unbroken blade.

Along the way, as I passed by the place where we were attacked by the dragon last night, the brick was standing as it was before.

"... .. ah, the station"

Though I walked on nervously due to my trauma, I did not encounter not a single monster, so I unexpectedly and quickly arrive at the south entrance of Nanaobi Station.

That evening, there were lots of cars passing by as Akeno and I walked on the main street. Right now, no moving car is in sight. The one-way three-car-wide lane is empty. But, there were cars parked on-street and on the parking lot; for bicycles, in the rotary guard rail south of the station, there would be some standing along in this dream world.

"!! There ..."

There should be some bicycles left alone unlocked. I could go the to school with those. With bikes I could go on fast. I can rejoin Akeno in a hurry, and if some monster finds me perhaps I can run for it. At any rate, it's better than walking.

As I begin my search, I have found three unlocked bicycles. But they're dusty and totally worn-out, with extra warning stickers put on.

"Hm, at least a rider is in a far better state ..."

Perhaps, it's much easier to get one at the north exit of the station ---

"Oooii ---- !!"

"----- !!?"

I totally froze on hearing someone's voice. Not a monster's growl, it's a human call. Not Akeno's, not Valkyrie's, it's a deep male voice Are there more people within this world ... !?

A lad was coming down alone in the south exit stairs. With his head styled like a sea urchin, an oval face, a tapered jaw. Though his clothes are so tattered I can't recognize it at first, I can make out the Suijou Academy uniform markings.

"Hoshi!! Ain't that you Hoshi!"

"... eh ... Saitou ... ?"

Coming at me with a smile is Saitou Masanori, a young toughie the same year as me. Though there are special promotion courses set up in our school to devote our energies to studying them, it's a mammoth school anyway. If there are pins, there are dowels. There are bad guys too in the likes of Saitou.

"You were 'called' by this world, eh."

"Just like you."

We're not normally buddies, but it's another story if we meet suddenly in an uninhabited street. I smile naturally.

"It's nice to meet 'ya. I'm getting worried at being separated from my comrades."

"Me too, I'm getting lonely ... eh, what comrades?"

Are there other people besides us that see the same dream we're seeing?

"We'll chat later. First we change locations. It's dangerous here, we could get spotted by that monster."

Saitou shivered lightly as he scans the surroundings. For him to be vigilant, it's probably appropriate to think that there are other monsters in this dream besides the dragon.

"Well, how 'bout the convenience store?"

I pointed at the Clan Mart across the main street.

"Fine with me. I'm just getting hungry. We'll talk as I eat."



Within the agreeably air-conditioned store interior, Saitou spreads out the food on the floor in front of the register, sat down and began to speak. I too this time leave the payment behind. This made Saitou amazed, but I also left behind an amount roughly to how much he got.

"... after Massan, Homura-san. That makes us 5 in all"

"5 persons ... and 5 days before ..."

Saitou's group was originally a group of five young toughies, for them it's their fifth night in this dream. They have probably encounter many a monster on their way, the varieties ranging from dragons to slimes. This dream world is way bigger than we think otherwise.

"Well, the way we see it, monsters like that ain't that scary that all ..."

Saitou proudly gulps down a can of beer. For them with the ability to control the dream already in their hands, they would be using that to fight the monsters.

"It's way different unlike being a normal human; if you become a superhero, you'll be using ESP, or the way we see it, magic."

For me who's feeling frustration from the laser blade back there, I could only feel admiration.

"Is that so ... For example, what ability do you have? What can you do, Saitou?"

"M, me? Me, ... well it's ..., quite good. I can control fire at will. With only one

wave, I can turn a monster into a fire daruma."

"Really! Awesome. Let me see your power!"

"Eh, you want to see it?"

"Can't you do it?"

"Well, what can I say ... I can't control it. Even if I can bring down a monster, I can't even use it for a lighter ..."

"I see, you're saying it's impossible"

If we do some flashy fireworks in the narrow store, it would only end up burning buildings down. We do it outside, on the other hand, would only attract monsters and danger upon us.

"Anyway, I'm counting on you"

"Right, leave it to me"

Saitou struck his chest. It's usual to think of not mixing with toughies, but in this condition these guys are reliable.

"Anyway, from here on it's my call. I have a friend waiting for me so I must go for the school. Care to join me, Saitou?"

As we were eating and drinking, I think Akeno must have been feeling helpless. We can't stay here longer worrying.

"Can she use her powers?"

"Dunno. She's the same as me, trying out her powers tonight."

"Whether or not she can use it is a delicate matter, hmm ..."

"It would be fine if she can realize it, until then I can't help but protect her. Either way I just can't leave her behind. On the other hand, I can't use my powers. So please, Saitou, I ask of you."

" I know But I have my comrades to worry about, so I must find them quickly ... but where were they going I don't know."

Saitou lowered his back, considering on his answer, and entered the toilet diagonally opposite of the register. While he's inside, I'm thinking as I stuffed on

an egg sandwich. Only thoughts of Akeno crossed my mind. I'll be worried hearing Saitou's answer.

Until a while ago I recognized the next monster that I might encounter will perhaps only be a dragon again. That changed on hearing Saitou's story. As far as I'm concerned, I misjudged. Akeno could be waiting inside the school building by the school racks, but is it safe to say that she's in a safe place? For a monster with sharp senses, it could sniff out someone lurking inside a building. If that's the case, there is the possibility of stealth backfiring.

It's not limited to inside the school. It can happen even where I'm standing right now. If that dragon from last night would come busting in, that pane of glass would easily be brok ---

---- *sound of glass smashing*

I was taken aback by a violent smashing sound. One side of the glass barrier was broken, its countless fragments flying! From the darkness into inside the store, a black shadow comes flying ... !

"Wh ---"

For the shadow bringing down the display cases, it could only mean it's trying to take me down! As I tumble down the floor, I immediately slam into the counter, my breath leaving me, the stuff from the shelves all tumbling down in a loud noise.

"Oh shit ..."

I'm lucky that I'm not hurt for now. But my ominous feelings has come true, we've been quickly found out!

As I got myself up, I quickly checked what's inside the store. Some of the ceiling lights were broken, others were flickering. The monster must have been hit by the glass shards when it busted in. All of the display cases were knocked down to one side, its contents like cup ramen and toothbrush scattering on the floor.

And standing on them in the middle of the store is the monster. It's jet-black body is the size of a bull, and it has three heads! It's six ruby-like eyes were scanning the store interior.

"... Kerberos ..."

I've seen that name in either Western movies or video games. The three-headed dog from hell --- the one standing in front of me now, is just like what its popularly depicted.

It's growl, mingled with its breath, goes out from its three mouths in unison. It's canines would probably easily bite a human off. And with its tough muscles and protective fur, I don't think golf clubs, shiai, or saws would touch it.

"... Oh no ... this is scary ..."

We were scared by the unknown when we were attacked by the dragon last night, but tonight I can understand my situation. It can observe its opponent silently and meticulously. Hence, it's scary.

This one's different from the dragon. It is intelligent. Moreover it sees me merely as bait. Its six eyes are scanning me. Its eyes looks like it's simulating how will its prey moves and how to capture it.

But, my best choice is not to run away. I breathe deeply and,

"Saitou!! Help me, Saitou!!!!"

I shouted in a loud voice.

Kerberos growling

The Kerberos' menacing growl grew louder. Undaunted, I shout as loudly as I could.

"It's a monster! Now's the time to use your power!! Saitou, over here!!!!"

... But there's no reply. The toilet door remained closed, not moving even an inch.

"Saitou ..."

Why can't he come out? Can't he hear my voice? I'm sure he was there, Saitou!!!

Desperation overcame me. I don't have the power to take on this monster by myself. Without Saitou to rely on, I have to choice but to run for it. But where to run to?

I thought desperately. Get outside and I'm gone. No matter how much I struggle, this monster's way stronger than me. It will merely overtake me, and I'll be dinner for it in no time.

"... .."

This leaves running for the interior of the store. I straddle around the counter, ready to turn around and run for the back room. The dog's huge body can't go through the door. Then it's a matter of waiting for it to give up.

I've been thinking for about 2 or 3 seconds. At that interval, I've been aimed at.

Kerberos growling and attacking

With a roar, Kerberos jumps through the air!

"Tch ..."

I've jumped sideways instinctively! There's no time to go around behind the counter. But had I hid behind the counter, it would be smashed by the gargantuan dog's body blow, possibly crushing me to death.

The door to the back room has been closed. Should I run into the toilet room Saitou had just entered? Well, thanks to the downed shelves, goods about the floor, and broken glass on the floor, my foothold is at its worst. Going back there slowly would only tire me out. That leaves me only one alternative ---

"Guh ... !!!"

There's no time to hesitate. As Kerberos calmly rose from the crushed counter and scanned the corner, I made up my mind. From the store interior I made a mad dash for the main street!

I did not even look sideways. With all my strength I cross the main street. My eyes are set on Nanaobi station, south entrance. It is the only place I could run to!

Kerberos growling

A trio of howls strike at my back. It's the chaser's signal! It won't overtake me! I apply more power to my legs pushing at the ground ---

"eh ... uwaa!?"

I collapsed!

In my haste I twisted my leg. I fall down forward. Can't be helped, but my head would have been hit. Immediately bringing out my arms, my left wrist pained, every part of me from my left shoulder striking the asphalt!

"... when ..."

Of all things I would stumble in a situation like this! I was totally flattened. As I get up holding my left wrist with my right hand,

"----- gaa!!?"

I was immediately pinned down! My left foot is in sharp pain. My left calf's like being eaten by something. As I was lying face down I turn around to look at it,

Kerberos growling

Six eyes met my own eyes. It's right head (I'm seeing to the left) is biting down on my left foot ... !!!

"No"

It's lowered head began to rise. I've been dragged along, hanging upside down. At this rate, I think I'll be swallowed ---

****Kerberos biting****

It's mouth carelessly closed. **It's mouth where my foot is located** closes! It's thick fangs rip through the flesh and smash the bones of my foot!

"Aa aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!"

I quickly fell to the ground. Everything below my left shin is missing. Within the torn flesh I see the whites of the bones. As I was agonized from convulsing pain I roll over, trying to hold the injury with both of my hands, unable to stop the freely flowing blood at this rate.

"... .. shit"

Kerberos bites on the foot it has taken from me like a chewing gum. It has three heads. Soon its two remaining heads open their mouths. Their drool drips, saying "we want food".

****Kerberos growling again****

As the giant dog's front paw extends, I carelessly rolled about just like a ball a cat plays with. As I was already rolled down I was forcibly rolled up, its paw trampling down on my left shoulder. On hearing a snapping sound, I knew my shoulder's been dislocated.

"shit ... head ..."

I groan weakly. At a condition where I was pinned down by an overwhelming force, even I cannot move. Just like that, a face approaches me ...

... the Valkyrie will come save me again at this time if not I might die here right now for sure if I die in this dream I die in the real world Akeno ... at least only you

"... .."

To my rapidly darkening consciousness, only a small uncomfortable feeling it pulling it. There's something below my behind. It's not a pebble. It's hard, long, slender thing ... ah, it's my laser blade

... .. I'll do it one more time. This is the only thing that could save me from death. I'm not giving this one up even if the chances are low. I do not want to throw away alternatives for any reason. For only death awaits me should I give up ...

So I move my free right hand to my left side. Fumbling for the plastic grip, I brought out the blade from its holder.

Now show yourself, lightsaber! My last remaining hope! Even if for just this moment. Imagine with your mind bend this dream to my will! Bend this world to my will! Show me the light!

****Sakuya screaming****

With a painful scream, I swing my right arm! And in that instant,

****light saber humming and slashing****

A dazzling light surged out! As I thought "eh?" for an instant,

****Kerberos yelping****

An eardrum-splitting moan reverberated overhead! The Kerberos raises its

front paw high, and backs away from me. Did the light just now inflicted an injury to it?

As I wearily get up, I follow the giant dog. Then I saw. This is no injury. The middle and left heads, they feel like they're dead tired. In the joint of the left paw, I can roughly make out a slash mark entering it. But somehow, blood did not flow out.

****Kerberos howling****

The remaining right head howled with a sad look. Then it finally folded down, laying down on the ground. Is it ... dead?

"... .."

I stared at what my right hand is holding. Within the small plastic tube, only a chipped blade remains. Must have probably happened in an instant, but ---

"It can't be a dream or is it?"

In my confused head, I could only see a mere toy laser blade.

Part 01

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 3 - The trickster god rules - Part 1[[edit](#)]

A pale, gloomy light envelops the dead Kerberos' body. Just like what happened to the dragon. The remains turn into clusters of tiny lights, scattering into the night sky. Nothing remains of the behemoth ---

(... .. ?)

No, wait. "Traces" do remain. I didn't notice it last time as the Valkyrie picked me up, but with the Kerberos' defeat, a small dark mass remains. Just what is that, I wonder? I can't see it well ...

(... I can't see it well?)

Impossible. Even in the dead of the night, I'm in the main street. Street lights line up here. And they're even on with neon lights. But in spite of that, why is it getting dark?

(... I give up)

Which reminds me, my left foot's been eaten, my left shoulder's dislocated ... despite these fatal injuries, I strangely feel no pain at this time. My senses ... my consciousness ... they're fading.

My vision sinks into the darkness ---

... At this rate ... I'm going to ... die ...



As I open my eyelids, I'm back at my own room. I'm lying down at the top of my

bed, the Siamese cat Mi-ko sleeping soundly beside me. Somehow, it appears that I'm not in heaven.

"... I'm alive and back ..."

I can feel my left foot as before. My left shoulder feels no pain. With my left hand I touch Mi-ko. As she loudly yawned, she purred and jumped from the bed, swishing her lovely tail she went out through the already open door.

"Well, time to get up ... hm?"

My awake eyes stop on some unfamiliar objects. "Why is the saw, shiai, and golf club scattered on my bedside?", I thought for an instant. Ah I see, I placed them here myself.

"In the end, you alone was useful ..."

I pick up the laser blade placed by the bedside floor. Within the grey plastic tube, the blade that was broken in the dream appeared unbroken.

"Thanks, you saved me back there."

Giving my gratitude to this treasured item, I assure my feelings to the handle wrapped in my hands. With this I was able to defeat it. That three-headed monster. With only one attack ... !!

As I recall that time when I was at my utmost limit, I tightly grasped the toy's handle.

Part 02

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 3 - The trickster god rules - Part 2[[edit](#)]

June 27, Wednesday.

As the day's classes ended, I dashed hurriedly through the club building corridor, not for the tennis clubroom, but for the SF clubroom. As I promised Teru-san to report what I saw in my dream last night, I'm skipping tennis practice.

I know why my pace's quite fast. I'm pretty excited. Last night's event, the fear from Kerberos' attack, and from desperation to the sudden conclusion, I'm must report everything. I want Akeno and Teru-san to hear me out. ... Well, I want to boast everything what happened, but after considering it, I can't help but keep my emotions reined in. After all, I defeated the hell hound alone!

"I'm coming in!"

As soon as I arrive at the clubroom, I knock and immediately open the door ---

puppy barking

"Dowaaa!?"

On unexpectedly hearing a dog's bark, I miserably shouted, jumped up in surprise, and hit the floor on my backside.

"Oh?"

Rushing through the open door is a Shiba (still a puppy), its round eyes stared at me.

"Wh, what? You, how did you get in here?"

As I calm down my rapidly beating heart, and ask the pup, "I've brought it

here."

My head raised in confusion to the sudden reply. Akeno was sitting on the side bench, her chin resting on her hands, looking down to me.

"Akeno ... you saw?"

"Everything"

"... .."

Oh no, bad move -! This is humiliating -!!

"This is surprising. Sakuya hates dogs?"

Ah -- yeah. Right. From Akeno's looks, I'm sure it looks like I was surprised by a puppy and clumsily falling myself flat. Dammit --!

"Uh, it's an misunderstanding. It doesn't mean I don't like dogs, I'm thinking about what to talk about next ---"

"Yes, yes, I want to hear it from you. But for now, when will you get up?"

"... .."

Akeno walked near me and picked up the pup. More like "removed" in front of me. This has nothing to do with me being afraid of dogs or being struck silent. Explaining and making excuses would only led to tears. So I shut my mouth and let myself up, brushing off the dust from my backside.

I again enter the room. As the clubroom space is narrow from door to table, Akeno place the puppy in a cardboard box in the corner. As I prepare to ask that question, "Have you seen last night's dream?"

Akeno asked ahead.

"Yeah, I've seen it. Listen, I ---"

As I nodded, Akeno sweetly smiled and then,

"-- keru *Sakuya was interrupted*"

I was slapped mercilessly!

"Owww ...!! What was that for!"

"How dare you totally forgot yesterday!"

From that sweet smile, Akeno now glared at me, her face that of total anger.

"You made me wait in vain, where you've been wandering to! I hate boys who break their promises --- !!"

Oh no! I was so into the fight with Kerberos that I totally forgot our promise ...!

"I've been waiting all throughout! And you didn't come no matter how much time passes. I was so worried that something might happen ... and yet, you show yourself with that carefree look!"

"S, sorry ..."

I have no choice but to apologize. I have my excuses, but I made Akeno worry too much, so maybe I should reconsider. Maybe I should have mailed her first thing in the morning.

Nonetheless, even with her dreadful and threatening attitude, to hear her say "I was so worried about you", I'm so happy.

"What's with you grinning! I'm mad right now! Apologize!"

"I, I apologize. Sorry for making you worry. but it's okay, you see I'm this lively since,"

"Since?"

"Thank you for your concern to me. And I'm glad to see you safe and sound."

"... geez, even your thanks ... you sound suspicious ..."

As Akeno frowned, she turned away pouting. For now it seems her anger has subsided. Going beside where she's squatting beside the box, I too squatted down.

This pup is probably been 6 months old. It's head tilted looking at to me.

"Oh, it's cute ..."

Mi-ko may be a beauty in our house, but this pup's lovable for that reason. Perhaps I should tickle it As I reach out to brush gently its head, the pup narrowed its eyes, feeling content.

"? Sakuya, I thought you don't like dogs?"

"I told you it was a misunderstanding. What happened last time was a series of bad timings. I really like dogs."

"Is that so ..."

To my explanation, Akeno, after doing like she's thinking of something, "Hey, can you keep this puppy?"

"... .. Ha?"

She made an unexpected proposal.

"What do you mean? You'll be the one keeping this pup ..."

"I've found it on my way to school"

"So, you picked it up so you would keep it ... ?"

Akeno lowered her eyes, and shook her head.

"Pets are prohibited in the apartment ... my home"

"Eh ... then why did you pick up the pup?"

I can't help but ask that.

"... But, somehow ... I can't leave the pup alone ..."

"... .."

"B, but I can't help it. It's eyes are looking at me. And it's barking at me like it's lonely."

Akeno looks like she's about to cry. I've never thought she would pick up a stray dog with such an impulsive reason. "You're no longer an elementary student" ... somehow I manage to swallow those words already in my throat.

"Well, what do you think, Sakuya?"

"Sorry, but I have a cat at home. I don't have the luxury to raise another pet."

"... I see"

Uh, don't show me that sad look. I've said my reasons without doubt.
Speaking of which.

"We must return the puppy to where you picked it up first."

"! No!!"

"You said 'No' Then what you're going to do. Think you can keep it at your home?"

"Truth is, I can't raise him without running into trouble, but I don't want to throw the puppy again We must find someone who can take care of it."

She says that clearly. In her eyes lie that single-minded will.

She may act like an adult, but now in front of my eyes she's still only a kid. The genuine side she usually does not display, it's right in front of my eyes

I was driven by the urge to respond to the girl's feelings, and yet I stood my ground, uncertain. What a disadvantageous role for me

"What will you do until we find some to take care of the pup?"

"That ... we'll place it here, I think it's safe here but ..."

"Sorry, but no can do."

"No way ... !? Why with those ill words?"

"I'm not saying anything bad! It's already end of June, summer's near. To shut the pup in a hot and humid room would be torture, don't you think? Besides ---"

In a way, it's a perfect timing. The door suddenly opened and Teru-san entered.

"Ya, you two going together ---"

Teru-san smiles at us, but then his face crumples.

"---*sneeze, cough, sneeze*...!!"

He's sneezing continuously. And it appears it's not stopping anytime.

"Eh, Hiruma-senpai !?"

"Teru-san, let's go out --!?"

I push Teru-san hurriedly out of the room, and just to be sure I moved him several meters from the door.

"You all right?"

"Y, yeah. Somehow Hoshi-kun, it can't be that now ..."

As Teru-san was still teary-eyed, he blows loudly through his nose with his handkerchief from his trousers.

That's right, this is the reason why I can't leave a puppy in the SF clubroom. Teru-san's severely allergic to dogs.

Before we could even report to Teru-san about our dream, we have to something about the pup. For now, we have Teru-san wait at the cafeteria, and fortunate that we found Seki-kun (SF member A) to take care of the clubroom, its windows and doors all open, Akeno and I carried the box with the puppy out of the clubroom.

"... .."

As we walk out of the clubroom building, Akeno was stiff silent. I followed stiffly too, just like following a death row convict on his way to the gallows, unable to offer significant words; like this we arrived at our destination.

"... .. um, this should do it"

I led Akeno to the back of the building where a small forest is located. Though we had stepped on the grass, we placed the box in a thicket away from where people might walk through.

"Here it is hidden from the pathway, and few people pass here, I don't think we have to worry about the pup being found. Even for this puppy, it is a more agreeable place than the clubroom. Well?"

I turn to Akeno. For some reason, Akeno turned and looked at me in an absent-minded face.

"Akeno?"

"Ah, un ... no doubt about it, we're abandoning this puppy here ..."

Ah--, so you're demoralized. Surely, it can't be helped but to think about it but ...

"But for me, it doesn't mean that I'm all for abandoning it. So, you think you're "not really abandoning it"? If that's that case you've just done it."

To put Akeno in ease, I showed my smiling face.

"... .. thanks, Sakuya"

Her smiling face lasted only a second, but in spite of my failure I felt my heart beat faster.

"W, whoa! What's with the face ..."

"Eh? Is my face weird to you?"

"It's not weird. It's cute, you know."

I'm expecting Akeno to be disgusted at my "cute" words and react with a "are you an idiot?" type of reaction but, "Eh ...?"

Akeno was both speechless and blushing. To see an expression up front, I'm worried!

"No ..., well I'm only kidding. Just forget it."

"... uh, uh huh ..."

To have to deny especially something, it's awkward. As we fall to a delicate silence, I said something in haste.

"Anyway, in truth, that was unexpected. For you to be kind to this pup until the end, you know. You really like dogs, do you?"

"You could say I like ... yeah, I like dogs."

Akeno slowly closed her eyes, nodding to my question.

"... .. well, I have something to say ---"

"--- when I was small, I met a puppy. In the corner of a park, in a cardboard box just like this Once I tried to take it home, only for my mom to immediately scold me, telling me to take it back to where it belongs. Nevertheless I didn't leave it alone, feeding it as I return from school. Leftovers from my lunchbox, you know."

"I was still an immature kid back then, so I thought this would last forever. ... Yeah, I did not think that the end to this relationship would come."

"One day, as I pass by the park just as usual, the dog wasn't there. Only the

cardboard box and the plate where I left the food remained. I searched. Day after day, after school until darkness falls I searched. But I failed to find the dog..."

"I don't know how the dog went missing. Maybe it was carried off to a dog shelter or it went off on its own or someone else picked it up ..."



"Why am I obsessed over this puppy even is a mystery for me ... but yeah, every time I remember my past, I would come across the image of this pup---"

As Akeno finished her words, she squats and pats gently the pup on the head.

"Now I see. For that, even I can understand that you want to find out where the puppy went to."

I've felt Akeno's words. Even if I haven't experienced it, I can understand this girl's feelings.

A puppy she adored suddenly disappeared. Akeno probably was worried sick about it. As the days pass by without getting any clear answers, today was a simulation to her past revealed That Akeno thinking she would get her answer from the puppy, that is not at all surprising. So, "If you don't mind, can I join you? If you can't find someone to take this pup in, I think I can help you find one. Just say the word, Akeno"

"Thank you, Sakuya"

Akeno gently smiles. Unable to see her cute face without being taken aback, I move my gaze to the puppy. It looked back at me with an innocent look.

Part 03

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 3 - The trickster god rules - Part 3[[edit](#)]

Once we left the puppy in the grounds behind the club building, Akeno and I head back to the student canteen and joined up with Teru-san. Though Akeno tried to apologize for bringing in the puppy to the clubroom, Teru-san cheerfully brushed it aside.

As this was after-school hours, the bustle at canteen was breaking up. In the space with 150 chairs with room to spare, we are only three that is considered at a 4-man group. As we take up both sides of a table, the silence inside the canteen stretches out. But then, an hour will pass and the students, hungry from their club work, will probably come bustling in.

"Well, shall we begin."

Teru-san, looking across, just said that to Akeno and I, sitting at the other side just like an interview.

"First off, did you two see the usual dream? ... I mean, the state you've seen, you know?"

"Yes, I saw it. But last night, I was unable to meet Sakuya, so I could not say if we saw the same dream, but ... for me I think it's the same dream."

"I concur, too. With the monster prowling around the deserted street in my lucid dream, no doubt it's that strange dream."

"For you two to see this rare dream, this means that both of you are on the mark."

"For it to occur 3 times in a row, we cannot say this is only mere chance, you know ..."

"So for now we better discard the notion that this is a dream you're seeing. From now on your objective and challenge is to be sure not to see this dream. Got it?"

"OK"

Akeno and I nodded back to Teru-san in unison.

"Next question. Did you follow my advice? Were you able to bring something into your dream?"

Both of us nod at the same time.

"Was it useful? Did your imagination saved you?"

Once again we nod. On seeing this Teru-san was surprised.

"Really--!! The power of the word really is strong---! For me I only harbor varying feelings of "what if". Well can I hear those details out? From Kasugamori first."

"I brought in the magical wand and the toy handgun me and my brother used to play with when we were little. But I could not use magic with my wand. But then --"

Out from her bag, Akeno brought out a single handgun. She placed it on the top of the table with a heavy *thud* sound. My eyes were suspicious of its exquisite detail.

"Eh, no way ... this not the real thing ... right?"

"It's a real airgun! It fires BB rounds using high-pressure gas."

"So this is a fake then I thought at first it was real ..."

I request Akeno to hand it to me. It really is heavy on my hand, probably no less than 500grams. For a test run I aimed with it, "No, Sakuya-kun! Don't point its muzzle at anyone, and don't place your finger at its trigger! It maybe an air gun, but its power can take out an eye if you hit someone ---"

Teru-san was unusually severe with his warning.

"S, sorry. I'll be careful next time ..."

I dejectedly place back the gun in the table. Then Teru-san picked it up.

"Hm, an M9. Looks like it changed a bit, you know. I wonder if it's the maker's original model"

"e-mu-na-i-n?"

"Yup, this handgun's nickname. It's a popular handgun, you know. Police and army forces around the world use this. As this was popular too in movies and games, I'm careful in examining this though this is my chance."

As he said that, he aimed that the wall. His right index finger was not inserted into the trigger. Though Teru-san is not athletic, he looks awesome in that form.

"I see, this really was helpful It's helpful to you since the real thing came from this model, imagining it would probably be easy."

"That's right. I thought nothing in particular but its power became that of the real thing I could use this to defend myself from monsters."

"That I would agree"

Teru-san returns the handgun to Akeno, and she placed it back into her bag.

"It's my turn next. This is what I brought in ..."

As I bring out the laser blade from it's bag, I told them what happened in my dream. Finally the time I've been waiting for is here! I triumphantly told -- especially during when I was followed by Kerberos and its sudden conclusion in minute detail, But somehow, something was awkward. Instead of applause from them two they felt I was doing something bad. Akeno was somehow going pale and depressed.

"Excuse me, Sakuya I can see that it's a bad experience ... but, I can only see you boasting ... I'm really sorry ..."

I hang my head in shame. Hey, wait, that's not the reaction I'm expecting-!!

"B-but I'm safe! Here, look at me, am I lively? My legs ... they aren't any injuries left behind. That was totally an incident within the dream. I'm my die there, but I'm not totally dead ... maybe"

Can't help but follow that up. But even that is probably unacceptable to Teru-san, with his severe expression and all.

"Don't rest easy yet, Hoshi-kun. You maybe lucky this time. With strong autosuggestion, real injuries sometimes do leave behind the body."

"N, no way. Don't scare my like that ..."

"It's actually a well-known phenomenon. It could be a case of 'stigmata', well, the details are sketchy, but I have little doubt that injuries you receive in the dream could be transferred to your real bodies. I want you two to be aware of the senseless situation."

"Ah we'll keep that in mind ..."

"The body may not be really injured, but in that lucid dream the mind is an half-awake state, so it is suspect to pain stimuli. In other words, the mind is burdened. Needless to to say, too much burden will hurt, doesn't it? It maybe is a dream, but I want you two to refrain from rash action."

Well, I don't have a death wish, you know

Anyhow, with Teru-san in sermon mode and Akeno worried, I was depressed. A suffocating silence follows. Teru-san lifted up his glasses and rubs his eyes; as he lowers his glasses his usual loose expression returned.

"Let's continue. I'm interested with Saitou-kun. If what you say is true, there are five others besides you that see the same dream."

"Furthermore, they're ahead of us, you know"

"Until now, the probability of you two seeing the same dream by chance was strong. But now, it's better to consider other factors."

"Is it possible that we were called into someone else's dream?"

"That possibility, or put it another way, you two have begun the journey into the astral state, is something I cannot deny."

"A-su-to-ra-ru what?"

"Well it's what they call the spirit world. I've been trying to stay away from that topic ... but I'm certain that there are certain conditions to fulfill ..."

Unwilling to delve into the occult, Teru-san can only scratch his head.

"Anyway. At least you two are not the masterminds of this dream. If that's the

case, though it could be a lucid dream, it could be the reason you were unable to control like you wanted --- for example, flying through the sky."

"Is that so? We may not fly through the sky, but how come I was able to use a laser blade?"

"I thought so too. So that means you could act on your own will. And it's not limited to normal actions. In other words, your astral bodies ... not only that, your "ego", is preserved. Hoshi-kun using his laser blade is one. Probably the power of control."

"Sorry, I can't get you ..."

"Ah ... then I'll make it easy for you ..."

Reaching into his own bag, Teru-san drew out a DVD case. I knew all too well its package. Akeno though read out the title.

"Neverending Fantasy 13 ... isn't that a video game?"

"Right, a video game. And it's a MMORPG. You were the characters of the "Nightmare" world. Each character has its own equipment and abilities, and you could go around the field as you wish. You enter combat once you encounter monsters."

"So that's it That's as far as we can do, but does that mean we cannot break the rules of the game?"

"Just like you said it. But it's only an example ---"

"Yo!"

A low voice interrupted Teru-san's speech. Just who? Looking at the source, some rude-looking guys are approaching.

"Saitou"

"Yo, Hoshi! I see you're OK"

With Saitou, are four of his probably fellow delinquents. I see so they are his colleagues he's talking about. Every one of them has a poor getup. Or should I say, Saito is the best-looking among them. But though I can't say the same to his fellows, they're in no mood for friendly chitchat. On the contrary I have to be

on guard.

"Homura-san, that's Hoshi"

Saitou turns a mean smile to one companion. A bossy ruffled, red-haired lad. He's probably approaching 190cm the way I look at him. With bulky shoulders and chest, and an intimidating air about him. Even me as a normal student knows Homura's name.

Homura Takeru, 2nd year high school. He's the boss of the delinquents of Suijou Academy. Different from mere brats with excessive youth and vigor, I remember he's the type who enjoys immoral acts (especially mayhem). Despite of rumors telling of Homura-san stirring up incidents again and again inside and outside school, both the school and police turn a blind eye to it. I think they totally shut up probably because Homura's father is a Diet member or an attorney or something.

"You Saitou's talk's maybe useless, but you use the 'power' ?"

Homura looks down to me with an inquisitive eye. It's scary, in fact. And I can't turn away from him.

"Y, yes I can use it one way or the other"

Just what is his objective? Am I the one they're looking for? I'm not joining them if that's the case

"Hm? What kind of power?"

"Laser blade ..."

"Laser blade? Hahahah!! Ain't that cool! Was it strong?"

"Might be. Since I haven't see other people's power I'm not ..."

"The hell with other people! I only care if you can fight"

"I can fight. If I can do it, I have the power to bring down a monster with a single blow."

I assert that since it's true. Homura turned his admiring face to his underlings, "You hear that? One strike! Ain't that good. At least he's good for somethin'. Right, Saitou?"

"F, forgive me, Homura-san ..."

Saitou replies with a weak smile to Homura-san and other's sneers. Hey, wait. Does it mean Saitou was unable to use fire? Did he keep it a secret to his fellows? Or did he lie to it? Either way better to stay silent ---

"--hat? What's so strange?"

Did he see through me ...!? I probably changed my expression a bit and yet, he's sharp-eyed to see it

"Ah, well ... I heard from Saitou about fire manipulation ..."

I tell that because I'm not here to cover Saitou to the point where I offend Homura. Homura and others look down at Saitou with dumbstruck looks, as Saitou went pale.

"Ah, ... yeah, that was a misunderstanding ---"

"Ah, so you're showing off ... YOU BITCH!!!"

With that Homura's knee went into Saitou's stomach. Saitou groaned a bit before he went down on his knees. Behind me I heard Akeno stifling her scream.

"What fire you talkin' about! You useless shit!"

As Homura mercilessly stomped on Saitou at the back of his head, Homura glares at me.

"Don't tell me you bastard believe his shit for words. This garbage can't use anything. You got that?"

"U ... understood ..."

I only nodded in awe. Homura looks down one more time at Saitou in contempt, removing his foot from Saitou's head. Then he looked over my shoulder to Akeno.

"You, name? Can you use the "power"?"

"Kasugamori Akeno I use a gun"

"A gun? That power too is cool ..."

Homura nods in assent, then looked at Teru-san. Suddenly noticing, Teru-san

places both arms on the table, rounds his back and lowers his face, becoming shut-in. There Homura pierces him with his blood-thirsty eyes.

"Bitch, just what the fuck are you doin' there a' while ago, hah?"

"! S, sorry. But I don't think I'm interfering with you ... I'm here only for idle chitchat ..."

Teru-san snaps his head up, revealing a forced smile. I didn't know Teru-san can be this meek.

"Tch, it's that pipsqueak Hiruma"

Homura clicked his tongue contemptuously. Those two, they knew each other. That was unexpected.

"Sorry to disturb you. I'll just go somewhere ..."

Teru-san hurriedly rises. Looks like he's getting away from here. But Homura won't let it.

"Fuck you! Who told you to move?"

Told off, Teru-san lowered himself again to his chair. Those two, they're like snakes and frogs.

"Then the fuck you're here if have no business? You related or somethin' ?"

"That ... I'm in no way related to everyone here that can see that dream ..."

"Hah? The hell you call that chitchat!"

"I ... I only met Hoshi-kun by chance and from there we talk about it ----"

"You heard and nosed around --- !!"

"Hii, s, sorry ..."

"Fuck your excuses! You think you're already out, huh? I'm getting tired, you fuck!!"

Homura goes around from beside me. Word by word, step by step, he sidles up to Teru-san. He corners Teru-san. In an instant, the atmosphere changes. Aren't we talking about the dream here ...? Even as I was confused Homura walked up to Teru-san's side and, "You're dead, bitch ...!!!"

"Gah --- !?"

Teru-san was grabbed on the cheeks with only one hand, and was lifted up. Forcing him to stand up. His glasses slide off and fall down to the floor. With his mouth blocked by Homura's hand, his screams are reduced to only mumbles.

"No screams for you. Think you can spit on my hand -- eh?"

As Homura looks on piercingly, I'm sure from his voice he's clearly enjoying it. There no time for awe, someone has to stop Homura!

In my opinion, Homura is scary. If I were Teru-san right now I might be powerless. I'm sure it would be scary. But, for this reason, I'm not letting like this happen to my friends!

"Enough ... !!"

I stood up shouting sharply.

I looked at the two toughies grinning, and their smiles instantly disappeared. Looks like from their eyes that they don't believe it. From Homura's view, it was probably a very rash action. Nevertheless, they can't ignore me!

"The hell ...?"

Homura slowly turns to me. As I feel my stomach tighten, I clearly say it.

"Get your hands off Teru-san"

"The fuck's that for?"

"He's in pain!"

"Oooh, he's in pain"

Homura says that shamelessly. I have no reply for that. For him to see his opponent in pain, he sees no reason for letting him go from pain. So, he can't be convinced aside from violence. So how can I go persuade him? Is words useless for him? Should I tear him off with all my might?

I was puzzled. Homura stood there calmly. While Teru-san continues to struggle ...

I got it. My breath quickens. My fist tightens with power. My heartbeat is increasingly violent, aiding my fighting spirit ---

"You guys are ugly"

With Akeno's word, I was calmed down in an instant from the verge of rage. Akeno too stood up beside me, glaring at Homura.

"What you're doing is mere bullying! That's not something the strong does. It's cruel, clumsy and ugly, let him go."

She said it! With those scathing words, even the toughies are speechless. Homura was staring dumbfounded at Akeno from the start, but then, "... ... hahahahahah!! So, it is bad huh. That's uncool, hah!"

With a happy smile, his hand lets go of Teru-san!

Teru-san crouched on the floor, coughing. Homura banged his hand on the table, his body towering, and approached to Akeno's side fast!

"Akeno!"

I immediately grabbed Akeno's shoulders and pulled her behind me, protecting her.

"Outta my way!"

Homura listlessly swings his right arm! I immediately bring up my left arm to guard my head, but his arm is too strong, so I was forcefully pushed aside, and I slammed into the wall before going halfway down!

"Guh, uhhh ..."

In an instant I have trouble breathing, and my body went down as I cough. Such strength

Homura brings up Akeno's cheeks, and he brings it close to him as if to kiss her. But Akeno was not the one to lose. In an instant the muzzle of her airgun was dead center in his left eye! Close enough to touch the eyelashes should he blink. Akeno's finger is in the trigger.

"You threaten me with a toy?"

"A toy, true, but it can destroy your retina."

"Care to say what will they think of you afterward?"

"They will probably think I'm the hero that made you lose an eye."

A tense silence follows. Homura stared at Akeno for several seconds.

"Hahahahahahahah!!!"

He lets go of her.

"I like it! You're good, girl. You're mine"

"Excuse me. I'm not interested with you."

"Is that so! That's too bad ..."

Shoulders quaking in laughter, he passes by Akeno's side "I'll see you in the dream."

On saying that, the toughies pull out, and left the canteen.

Akeno turned her back to them, without shaking. Or so I thought "... .."

Like a marionette with strings cut, she dropped down the floor.

"Are you all right, Akeno?"

"Hm, I'm okay just a sudden loosening-up Th, that was scary"

As a dry laugh escapes from her, she looks up at me with teary eyes.

"Can you stand?"

"Can't, I'm drawn out I'll be here for a bit. You go over to Teru-san first ..."

"Got it"

I went around the table. Teru-san is still crouching on the floor. His hands earnestly hold his glasses. It was trampled on by Homura, its lenses cracked, its frame bent, already rendered useless.

"... .. I'm useless ..."

He murmurs as his shoulders shake.

"I can't go against them. Not with even a square conversation quaking, groveling, smiling, just to put up with his bullying ... I am this weak ..."

"That ... was Akeno's not real way of talking. She had to talk like that. Truth was she's in no condition to admonish like that ..."

"I knew that, I knew that! It's wrong to bear a grudge against her. She saved me. That I'm thankful. It's just that I hate myself With this much, I'm only a miserable self that can't even go against them"

"Teru-san ..."

"Go, Hoshi-kun. Leave me ... alone ..."

He's probably crying, I can hear him sniffing. I should be embracing him, but I obeyed him in the end.

Quietly leaving him crying on his spot, I take Akeno's hand and leave the canteen.

Part 04

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 3 - The trickster god rules - Part 4[[edit](#)]

Then the night came.

June 28, Thursday. 0214H.

Even at this time, The neon lights near the station are alight. From Nanaobi Station north entrance towards the main street, no moving cars nor people are in sight.

Above the pedestrian deck, our meeting spot was below the famous clock tower; as I spot Akeno coming, I rushed over to her as I call her out.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. Did you wait?"

"No, I just arrived. I think about 5 minutes ago."

"I see. It's good we met that quickly"

One look and you could say its a simulated scene of a date. Too bad, but the truth is different.

"Didn't you encounter monsters?"

"Lucky I didn't encounter any. Speaking of encounter rates, just because there are lots of monsters doesn't mean they swarm on us. How about you, Akeno?"

"I didn't encounter any but ... "they" are in the school"

Akeno stared at the ground with a pained expression. "They" ... it's Homura and gang.

"Striking them from the back is fine"

"Hey hey, no heroics. And at least stick with me at all time"

"Ara, I'm that unreliable"

"Well, it doesn't mean I especially want to slug it out against them. What I meant is do no rash actions on your own."

Even on those words, Akeno only hmph'ed. Looks like she's really offended against Homura and gang.

"Even I can't forgive Homura and his gang. But in this dream there are more pressing matters than taking them down, right?"

"All right, all right. Let's go"

Akeno walked with a sullen look, and I followed her in confusion.

Leaving the Nanaobi station via the south exit, we looked around for abandoned bicycles, taking one each. Next we entered the convenience store, planning our next course as we ate, before we head out into the dark streets.

By the way this is the store where I talked with Saitou last night, where the Kerberos attacked last night. Proof of total devastation was nowhere to be found and the store was restored as before.

Also, this time I didn't pay at the counter. My heart pained for a bit, but as we were told by Teru-san that "as game characters we are to raid it and take everything we need", I gave in. Yeah.

In line with Teru-san's advice, we follow our course of action according to our objective. Our objective of course is to be not called into this dream again. Though, we don't have the slightest idea on how to go about this. For now our objective is to find it.

Then, our first stage of information gathering is to understand this "field" called the "Nightmare". What are the extents of this "field"?

How to approach the limits of this "field"? It's virtually impossible to do that by foot. Who knows we might not hit the bounds, or we might hit a precipitous cliff, or we might actually be in the Jurassic age. There are too many exits, but we can't just ignore them all.

With a map and a flashlight from the convenience store and stored in the bike's basket, we earnestly head south. With no running cars, traffic rules are

useless, and we cycle on full speed.

If this happens normally it's exhilarating Too bad both Akeno and I are expressionless and exchange no conversation. Thoughts of Homura and his gang hover on our hearts. Within it is our boiling anger.

After the canteen incident, we continued our meeting with Teru-san at the SF clubroom. Simply put, Teru-san is being bullied by Homura and his gang. We heard rumors that special course students earning stipends from the school are the victims of toughies, but we thought we haven't seen that fact.

And now that was then. As Homura was from a prominent family, money was no problem for him. To probably amuse himself he resorts to threats. After extorting the money, he would even burn it in front of one's eyes, Teru spoke.

I rebuked Akeno a while ago, but should I encounter them alone I would probably attack them without fail. Teaching Homura and his gang a lesson in the real world is difficult. But in the nightmare, I have the power to oppose them. Also, it would not trouble me dealing them and inordinate amount of injury. Nothing would stop me from those evil thoughts growing within me

"Sakuya ..."

We must have been running for 1 hour. I was suddenly snapped awake by Akeno's voice. Trailing behind me, she stopped her bike once she passed by me. I lined up beside beside her.

"We've been going through south, right?"

"True. We've been passing through the same road from the station through and through without any turns."

"That road, too, didn't bend or anything right?"

"Even if we stray from our direction a bit, we should be going southwest. At least this road does not go in a northern or easterly direction."

"Well, what's that ... ?"

Akeno pointed ahead with a stiff face. The station's there, buildings clustered together, neons brightly alight. Ahead of the station the pedestrian deck extends, and the clock tower landmark ----

"Clock tower ... !? No way that's impossible ..."

Struck with terror I scan the buildings again. Their layout, together with the neon lights, I remember them all to well.

"It seems we've returned, all right ..."

No doubt about it. After biking hard, we arrived at our starting point, Nanaobi station.

"We left at the south entrance, went straight south, and arrived at the north entrance ... ?"

"Let's check the map"

Stopping below the pedestrian deck, we climbed the stairs. Sitting on the bench beside the clock tower, we spread out the map.

"Through prefectural road 2, we must have passed by Hamada Denki. From there ..."

"Before we knew it we entered through the north national highway. Ah, I think I remember seeing the Home Center somewhere ..."

As we jog through our memories we mark our map with a red pen. Our marks may disappear when we wake up from this dream, but in this instant we don't think our memories were useless. Should we wake up the next morning I would check using a real map, and compare it with Akeno at school.

"We pass through the south end, we end up at the north end Very funny, it really is a video game. Likewise we pass through the east end and we might end up at the west end."

"This means, we can't go outside the fixed boundaries.?"

"It's highly possible. But it's too early to say it."

"If it were the case, then there is no way to escape from this dream ..."

"Merely passing through the exits is not the solution. Instead, in most video games, taking down the 'last boss' is the clearing condition."

"Last boss?"

"Something like the boss of the monsters. If we take it down, this game will

end, and we would be released --- that possibility is very likely --- I think"

There are lots of games though without any last bosses (just like online games), and then there's the more worrying Battle Royal-type games (player-vs-player combat) As I was to inform Akeno both of those strong guesses,

"Correct"

Out from a nowhere a voice sounded. A male? A female? It sounded like neutral.

"Who's there ... !?"

I draw out my laser blade from my back and scan the surroundings. Akeno too draws out her handgun from her side holster ... and her skirt turns inside out! As her holster is partly hidden underneath her skirt, should she draw out her gun her skirt would partly turn inside out, no doubt about it ... but how distracting. I was almost enchanted by it

Regaining my control, I again search for signs of the owner of the voice. There! From behind the clock tower, out of the darkness, an almost dissolving shadow of a person comes walking along.

"It" was wrapped from head to toe with a pale red robe. We cannot tell from there "its" face, physique or gender. Truth be told, it's a totally different outfit

"No need to stand ready. I have no intention of endangering you, you know."

"It" addresses us in a good-natured tone. True to word, we cannot feel any hostility or intimidation from "it". Even as I calm down, I dare not take my eyes off on what could be hidden on the robe.

"Fine by me. But sorry, I'm not the type who trusts persons who doesn't show their faces."

"Sorry, about this getup. I still can't decide on my face, you know"

"Can't decide your face ... ?"

"Yeah, right now my face is kinda featureless. So even if I show it to you, you wouldn't be able to see me."

"... .."

For this very erratic reason, I'm too embarrassed to reply. I could barely make out the markings of its mouth from beneath the robe, but I wonder what was above the nose ... ?

"You may feel uncomfortable. But my face or name has no particular meaning, you know. In this world (Nightmare), only my role and power (status) matters ..."

That line ... it's the same as that of the Valkyrie. Just who the hell ---

"My name's Loki. This game's 'boss'."

Its tone is so casual, I almost childishly nodded back in assent. But, hey wait! I can't overlook this. Just what it's said now ... ?

"I really am the creator of this nightmare. You take me down, this game ends."

"Are you seriously saying ... ?"

"I'm serious. It's up to you to believe me or not though."

"If what you're saying is true ... what were you thinking? You to be 'taken down' ..."

"Normally, I just wanted to have fun with everyone. But it's an uninhabited town anyway, right? It doesn't mean though that no villager teaches the demon. "When will you on your own power probably reach me?" --- that thought alone made me worry. Thus I went ahead and came up with this. Merely waiting is boring, you know."

It looks like a friendly chat with a classmate. But I'm not into the mood. "It" is saying something unthinkable.

"So you're the culprit of this nightmare? Why bring us into this?"

"Lately, I'm getting bored as hell. I only wished for playmates. Well? It should be quite enjoyable."

"Too bad, but I'm not enjoying. Truth is, we're annoyed as hell. Just let us go. And don't call us back again."

I complain in earnest. If it's the master of this dream, it should be able to let us go on its own power. As I thought, Loki's answer is,

"Yada"

Just a single word.

And it's a resolute, sentimental answer. Its open mouth remained unclosed. As Loki swings its head, it points its index finger up.

"This is a game. I meticulously prepared its rules, so I don't want you usurping it."

"So taking you down is fine?"

"If you can take me down."

Loki left his mouth hanging. If that's the case, bring it on! The answer came from the boss itself. The chance right now is too good to pass up.

I concentrated my consciousness on the laser blade on my hand. Soon the plastic toy turns to metal, weighing on my hand. From the tip of the handle, a beam of light extends, forming a blue-green edge. The surrounding air crackles. Just as I had envisioned. Before meeting up with Akeno I practiced; that was the effect.

"Good. I'm thrilled"

As Loki laughed joyfully, it jumped softly! Flying lightly overhead, it descends in front of the station building, beside the pedestrian deck. With such mobile ability, it is no human

As we stood dumbstruck Loki snaps its fingers. Then, suddenly out from nowhere, the sounds of dry bone rustling began.

"What's that ..."

We scan left and right, but we can't find anything suspicious. no, below!

From both sides of the fence the source of the sound appears. It's crawling on the ground. One, two, three there's more of them ... !?

"..... !!!?"

As soon as the street lights illuminated their true forms, Akeno could only scream. They're as big as a grown man, flat, covered in a brown shell, and has six legs and two cylindrical things for sensing ----- to put it simply, giant

cockroaches! And there are more than 10 of them ... !!

Sakuya shivering

I know I'm getting goosebumps. And I'm still fine. But Akeno, even in the night, is trembling and her face turning pale. She's breathing roughly through her feebly opened mouth. she's showing some very bad signs.

"Akeno, calm ----"

Akeno screaming

My words are drowned out by her scream. Akeno was readying her gun, her eyes unfocused. Shit! --- I reflexively hit the deck,

gun blast

Overhead, an ear-splitting roar resounded!

gun blast gun blast gun blast

Four, five, six shots in succession ... how many does she intend to fire ... !?

Akeno screaming some more

Akeno keeps on firing as she screams. The sound of gunfire keeps on ringing. Ten shots ... twenty ... thirty ... !? That's one bottomless clip! A real gun would have already been out of bullets by that time.

As it is, even I am pinned down. And I can't even raise my head. I cannot confirm what happened. Unless Akeno is not stopped

"Ake---"

"Stay back!!! Get away !!!!!!"

Uwah, it's no good. My voice cannot reach her. She's totally into it, no matter how loud I go. It will take me a lot of lung power If words won't do then I'll have to take action. Though taking her down from the front is like taking on a hornet's nest. For once, I went around.

Since my will has been drastically deflated, the laser blade returned to its original toy form. With it on one hand, crawling along the bricks, and my eyes on Akeno's shoes, I went in a circuitous route. From the sidelines I was sure I look like an idiot, although it's for my own safety. Moving along until I was onto

Akeno's heels and able to grab her, I looked above to make sure no bullets were flying overhead ---

Sakuya choking

As I look up I saw completely inside Akeno's skirt. In hot haste I lowered my head to her heels. Polka dots.

"Akeno !!"

Resolving myself to tackle her down I stand up and embrace her from behind.

"Kya----"

"It's me, Sakuya!!"

Before she could be surprised and act violently, I tell her that.

"It's okay ... it's all right ..."

"... hah, haah hah ..."

From her overly stiff body, I can feel her excess power going out. Her gun arm slowly lowers.

I looked around over Akeno's shoulders. To calm her down the words "it's all right" has no basis, but somehow it worked. The giant cockroaches had all died! Where the bullets went through them were completely gouged out holes. Speaking of which, even the deck floor is full of holes. Aren't those from standard bullets of an M9? It's clear that this gun's destructive power exceeds that of a handgun

As we were watching, the monsters' corpses one by one turns into light, dissipating into the night. It was a one-of-a-kind spectacle (though they were cockroaches originally).

"Thank you Sakuya, I've calmed down. So, can you ..."

"Hm? Oh, sorry"

My perks are over. I immediately withdrew my arms encircling her chest.

Though the cockroaches are all eliminated, Loki still remains unharmed, we can't just relax yet. As I hear a pair of hands pleasantly clapping, it approaches us with an air of composure.

"Awesome--! Such power ! You're not good with the gun, are you? I mean, this is why I think such unreal power should not be drawn out, you know ---"

It repeatedly nodded, though it remained unfazed even when the gun was aimed at it. Standing in the middle of the plaza, it stood back from us about 5 meters.

"I'll only say this once. Let us go. Otherwise we will ---"

"Fire at me? I maybe a clever boss, but even that would probably hurt me should I take that ---"

"We're not kidding! We will fire !?"

"Please?"

It provocatively shrugs its shoulders. Threats or negotiations has no meaning, does it want an all-out battle ... ? Thinking only cockroaches didn't hold back in attacking persons, Akeno did not pull the trigger. And in that time,

"If you don't attack me, may I?"

Loki made its move! It slowly spread its arms. Then, shadows spread out fast to where we were standing, an unknown number of black tentacles jumping out!

"----!? What the !?"

Focusing at once my willpower, I call forth the laser blade and made a horizontal slash! The attacking tentacles were sliced off by the blade, the cut off pieces disappearing into the air instead of falling to the ground.

"That is one heck of an attack No man can do that, just now"

"Better think it that way. It's no human, so fire!"

Akeno mutters, preparing herself.

Although, how should we fight it? Loki was probably unaffected by my attack on its tentacles, remaining calm. It didn't even show any sign of pain. Well then, we go for the real target I wanted to say, but we don't know the extents of its power, approaching it recklessly could be dangerous. A short-range assault is totally not a good idea. If that the case ---

"I'm going in. Akeno, aim for Loki."

"Got it!"

Responding quickly, Akeno fires!

Loki screaming

As Loki let out an unnatural scream, it merely sidestepped dodging the bullets. Akeno fires 4, 5 times in successions, all of which were narrowly avoided.

"Now's my turn!"

Loki stretches out its right arm, the tentacles again jumping out from the overstretched shadow. They suddenly spread out in front of me when I was expecting it to go straight. They are coming for me in the front from all directions!!

"Tch, defending like this --!!!"

Swinging my blade I back stepped! 3 of the 4 downed tentacles pierced into the ground, the fourth one grazing my right ankle.

I ignore the oncoming pain. Won't the end come because we missed our attack? As I thought on that, I jumped as soon as I landed! From where I stood before, a hidden tentacle suddenly comes out, piercing the brick deck! As I thought!

Catching them in mid-air, I sliced off the exposed tentacles (the ones stretching from Loki's shadow and bursting from the ground).

"Sakuya, are you okay?"

"Somehow. But I don't know how long we can keep up ..."

"I'm so sorry. I tried to aim at it, but not one of them"

"Your aim's good. It's just that "it" is strange"

For Loki to dodge all the bullets, such invincible skill

"At this rate it will get worse. Will I keep up the attack? Or should we get away for now?"

"I'll give you a hand. We've gone through the trouble of finding the boss. If we take it down fast, tonight's dream will end."

"Got it, so we've got to change tactics. You aim and fire on Loki. And you've got to keep it up. That will keep him from conjuring its tentacles. Meanwhile, I close the distance to it.

"Let's do it. And look out for stray bullets, got it?"

"I, I believe in you ..."

Now that I've said it surely I'm about to become Akeno's target for her bullets, the possibility of stray bullets hitting me high. In that case I've got to believe in Akeno.

"You two, don't ignore me!"

As we were making our tactics, Loki unleashed his third wave! The tentacles are again spreading in front of me in all directions, out to engulf me! Just like the same attack before. In that case ---

Sakuya jumping

This time I did not retreat. And I never expected to jump to the other side! Only one down tentacle was cut down, the rest I avoid them! As I sense striking and missing Loki, I mowed down the rest of the tentacles.

"Heee"

Loki lets out its voice of admiration. At that point, Akeno did not miss the chance!

"Got you!!"

The gun spits out fire! Loki immediately avoids the incoming bullet with its inhuman reflexes. But thanks to that, it's distracted! Now!

"Taa !!"

Once again I kicked the ground! Jumping I shorten the distance to a little less than 3 meters! With Loki distracted by Akeno's attacks, it reacts too late!

Sakuya screaming

As I land, I slashed it from the left shoulder and through its robe!

In that instant, I was thinking. If this blade wasn't the real thing there wouldn't be any resistance. Was this attack any effective? Have I brought down Loki?

Anyhow in this interval, it it counterattacks I have no way to avoid it. Should I fall immediately back, for should I deal the final blow ... ?

more screaming

I chose the latter. Standing up again, I bring up the force-filled blade! The laser blade is about to decapitate Loki's head ---

"... ... nnnn !?"

-- no, it flew away. Only its lowered hood. Everything below it crumbles down. Just like an empty shell, the body that should be below the robe is not there ... !?

"... that's impossible ..."

An empty shell escape technique? Is it a ninja? Just where it disappeared to ... !?

"Sorry. I cheated."

That voice came from nowhere. Echoing among the buildings, it especially echoes. Finding its source is impossible.

"Well a bit of a pest came so we'll end this today. Let's play again sometime."

"Are you trying to run away?"

"Exactly as you say. So, keep on leveling up okay? So you can finally take me down Especially you girl, you still have a long ways to go before you can bring out your latent power!"

The voices stopped after that. I tried calling out but there was no answer.

".... ... looks like it ran away"

On hearing Akeno murmur, I let go all my tension. At the same time the laser blade returns to a toy. Just when we almost took it down, as I chagrin, but then there's relief that we narrowly escaped from death. Either way the fight's over. I wearily sheath my laser blade,

"... ... you"

I raise my head on Akeno's voice. Ahead of her line of sight, an armored beauty with a golden spear is walking towards us.

"Valkyrie ..."

As I only saw her body ... *wham* ---- my heart throbbed.

"You two are all right. Who was it?"

Though I did not show the pleasure of meeting her again. I make a sharp glance at the surroundings.

"Are you referring to Loki? It just got away"

"I see it's too early it seems ..."

For some reason the Valkyrie mutters with a worried look. Loki's 'pest' would probably be her. Just what are their relationship? As I start to worry,

"---- an unnecessary parting gift comes ..."

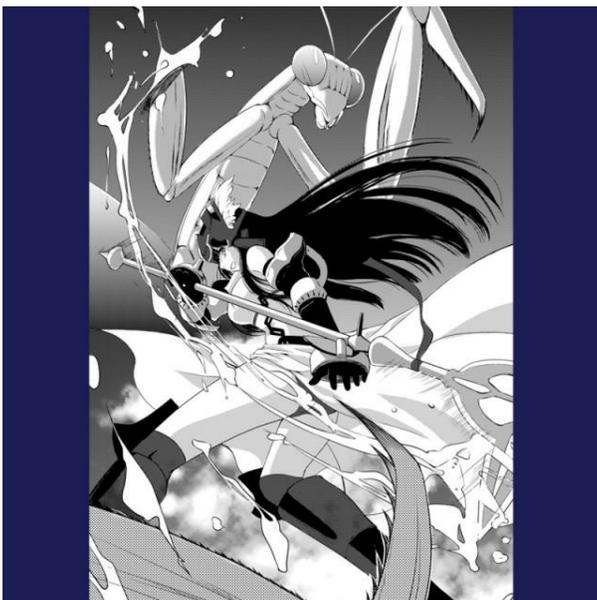
Looks like an afterthought. As I turn my eyes to where I hear a strange "kyuui" cry, from the darkness 4 giant praying mantis appears on top of the pedestrian deck.

"Another insect-type monster You okay, Akeno?"

"I, it's better than cockroaches"

As she shows her forced smile she prepares the gun in her both hands. I too conjure the laser blade in my hands.

As Akeno and I exchange words, the Valkyrie was already running! Ignoring our cries she took on all four of them.



"... .. that's madness ..."

"Awesome! It's an even match even if it's 4-on-1 ..."

"On the other hand we can't just do nothing. Let's back her up, Akeno"

"Of course! We'll take one each"

"... .. eh, you sure about that one-on-one?"

"They're monsters, so it's scary and clumsy"

"ookay"

I recall Akeno firing recklessly before a swarm of giant cockroaches. The mantises aren't greatly scattered, but the risks from stray bullets is greater

So instead of Akeno giving cover fire, taking on them separately would be safer. I'll be taking on a 3m high mantis in a one-on-one battle; even as I grip my laser blade, I was honestly scared, but I'll do this!

"More power to you!"

"You too, Sakuya, take care"

As I ran, I heard a blast from behind ! ---- Akeno's gun blasting away. Two of the mantises not fighting the Valkyrie notices me, and they deftly head towards me.

Akeno fires her gun more and more. Though she failed to hit anything, she was able to separate two of the mantises. Already one of them is approaching me. Fine with me. I force my foot to the earth with all my power,

Sakuya's war cry

Brandishing my light saber, I jumped onto the giant mantis!

Part 01

Please read [Template:PREVIEW](#) for further information.

Chapter 4 - Player Kill - Part 1[[edit](#)]

"--kuya...."

With that faint voice, I woke up from my slumber.

Is that Mi-ko ...? It appears I was able made it back alive from the nightmare.

"...fa--a..."

As I yawn I open up my eyelids,

"..... eh ..."

My astounded voice got itself out.

What jumped in front of me is merely a chipped golden moon and the dome with the stars twinkling.

"Night ...? I, I should have returned by now ..."

"No. This is the Nightmare."

"..!?"

An answer came from my murmuring meant for no one. As I was about to bend my head, the Valkyrie's face showed up right in front of me. With our lips so close I would have kissed her should I raise my head a bit, my heart suddenly jumps!



This stance ... am I being awakened by her? And, is it her bosom that is touching my cheek ...!? It feels like hard armor but even then I cannot keep myself calm.

"S, sorry! I'm already awake and -"

"Don't move too fast. You must rest here for a while."

In my confusion I tried to get up; conversely, I was being strongly embraced by the Valkyrie. Eh, eh hh ... !? Why did I end up in a paradise like this --

-- oh, I see, I'm about to die.

My confused brain finally settled down. I see, I remember myself torn to shreds and then left for dead by the praying mantis. And from there the one who revived me is, "You're the one who saved me, right."

She probably healed my injuries with her usual mysterious powers.

"Are you hurt somewhere?"

"None, thanks to you. I'm a bit sluggish though ..."

"My magic can only heal injuries, not restore stamina. It's better I stay beside you until you've settled down."

"O, okay"

This is an embarrassing stance, but the real problem is if I get up right now I have a feeling that I would be totally disoriented as I stand up. Allowing myself to rely on her words, I breath deeply.

"Thank you very much. Thanks to you I've narrowly escaped from death yet again."

"No need for thanks. I wished for this. So there's no need for you to humble yourself. Being reserved is lonesome."

The Valkyrie says those words with a straight look.

"I understand ... well, 'I got it'"

As I correct myself, she nodded in assent.

... good, it's all right already. I again separate from her arm, and stood up by myself.

I look around the surroundings. It's the same place where I fainted, at the top of the pedestrian deck of Nanaobi station, north entrance. The praying mantises were dispersing into light as usual, their figures disappearing. Though that's okay, "Akeno ... where is she ...?"

"She just 'left' just a while ago. As you lay down unconscious."

" 'Left' -- she woke up from this dream? It means she returned safe and sound, thank goodness."

With her safe, I stroke my chest in relief.

"Even so, I 'collapsed' Even in this dream I lost consciousness."

I murmured in wonder. Should I faint within this dream, I wonder where my consciousness will go ...?

"Of course. The Nightmare is an elaborate miniature garden (replica), should you lose consciousness here, you could die here."

The Valkyrie's expression was flat. So this would be true.

"We've met in the Nightmare twice, yet both times you were barely alive. Exercise more caution. Unless you want to be like it."

As she mouths those words of caution, she pointed at my feet. "It"? -- As I incline my head in doubt towards me, her fingertips follow. There, A praying mantis is rolling about.

"---- !?"

As my heart beats violently, I choked for an instant.

I kneel on the ground, and pick it up. It's about 10cm long. Even when it's between my fingers it didn't even move one bit. Nevertheless, I can't find even one injury in its body. It's pretty even if it started moving right now. Yes, a fine example for a **stuffed animal**.

"This ... this praying mantis ..."

"That's right. That's it for sure. The real form of the monster we fought against."

I remember the goosebumps-inducing ominous giant mantis' body. Was its real form the common praying mantis? Does this mean the monsters are not virtual, they're real living creatures ...?

"The monsters loitering in the Nightmare are common animals mutated by Loki's curse, driven into a violent frenzy to attack the players. If a monster goes down, it will revert back to its normal form."

So the dead monsters turning into light, it means that the curse attached to these monsters is being dissipated.

... Shit, somehow this is annoying "Until now we've been involved an exchange of lives with the monsters", this fact is suddenly making me sick. Even nauseous.

"Even in this Nightmare, there is no way to resurrect the dead. ... Watch yourself, Sakuya."

The Valkyrie's advice reverberate throughout my skull. My heart is battering against my ribs.

From my shaking hands, the mantis fell off and rolled about.