

ソードアート・オンライン  
オルタナティブ

# ガンゲイル

# オンライン

「セカンド・スクワッド・ジャム(下)」

# III

時雨沢恵一

イラスト／黒星紅白  
原案・監修／川原 礫

Sword Art Online Alternative  
Gun Gale Online III  
2nd Squad Jam



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## III

—セカンド・スクワッド・ジャム〈下〉—

Sword Art: Online Alternative

Gun Gale Online III

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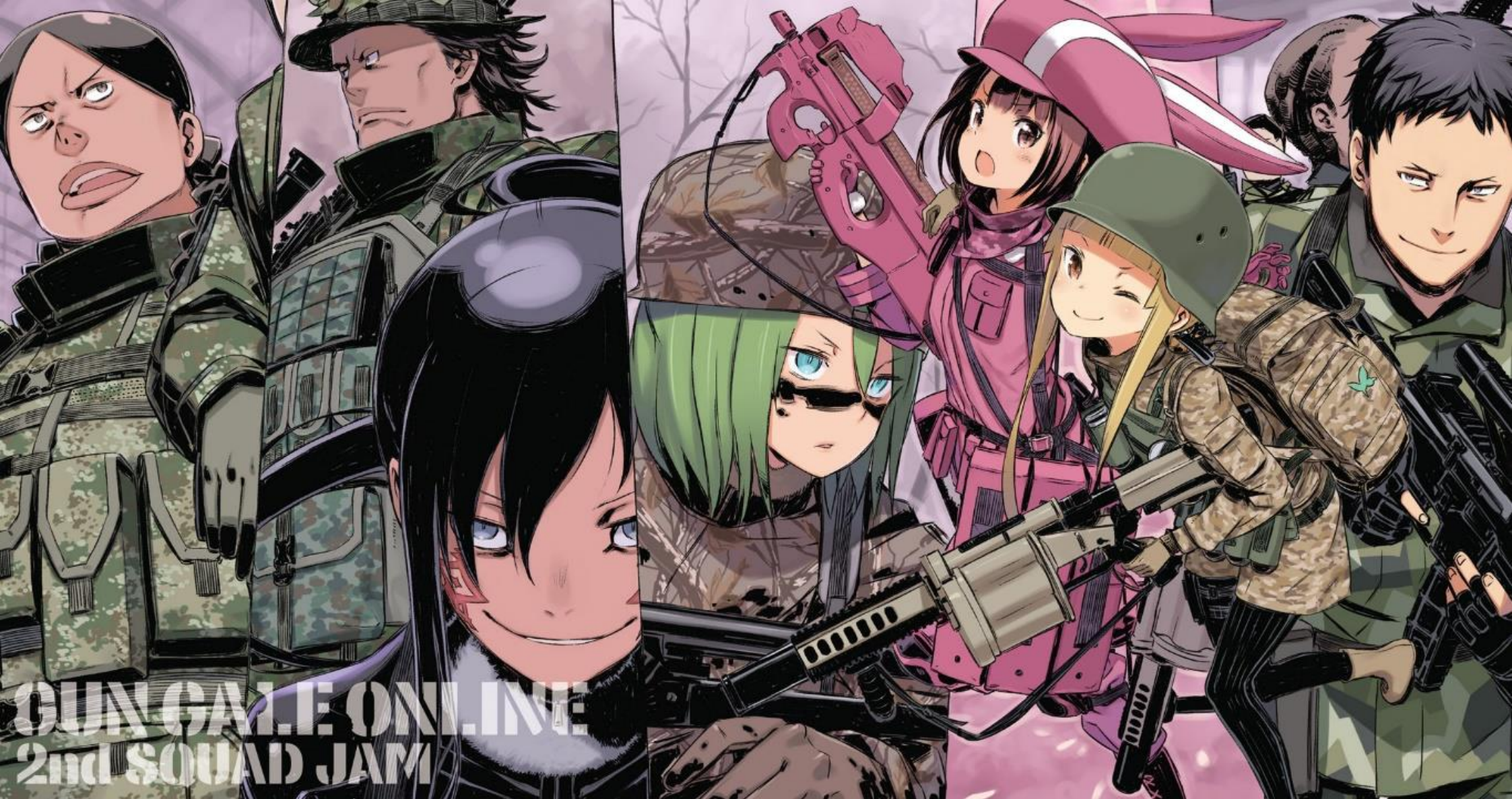
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GUN GALE ONLINE  
2nd SQUAD JAM



Sword Art: Online Alternative

**GUN GALE  
ONLINE**



**2nd SQUAD JAM**

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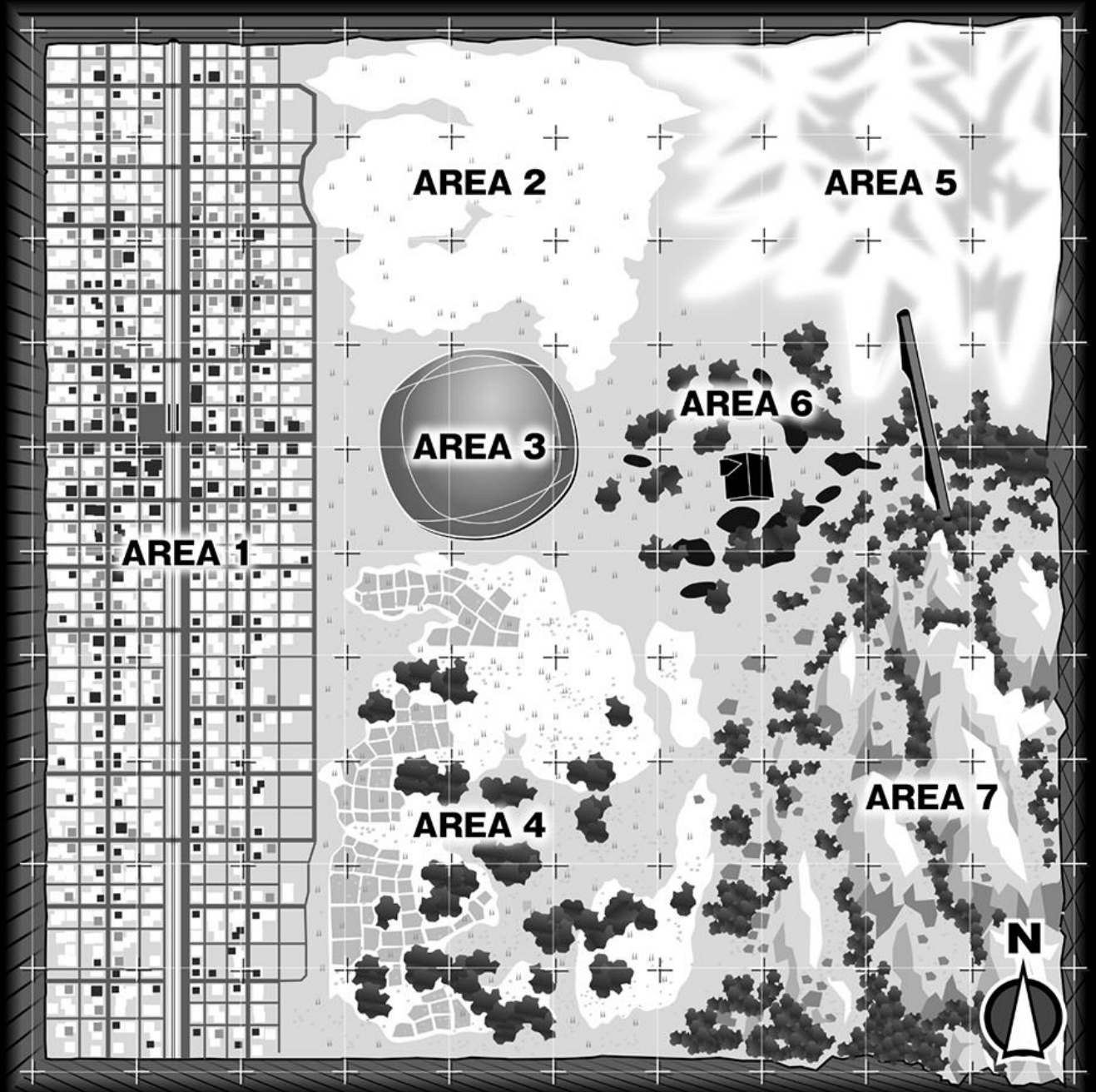
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# THE 2nd SQUAD JAM FIELD MAP

第2回スクワッド・ジャム  
フィールドマップ



AREA 1 : 町

AREA 2 : 丘陵

AREA 3 : ドーム

AREA 4 : 畑・林

AREA 5 : 雪山

AREA 6 : 草原

AREA 7 : 岩山


**Sword Art: Online Alternative  
GUN GALE ONLINE**

**Playback  
of  
2nd SQUAD JAM**

前巻までのあらすじ

# Playback of 2nd SQUAD JAM

前巻までのあらすじ



第一回スクワッド・ジャムの死闘を経て、咲が率いる女子高生たちと親交を深めた香蓮。咲たちを部屋に招いてお茶会をするなど、以前からは想像できない生活を送る香蓮は、一方で〈GGO〉から一定の距離を置いていた。

そんな中、突如開催がアナウンスされた第二回スクワッド・ジャム。

参加に二の足を踏む香蓮の背中を押したのは、なぜか彼女の住所や氏名を知っていた“エムのリアル”こと豪志の、こんな言葉だった。

「第二回スクワッド・ジャムの夜に、人が死にます」

“大会中に死んだらリアルでも死ぬ”と心に決め、大会に挑むというピトフーイ。豪志はそんな彼女を救って欲しいと香蓮に懇願する……。最悪の事態



を回避する唯一の方法「ピトフイーをスクワッド・ジヤムの中で殺す」というミッションを達成するため、香蓮は苦悩の末にS J 2への参加を決意するのだった――。

そして始まったS J 2。

一刻も早くピトフイーに辿り着くため、へALLO（アルヴヘイム・オンライン）からコンバートしてきた地元の親友、美優とタッグを組んだレン。美優が操るアバター・フカ次郎の強力な両手グレネード・ランチャーを武器に、邪魔な敵を次々となぎ倒していく。

一方ピトフイーとエムのチームは、襲い来る他チームを遠慮容赦なく皆殺しにしていた。

果たしてレンは、鬼のような強さと狂気をみせるピトフイーに勝利し、彼女を救うことができるのか？



SECT.10

## 第十章 十分間の鑿殺・その二〈上〉

## SECT.10

### Ten Minute Massacre - The Second (I)

Turning the clocks back by 10 minutes, at 13:40.

Right when Pitohui and the others succeeded in luring a large number of enemies to the valley and a *countdown* till all of them were killed had begun.

“I’m looking at the *scan!*”

The *pink* chibi, LLENN, who had fallen to the ground and had dust all over her,

“Gotcha!”

And the other chibi, Fukaziroh, wearing a green *vest* on her *MultiCam shirt* and *short pants* and holding *grenade launchers* in both her hands, were at the edge of the huge *dome*.

The huge *dome* that was approximately 2 *km* in diameter and several hundred *metres* in height already seemed like nothing but a mountain up close.

The white wall, made out of a mysterious material with no joints to be found, drew a gentle arc as it extended to the reddish gray sky.

There were door-like objects about 100 *metres* apart from each other, thus it seemed that it was possible to enter. One could enter but not leave... you could only pray that this was not the case.

After seeing the 13:30 *scan* at the station, they had made it here in 10 minutes. During that time, they made no contact with any enemies.

In the vicinity of the *dome*, only tender soil filled the area, as if the grass had withered and disappeared.

The area offered a great view and there were presently no enemies in the surroundings, but LLENN and Fukaziroh did not let their guards down. They lay tightly hugging the ground beside the *dome* and facing the opposite direction. They placed their *satellite scan* terminal in front of them and hit the *switch*.

SJ2's fourth *scan* began.

It began from the north and rapidly proceeded down to the south.

The two touched the dots of light representing the surviving *teams* and began checking their names. The formidable MMTM was still alive in the hilly area to the north-east of the *dome*. Typical favourites.

Soon, it passed above the *dome*, and LLENN discovered.

“Guu.....”

To the north-west of the *dome*'s circle. If the north was considered to be up, then they were at exactly 10 o'clock from there.

Due south, at 6 o'clock, was SHINC, the rhythmic gymnastics club *team* led by *Boss*.

And,

“Why are there so.....”

Inside the *dome*, near its centre, were three other *teams*.

LLENN touched the terminal screen, and discovered that they were groups she had never heard of.

The distance between them was about 300 to 600 *metres*. For SJ, this was quite close and, taking only the distance into account, they should be quite capable of battling each other, but whether they were fighting at the moment was unknown.

“Guah! They’re in the way!”

Shouted LLENN. Crossing the *dome* would be the fastest way to reach Pitohui, but there just had to be three *teams* inside now, of all times.

“I guess I’ll have to give up on being a “*lucky girl*” with this luck.....”

She once again uttered faint-hearted words,

“Hey hey. Ya can’t do that. In Japanese, there’s a thing called “<sup>kotodama</sup> power of words ” ; if ya utter that, it’ll certainly turn out like that.”

And was admonished by Fukaziroh.

To the south-east of the map, the location of the seven dots of light had not changed at all in the past 10 minutes. Also, Pitohui’s team was in basically the same place as before.

It was not hard to imagine that they had left their *leaders* at the foot of the mountain while the rest of the *members* formed a group that entered the mountain.

‘Pito-san, M-san, may fortune smile upon you!’

LLENN prayed in her mind. ‘Please don’t die until I kill you myself.’

“The number of eliminated *teams* hasn’t increased since then. Seventeen survivors. There are a few at the western edge and to the north-east, but no enemies are close enough to make contact with us aside from the *teams* inside the *dome*!”

Fukaziroh said as the *scan* ended.

“Ah—Thanks.”

As LLENN was preoccupied with her thoughts of Pitohui, she had forgotten about the *count*. This was really helpful.

While still lying on the ground,

“.....”

LLENN pondered. What should they do about their *route* of advance. While pondering, she informed Fukaziroh.

“The fastest route to reach Pito-san would definitely be by crossing through the *dome*, but there are three enemy *teams* inside.....”

“Yep.”

“If we go around the *dome*, we would be travelling a long distance. And, if we go around the north, there’s a high chance that we’ll bump into the formidable MMTM. Alternately, if we go around south, we’ll bump into SHINC.”

“Yep.”

“Fuka..... could you grow wings from your back now? And then pick me up and fly me over the *dome*?”

“That’s not going to work. I stopped being a fairy, y’know.”

“So then, we have no choice but to pick one of the three *routes*.....”

“Hey, wait now. It’s too early to decide, LLENN. If nothing else, let’s take a look and see what’s going on inside the *dome*. We can decide everything after that.”

At Fukaziroh’s words, LLENN raised her head, taken aback.

“Is that so..... You’re right. Thanks.”

As LLENN broke into a run towards the towering *door*,

“Women who make men say “Geez, you’d be hopeless without me, are popular.”

Fukaziroh *skipped* after her.

Troubled about a course of action following the 13:40 *scan*,

“Muu.....”

Was Eva, or *Boss*, controlled by Saki.

Her *team* was on the south side of the huge *dome*, on standby in front of one of the entrances while keeping watch on their surroundings.

“Well now, what to do.....”

The rough woman with braided hair made a sullen face, dropped her huge buttocks onto the ground, and folded her huge arms.

“It’s rare for you to be so troubled, *Boss*.”

Said the blonde beauty Anna, who was surveying the 20 *metres* or so around them through her Dragnov sniper rifle *scope*,

“But you’re cool. If you had a shō<sup>1</sup> bottle of sake next to you, it would be fitting! Samurai!”

The black-haired Tohma, who was a *sniper* as well, turned from her binoculars, giving her a fleeting glimpse and letting out her impression.

“Well, whatever you decide, we will follow you.”

Continued Tanya, a silver-haired, kitsune-eyed girl who was watching over the surroundings from the opposite side of the defensive circle with her Bizon at the ready.

“Yea. I’ll be honest. I’m troubled about whether or not we should enter the *dome*.”

“What’s on your mind?”

Enquired Sophie, the one with the shortest and stoutest figure of the *team*, as if she were a *dwarf*. She was beside Rosa, the Mother Courage who was armed with a PKM *machine gun* and in a prone position, working as her *support*.

*Boss’s* voice reached everyone’s ears through the communication *item*.

“If we enter the *dome*, we’ll likely be taking on all three *teams* loitering inside at the same time.”<sup>2</sup>

“Mmmhmm.”

---

1 A traditional Japanese unit for volume in the shakkanhō system. It is equal to 2401/1331 litres (approximately 1.804 if rounded to four significant figures).

2 Boss uses archaic/old-fashioned grammar variants in the following few sentences. Such as using yamoshirenu instead of kamoshirenai, as well as using -nu or even -n negative verbs instead of -nai forms.

Sophie threw in an aizuchi.<sup>3</sup>

Whenever the club president (*Boss*=Saki)<sup>4</sup> and vice-president (Sophie=Kana) had a serious conversation, the other *members* listened to them in silence. This was a rule of the rhythmic gymnastics club both *IRL* and in *VR*.

“If LLENN’s group or MMTM, or both, entered the *dome*, we’d probably end up in a heated melee for the next 10-20 minutes. Of course we’d win, but we’d likely suffer not-so-little *damage* ourselves.”

“Indeed. LLENN, and those guys, are strong after all.”

“However, it’s not like us to run away. And we haven’t fired anything these past 20 minutes either.”

“Indeed. My body is getting cold.”

“But, I have my worries. The possibility of LLENN’s group going around the *dome* instead of entering it. If they go around the north, we won’t make contact and have to postpone our duel for a bit. But, if they go around south, then we’d get the head-on battle that we’ve wanted—”

“And if we enter the *dome*, we’d be unable to make contact for the next ten minutes, is that what you’re saying?”

“Right. Also, inside the *dome*, there is that—”

*Boss* began saying in a loathsome tone, but stopped midway.

“Eei! Idle pondering is a waste of time! We are soldiers! We’re going in to get to our enemies!”

---

<sup>3</sup> An interjection used to by the listener to show that they are still paying attention.

<sup>4</sup> The = used here is a double hyphen. In Japanese, it’s sometimes used instead of an interpunct (・) as an equivalent of the English en dash or hyphen to separate names.

Only tens of seconds were spent pondering. *Boss* decided to fight.

“Let’s go, ladies! —Our first *jungle* fight!”

While the *amazons* gave an “Urararararaa!” yell, at approximately the opposite side of the *dome*,

“Wh-what the heck is this!”

“Uhhyaaaaaaa—!”

LENN and Fukaziroh exclaimed in surprise. The exclamations were so high-pitched and loud that any enemy in the area would have heard them.

They were inside the *dome*.

Having passed through the *door* that opened awfully easily to the sides, and having come out of the long pedestrian *tunnel* that pierced the *dome*’s structure,

“It’s a *jungle*……!” “It’s a *jungle*……!”

They found the South.

It was a world overflowing with greenery; a sudden change from the bleak and colourless world that they had been in just now. Grass as tall as people grew disorderly without leaving any gaps, thus it was almost impossible to see the ground.

In some places grew huge, at least 20 *metre*-high trees in zigzags, and closely packed moss grew on their thick trunks. As if it weren’t enough, the branches were in full leaf, creating an umbrella that concealed the sky.

And that sky was surprisingly blue.

As this was the inside of the *dome*, it was most likely just the ceiling, so it “just looked like it, but it was so similar that you could mistake it for the real sky. LLENN had *played* for tens of hours so far, but it was undoubtedly her first time seeing a blue sky in GGO. The lost nature of Earth remained here.

“Hah.....”

Beside LLENN, who was staring in wonder,

“This is awesome! The inside of the *dome* is like a different world! Nice! Is this a greenhouse? Or a nature *park*? I wonder which?”

Fukaziroh was truly enjoying herself. She probably felt nostalgic for her old home of ALO, which featured characteristically nature-filled *fields*.

The scene extending before them was truly enjoyable, but— she had no time to remain captivated. LLENN had to make a decision immediately.

To cross this at least 2 *km*-long *jungle* with three enemy *teams* in the middle, or go around it from the outside.

Worrying would just lead to more worries, as precious time passed by. She would not allow such a loss, and such a mistake anymore.

“That settles it!”

“Oh? Settles what?”

Asking about what she had proposed herself - that was the way of life for the woman named Fukaziroh.

“Dah, Fuka, weren’t you the one who said “How about we look inside the *dome* and decide then whether to cross or go around it?”

“Oh! Yeah, that’s important!”

“We’re crossing this *jungle*! Although there are three *teams* in here, the chances of getting one-hit killed here is lower than running outside where the view is unobstructed.”

While saying this, LLENN operated her *window* with her left hand. She took out a green camouflage *poncho* from her *storage*.

As it materialised in mid-air, she slipped into it head-first. It enveloped her to her ankles, and nothing aside from her *pink* shoes could be seen any longer.

“LLENN disappeared! Wh-where did you go?”

As Fukaziroh, 3 *metres* away from her, shook her head unnaturally,

“No worries. I’m over here.”

LLENN gently called out to her.

“Oh, there you are. —Though, you really do become impossible to spot when you’re a distance away with that, so it’d be seriously scary if you went too far ahead, y’know?”

“Right. But that applies to the enemy too. If they get separated from their comrades, it would probably be impossible to easily meet up.”

If the whole *dome* was entirely taken up by this *jungle*, that would mean that in the worst case, one’s field of vision would not even encompass 5 *metres*, while the maximum would be 50 *metres*.

The field of view was so bad that it could not even be compared with that of the outside.

In this case, unlike spacious areas, *combinations* where *machine guns* and sniper rifles provided *support* while remaining teammates attacked would be mostly useless. This was certainly troubling those three *teams*.

“But, even if you can’t see anything, bullets will still come flying.”

As LLENN stated, the troublesome thing was that bullets could easily pierce through the leaves.

A *jungle* offered plenty of places to hide, yet few safe places that could protect against bullets; that’s the kind of exceedingly unique battlefield this was.

“I see. If someone blindly fires a *machine gun* horizontally, bullets would come flying at you. Dat’s scary. Though, we will see the *Lines*, right.”

“But, that’s why I came up with a plan to exit this place without going astray. And to fight against any enemies we encounter. If it goes well..... I’m sure it’ll go well!”

“Oh? What what?”

LLENN deliberately brought her mouth close to Fukaziroh’s ears, which she had also moved closer, despite both having communication *items*, and conveyed her *idea*.

Having heard it, Fukaziroh blinked in surprise, and,

“Hyahou! I like it! Sounds fun!”

Gave a shout like a child who had received their pocket money. And then,

“But..... won’t you be in danger, LLENN?”

Asked with an expression like that of a parent worried about their child.

LLENN answered with an expression like that of a child beginning their solitary life for the first time.

“I know.”

\* \* \*

Turning the clocks back by about 3 minutes, right after the 13:40 *scan*.

In the *jungle* inside the *dome*,

“Craap! What a shitty place!”

There was a man cursing.

*A member* of one of the three *teams* in the *dome*, wearing camouflage with gray *gradation* and a similarly camouflaged *helmet*. On his chest were sturdy-looking *protectors*.

The *team* was wearing matching equipment. The camouflage was helpful in a concrete *jungle* urban area, but in an actual *jungle*, it was conversely conspicuous.

The man was crouching among ferns, with his beloved 《ZB26》 *machine gun* in his hands.

This was a machine gun made in Czechoslovakia, and, as the name implied, the weapon was actually made a century ago in 1926.

Its name was well-known due to it being a masterpiece of a machine gun due to its high performance and low chance of breaking down, and in GGO it circulated as a “super recommended *machine gun* that is extremely cheap, but does not lack in performance at all.”

“Where are you all? Are you truly close by?”

He called out to his comrades through his communication *item*,

“We’re here. You’ll notice if you stand up. Relax.”

And a reply came back to him as it should have. However, while crouched, the only thing he could see from his point of view was the green vegetation in front of him. He had an ominous feeling, as if he alone had been left behind in this place.

“This is one “green hell” .....”

Since they entered the *dome*, all they saw as they walked on and on was *jungle* and more *jungle*.

Because the scenery was always unchangingly flat, and they could not estimate the distance they travelled due to difficulty when walking, they no longer had any idea where they were.

Having a poor line of sight and having lost their current position, the *team* determined that it was dangerous to walk about carelessly and thus stopped. In order to avoid being done in by rapid fire, every *member* distanced themselves from one another and were waiting for the next *scan*.

As the awaited time drew near, their *leader* gave instructions.

“All right, the *scan*’s about to begin. Everyone, watch it silently.

As instructed, the man took out his *satellite scan* terminal from his thigh *pocket* and turned it on. And then, he looked at the results of the *scan*.

And then, he turned pale.

“E-eeeeee.....”

He found his own position on the terminal screen. Right about the centre of the *dome*. They had passed 1 *km* through the *jungle*. Mentally, he felt that they had travelled farther, so they had undoubtedly “wandered about”.

And, he also discovered the location of the enemy. To his dread, they were very close; merely a few hundred *metres* away from their own light dot. Moreover, wasn't his team in-between two other *teams*?

“Enemy! They’re right nearby!”

“Idiot, don’t shout!”

This shout came in reply from a teammate.

“What we gonna do? *Leader*?”

“‘What to do’, you say, but I..... He-... the enemy... they’re too close, crap, this is seriously bad.”

Based on his high-pitched voice, it seemed the *leader* had lost his presence of mind as well,

‘Aah, so we’re... done for, I guess.....’

So the man with the ZB26 drifted into a *mood* of resignation.

‘We shouldn’t have entered this *dome* just because it looked interesting.’

‘We shouldn’t have set foot in such a *jungle* just because it was rare for GGO.’

‘We shouldn’t have chosen our *leader* through rock-paper-scissors just because nobody wanted to take up that position.’

Various regrets crossed his mind.

“Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot! Guys, don’t shoot!”

Finally, he even started hearing hallucinations.

This was a quiet voice that did not come through the communication *item*. The enemy would not be saying something like that, thus it was undoubtedly a hallucination.

“I want to talk! The *team* over there! I want to talk to you! Don’t shoot!”

The hallucination rapidly became louder and clearer.

“Okay guys! Don’t shoot! I’ve laid down my arms! Please!”

Finally, the voice reached a normal volume,

“Guys, I can’t go on. I’ve started hearing hallucinations. I might have spent too much time in the *game*. I’m dropping out ahead of you.”

The man waved his left hand to bring out a *window*, and looked for the *logout button*,

『The Second *Squad Jam* tournament is in session. Even if you *log in* to GGO again, you will not be able to return to the tournament. Are you sure you would like to *log out*? 』

And the *Y e s* button,

“You idiot, stop!”

Was 3 *cm* short of being pressed, and would have been had his teammate not rushed to him in panic, grabbed his arm, and stopped him.

At a place within the *jungle*, eighteen people had gathered.

“The inside of the *dome* is the worst *field* that anyone can come up with. I believe everyone thinks so, but entering it was a mistake.....”

Seventeen people were listening to one man’s speech.

These eighteen people were divided into three groups.

A gray camouflaged *team*. A *team* wearing camouflage that was a mixture of red and brown colours and looked like it would only avoid standing out when leaves were turning red. And finally, a *team* wearing awfully dissimilar clothes with zero sense of unity.

The man wearing reddish-brown camouflage and carrying an 《AC-556F》 *assault rifle* continued his speech.

“Moreover, based on the *scan* just now, we found out that the previous champion LF, the runner-up SHINC, and the third-ranked MMTM are all in the vicinity of the *dome*. Naturally, they will likely be coming in here. Being attacked by nearby *teams* is the basic *theory* for *battle royales*.”

The man, of course, was unaware of LLENN's reason for participating in SJ2, thus he spoke relying on the prevailing theory.

“So, our three *teams* should join forces and ambush them! Seven *teams* have joined forces in the south-east of the *map*. We have no reason not to do so too, right? In the last tournament, my *team* managed to take down a *team* by benefiting from their fight with another team, but we were similarly taken down right after. And so I thought. That in SJ, we should form a joint front to survive! Rather, “How can we cooperate with other *teams*? „ is the epitome of this *game*!”

The words of the man, who had been killed by an explosion created by the Air Self-Defense Force in the last SJ, were filled with zeal.

“And so, it's some sort of fate that brought us all together without firing our guns and allowed us to unite without fighting! Let's join forces! And then, beat down all the favourites!”

2 seconds after his speech was done.

“Sensei, question here!”

A *character*, clad in a black combat uniform from top to bottom, with numerous long and narrow stomach *pouches*, said while raising a hand.

“Oh! What is it? Ikemen-kun over there!”

The *leader* of the reddish-brown camouflage *team* answered in high spirits.

The questioner, who had a beautiful *avatar* with a truly well-featured face,

“Please stop with the ikemen-kun. My name is “Clarence” ,  
*leader-san*. Though everyone calls me “Clar” .”

First answered with their name.

Not just the face, but even the voice was beautiful.

It was a *character* who would be awfully successful in a VR *game* where one became a male *idol* singer and made *fangirls* squeal.

But then, there was no guarantee that they would get such an ikemen *avatar* if they *converted* to that *game*.

“Clar-kun, huh! Your question, please!”

Clarence asked without delay.

“If everything goes well as per your plan, let’s suppose that we do beat down all the favourites. If so, are you okay with *restarting* our bloody battle? In other words, to be specific, that means you are fine with me sticking my gun barrel deep into the ass hole of the man who was beside me just a moment ago, and opening fire?”

‘Uwaa. What the heck is he saying.....’

No one uttered this, but it was obvious from the atmosphere that the men there all wanted to draw back.

In GGO and other VR *games*, there were plenty of *players* who felt a pleasant feeling when killing other *characters* in cruel ways.

Of course, this was inside a *game*, so it did not really matter if one could become stronger, but—

It was true that people who gave a “What kind of person would do that?” impression weren’t liked.

Even the other *members* of Clarence's *team*, who all had dissimilar outfits, kept quiet while giving expressions that implied they did not want to get involved.

The *leader* of the reddish-brown camouflage *team* who was asked this question had to answer it, thus he gave his reply.

"Although you are *handsome*, it seems you have some issues with your personality..... But, that is a *good question*. I believe everyone else wants to know that too, after all."

"So? You *okay* with getting shot in the ass?"

"I'd like to say *no*. I hereby propose a gentlemen's agreement that if we wipe out everyone other than our allies, we will not start fighting till the next *scan*. Of course, if the next *scan* is very close— for example, if it will take place within 3 minutes, we'll wait till the next next *scan*. How's that? Guys?"

The gentlemen given this question,

"All right."

"No objections."

"I agree too. That works fine."

"3 minutes is appropriate. If you run away without looking aside, you can get out of firing range."

Agreed one after another. There was zero opposition.

"So how's about it? Clar-kun?"

With the man's gaze on him, Clarence shrugged as if playing the fool,

“Roger. Though, I am not a “gentleman”. We can kill one another at any other time, so I am *okay* with it. Thank you for your answer.”

“Alright! Now then, the eighteen of us here are comrades! For now, let’s aim to survive in this *jungle*! We’ll beat the powerful enemies coming at us with the power of numbers!”

In response to the man’s vigorous words,

“Though..... What is our plan specifically? We have done our homework on how to cooperate within our *team*, but it’s kinda impossible to work together with other *teams*, y’know?”

A member of the gray-camouflaged *team* raised his hand and asked. ‘That’s right’, the other *members* agreed.

If they were comrades in the same *team*, all of their roles would be clear: who made barrages of fire with their machine gun, who flanked the enemy in the meantime, and so on. However, it would be quite difficult to carry out tactical actions in good coordination with *characters* met just this day.

Another man followed by raising their hand,

“Also, the poor visibility here. Honestly, it’s hard to cooperate even with fellow comrades. Did you form this alliance having considered what to do about that?”

That was another natural question and everyone’s eyes focused on the reddish-brown-camouflaged man.

‘Just what I was waiting for!’, as if to say this, he broke into a smile.

“Right! I have an *idea*. I figured we could use a trick that did us in during the last SJ this time. Hey, everyone——”

Drawing attention to himself, the man asked a question.

“What do you think is the primary factor in knowing your opponent’s actions even if your field of view is bad?”

\* \* \*

13:43.

A tiny, green creature advanced through the *jungle*.

It was LLENN, wearing a camouflage *poncho*. The short LLENN was in a half-sitting posture and her body was almost entirely hidden in the grass; adding in the effect of the camouflage, she was practically invisible. Only the \*kasakasa\* sound of small leaves rubbing against each other could be heard.

It seemed as if an insect, which had a name beginning with “go<sup>5</sup> that one would not want to utter, was moving around in a room so disorderly that the floor could not even be seen.

“Travelled 100 *metres*. No signs of enemies in the area.”

LLENN’s voice flew to Fukaziroh,

“Roger. I’m coming after you. Counting on you for *guidance*.”

And Fukaziroh answered.

Then, LLENN made a surprising action.

She turned around to the path she came through, fixed her P90 to her shoulder on the *poncho*, and touched the trigger with her finger. Her target was Fukaziroh’s direction.

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5 Probably referring to cockroaches (gokiburi).

It was an action that gave the impression that she was aiming at Fukaziroh on the other side of the *jungle*, as if she were an enemy. The *Bullet Circle* projected in LLENN's eyes.

“Alright, I see it.”

A response came from Fukaziroh.

And then, several seconds later, she ran through the *jungle*, and undeniably turned up at a placed that LLENN could see.

“Okay, my turn.”

LLENN lowered the P90 in her hands and turned around. At the same time, it was now Fukaziroh who fixed her aim with her MGL-140. She aimed her <sup>jūkō</sup>muzzle , no, her <sup>hōkō</sup>muzzle , and touched the trigger with her finger.

And then, the created *Bullet Line* took the form of a red parabola and extended into the grass of the *jungle*.

“I see it. Going.”

Looking up at the *line* extending from behind her, LLENN broke into a run.

*Bullet Lines* would go through obstacles if they were objects that bullets could pierce while preserving their power.

“In a *jungle* full of grass, *Lines* should be visible as bullets can pierce it all. If both of us used *Bullet Lines*, we'd be able to avoid going astray, and moreover, advance straight ahead!„

That was the idea that LLENN came up with. Being the one to advance first, LLENN was in danger, but she was well aware of that. When they tried this method of movement, it ended up working as well as expected.

Repeating it over and over again, the two rapidly advanced through the *jungle*.

And so, at 13:44.

Once Fukaziroh had caught up to LLENN, about 10 *metres* behind her, and attempted to create the *Line* once again, it happened.

They heard gunshots.

“Hit the dirt!”

“Aye!”

LLENN and Fukaziroh fell to the soft *jungle* soil and listened to the gunshots that had abruptly begun.

\*Tatatatatatan\*, the dry sounds of 5.56 *mm*-class bullet rapid-fire that seemed like someone was playing a small drum, and \*dodododododo\*, the low sounds of firing something that seemed to be using 7.62 *mm* bullets. Additionally, \*tarararararararararara\* sounds, probably from a *submachine gun* that was using pistol ammo, in a fast, woodpecker-like *rhythm* were mixed in.

The gunfire was hidden by the *jungle* so it could not be seen, but,

“Straight to the left. About 200 to 300 *metres* away. A bit to the side of our course.”

LLENN said after concluding based on the sounds.

Then, she raised her head and carefully confirmed their surroundings,

“Don’t see any *Bullet Lines*. The bullets aren’t coming here.”

“Okay! So, it’s those three *teams* then, right! They’re fighting against each other! Their numbers will diminish at this rate! How helpful how helpful!”

Fukaziroh’s frank impressions slipped out.

While thinking that she was probably right, LLENN continued to listen to the incessant sounds of battle for about 5 seconds.

“That’s..... strange.”

And she realised that something felt out of place. The gunshots that could be heard even now were definitely strange. LLENN did not yet know why, but she shouted.

“Strange..... Something’s strange here! Fuka.”

“What is?”

“The gunshots that we can hear now——”

Just as LLENN began to speak, she realised it.

The reason for her sense of uneasiness.

And thus, the enemy’s plan.

“Ah, I get it! I get it! This is—— a trap!”

At this point, the majority of the audience in the bar was watching Pitohui’s battle, but,

“I wanna see LLENN-chan in action.”

“True that. I wonder if it’s gonna be soon.”

Among them were lolicons— or a set of people who liked small and cute girls.

As if granting their wish, the screen suddenly changed to a world of greenery.

“Yippe! It’s begun! I wonder if LLENN-chan will be caught on screen?”

They were overjoyed.

They also called out to the people in the area, saying ‘The battle with the previous champion has begun here’.

On the screen, there were several people firing their guns in a thick *jungle*.

Three *teams* with two members each, for a total of six, were gathered together in a horizontal line. And they were pounding away with their respective guns towards the thick *jungle*. Their bullets pierced through dozens of leaves, while the *gas* spouting from their muzzles scattered the nearby grass.

The fact that the three *teams* had formed a united front was already known to the audience, as they had seen the video of their discussion earlier.

So, they must have made contact with some other *team*. If it were a battle broadcast, footage from the opposing side’s point of view should be displayed in parallel, but there was none of that here.

What the four *cameras* from four angles projected was just the *scene* of the six men shooting from various angles. In other words, they were just aiming at an invisible enemy and one-sidedly pounding away; however, it did not seem like they were wasting bullets in panic,

“Those guys..... who on earth are they fighting against?”

And even the spectators tilted their heads at this behaviour.

“Hey, could it be that? An invisible alien from another planet who’s come to hunt earthlings to gather proof of his bravery.”<sup>6</sup>

“That’s an old movie!”

“No, couldn’t it just be a *monster* coming out? If it’s a *Boss-class* one, I think there were some that can’t be seen, as if they were using optical camouflage?”

“I’ve never heard of *monsters* coming out of the blue during a *battle royale* tournament?”

“I mean, it happens just in this *dome*! Such a *jungle* in itself is a first for GGO, so it’s possible? “This *area* has a *trap* , can’t it be something like that?”

“Well now that you say it, that could be the case.....”

They had absurd conversations for a bit, but finally a perceptive person realised the trick.

“Ah, that's... not it..... There are no *monsters*. Those guys... aren’t fighting against anyone. They’re just shooting.”

“Eh? —Why? Target practice?”

“That’s not it. They’re using a “we’re fighting here” kind of diversion.”

“Ah!” “You’re right! “I see!”

The audience understood.

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6 Most likely referring to Predator.

Those three *teams* were conspiring and trying to ambush LLENN's group, *Boss's* group, or MMTM, who were coming into the *jungle*. No matter which *team* it was, they were formidable, so they could not let their guard down even if they had superiority in numbers.

And so, they set a trap.

They were earnestly pounding away in a place with no one else there, creating gunshots that feigned a battle. "All right, those guys are in the middle of a battle, let's go flank them, a kind of trap that lured *teams* trying to benefit from someone else's fight.

The reddish-brown camouflage outfit wearing *leader* remembered well how his team was once wiped out in such a way.

'In that case, let's use that trick ourselves.' That was his plan.

"Now I see..... That's well thought out. Even if the field of vision in a *jungle* was poor, gunshots could spread far away."

"Moreover, LLENN-chan and the other *teams* don't know that those three *teams* are conspiring yet, right? Thinking about it sensibly, "They've bumped into someone and are having a fight! is what they'd probably think."

"And if they were drawn in nonchalantly like that..... the ambushing troops could take them out; that's their plan, huh."

"Right. So, the remaining twelve should have scattered around the area of the guys shooting, forming a wide net."

"If we carelessly approach them trying to benefit from their fight, we'll be done in by the remaining *members* scattered in the area."

"I see..... But, LLENN, how did you realise this?"

LLENN and Fukaziroh were having their strategy meeting in the *jungle* without having moved a step. The gunshots could still be heard intermittently.

“I can hear all of those gunshots coming from the same direction and the same distance. That’s too unnatural. And also, it’s unimaginable unless they’re pounding away one-sidedly from the same place.”

“Wow, them’s some ears. The heck is that *skill*?”

“ “A *skill* trained by M-san, .”

“That training before the previous SJ was truly helpful.....’

LLENN thought while answering. That was the first time she learnt how important ears were in combat.

“So, what’re we gonna do? Outwit the enemy and set our own surprise for them?”

“If we didn’t have an important goal, we might have done that.”

LLENN answered. And then,

“Let’s slowly escape the net. We don’t want to consume our precious bullets at a place like this, after all.”

“Roger. That’s probably for the best.”

“We’ll go around slightly to the right, okay. Again, counting on you for the *Lines*.”

“Okay. I’ll put it up about 100 *metres* ahead.”

Like a guidepost, Fukaziroh created a *Bullet Line* with her MGL-140.

Passing under it, LLENN once again began moving through the *jungle* like a certain insect. And, just when she had moved about 50 *metres*—

“Fuka! Decrease by 30 *metres* and fire!”

Suddenly shouted.

‘Was my *luck* from before written off this time.....?’

With this thought, LLENN cursed her bad luck.

In front of LLENN, there were four enemies. Merely 10 *metres* ahead in the *jungle*. They were crouching beside thick grass and keeping watch over their surroundings.

And, a sharp-eyed one among them noticed LLENN rushing out from the grass,

“Enemy! To the right!”

While shouting, he pointed the muzzle of the 《HK33》 *assault rifle* in his hands towards her.

Dropping to the ground, LLENN prayed to god.

Please, let Fukaziroh follow my instructions immediately.

They were not aware of Fukaziroh’s position.

So, just like a sniper’s first shot when their position was unknown to the enemy, she did not produce a *Bullet Line*. Close to the four men who aimed their muzzles at LLENN in a line and were about to shoot, Fukaziroh’s *grenade* exploded. There were zero instant deaths, but one was lightly wounded by the fragments,

“Uwah!” “Uwah!” “Dah!” “Aah?”

But most importantly, all four were more shocked than ever before. She succeeded in preventing the people who were about to shoot from firing.

‘God Fukaziroh-sama!’

LLENN raised her *gears* to full speed. At the same time, she began discharging her P90 through her *poncho*.

She showed no trace of hesitation. Nor did she economise her bullets.

She aligned the *Bullet Circle* that appeared in her field of vision with the closest person, fired in *full auto* with all her energy, and pumped a hail of bullets into him.

By the time the first guy was turned into a beehive and killed, she was already in front of the second one. She fired into his face. By the time she killed him, she was already in front of the third one. She mercilessly pumped him full of bullets as well.

The fourth one was shooting randomly with his 《MP5K》 *compact submachine gun*, and one of his 9 mm bullets sank into LLENN’s left arm, but she continued charging without minding it, and she discharged while passing under his *Lines*.

She made numerous hit *effects* in the man’s legs and torso and, when she had spent her P90’s 50 bullet *magazine*, he died.

Just as the 【D e a d】 *marker* lit up on the man,

“LLENN, you okay?”

A voice reached her ears. For a moment, LLENN hesitated on where should she start,

“I’m fine but it’s bad I got discovered by the enemy your support was helpful I used up a *magazine* but brought down four of them!”

And then she rapidly reported it all in one go.

In this case, it would have been better to travel outside the *dome*.

It was too late for that idea.

“That’s great! But LLENN, you did get shot too, y’know?”

LLENN checked her own *hit points* and found out that it had decreased by twenty percent. It was bad that it had only decreased partially. If it had decreased by thirty percent instead, she could use a first aid *kit* without hesitation.

Under her *poncho*, LLENN exchanged her P90’s *magazine*. As for the now empty *magazine*, she left it on the spot. After all, once the tournament was over, all dropped *items* would be retrieved to one’s hands no matter where they were dropped.

With this, the number of bullets that LLENN could use in the tournament was 700.

“I’m still fine. Can you come here?”

“I’m going now— uhyaa!”

Fukaziroh’s voice turned to a shriek midway and a violent *rhythm* of gunshots entered LLENN’s ear.

“Uhyahyaa! I’m under fire I’m under fire! Hyahhaa!”

And then Fukaziroh’s voice, though she was not sure whether it was in joy or fear.

LLENN could not see it, but she could understand the situation well.

50 *metres* away from her in the *jungle*, Fukaziroh was under vehement fire. Having their comrades brought down, the rest were undoubtedly coming towards them all at once. While firing along the way.

“Fuka! Run!”

“Impossible that’s impossible! If I raise ma’ head, I’m scared that I’ll be sho-o-o-o-t! The *Lines* are all sparkling! Uwah! It grazed me, uhyaa!”

LLENN understood that the gunshots were gradually getting closer.

“This is no good. Oh LLENN..... thou must escape without me!”

In LLENN’s mind,

Abandonment. Plan. Valuable sacrifice. Main goal. Strategic retreat. Women’s friendship.

Various phrases came up.

“Fuka! Can you reload your *grenades* on the spot?”

LLENN asked while operating her *storage* with her left hand. A *window* appeared in front of her, then an *item list* came out, and she first selected a spare *magazine*.

“Well, yeah I can? I’m face-up in a hollow after all!”

Next, LLENN selected one more *item*, and pressed the *OK button* to materialise both.

“Then, do as I say! First, doesn’t matter where, but fire 5 shots in rapid-fire! Empty out your magazine!”

“O-okay! —Oraoraa!”

Fukaziroh mixed in the cute sounds of her *grenades* being fired with the bustling gunshots of the enemies. And then, sounds of explosions came from afar.

“Reload! We’ll do “that thing” now! Tell me when you’re ready!”

“Y-yeah! I get it! Hold on!”

LLENN jammed the materialised new *magazine* into her empty *pouch*. And then, she inserted the other *item* onto her P90’s muzzle.

It was a metal cylinder just over 4 *cm* wide and 18 *cm* long, a *suppressor* for the P90.

It was a very expensive and *rare item* that she had acquired, after searching to no end, by buying it with the *credits* earned during her practice with Fukaziroh. Once equipped, it suppressed high-pitched gunshots considerably, but since the gun became longer, it degraded the gun’s manageability.

After approximately 10 seconds,

“*Reload* done! Ready!”

Upon Fukaziroh’s words, LLENN shouted while tearing off her camouflage *poncho*.

“Fire away overhead!”

“Ah, that *grenade* girl is done for already, huh.”

On the broadcast footage, Fukaziroh’s desperate state was displayed.

It was great that LLENN had wiped out the four men who were shaken by the *grenade* by making use of her Agility, but because of that, Fukaziroh’s position was, of course, revealed, and the remaining fourteen men came charging at her all at once.

Additionally, they had spread out in a line, and slowly advanced while alternating their firing to prevent her from sticking her head out.

As they moved while discharging a volley, they did not allow their opponent to counterattack. Or to escape.

For an impromptu-formed *team*, it was quite the plan. Fukaziroh, who was on-screen, could not move at all.

By accidentally falling into a hollow, she had avoided being hit, but the fact that bullets were swooshing and grazing the top of her head was made awfully clear by the light lines of tracer bullets. The leaves in the area were pierced by the bullets and continued to fall and pile up on her body.

If they got closer, they would throw in several *grenades* into the hollow and that would be *the end*.

“If she gets done in, won’t LLENN be in danger?”

“At the moment, knowing LLENN-chan’s speed, she could leave her partner and escape, right? She obviously can’t face that many of them. If I were LLENN-chan, that’s what I’d do.....”

“In that case, she’d be at an awful disadvantage later on. In the battle at the station, didn’t that girl play an important role with her bombardment?”

Some men were making a calm analysis like this,

“You keep calling them “girls,” but it could be that they just look young, but IRL both are women in their thirties? Are you still okay with that?”

Another man mercilessly dumped cold water on him. And then,

“*Ladies* in their thirties? I’m still eighteen and a virgin, but on the contrary, that’s just my type?”

And another young and brave man pointlessly talked about his taste.

“Oi, wanna go to a VR eroge with me next time? If you truly are over eighteen, I could take you along? You need a letter of introduction for it after all.”

“Are you serious?”

“A man doesn’t go back on his word, ya know?”

“Let me call you “aniki!”<sup>7</sup>

“Alright! But, don’t you dare fall for me, ‘kay? I have no interest in homosexuality, kay?”

“Get a room you guys!”

On the screen, Fukaziroh, who was actually a nineteen-year-old, rapidly fired five *grenades* while face-up.

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7 A respectful way to call an elder brother, or a senior in a gang.

At the beginning of the counterattack,

“Oh!”

The men in the audience bent forward in excitement, but the five grenades flew in the wrong direction, far away from the enemy, and exploded. That could not even make the enemy drop to the ground, let alone stop their charge or overwhelm them.

“Aww.....”

Fukaziroh turned her hands towards her *backpack* and began reloading her *grenades*, but the audience’s reaction was cold.

“Even if it’s an awesome weapon, it’s meh in this situation.”

“Seeing as she can’t get up to aim, it doesn’t matter how many of them she shoots.”

On another screen, LLENN putting her *suppressor* on her P90 was displayed.

“Oh! LLENN-chan has her game on!”

“So she had that up her sleeve.”

“Even the *suppressor* is *pink*... she sure is thorough.”

On one of the two *monitors* lined up on the ceiling, Fukaziroh finished her reload and returned to a state where she could fire her MGL-140.

On the nearby *monitor*, LLENN forcefully tore off her camouflage *poncho* and returned to being full-body *pink*.

Seeing her outfit, which was undoubtedly conspicuous in the *jungle*,

“Huh.....? Did LLENN-chan become desperate?”

Someone said.

At the same time, Fukaziroh used her MGL-140 to rapid-fire overhead.

“Huh.....? Has this girl become desperate too?”

The 6 *grenades* that Fukaziroh had fired out soared into the sky as a black mass, and as it approached the blue ceiling—

They finally lost to gravity and, in the order they were fired, came down in Fukaziroh’s surroundings.

And then, the colour of the world changed.

“What!”

The reddish-brown camouflage wearing man who advanced forward while pounding away towards his target, and—

“What the!”

The men who observed the situation on screen shouted at the same time.

Right now, the *jungle* was dyed in *pink*.

“LLENN! Success!”

“*Okay!* I see it!”

In her field of vision, LLENN saw a world dyed in *pink* on other side of the thickly growing grass. The air was clad in *pink* and it was growing as if it were a propagating being.

Having torn off her *poncho* and become *pink*, LLENN charged there full speed ahead.

“It’s *smoke*! Everyone, don’t shoot carelessly! Pass the order to the other *teams* too!”

The moment the reddish-brown camouflage wearing man shouted this, his body was engulfed in *pink* smoke.

What Fukaziroh had fired were projectiles that created smoke—*smoke grenades*.

And that colour was dusky *pink*. The exact same colour as LLENN’s garments and equipment.

Originally, there were no *smoke grenades* with such a colour, but this was a result of LLENN, who had taken up the “Projectile *Customisation*” skill, making *full* use of her Dexterity and mixing the colours.

This smoke did not have any poisonous effect like that of a gas attack from a *monster*. Nor did it make one’s eyes or nose hurt or make it difficult to breathe.

It simply, and most terrifyingly—

“Made it hard to see, , that’s the effect it had.

Just 1 of them would have spread quite wide, but if 6 of them were used and scattered in the narrow area of a *jungle* with poor ventilation, what would happen?

“I can’t see nothin’.....”

The fourteen survivors on the enemy *team* experienced firsthand.

And,

“I can’t see nothin’.....”

That applied to the men in the bar too.

The scene should have been caught on *camera*, but nothing aside from *pink* could be seen.

It was as if an accident had occurred during broadcast.

“Calm down! The *smoke*’s gonna clear up in a moment! Until then, don’t shoot carelessly! You’d undoubtedly cause friendly fire! Let your comrades know!”

Such a calm instruction was given in the *pink* mist.

Their field of vision didn’t even encompass 5 *metres*. They could clearly see the grass at their feet, but if they raised their heads from there, everything rapidly lost shape and quickly turned *pink*.

The sky was bright, thus the field of vision above was relatively clear, but their enemy was not a bird so it did not matter.

“What’s up with this? Why is the smoke *pink*?”

Someone said. This was a natural question.

“*Pink*.....? Ah, it’s *pink*.....”

And so, another person noticed the terrifying thing.

“Ah, it’s her……. She’s coming…….”

“Who’s “she” ?”

“Idiot! It’s obviously the previous champion! Everyone, watch out! The *pink* devil is coming!”

In the upper-left corner of the man who shouted this, the *hit points* of his comrade were diminishing.

“Another one!”

While hearing LLENN’s voice,

“Good good!”

Fukaziroh hurriedly reloaded in the *pink* smoke.

The *grenades* packed into the MGL-140 were, of course, custom-made *pink* smokescreen shells.

There were still more in her *backpack*. Once her reload was complete, she once again unleashed them so that the smoke would not fade.

“I can’t see anymore, so don’t you dare raise your head! Fuka!”

“Dontcha worry even if ya hit me by mistake!”

Fukaziroh would use her firepower to launch *pink grenades* all over. Throwing up a smokescreen.

And then, LLENN would run around inside it and pound away with her P90, with its gunshots suppressed by the *suppressor*.

Where to shoot? Wherever something got in the way.

While running around, if she encountered something that looked like a person, she would fire. It didn't matter if she hit a tree or a stone. She'd just shoot anyway.

She'd launch at least 5 bullets in *full auto*.

Shooting away while moving. Moving as much as possible.  
Shooting while running, reloading her *magazine* while running.  
Even if she crashed into something and fell, she wouldn't cry.

It was a plan that they came up specifically because LLENN and Fukaziroh were a *team* of only two members and thus the danger of friendly fire was minimal.

And, originally, this was an *idea* that they came up with to use against Pitohui.

A measure to use on an awfully formidable enemy; a so-called last resort.

'I can't believe we've been forced to use it so quickly, in a place like this.'

LLENN was angry.

At her bad luck that kept piling up.

At her *mistake* of a command to cross the *dome*.

And also—

At the three *teams* that had formed an alliance and set a net here.

The last one was an entirely a false accusation, but,

“I’m gonna wipe the floor with all of you.”

LLENN ran into the *pink* smoke.

“The heck’s going on!”

“I dunno!”

As the screen had turned entirely *pink*, the audience in the bar could only shout complaints.

Although they did not quite understand what LLENN wanted to do, didn’t she essentially just make her *scene* of action entirely invisible?

“I can’t see muh LLENN-chan!”

The next moment—

‘How’s this, brighter for you?’

Like the parvenu who lit up a money bill to find out where his shoes were<sup>8</sup>, the screen changed completely.

The game’s management did the tactful thing to let the audience enjoy the scene. Their action was to display people as white figures on a gray and black screen.

“It’s *thermal vision*.”

Someone knowledgeable immediately stated.

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<sup>8</sup> This is referencing a caricature from Japan’s time of prosperity during World War I. Basically, the caricature depicts a man and a woman who had suddenly come to wealth. The woman is looking for their shoes but can’t find them because it’s dark, so the man lights up a hundred yen bill (which would be worth about 120,000 yen, or 1052€/1176\$, nowadays) to make some light to find the shoes and says “How’s this, brighter for you?”.

Detecting infrared beams and displaying them - that's what *thermal vision* was.

This was a kind of night vision device, but unlike a *system* that just amplified light, it also had the feature to find heat sources in the smoke.

But then, everything that could be seen in the world of GGO, no matter where one went, was just *computer graphics* and, going more deeply into it, it was just “pseudo-signals sent to the brains of the *players* watching it, .

The white figures lined up on the screen were the three *teams*. Their weapons had just stopped pounding away, so their barrels were displayed as being especially bright.

And, there was a small, white silhouette without form creeping up to the group.<sup>9</sup>

With moves so fast that it seemed like she was leaving afterimages, she moved all around and, when she encountered another white silhouette, the gun in her hands emitted white light and brought down the person that was just there.

“Hyahhou! It's LLENN-chan!”

“Our guy was done in! Should be to the left!”

Shouted a grayish-camouflaged man, whose *teammate* had lost all his *hit points*.

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9 The original text for this phrase is 実体も見せずに忍び寄る小さな白い影, which seems to be a slight modification of the phrase 実体を見せずに忍び寄る白い影, which was used in the Kagaku Ninjatai Gatchaman (Science Ninja Team Gatchaman, known as Battle of the Planets or Eagle Riders in the English-speaking world) series.

His surroundings were still *pink* like before. Even though someone said that it would clear up in a moment, hadn't it been more than 30 seconds and it hadn't cleared up at all yet?

This was because Fukaziroh fired additional rounds each time she reloaded, but the man could not even see that, thus he had no idea what was going on.

There was a limit to the amount of *stress* a person could bear.

All he knew was that he was enveloped in a *pink* mist and could not see anything while the number of his allies rapidly decreased, thus,

“Oh fuckin’ dammit!”

It was not unusual that he could not control himself anymore.

The gray-camouflaged man pointed his ZB26 *machine gun* held at his waist towards the sound of rustling, and,

“Eat this!”

Fired mercilessly. In *full auto*.

“Gabuh!”

He heard a voice mixed in with the gunshot,

“I got her!”

Feeling a response, the man stopped firing.

The next moment, a groan came from the direction he shot at, then bullets flew at him and hit the *machine gun* in his hands, causing sparks to scatter,

“Gyah!”

The ricochet sank into his face, creating a hit *effect*.

“I’m shot!”

When the man fell on his backside while shouting this,

“Wha! —That was you there?”

The voice of his comrade reached his ears.

When they heard some loud gunshots nearby, they reflexively shot in that direction.

Inside the *pink* smoke, numerous non-suppressed gunshots resounded, sometimes mixed in with a scream.

Only the people in the bar,

“Aww.....”

Clearly understood the situation.

That the friendly fire had finally begun.

If they were from the same *team*, they could still understand each other through the communication *items*, but that was difficult to do in this hodge podge of three *teams*, thus the number of people who aimed their guns wherever they heard gunshots nearby and opened fire in response continued increasing.

The actual LLENN had dropped to the ground on the spot the moment the gunshots had started and had not moved since. She decided to let the friendly fire go on.

Only one *character* came in front of LLENN in a panic and LLENN shot him from underneath, turning him into a beehive.

After a while, the friendly fire calmed down and the gunshots stopped.

Without a moment's delay, LLENN stood up, rushed through the smoke, and repeated her merciless gundown of the people nearby.

“The tiny *pink* one's darting about! Comrade got shot! And she immediately disappeared!”

The man who shouted this felt that something was thrust into his right cheek from below. And then,

“Tell your guys. “I finished off the *pink* enemy! Guys, stop shooting! ”

She heard a low and intimidating woman's voice right next to him.

Without even looking at the source, he knew that it was the enemy,

“W-what... if I r-refuse.....?”

The man asked.

On the screen in the bar, the small white silhouette that had pressed down its P90 *suppressor* on a large white silhouette opened fire.

The man, who had his head pierced through his cheek, fell to the left along with the AC-556F in his hands.

“Five!”

The people in the bar were fired up.

A gray-camouflaged man in the *pink* smoke,

“Hih! Hah!”

Was standing and waving his 《M4A1》 *assault rifle* muzzle left and right while holding the gun at his waist.

Every 2 seconds or so, he looked to the right then to the left— though he could not see anything in the smoke, he kept his finger on the trigger with the intention to shoot at anything that moved even the slightest bit.

“Hahih.”

The moment he faced to the left for the umpteenth time, a *pink* ghost-like silhouette appeared behind him and to the right, but the man did not notice it at all.

A reddish-brown camouflaged man was lying on the ground.

Lying on the *jungle* soil with his AC-556F at the ready, he kept his finger in contact with the trigger and thus a *Bullet Circle* was continuously displayed before his eyes.

“C’mon....., come from wherever you want.....”

If something moving entered this *Circle* in the *pink* smoke, be it friend or foe, he would blast them away. That is what he decided.

Red Lines, coming slightly to the side of the *Circle*, pierced the smoke and, before he could dodge them, a hail of 5.7 *mm* bullets assaulted his surroundings,

“Gebuh!”

And hit his body.

The audience, seeing LLENN bring down the man lying 10 *metres* away from her,

“Wh-what was that? Did she just aim carefully as she shot him?”

“She’s been doing that for a while now and hasn’t she been able to close in on her enemies all this time? Is LLENN-chan the only one who can see her opponents?”

Let out their reasonable impressions.

Even now, everything was displayed in *thermal vision* on the screen, so the surroundings should still be in smoke. No matter how one thought about it, there was no way anyone could see 10 *metres* ahead.

“It’s the *Lines*.”

Someone gave the answer.

“Even in the smoke, the *Bullet Line system assist* should be vividly visible, right? She’s seeing the *Lines* that the enemy keeps producing and following them. And then she fires at their source.”

“Ah! I see!

‘Aww! Waste of bullets!’

With that thought, LLENN aimed at the source of another *Bullet Line* she found, and fired her P90 in *full auto* for over a minute.

The muffled sounds of discharge and the empty shells expelled below.

Truthfully, she had no desire to shoot this much. Because she still had the great task of bringing down Pitohui ahead. ‘Extravagance is the enemy!’

However, she did not know what posture the enemy at the root of the *Line* had.

They could be lying on the ground, they could be standing. They could be *characters* with full-body bulletproof *protectors*.

To ensure the death of such enemies, she had to fire at least 20 bullets while changing her aim or she would feel uneasy. Even though she could kill them with just 3 bullets if she could *pinpoint* their heads.

The *Lines* disappeared immediately, so there was a response to defeating the enemy, but her spare magazines kept decreasing rapidly.

Then she spotted another *Bullet Line* given off by an enemy. She closed in, getting surprisingly close, by going around him, and she immediately found his figure.

She had noticed him, but due to her full body *pink*, he had yet to notice her.

With the nimbleness of a cat aiming for its prey, LLENN went around from the side and, adjusting her aim so that the *Bullet Circle* overlapped with the tall man’s head, she pulled her trigger for a short burst.

“LLENN! Next 6 grenades are the last!”

The voice of Fukaziroh, who had been replenishing her *smoke grenades* at fixed intervals, reached the ears of LLENN through the communication *item*.

The *smoke grenades* remodelled and prepared for the battle against Pitohui numbered 24. Although it was unavoidable, she could not believe that they had already used 18 of them in a place like this.

While lamenting in her mind,

“It’s okay! *Save* them!”

LLENN answered.

The *pink* smoke slowly but certainly became thinner. But, if LLENN had not miscalculated, she should have already brought down ten of them.

“There should be about three or four left, so I can bring them down by moving around! Fuka, defend yourself as well!”

“Gotcha!”

While hearing this answer, LLENN glanced at her P90 *magazine*. The bullets she saw in her half-transparent *magazine* numbered 5.

LLENN bravely exchanged it for a new *magazine*.

By operating the gun’s *magazine catch lever* with her left hand, she removed the *lock*. She raised the muzzle and, when the *magazine* slid down, her left hand pulled a new *magazine* from her *pouch*.

This was the sixth one she inserted into her gun. In other words, she only had 101 bullets, if she included the one magazine left in her *pouch*, that should could use right away.

‘I can’t believe I spent nearly 200 bullets to defeat ten of them!’

She had consumed far more than she had imagined. However, this was by all means necessary to avoid death here.

‘Crap! Damn! Damn!’

She directed the welled-up anger for all of it,

“Oi! Let’s get out of here already!”

“Yeah! Like I have time for these guys!”

‘Theeeeeere... yooooooooou... aaaaaaaare.’

Towards where she heard that voice, along with her muzzle.

“Aww yeah! Twenty *dead*! With this..... how many has it been?”

“About twelve I guess. There’s two at most left.”

“She won!”

“That’s LLENN-chan for you!”

The video in the fired-up bar changed from *thermal vision* to regular mode.

As they ran out of additional *smoke grenades*, the *pink* smoke was slowly clearing up. The green grass regained its contours and they began to see the numerous **【 D e a d 】** *markers* jumbled on top of it.

This was definitely a massacre.

The corpses were lying all over the narrow *area* and there were even some lying on top of each other.



SECT.11

## 第十一章 十分間の鑿殺・その二〈下〉

## SECT.11

### Ten Minute Massacre - The Second (II)

“Alley oop.”

No longer hearing any sounds of gunshots at all, Fukaziroh got out from the hollow.

And in the *jungle* she saw,

“Oho. Wowzers.”

There were many corpses lying around on the extensively mowed grass.

It was about 40 square *metres* in size. That was an unbelievably close battle. There were even around three bodies lying less than 5 *metres* away from her.

And, one of them,

“Uoooooh!”

Suddenly rose and darted at her. He had been just lying on the ground, but had not yet become a corpse.

It was a large and shaven-headed man wearing an all-green uniform.

In his hands was a 《SIG SG510》. A powerful *assault rifle* adopted by the Swiss Army in 1957 that used 7.5 x 55 *mm* bullets.

It was a rather *rare* small arm in GGO that had an overall length just a little under 1.2 *metres*; its first half had a long and narrow *silhouette* that looked like it was just a pole and it had a characteristic, close to 6 *kilogram*, weight.

The man plunged towards Fukaziroh with a ramming attack.

Upon a closer look, she saw that the SG510 in his hands did not have a *magazine* in it. It seemed that he had shot out all of his bullets and had removed it, but due to LLENN's shooting, he did not have the opportunity to put in a new one.

“Uhoh!”

Without hesitation, Fukaziroh lay down on the spot.

The man that was running,

“Uwah!”

Tripped over Fukaziroh and fell. The gun got separated from his hands and fell down, while his body rolled around for about 3 *metres*.

“Oh, you wanna piece’a me, punk?”

Saying this in a vulgar tone, Fukaziroh quickly stood up and, at the same time, dropped the guns which were completely useless at this range— her MGL-140s hanging by their *slings* on her shoulders, to the ground. As if this had been anticipated, there was a *buckle* in the middle of the *sling*; it easily came off by pinching under her arm.

The 2 MGL-140s fell on either side of the SG510 that the man dropped and sank into the soft *jungle* soil. At that moment, Fukaziroh's right hand nimbly extended towards her final weapon, a pistol held in the *holster* on her right thigh.

“Cra..... —Ah crap!”

Having stood up, the man noticed that his weapon was no longer in his hands,

“Too bad! Call upon on your god!”

And then, he noticed the small girl about 5 *metres* away who thrust her pistol at him, along with a cool-sounding line.

In Fukaziroh’s right hand, the M&P pistol emitted fire.

\*Papapapapapapapapapapapapapapapapapan!\*

It was an ultra-high speed rapid-fire. The *slide* slid down with tremendous force, ejecting an empty shell, then it propelled back due to the power of the spring, sending a new bullet into the chamber— then the trigger was pulled again, emitting flames and a bullet from the muzzle.

The golden, empty shells fluttering in the air glittered in succession.

When the last bullet was fired and the *slide* stopped after sliding down,

“Huh, what?”

Fukaziroh, who had dealt a merciless rapid fire with one hand, jerked her chin.

“ .....

Then, the man who was under one-sided fire and had been frantically crossing his hands in front of his face, but before long,

“Huh?”

He noticed that he had not been shot anywhere.

‘It doesn’t hurt, I don’t see any hit *effects* and my *hit points* haven’t decreased.’

“Huh wha?”

The shaven-headed man’s,

“Huh wha?”

And Fukaziroh’s voices were *synchronised*.

“Huh? I coulda hit at this range!”

Fukaziroh flustered,

“Ojou-chan..... could it be that you’re terrible with your pistol?”

And the man grinned broadly.

The man stepped forward. And sidled up to Fukaziroh.

“He...hehehe..... I-if I recall correctly, in this tournament you see, a fallen corpse’s remains for 10 minutes as an “indestructible *object* , right.....”

Saying this with a vulgar smile, the man took another step with his left leg.

And then, he blurted out something unthinkable.

“D-during that time..... the 《*harassment warning*》 won’t come up even if I touch the corpse all over.....”

In VR *games*, including GGO, if one inappropriately touched the body of a person of the opposite sex (or even same sex if the person disliked it), a *harassment* warning would come up.

A penalty would be imposed; if these added up over time but such actions still continued, the *account* would be permanently suspended. No matter how developed it was, the ID would not be usable on any VR *game*. Starting over from scratch... the worst conceivable situation for a *gamer*.

However, combat was an exception to the *harassment* regulation. If that were not the case, *contact*-based attacks such as using *knives* or blows would not be possible.

Normally in GGO, a corpse immediately turned into small *polygons* and scattered, but a body would lie in place until the end of the *game* in BoB and for 10 minutes in SJ.

That is to say, the theory that one could touch all over someone's body as much as they wanted by feigning it to be an attack came into existence. The broadcast *cameras* would not come if it were not an actual battle, so it would not be seen by the audience either.

“Hehhehhe.....”

In other words, this man was thinking of killing the cute and tiny *avatar* that is Fukaziroh, then touching her corpse to no end and committing lewd deeds,

“Bah— Why you fucking pervert-lowlife-bastard-degenerate-scumbag-savage-beast! Doncha screw around with me or I'll kill ya, y'know?”

Having realised this, Fukaziroh began glaring at him with a sharp glint in her eyes and hurled merciless jeers at him.

“Heh! How? Don’t start regretting that a fucking amateur like you, who can’t even hit someone at this range, came to GGO and nonchalantly participated in SJ!”

While shouting this, the man brought his hands in front of him and darted at Fukaziroh.

This was an action no longer related to either GGO or SJ, it was just the action of a pure degenerate.

“Doncha make light of me!”

Fukaziroh threw her beloved M&P, which had run out of bullets, with all her force,

“Gafuh!”

And despite not being able to hit him with her shooting, she managed a splendid bullseye on the man’s forehead with her gun while he was charging at her.

However, that alone was not enough to stop the abnormal force of the man driven by his *libido*.

Fukaziroh found the man’s gun, the SG510, at her feet, though out of bullets, put her left foot underneath it,

“Hun!”

And stepped on its *stock* with her right foot.

\*Guwah\*, using the principle of leverage, Fukaziroh raised the long and narrow rod-like barrel and firmly grasped it with her hands.

“And what can—”

‘You do?’

Just as the man was about to say this,

“Doryaa!”

Fukaziroh struck his chin from directly below.

The state of their battle was displayed to the audience in the bar.

First, they saw how the collapsed man darted at Fukaziroh, then tumbled,

“What a pity!”

Then, Fukaziroh’s merciless rapid-fire with her pistol, thus they thought ‘Aw, he’s definitely dead now’,

“Huh?”

But then they saw that all of it had missed and, after some sort of conversation, the man charged in.

‘Ah, that girl... is already done for. She has no chance of winning in a hand-to-hand battle.’

The moment when everyone had this idea, the man’s large body received an *uppercut* and was taken aback.

“Huh?”

“Gyahan!”

The man fell on his back and his chin was— not shot, but a red *damage effect* light shined on it.

His *hit points* had decreased by about ten percent.

“Wha.....?”

What the man saw after raising his head,

“Like hell I’m lettin’ ya!”

Was a small girl grasping his own gun.

Fukaziroh was firmly grasping the barrel of the man’s SG510 and holding that heavy thing like it were a two-handed sword.

“Haah?”

“Haah?”

The man’s voice was perfectly *synchronised* with the voice of the audience.

Projected on the screen was the scene of the small girl inversely holding a long *rifle*.

“Eh, whatever the circumstances may be, ain’t it impossible to fight with that?”

“But, didn’t she get a clean hit just now?”

“Ain’t that a fluke? GGO is a *game* of guns ya know?”

“Do-donncha mess with me!”

The shaven-headed man stood up, then squatted and began his *tackle*.

Right now, driving him was—

But one wish.

‘I wanna push that chibi girl down, strangle her to death and, after that, do something lewd.’

“Fuh!”

Fukaziroh moved her right foot one step laterally and turned around clockwise.

Almost everyone in the audience believed that this was a *motion* for escaping.

They believed that even if she did escape, the man would catch up with her in an instant and easily push her down due to the difference in physiques.

Only one man,

“Ah!”

Realised the hidden truth.

He shouted in his mind.

‘This girl has experience with *fantasy*-style VR *games*! And she’s used to handling a long sword!’

Turning around was the *motion* for swinging a long, heavy weapon like a bat.

“Houryaaaaaa!”

With an audacious scream, Fukaziroh swung the SG510 diagonally downwards at a tremendous speed while pulling her left foot backwards and twisting her body counter-clockwise.

“Eh?”

With unprecedented *timing*, a diagonal slash was dealt to the man’s left shoulder as he charged in.

Exerting herself, she dealt her strongest blow, with all of her power and speed riding on it.

The upper part of the SG510’s *stock* literally smashed the man’s collarbone into small pieces. As her strike continued, his ribs and breastbone broke into pieces.

“Buggyaaaa!”

As a long *damage effect* gleamed from the man’s shoulder to his stomach, he collapsed forward.

While feeling a pain from his chest and stomach, the man looked up and saw a small silhouette, holding its sword above its head, covering the sky,

“I’ll hand down the divine punishment on the enemy of womankind! *Chest!*”

“Heh?”

With such tremendous speed that an afterimage was created, the “sword” swung down.

“Fuka? Where are you? You safe?”

In the world now cleared of *pink* smoke, the *pink* LLENN looked for her partner while holding her P90 in one hand,

“Ah, over here! Can you see a black gun?”

Along with that voice, a black *stock* appeared above the *jungle* grass.

‘Huh?’

That did not appear to be Fukaziroh’s MGL-140. For the time being, LLENN pushed her way through the grass while being on alert,

“Urya!”

“Gefuh!”

And there, she found an excessively pitiful scene.

Fukaziroh, grasping the barrel of a long *rifle* she had never seen before with both hands and swinging it down on the enemy, a shaven-headed man, who was about to burst into tears, collapsed with his face looking up in front of her.

With a heavy impact, she hit the man’s right hand, then quickly brandished it again, and hit the left hand next. Then, the right ankle and then the left ankle.

“—Gyah! —Gyah! —Gyah! —Gyah!”

Although the man was at her mercy, the *damage* from the blows to the tips of his limbs was not that high, thus it only caused minor *effects*. There was a decrease in *hit points*, but it was far from nearing death. However, the struck part of the body would become numb and definitely hurt. This was practically torture.

“Yo LLENN, glad you’re okay.”

Fukaziroh once again brandished it overhead as she said this, while LLENN, who did not understand the situation other than the fact that Fukaziroh was safe and lively,

“W-what happened.....?”

“Well, I figured that I’d help out by killing at least one myself!”

Fukaziroh answered with a refreshing smile. Then, she glared at the man,

“C’mon c’mon! Try and touch me!”

And then attacked again. The *rifle* swung down on his left hand.

\*Bakin\*, with this unpleasant sound, his fingers shined red due to the *damage effect*. If this was *RL*, the man’s fingers would probably have been smashed and fractured.

The shaven-headed man looked at LLENN with a tear-stained face, and in a frail voice,

“P-please save me..... I wish... to log out... but my left hand... is nu... mb... I can’t call out... the window..... P-please..... kill me.....”

And appealed to her in keigo.

“Quit screwin’ around, punk! Don’t think I’d let an enemy of womankind like you die easily, you bastard!”

At Fukaziroh’s tremendously threatening attitude,

“I’m sorry I won’t do it again I won’t do it again I won’t do it again I won’t do it again!”

The shaven-headed man shouted as large tears welled from his eyes.

“ .....

LLENN made *eye-contact* with Fukaziroh,

“ *Okay*. That’s enough. Ah, that was refreshing!”

Fukaziroh lowered the SG510 from her overhead stance and tossed it aside. The heavy-looking *rifle* flew through the air while turning, and disappeared into the *jungle*.

LLENN aimed the tip of her P90’s *suppressor* at the man’s temple, and

“Aah..... I’m saved..... Kami-sama, th.....”

LLENN put the man, who let out words of relief and called on God, out of his misery with just 1 shot.

“I think we’ve wiped all of them out right now, but let’s count!”

Saying this, LLENN began *counting* the corpses in the area. The smoke had cleared up entirely and the *jungle* returned to being green. With the vegetation mowed down by the numerous bullets flying about, it looked much more open than before.

LLENN nimbly wandered from one corpse to another, scattered about,

“Eight, nine, ten——”

Counting the 【D e a d】 *markers*.

“Thirteen.....”

As LLENN counted this far, Fukaziroh, who had retrieved her thrown M&P and hung her MGL-140s on her shoulders, said.

“Yeah. That’s not a wipeout?”

“Considering that there could be a maximum of fourteen of them, it’s natural, but.....”

After saying this, LLENN,

“Ah! So that’s it.....”

Made a stern expression and turned around.

LLENN readied her P90 and walked slowly. Her goal was a spot 10 *metres* ahead where some corpses had piled up.

“HmMMM?”

Fukaziroh followed after her and LLENN, when she was only 4 *metres* away from the corpses, suddenly fired.

3 bullets towards the collapsed corpses.

Corpses become indestructible *objects*, thus nothing would change by shooting them. It was just a mysterious wall that absorbed the force of the bullets— or something like that.

However, this “corpse” was different.

“Youch!”

It shouted this right after being shot and jumped up, then fell on its backside with a thump.

It was the black combat uniform wearing ikemen *character*—  
Clarence.

“I knew it!”

“Ooh! So he was planning to play dead!”

Shouted LLENN and Fukaziroh. This fellow had been lying face-down on someone’s corpse, thus faking the *marker*.

While sitting, Clarence raised both hands with a brand new hit *effect* shining on them,

“So you got me, oh well. Okay, I give up, I give u~p!”

The ikemen said with a smile.

“Look, as you can see, I’ve got no weapon. My *main arm* was shot away by someone during that melee just now. I have a pistol on my waist, but you’ll shoot me if I try to take it out, right?”

“Of course!”

Said LLENN while aligning her *Bullet Circle* on Clarence’s face,

“I want to save my bullets, so I don’t want to fire a single bullet anymore. I’d like you to resign.”

“Well, what can you do. But y’know, if you don’t mind, why don’t we talk a bit? You two are cute. I really really really love strong and cute girls like you two!”

At the magnificent nanpa<sup>10</sup> line that came out from the refreshing ikemen smiling face,

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<sup>10</sup> Nanpa (ナンパ) is a type of flirting and seduction popular among Japanese teenagers and people in their twenties or thirties, or it can refer to people who take part in this activity.

“Ugh.....”

LLENN made a truly unpleasant expression,

“Woah, this guy’s amusing. You’d want at least one of this *type* in a joint party.”

On the other hand, Fukaziroh said this with a cheerful smile. And then,

“But since he’s so amusing, let’s shoot him. We’re not in a joint party right now.”

LLENN sighed,

“Then, I’m gonna shoot him, so don’t get a bad impre——”

And stopped midway on her remark.

“Oh? What’s up?”

Fukaziroh,

“Hmm?”

And Clarence let out their curious voices. LLENN,

“He— th-that *pouch*——”

Asked while looking at the extensive, long, and narrow *pouch*, which was of course black, on Clarence’s black combat uniform.

“What’s in it?”

“Huh? Ah, this? May I move my right hand?”

Clarence asked in return and LLENN answered by slightly nodding with her head and P90.

“Then, if you’ll excuse me.....”

Clarence’s right hand slowly moved down, then, once it had descended below the shoulders, suddenly gained speed, extended towards the pistol on the right side of the waist, pulled it out—

\*Shupaan!\*

LLENN’s P90 spouted fired. A high-pitched, *suppressed* gunshot resounded.

“Yoooooouch!”

It was a rather speedy quick draw, but LLENN, who was already armed, naturally won. An 《FN Five-SeveN》 automatic pistol was shot out of of Clarence’s hand with a 5.7 *mm* bullet and fell down.

With the last counterattack method sealed,

“Oh geez! Fine! Just kill me! Humph!”

Clarence had a childish tantrum.

“Before that, what’s inside your *pouch*! If you continue toying with me, your ears are gonna be shot next!”

“Arencha a scary girl..... Look.”

Clarence pulled off the *pouch’s flap* and took out its contents.

Which was a long and narrow *magazine* made of *plastic*, with clearly visible bullets packed inside.

And, aside from the tint, it was the exact same as the one in LLENN's beloved gun that she was using right now.

LLENN's eyes suddenly opened wide.

"I knew it! You! You're using a P90?"

"No. My gun is an 《AR-57》 ... but I guess you don't know about it? It uses an M16-type lower *receiver*, but the upper one is exactly the same as the P90's, and it uses the same mag——"

Interrupting Clarence's speech,

"Hand over your *magazines!*"

Was LLENN's shout.

"Excuse me?"

"All the ones that you have! Hand over your *magazines!*"

"Excuse me? —Ah, I get it! The *pink* ochibi-chan has shot quite a lot in this battle, right. So, you're uneasy about the future with the ones you have left. Which means that you want my *magazines* that you can use for your P90."

'Ah, I see', Fukaziroh, who was behind LLENN, nodded.

"But, even I had quite a shootout just now, so this is all I've got left in my *pouch*, y'know."

Clarence tapped on the stomach *pouch* with the hand that held the *magazine* and it collapsed entirely. Proof that there was nothing inside.

"H-how about your *storage?*"

“Well, I do have—”

“Take it out!”

“Eh, why?”

The ikemen gave an expression of amazement,

“Why do I have to do so much for the enemy that defeated us?  
Though I am already going to resign.”

‘Hmm, that’s true’, before Fukaziroh could share her thoughts,

“I’ll win! Using your *magazines!*”

LLENN answered. With a serious look.

“Buhah! And what benefit do I have out of it? Buhahahahah!”

In front of Clarence, who burst into a cackle, LLENN said to her partner without facing her.

“Fuka..... I’ll be shooting this guy's limbs, so in the meantime, can you pin him down from the back and manipulate his left hand?”

“Ah, okay. I can do that.”

Fukaziroh understood everything and nodded.

Since there was a *system* for bringing out the *window* with a specific movement of the left hand, the fact that it did not matter whether the hand was moved intentionally to activate it was a scary part about VR *games*.

There have been actual cases where someone materialised and then stole *items* or accepted duels in essentially safe areas like towns by manipulating a person's arm and fingers while they were having a pleasant nap. Good grief, one could not carelessly take a nap.

“He— hey, wait wait!”

Naturally, Clarence was also shocked.

“You two show no mercy while making those cute expressions, really now! If someone saw you doing something like that, what do you think people would think of you? You do know that this whole thing has been broadcast for a while now? Although they can't hear this conversation, they'll surely figure it out if they see your actions you know? You'll go down in GGO history as lowlife bastards— well, since you're women, you'd be “lowlife bitches who breach etiquette, y'know? Are you okay with that? Really?”

“Is that all you wanted to say?”

LLENN answered in an emotionless monotone,

“.....Uhi. Okay okay. I'll give you them. At any rate, they'll return to me once the tournament is over, so I don't mind.”

Clarence's left hand slowly opened, dropping the *magazine* in it. And then, just before operating the *window*, Clarence gave a broad grin,

“But, you know, you wouldn't mind giving me some kind of reward for it, right?”

And proposed such a thing at the last moment.

“LLENN, how about we shoot him already? This is a waste of time, aight?”

Said Fukaziroh. Without answering to that, LLENN asked Clarence.

“What exactly?”

“Yeah. Nothing much really— would you give me a *kiss*?”

“Haaaah?” “Hoa?”

While looking at LLENN’s and Fukaziroh’s stunned expressions,

“A *kiss* a *kiss*. A <sup>seppun</sup> kiss . A baiser. Both of you would be nice, but I would want at least the *pink* girl over there to give a *kiss* as a reward. Of course, it could be on the cheek!”

“ .....

Beside the speechless LLENN,

“Are you fucking taking advantage of us! Is there nothin’ but lechers in this *game*! —LLENN, I’m gonna use a *grenade* to make him see chickens around his head<sup>11</sup>, so in the meantime, you should be able to materialise the magazines by moving his left hand, ‘kay.”

When Fukaziroh was about to aim the MGL-140 in her left arm, Clarence twisted while making an \*uhya\* sound.

And then, LLENN decided.

“Okay. I’m okay, if it’s only that much!”

---

11 A slang expression for stunning someone or making someone dizzy/lose consciousness. This comes from beat’em games like Final Fight and Street Fighter II where a stunned state was depicted by a ring of chickens or other small birds swirling above the character’s head.

“Oh? You’re okay? LLENN, are you sane?”

“This guy isn’t right in the head..... but still..... I’m okay if I get those precious *magazines*. It’s certainly better than “mugging” after all .....

“Yyyipeeee!”

Clarence cheering like a child,

“Well, if you say you’re fine with it, LLENN. I’ve *kissed* with my mates in *game* too.”

Was quite the contrast to Fukaziroh’s somewhat stunned expression.

“However! Materialise all of your *magazines* beforehand!”

“Kay ‘kay! Be sure to keep your promise, ojou-san!”

Clarence said with a *wink*, left hand waving to operate the *storage*. P90 *magazines* appeared one after another in mid-air and slowly dropped to the ground. Their number actually exceeded ten.

“Ohou! A mountain of treasure. LLENN, can I shoot now?”

“No.”

“Okay, you want to shoot, right LLENN. By all means by all means.”

“No, I won’t shoot. I’ll... keep my promise.”

LLENN finally loosened her P90’s aim and approached the sitting Clarence, while firmly holding it in her right hand.

“You sure are scary. Don’t pull the trigger by accident, okay?”

While aiming at Clarence's heart so that she could pierce it at any time, she squat down to the right of Clarence.

"I really loathe you, but..... I keep my promises!"

And then, with a stern expression of resolution, she placed her left hand on Clarence's right ear, and lightly *kissed* far back on the cheek. The *kiss* itself took a mere moment, but the time it took her to close in with her lips was unnaturally long,

"Oh, clever. With this, the people watching the broadcast will think that you whispered into the ear, huh."

Fukaziroh admired LLENN's quick-wittedness.

"Well? Satisfied?"

With an expression that was filled with thirty percent anger, thirty percent shyness, and the rest contempt, LLENN backed away.

\*Gui\*, facing LLENN was Clarence's biggest grin ever. It spread out so much that it seemed like it would reach the nose, but it was quite vexing to see it on an ikemen.

"I'm satisfied I'm satisfied! Hyaah! My heart is throbbing! Ufufufuh! How lovely!"

And then, Clarence abruptly gave several remarks in a feminine tone.

"Hi?" "What?"



LLENN's and Fukaziroh's hearts jolted in a bad sense at the unexpected speech and conduct,

“Mm, there's truly no better *kiss* than one from a girl! I hate how men's *kisses* are so rough!”

Clarence was unconcernedly cheerful. Really cheerful.

“ .....

‘A *kiss*..... with a man?’

With her comprehensive faculty failing, LLENN froze up like an armed and *pink* Ojizō-san.<sup>12</sup>

Fukaziroh,

“Hey what the heck? You normally *kiss* guys.....? Is it that? The non-milk kind of homo<sup>13</sup>, or the *bacon* and *lettuce*<sup>14</sup> kind of that?”

Asked a truly Hokkaido-born-like question,

“That?”

\*Kyoton\*, staring blankly was Clarence. While having a mutual stare with the stiffened LLENN and the frowning Fukaziroh, Clarence,

“Ah! Oh right right, sorry sorry! I didn't tell you, that's right!”

“Tell us what?”

---

12 The Japanese name for Kshitigarbha, a bodhisattva (one who vows to save all beings before becoming a Buddha) who looks over children, travellers and the underworld.

13 Homo is a common abbreviation of both “homosexual” and “homogenised” (e.g., milk) in Japanese.

14 Bacon and Lettuce form the initials “BL”, jargon for “boys love”.

“I— am a woman. Though my *avatar* reminded me of the Takarazuka<sup>15</sup>, so I intentionally went for this manner of speaking.<sup>16</sup> I’m flat-chested, but I could show you my breasts? Ah, this would be quicker, I guess.”

‘WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAT DID YOU SAY?’

To both equally flabbergasted girls came a *name card*, which could be called a VR *game* business card exchange.

It was indeed written on it.

The *character name*— “C l a r e n c e 〃 . Gender— *female*.

“*IRL*, I like both boys and girls, y’know?”

Clarence said, even though they did not ask.

Having finally recovered from her *shock*, LLENN,

“Eh..... please do not bring up *RL* subjects.....”

Unintentionally replied in keigo.

“Eeh! Why not! Next time, why don’t all three of us go for tea? A *virtual* girl meetup! There are few girls in GGO, after all! Be my friends!”

“Y-you don’t know what we are like *IRL* right? We could be fifty-year-old ladies, you know? We might not have anything in common, you know?”

“Oh don’t worry! I’m a philanthropist! Hey! Since we’re all here and all, wanna make a girls-only *squadron*? Let’s do it!”

---

15 Takarazuka (宝塚) refers to the Takarazuka Revue - an all-female (women play both the female and male parts) musical theatre troupe based in Takarazuka, Hyōgo Prefecture, Japan.

16 Clarence has been using the first person pronoun *ore* (俺), which is considered to be a rough- or arrogant-sounding masculine pronoun, to refer to herself.

‘Just resign already.’

Thought Fukaziroh, but decided to pass on saying it.

“W-well, I shall be borrowing the *magazines* then.....”

“Be my guest, be my guest.”

LLENN operated her *window* with her left hand. But, the moment she tried to place the *magazines* that had formed a mountain into her *storage*—

“Taah!”

She was unable to do so as she was pushed away with tremendous force by Clarence.

LLENN’s small body was blown away to Fukaziroh’s side, and when Fukaziroh tried to aim her MGL-140s at Clarence,

“Drop to the ground!”

She felt something in his— no, her frantic expression and did as she was told.

In front of LLENN, lying face-up with only her head raised, and Fukaziroh, who energetically dropped down on her face,

“Win this!”

As Clarence left behind these words, hit *effects* appeared throughout her body, and thus she died.

And then several high-pitched gunshots could be heard.

The pleasant sound of rapid fire from an *5.56 mm class assault rifle*.

Its source was a spot about *50 metres* to the north.

The moment they confirmed that, numerous *Bullet Lines* assailed them,

“Hyaa!”

“Craap!”

Then, with a roar, numerous bullets flew above the heads of LLENN and Fukaziroh, who had bent down to the ground.

‘We’ve been talking too much!’

LLENN once again cursed the *mistake* in her decision-making.

Seeing as it was an enemy *team* that had just come from the north, those guys were undoubtedly MMTM. They crossed the *jungle* without a sound and approached them in secret.

If Clarence, who quickly sensed them, had not pushed her away, LLENN would have probably been shot to death as well.

‘Thanks! Truly, thanks!’

Offering her gratitude in her mind, LLENN,

“The *magazines!*”

Thought about the more than ten *magazines* that she had been unable to put away into her *storage* and thus left beside Clarence’s corpse merely *3 metres* ahead. She had no confidence that she could fight properly later on without them. However,

“Let’s get outta here LLENN! Retreat!”

Fukaziroh was right. In the current state that did not allow them to even to raise their heads properly, it was only natural to make use of the *jungle* to creep out to safety.

\*Byunbyunbyun\*

A diversionary *full auto* fire passed above their heads. They felt the wind it made.

If the enemy moved just a bit, they would probably be able to reach them here. If she took too long to decide, they would be unable to save what had to be saved.

They had to run away.

‘But those *magazines*—’

After LLENN hesitated for merely 3 seconds, a *Bullet Line* lit up right on her face.

As if the opponent had climbed up a tree, it came down diagonally from above.

“Aah.....”

She had no way of dodging it now.

The *Line* disappeared with a low and intimidating roar.

A beast roar-like heavy bass sound resounded from the right, opposite from the side they had been hearing the gunshots from MMTM thus far, and a bullet came roaring at the top of her head at supersonic speed.

“Wh-what.....?”

“C’mon LLENN!”

LLENN was forcibly pulled by Fukaziroh and thus moved out of the way. At that moment, a heavy bass sound resounded, mixed in with the high-pitched *semi-auto* fire.

Having been forcibly pulled by the superhuman Fukaziroh,

“Horeh!”

“Mugyuh.”

LLENN, who had fallen into a *jungle* ditch, “heard” a vehement exchange of gunshots on either side of her.

And then, she finally regained her composure.

‘I’ve heard that heavy bass before.’

‘A sound I heard enough of during the previous SJ to make me sick, and it’s coming from a very close range at that.’

‘In that case,’

“Fuka! Can you fire some regular *grenades*?”

“Aye! Shall I pound them with all 6? So, should I go for the left or right enemy? Or both?”

“The left! 50 *metres* away from here. Fire and scatter them about 30 *metres* wide!”

‘She’s definitely down.’

MMTM's *leader* was convinced of this when he caught the detestable *pink* chibi in the *scope* of his STM-556.

However, the "man" that was in front just before he fired noticed him and thrust her away, thus that guy was the only one to die. It was too late to regret being stingy and not just firing a *grenade*.

As such, he had his comrades provide cover fire and climbed up a nearby tree like a monkey.

"Gotcha....."

But despite catching the cute face right in the centre of his *scope*—

At that moment, another formidable enemy appeared and began mercilessly firing at him.

If he had not heard the first gunshots and jumped off the tree quickly, it would have been him rather than the trunk riddled with holes.

That heavy sound undoubtedly came from a Russian PKM *machine gun*. And, based on the previous scan, he also knew the identity of the enemy *team*. That's right. It was those amazons.

They should be firing from not even 100 *metres* away, but due to the thickness of the *jungle*, all he could see were the *Lines*.

"Everyone, withdraw! No need for cover fire, so just retreat! Watch out for the *Lines*!"

He instantly decided, and his comrades instantly responded.

With their faces turned in the direction of the enemy, the six began running away backwards while avoiding the *Lines* one by one, but after a few seconds—

\*Bo\*, \*bo\*, \*bo\*, \*bo\*, \*bo\*, \*bon\*!

A series of explosions roared where they had just been firing moments ago, blowing away the vegetation. If their retreat had been just 5 seconds late, all of them would have received a lot of *damage*.

“Uhhyah! That was close! What was that!”

Hearing one of his comrades,

“A series of 6 Denel *grenades*. That chibi’s partner fuckin’ had two of those guns. I wanted to bring her down before she could fire, but..... We failed.”

The *leader* answered. And then,

“It’s too much for us to handle the amazons with them here. Though regrettable, we’re leaving the *dome* for now.”

While running, the *leader* looked at his wristwatch and saw that it was 13:49:45.

Having seen this series of events and the battle in the thick *jungle*, a man in the bar,

“Awwwsom!

Shouted in great excitement,

“I’m going to tell those idiots watching another *battle* on the

other side!”

Said this, and began running.

And then, in front of the group who had watched Pitohui’s battle—

Spoke with the most “triumphant” look ever.

“Why didn’t you watch LLENN-chan’s battle! That girl sure is awesome! At this rate, she’s definitely going to be the winner!”



SECT.12

## 第十二章 シャーリー

## SECT.12

### Shirley

Just before 13:50,

“It’s not like I was trying to help you, okay? I just did it because I thought it was our best *chance* to bring down the formidable MMTM. Though they got away. Well, I guess we’ll call it a “temporary truce.” It would be easy to kill you now, but I want a serious battle with you, after all.”

LLENN, who had been lying face-up on the ground and was told this by a giant woman with braided hair who was towering over her,

“I am indebted to you.”

Gave only this as a reply and took out her *satellite scan* terminal. While she was still collapsed, her wristwatch stopped vibrating. It was exactly 50 minutes now.

LLENN was too impatient to bother getting up, so she looked at the terminal screen while still lying face-up. And then, she saw a slow *satellite scan* beginning from the south-west,

“Would you get a move on! And you call yourself an artificial satellite! It’s not like you have to worry about air resistance or anything!”

Gazed at it while absurdly urging it on,

“There you are!”

And confirmed the survival of *team* PM4 in the south-east of the map. As well as seven gray dots lined up slightly further away.

“Aah..... Thank goodness.....”

LLENN held her *satellite scan* terminal tight to her chest, as if she had received a letter from her lover.

Although the possibility that only the *leader* M had survived was not zero, LLENN truly believed in Pitohui’s survival. Typical M-san and Pito-san. They turned the tables on all seven *teams*.

And then,

“How scary..... I have to beat someone like that?.....”

As her comrades kept watch over the *jungle* without leaving any blind spots, SHINC’s *Boss* also gazed at the terminal,

“Wow, it sure has decreased! Ten *teams* disappeared in 10 minutes!”

She cheerfully reported.

Among them, seven were the combined *team* wiped out by Pitohui and the others.

And the three others were the *teams* that were mostly slaughtered by LLENN on her own, except for Clarence, who was the only one finished off by MMTM.

The current survivors numbered seven *teams*.

LLENN’s group and SHINC within the *dome*, as well as MMTM, who had just made a brilliant retreat and were currently on their way to the north of the *dome*.

Naturally, Pitohui's PM4,

And the other three were—

KKHC in the valley between the mountains to the east of the *dome*. It was a *team* name that they had never heard of.

ZEMAL, or the Zen-Nihon *Machine Gun Lovers*, in the northern hilly area, who appeared to be all alive and well. This time, they were truly holding on.

The last one was named 《T-S》 and was quite far away, located almost directly on the rampart in the north-west area of the map.

Fukaziroh reloaded her 2 MGL-140s with regular *grenades*, stood up, and looked up at the huge woman carrying the silenced Vintorez sniper rifle.

The golden-haired dwarf gave a smile,

“Heya absurdly gargantuan person! You're *Boss* right. I'm Fukaziroh. You can just call me “Fuka,, , with love. Nice to meet ya!”

“My my, how late we are with our greetings, cheeky *blonde* Ojou-sama. Please feel free to call me either Eva or Boss, whichever you prefer. —And thanks. I don't know the details, but if it weren't for you, LLENN couldn't have formed a *team* and participated in SJ2.”

“Well, no need to thank me. We can take our time with the detailed self-introductions after the tournament.”

Fukaziroh heard about *Boss* and the others *IRL* in detail from Karen, but she knew that talking about it *in-game* would spoil the mood, thus she restrained herself.

Facing *Boss*, who nodded with an ‘uh huh’,

“You truly have our gratitude for saving us! I’ll eventually repay this debt with a direct hit from a *grenade*—”

Fukaziroh gave a sidelong glance to LLENN, who had just put away her *satellite scan* terminal,

“Oi, LLENN! I’ll hold this giga woman down with my masterful conversation skills! Take the opportunity! Get your *magazines*!”

“Thanks, that’s what I’ll do!”

LLENN stood up with so much strength that it seemed as if she were a grasshopper and rushed over to Clarence’s corpse. And, finally, she obtained her cherished *magazines*. The *fully* loaded P90/AR-57 *magazines*, with 50 bullets each, numbered,

“—Eight, nine, ten—”

‘Wow, twelve. That’s 600 bullets!’

“Ah..... “I’ve obtained some new *magazines*,<sup>17</sup>!”

As the 800 bullets she had brought with her had decreased to 450 by now, just how reassuring was this? Right now, they were *items* that made LLENN so happy that she was about to cry. A *fanfare* for acquiring a new item resounded loudly in her mind.

With these, she was able to fire 1050 bullets. She obtained more firepower than she had from the start.

LLENN gleefully inserted six of them into the *pouches* on her thighs that had been emptied, and put the rest into her *storage* via operating it with her left hand.

---

17 The phrase in quotes is written entirely in hiragana. I guess it was supposed to look childish?

“Thanks..... You’ve been a great help.”

Finally, LLENN sent words of gratitude to Clarence’s corpse once more.

He— no, she had died face-up, with her hands spread out and a happy expression on her face.

LLENN remembered that her *hit points* had decreased by twenty percent. Judging that it would be better to reduce the odds of instant death, she quickly applied a first-aid kit on her wrist.

Her body was momentarily enveloped in light and her *hit point gauge* entered *healing mode*. It would take 180 seconds, or 3 minutes, until the healing was complete.

LLENN returned to Fukaziroh and *Boss*,

“ *Boss*. Thanks for saving me.”

Looking up at her huge body, LLENN once again said her thanks and bowed down.

“My pleasure.”

Having politely replied, *Boss* gave a happy expression,

“Now then, looks like this is the perfect time, so shall we have our serious one-on-one? I don’t mind doing it here, but, you know, I don’t mind changing the location either? As long as other *teams* can’t intervene, anywhere’s—”

“Sorry..... I can’t do that.”

*Boss*’s eyes bulged open when LLENN interrupted her.

“Hah? Why? Didn’t we say we’d have a match next time—”

“Sorry..... Umm..... I can’t really..... explain.....”

Beside LLENN, who had shown a painful expression as she did not want to involve high school girls into *RL* trouble,

“Oh, you see, something bad will happen if LLENN doesn’t defeat Pitohui. If Pitohui-san dies without winning SJ2, she’ll apparently die *IRL*. The only one who can stop that is LLENN.”

Fukaziroh quickly spilled the beans.

“He——”

As LLENN became like a boiled octopus,

“She’s your *rival* right? Let’s give ‘er some trust.”

Fukaziroh said thus.

As there were no battles at the time, the broadcast *cameras* continued displaying LLENN’s and *Boss*’s groups.

Although the spectators could not understand what they were saying, they could see that LLENN, Fukaziroh, and the *members* of SHINC, who had gathered there due to the lack of enemies in the area, were having a conversation with serious expressions.

“What’s going on here? Are they planning to work together now that they’ve started talking, even if by coincidence?”

“LLENN-chan whispered something into the ear of that last guy just now.”

“Wasn’t that just a thank you for the magazines?”

“To me..... it seemed like LLENN-chan *kissed* that guy on the cheek.....”

“It’s amazing how far pervs can go.....”

It was the aftermath of a battle so extreme that no one could take their eyes off it for even a moment, thus the *mood* in the bar was once again laid back. There were even those who, using the opportunity, filled their stomachs with their new orders.

The *players* who died in SJ2 returned, one after another, after the 10 minute waiting time was over, thus,

“Those amazons! I ain't gonna be happy unless they win this!”

A *sniper* wielding an SSG69,

“LLENN-chan, do your best! Win this again!”

And the optical gun-wielding *team* that was wiped out at the station all cheered for the *teams* that killed them.

After about 2 very laid-back minutes—

On screen, LLENN gave a deep bow. Was she expressing her gratitude for the help?”

And then, *Boss* extended her hand to LLENN.

The large-bodied *Boss* lowered her large hand, while the small-bodied LLENN raised her small hand.

The two gave each other a handshake.

The sizes of their hands and bodies were so different that the scene was quite strange.

“Oh, they’ve settled their talk. What are they gonna do? Are they gonna fight here?”

To the disappointment of the people anticipating a battle, the two *teams* parted with a light wave of their hands.

The amazons started pushing through the *jungle* to the south, while LLENN’s group went to the east. The broadcast screen now displayed only the large number of corpses lying on the mowed-down grass.

“I thought they’d fight together, but they’re just parting ways again?”

Said a man drinking *beer*,

“Well, those *teams* aren’t going to band together.”

And added this.

\*                    \*                    \*

Slightly turning back the clocks, at 13:50.

“LLENN’s group has also survived. They’re inside the *dome*. Since there’re three other *teams* lying around, she could have formed a coalition with SHINC.”

M reported,

“As expected!”

And Pitohui listened with a smile. Once the *scan* was over,

“Seven surviving *teams*. The others include MMTM, who moved to the north of the *dome*. ZEMAL in the hilly area, T-S to the north-west. The closest to us is a certain *team* in the valley. KKHC. We’re going to descend the mountain and defeat those guys.”

M, who said in his usual serious tone,

“Roger. Which means a stroll, a stroll.”

Pitohui, who said in a joking tone,

“ .....

And the remaining four men, still silent, descended the mountain.

They were headed to the north-west. Towards the *area* there that had a conspicuous blue colour.

KKHC, the next target of Pitohui’s group, watched the fifth *scan* from inside a small forest.

Like Shirley, the four men were wearing identical garments with trees depicted on them, but—

The appearances of their *avatars* were quite dissimilar.

One was a rough-looking middle-aged man with a receding hairline. He looked like the eldest, thus he had taken on the role of *leader*.

One was a man with an African appearance, which was a common sight in GGO.

One was a tall, blond man.

And the last one was a small, black-haired man that looked like an ordinary Japanese person.

The five, including Shirley, discovered that the enemies in the area had mostly been eliminated. And so, they had a conversation through their communication *items*.

“This is awesome. PM4, the favourite *team*, seems to have wiped out seven *teams* with just six members and, moreover, in just 10 minutes..... Though I can’t even imagine how.....”

The *leader* voiced his surprise,

“What should we do about this. If we run about and hide we won’t lose, but we won’t win either, right?”

“Agreed. *leader*, shall we make our debut right about now? But, the closest one is that formidable PM4?”

“I don’t get the feeling we can win.....”

The other three chimed in. Shirley remained silent as always.

The *leader*, who had been considering something, said,

“Hey, guys, I’ve got an idea, so listen up. There's a chance we can aim for “victory” .”

\* \* \*

From 13:50 to 13:55,

“No battles going on.....”

A carefree *mood* continued to hang in the bar.

“Just in time. If they’re *battling* non-stop, we’ll also get exhausted watching it.

As the previous 10 minutes were exceedingly intense, there were viewers who took this chance to rest.

The idling *cameras* displayed *teams* on the move.

LLENN and Fukaziroh came out of the *jungle* and exited the *dome*. They were right on the eastern edge; if the dome were a clock, they would be at 3 o’clock.

At the same time, while keeping alert of their surroundings, *Boss’s* SHINC also exited the *dome*. They were approximately to the south. Not much different from their way in.

And then, the *camera* displayed another *team*.

A *team* of four men and a woman were running through a field with streaming brooks.

Everyone picked up on something strange. There was no way they could not.

“Why are those guys——”

Someone muttered, representing the rest.

“Not carrying any guns?”

"Enemies. Five of them. Distance 1000. They're currently running towards us."

Said M, peeking through his binoculars, with the three masked men holding their respective guns in their hands and one not holding anything at all, beside him. And then,

"Aye. What <sup>emo</sup>weapons are our <sup>emo</sup>prey using?"

Asked Pitohui while making a pun, as she quickly squat down.

They had already descended the mountain and were now in an *area* that had a mixture of flat fields, forests, and thickets. The top part of a giant *dome* could be seen in the distance.

Hanging his M14 EBR in front of his body via the *sling*, carrying his huge *backpack* on his back, standing, and peeking through his binoculars,

"They're not carrying anything."

M answered.

"Haah?"

3 minutes later—

The five people who practically sprinted there at full speed, were now standing before Pitohui.

They were *team* KKHC.

The four men and one woman were all wearing matching uniforms consisting of boots, brown trousers, and tree-patterned *jackets*, but held nothing in their hands.

Although not a battle, the scene was caught on *camera*.

Pitohui, M, and three masked men holding their guns at the ready to fire at any time. And a man, who seemed to be the *leader* of the five-person *team*, saying something to them.

Although the scene was caught on camera, their conversation could not be heard,

"I see."

"They came here with a proposal for the endgame, huh."

The audience, of course, understood what was going on.

That those five people had come to talk, wishing to conspire with PM4.

"However, I'm kinda surprised that the ponytail nee-san didn't just shoot those guys as they approached."

"Well, guess she's at least willing to hear them out."

"Even that oni-like woman can understand words, you say. —By the way, just how much do you like that *jerky*?"

"Hmm, I don't really think we need to join forces with anyone right now. Besides, we're aiming for victory, and just what are you planning to do when we become the last two *teams* standing if we fight together with you? Will we have a shootout then?"

Pitohui asked while facing the five people, including the seemingly eldest man among them who was their *leader*, lined up before her.

"Putting it simply, at that moment, I believe we can just resign and hand over the victory to you. That's the opinion that the entire *team* shares."

"Oh. So you're saying that you didn't join SJ2 to win?"

"Yeah. To be honest, we did it to test our skills. Actually, we're a *squadron* consisting solely of *hunters*, who fire guns even *IRL*."

"Heeh. That's interesting."

There was no mistake in thinking that people who began talking about *RL* in a *VR game* were people who wanted to brag.

At Pitohui's words, the *leader* got caught up in the moment and began talking about their *RL*.

That his *team* consisted of people who participated in hunting, with their base in Hokkaido.

All the *members* in the *squadron* were residents of Hokkaido who were *hunters*.

They were allowed to own hunting guns even *IRL* and normally used them for practice, while during the hunting season, which lasted from autumn till winter, they participated in hunts in the vastness of Mother Nature.

"So, we are confident in our shooting skills. We're quite accurate even without the *Bullet Lines*, you know? Actually, just minutes ago, we sniped three men without them sensing it. Though, I don't think your team can even imagine long-range sniping without *Bullet Lines*, ojou-san.

At the *leader's* proud or haughty words, Pitohui gave an honest-looking expression,

"Well, that is amazing."

As she said such a lie.

Beside her— both M and the masked men... kept quiet.

After the *leader* then bragged about how high-precision the *rifles* in their *storage* were, and how superior the skills of their owners were,

"So, our people can *back up* your *team* with snipers. That would be one heck of an advantage to you in combat, I believe. So, how's about it? Wanna employ us as mercenaries and aim for first and second place together?"

Having heard their proposal, Pitohui,

"I understand your proposal, and thinking about it simply, it's not a bad deal."

"Oh. So?"

"But, 'I'm sorry', is what I probably have to say. When I formed this *team*, I decided in my heart. That "if I can't make it with these members, then I can't make it, you see."

"I see..... It's unfortunate, but if that's the case, then I can't force you."

Said the *hunter team leader* dejectedly,

"Well then, let's split up again. We'll be disappearing to the other side of that thicket over there for now."

He pointed to the trees that could be seen around 70 *metres* to the north-west.

"Afterwards, we won't be making contact with you until the next *scan*. We promise on the pride of people who use guns even *IRL*."

"I see. Well then, we'll be staying here till you all disappear."

Said Pitohui, and, facing the five men nearby, including M, who were keeping watch on the surroundings and their five opponents,

"You guys heard that, right. Don't shoot. If you're men, keep your promises."

And gave them these instructions. 'Usu', 'got it', and other such short replies came in return.

"What marvelous soldiers. Well then, I wish us both luck."

The *leader* said this to finish off, turned back and began walking. The three men and green-haired woman who had watched on in slight unease followed behind him.

Having looked at their backs till the five of them were about 30 *metres* away, Pitohui,

"I guess that'll do?"

Suddenly waved her right hand. She operated the *window* that was produced, and selected the 《*Springfield XDM*》 automatic pistol from her *storage*.

The XDM appeared mid-air and Pitohui grasped its *grip* with her right hand. She then extended her arm forward.

The next moment—

She pulled the elbow and arm of the hand holding the gun with extreme force.

Her arm moved so fast that it left an afterimage. Due to the inertia of such a pull, the XDM's *slide* fell backwards, then returned forward due to the springs, sending a 40 caliber bullet into its chamber.

This... was the menacing “one-handed automatic pistol loading” that could only be pulled off by the biggest of *machos* IRL, or by people with considerably high Strength values in GGO.

"Now then, guess I'll start from the one to the very left?"

Saying this, Pitohui, using only her right hand, easily fired the gun at the back of the tall man to the left of the others.

"Huh?"

The spectators watching this peaceful scene without combat—

"Huh?"

And the shot man—

Let out the same sound.

"Ah dang, I was a bit off."

Seeing her first bullet hit the man's left shoulder, Pitohui slightly adjusted her aim and fired her XDM again.

The second bullet dug deep into the center of the head of the blond man, who was shocked by the hit to his shoulder. Despite the pistol being weak, the hit was counted as instakill.

The other four, obviously shocked, turned around,

"Hey—wha....."

Saw Pitohui, holding a black pistol in her right hand with her left hand formed into a fist and placed on her chest, as well as the *Bullet Lines* extending towards them from there.

\*Pan\*.

The black-haired man became the next target. The sole bullet hit the bottom of his neck.

\*Pan\*. \*Pan\*. \*Pan\*.

As that was not enough to kill him, the next few bullets hit his cheek, eye, and forehead respectively.

Seeing the second of his men having his *hit points* reduced and brought down with a thud,

"Ooi! What're you doing! What about your prom...!"

The *team leader* cried as loudly as he could. A bullet flew right towards his mouth and went inside.

"Gohoh!"

As a hit *effect* shined from his mouth, the *leader* collapsed backwards.

Continuing her one-handed shooting, Pitohui,

"I'm... not... a man, you see!"

Gave an answer to the already dead man.

"It's like target practice."

"To me, it looks more like prisoner execution."

The scene that could not even be called a battle was displayed in the bar as well.

The three men were killed in the time it took to say 'ah', leaving only one man and the woman alive. Of course, they had begun to flee with a full-power dash just as the second man was shot.

"Doesn't seem like— they have the time to operate their *storage* and take out their guns....."

It was not clear what guns they had, but it would take at least 10 seconds to take them out, load them, aim, and counterattack, so they could only flee at this point.

\*Pon\*, with this dry sound, a hit *effect* was created on the running man's left leg. The man collapsed forward, and then came the second bullet. This time, it hit his left hand.

"....."

Seeing her fallen comrade, Shirley stopped,

"Run for it!"

Was told this by him, but she did not flee.

She rushed over to the collapsed man, squatted, then threw herself down.

She drove her back into the stomach of the man, whose *character's* physique matched hers. And then, grasping his thighs, she immediately stood up and broke into a run while carrying him on her back.

"Ooh!"

Pitohui, who had continued to fire using only her right hand so far, finally added her left hand for support to shoot the "target," 40 metres away.

She pointed her legs at the target and held the gun pushed out in front of her, using both hands for *balance*,

\*Pan\*.

The fired bullet splendidly reached its target. This time, it hit the medulla oblongata of the man carried by Shirley.

\*Guun\*, his *hit points* decreased for about 2 seconds, and then, \*pikon\*, with an adorable sound, the 【D e a d】 *marker* rose up.

While Shirley continued running with the man on her back.

"Oh dear."

Pitohui continued firing her XDM.

The dry sounds continued in succession as empty golden cartridges fluttered to her right. Although her bullets flew right on track, they only ended up hitting the man's corpse.

Just as Pitohui fired the 16th bullet in her *magazine* and her XDM's slide stopped in its locked state, Shirley disappeared into the thicket.

"Machine gun."

At M's order,

"Aight. Someone lend me your shoulder."

The large, masked man materialised his beloved gun through manipulating his *storage*. Right afterwards, an MG3 equipped with a *suppressor* and an ammunition belt with 100 bullets appeared in front of him.

The man skillfully loaded the gun, placed the barrel on the shoulder of the small man who had rushed in front of him, and unleashed a *full auto* barrage at the thicket that Shirley had disappeared into. The barrage created a high-pitched noise, despite the suppressor, as the plants fluttered about.

After the man unleashed 100 bullets without rest, M looked through his binoculars,

"Still running."

And, in the circular field of view, he saw the figure of a woman, carrying a corpse with a 【D e a d】 *marker* on it, as she moved to the other side of the thicket.

"Not bad! She knew that the corpse would become indestructible, so that's why she escaped with it. The girl had not considered helping her comrade, for even a moment!"

As Pitohui said this cheerfully, she began operating a *window* with her left hand.

As she repeated her quick operations with her left hand while holding the spent XDM in her right hand—

Pitohui continued her transformation.

The spectators in the bar saw on screen.

How the woman, who had slaughtered eighteen people without bringing a weapon, prepared her weapons.

First, a spare XDM *magazine* appeared mid-air in front of the woman.

Having removed the empty one from her gun, she inserted the new *magazine* into the gun, pressed the *slide stop button*, and once again loaded a bullet into the chamber.

That's when the real transformation *scene* began.

In VR *games*, if a player had set it up in advance, they could “ bundle equip” their usual equipment from their *storage* with *one action*.

The woman did just that.

Once she pressed the **O K** button with her left hand, her equipment materialised one after another like magic and was equipped on the *cyborg*-like woman.

First, a thick *belt* coiled around the waist of her dark blue jumpsuit.

A *plastic holster* appeared on the outside of her right thigh, hanging down from that belt, and a *support belt* coiled around her thigh as well.

Likewise, a similar one appeared on her left thigh. There was an XDM already in place in this one. Once she stored her XDM into the right thigh *holster*, her dual pistol setup was complete.

As she loaded her left XDM using only her left hand, narrow grappling knives materialised on the outside of her boots.

Each time her equipment increased,

"Dual pistols!"

"That's *cool*!"

"They're cool, but does that have *merit*?"

"It looks "cool" of course!"

Or,

"Ooh! She even has knives!"

"I wanna see her cut someone up....."

The spectators in the bar were very hyped.

And then, her upper body. The *camera zoomed up*.

A black *vest*, to protect her chest from bullets, was equipped on the woman's firm body. A long and narrow *magazine* pouch was equipped on the *vest*'s abdominal region, making it look like armour.

A bulletproof *plate*, covering her heart and other vitals, appeared on her back. And a wide *pouch* with unknown contents appeared around her waist.

"Does that thing have *plasma grenades*? Probably specially-made with thick bulletproof fibre to prevent bullet-induced explosions."

"I see, that's thorough."

"Well, it's probably not cosmetics."

"But wait. Isn't there a chance that she's a glutton and that's her lunch box?"

"Of course not. Stop saying that with a straight face."

On screen, the woman's black hair, which had been kept in a *ponytail* thus far, suddenly came untied. And then, as if it were a living thing, it lightly fluttered in the air.

Just as the spectators wondered why, the answer was shown before their eyes.

A *headgear*, covering her head, materialised.

Although it was a protector used in hand-to-hand fighting sports that guarded the head, GGO was an SF world, thus the protector's *design was sharp and cybernetic*. It looked like a ninja *hachigane*<sup>18</sup>.

They could not tell what it was made of, but, naturally, it should be bulletproof. Its colour was, of course, the same black as the rest of her equipment.

As her *headgear* was equipped, her loose hair started gathering up. After becoming orderly again, it was tied into a *ponytail* at a slightly low point once more.

"Awesome! That's some transformation!"

"Hmm, doesn't seeing a woman change clothes like that kinda—turn you on? Hm?"

"Huh? Well....., yeah, indeed."

"I've been thinking... is there anyone but pervs in this bar?"

That was not all of her equipment.

An approximately 50 *cm*-long, 15 *cm*-wide *nylon* scabbard appeared on the woman's left thigh. Right about where a Japanese sword would go.

---

18 An armoured headband, like the one Naruto wears.

There was nothing inside the scabbard at first, but then its contents materialised one after another.

They were guns. A 《Remington M870 *Breacher*》 —a 50 cm-long *model* of the M870 *shotgun* with a short barrel and *pistol grip*.

The '*breacher*' here meant "opening a hole". It was a *shotgun* that fired large bullets with a short barrel in order to blow away *door locks*.

Naturally, shots fired from the short barrel would spread out vehemently. It was a weapon truly ideal for hitting a quick opponent at short range.

For example— when fighting an enemy like LLENN.

\*Jakon\*, with a *pump*, the first projectile was loaded. A *holder* with red and blue shots inside appeared all over her *vest*, and the woman took one of them and added it into the gun.

Just as she put the M870 into the scabbard—

As if that were the sign, particles of light in the air sparkled brilliantly, then gathered to form a shape.

The last piece of her transformation was the woman's *main weapon*. Once the figure of the slender, black *assault rifle* was made clear,

"First time I've seen it. GGO even has a *custom gun* like that, huh."

"She sure has *rare guns*....."

"Finally, she's revealing her trump cards!"

The *gun maniacs* in the bar were all overjoyed.

The KTR-09.

It was a *custom model* of the super famous Russian gun from the *AK series*. Made by an American company named Krebs, KTR was an acronym of “*Krebs Tactical Rifle*”.

Despite the *AK series* being known for its sturdiness and reliability, its design was getting old and, in the sense of ease-of-use, it currently fell behind this gun. The KTR had undergone remodelling to eliminate this weak point.

The first half of the gun had a *rail* with optical devices attached to the sides and its top, the *grip* and safeties were also improved, and the stock was changed to one used by its *rival*, the M4A1.

Just as the woman took the KTR-09 into her hands, its *magazines* materialised in succession.

They weren't the usual *banana-shaped* 30-bullet *type*, but the 75-bullet thick cylinders called *drum magazines*. It fired 7.62x39 *mm* bullets, twice the normal size.

The woman inserted a *magazine* into the gun, pulled and released the loading *lever*, and the first bullet was fed into the chamber.

And so, the transformation *scene* that took merely a few seconds was completed—

Creating a heavily armed woman reminiscent of Musashibou Benkei<sup>19</sup>, fully armoured and armed with 2 pistols, two knives, a *shotgun*, and an *assault rifle*.

---

19 A warrior monk who served Minamoto no Yoshitsune.

Despite putting on so many heavy items, her movements did not change a bit as they had all come from her *storage*. The *character's* weight limit remained the same no matter if an item was held in hand or in *storage*.

"Her weight carrying capacity is too high! Just how much did that woman build her Strength....."

Somebody in the bar muttered.

"It's truly been some time since I wore this. Aight. I'll take it seriously from here on."

In response to Pitohui, who finished putting on the equipment that could be called her "final battle outfit," and was giving a fiendish expression as she smiled,



"Hmm——"

The masked fat man, having seen the transformation from the side,

"With this, aren't we kinda unnecessary?"

Threw in a joke.

"I hope so. You can't look down on our opponent. Everyone, we're going with our lives at stake, ya know?"

Although Pitohui's mouth loosened, her eyes were far from laughing.

While Pitohui was carrying out her transformation,

"Shit! Shit! Shit!"

There was a *character* swearing aloud unfemininely as she ran wholeheartedly. It was the green-haired Shirley.

After she helped a single comrade and escaped the dreadful hail of machine gun bullets, her mind,

"That woman! That woman! That woman!"

Was shrouded in dark clouds.

\*                    \*                    \*

There was probably no *player* who "hated" participating in SJ2 as much as Shirley.

Her *real* name—— was Kirishima Mai.

She was a twenty-four year-old woman working as a *nature guide* and *hunter* in Hokkaido. Though, unlike Karen, she was not a native, but was instead born right in the centre of Tokyo and had later moved to Hokkaido.

Ever since she was a child, Mai's vision of her future was to work with nature.

To that end, she took up camping, mountain climbing, and other *outdoor sports*, as well as having learnt horse riding. She spent her middle and high school years leading an *active* life outdoors rather than dabbling in fashion.

And, in university, she joined every single club that allowed her to enjoy outdoor activities. Then, recommended by her female seniors, she acquired a shotgun possession permit and hunting license at the age of twenty, the minimum age requirement, and took up hunting as well.

After graduation. Mai found a job suited for her desires - a *nature guide*. It included guiding tourists and mountain climbers through Mother Nature.

This was what she was occupied with in Spring, Summer, and Autumn, while in Winter, when the number of clients and work decreased, she worked as a Yezo sika deer *hunter*, thus both dabbling in her hobbies and earning money.

8 years ago, in 2018, the Swords and Firearms Control Law was partially amended, reducing the requirement for possessing *rifles* from “possessing a shotgun for at least 10 years in a row” to “idem at least 3 years in a row”. The number of wild deer nationwide had increased too much, and the damage caused by them was also increasing, thus the necessity of increasing the number of hunters with powerful *rifles* to exterminate the deer had increased.

Due to the generalisation of wild game and the improvement of the *image* of *hunters*, the formerly aging and dwindling population of hunters was gradually rejuvenated and saw an increase in women. The term “*hunting girl*”, indicating a woman who goes hunting, became very popular as well.

With age, Mai also accumulated experience. She had brought down numerous Yezo sika deer—the first three years using her shotgun, then with a *rifle* for the past year and a bit.

With fellow hunters that were available, Mai searched for her prey by car, at times on foot or by *skis*, brought them down, and butchered them.

And then, she sold the skillfully harvested, high-quality deer meat to metropolitan *restaurants* dealing in wild game cooking.

As Mai spent each day productively like this—

Last year, in other words, around Summer 2025. One of her hunter associates brought up talk about VR *games* and GGO.

'You can enjoy VR *games* practically just as much as the real thing, and there are actual guns reproduced *realistically* there too', he said.

'You can practice shooting in a game at no cost (excluding the 3,000 yen monthly connection fee) and with absolutely no risk of accidental shootings. In America, its base of origin, the game is being used for hunting practice, using *monsters* as prey', he added.

'Also, GGO has clay pigeon shooting, so clay pigeon shooters and hunters who shoot flying birds with shotguns can enjoy it too', he finished.

And so, the number of people, especially young hunters who had little aversion to VR *games*... and *net games* in general, taking up GGO gradually increased. In just a mere 2 or so weeks, the *squadron* 《Northern Country Hunters Club》<sup>Kita no Kuni</sup> was formed. This was the full name of KKHC.

As more and more of her young associates joined the game and unanimously recommended it, Mai also joined GGO. Naturally, it was her first VR *game*. Mai, who had never even played video *games* before, was not all that interested in the game.

The name of the *character* which became Mai's other self was Shirley. A busty, green-haired woman.

This was a *nickname* that her bosom friend gave her in middle school. The name was derived by changing the kanji “舞”<sup>dance</sup> in her name to a homonym “米”<sup>rice</sup>, then using the word 舍利<sup>shari</sup>, which referred to the cooked rice in sushi. At the time, it was embarrassing to be called that in town, but there was no problem with it in another world.

As for GGO, Mai believed that shooting practice in the game was indeed effective.

In Japan, one could only discharge guns in shooting ranges and hunting grounds. Also, in shooting ranges, the distance to the target was fixed, thus it was impossible to shoot at distances in-between the fixed ones.

Furthermore, possession permits were issued to specific people for specific guns, thus it was completely impossible to shoot with someone else's gun. Even a simple “test fire before purchase”, like test drives before purchasing a car, was made impossible by Japan's Swords and Firearms Control Law.

In GGO, though, people were free to own and fire any gun they pleased.

The performance of actual guns and bullets was reproduced *realistically*, thus it was possible try out a lot of them. Moreover, there was no worry of accidents or injury.

Because of that, the game became a practice ground for “ shooting various guns, and “ shooting from every possible posture at various distances, .

The GGO-characteristic “nuisance, of an *assist*— the *Bullet Circle* was both good and bad, but it could be avoided simply by refraining from touching the trigger till the very last moment. Her *hunter* associates eventually began shooting without the *assist* as well.

In GGO, there were deer, bears, and boars that had turned into zombie-type *monsters*.

Their motion *patterns* resembled those of *real* animals, thus they were suitable for hunting practice, including pursuit and killing. Of course, despite hunting them down, she did not eat them.

And so, Shirley and the others polished their shooting and hunting skills in GGO.

Choosing GGO *fields* with terrain similar to her home, Hokkaido, she went *monster* hunting either in a group or alone.

The areas were hills, woodlands, or snowy mountains. At times walking long distances on foot, at times by *skis*, she pursued her prey, aimed, and brought them down.

And so, now in the presence of the winter hunting season, she was able to verify her results.

In order to bring down a Yezo sika deer while preserving the taste of its meat, it was necessary to aim at the head or neck, with no edible parts, and instantly kill it in one shot. This action was called a 《*clean kill*》.

Unlike humans, wild animals are incredibly resilient to pain and, even when shot, they will frantically continue their attempts to escape in order to survive. In this case, the meat in the body will be drenched in blood, damaging its taste, while in the worst case scenario, the dying wildlife would quickly escape.

Also, if a bullet damages the viscera, their contents can spill out, giving the meat an odour that makes it far from edible.

Naturally, shooting through the head or neck was far more difficult than hitting the torso. It was a *hunter rule* that “you shouldn't shoot if you aren't confident in hitting” and there were plenty of cases when she did not shoot despite having a chance to do so.

Her success rate of *clean kills* had, altogether, increased since last *season*.

She realised that the *virtual reality* world training was quite effective. 'I'm glad I started playing GGO. You can't really judge something without trying, huh', thought Mai.

Until one of her associates,

『Seeing as the hunting season has finished safely, how about we all participate in the *Squad Jam* tournament?』

Sent this *email*.

Until then, Shirley and the others had obstinately avoided player versus player fights.

As their main goal was hunting and shooting practice and they possessed guns that could easily kill people *IRL*— “shooting a person” was clearly a taboo.

Despite GGO encouraging *players* to kill each other, unless they took the initiative to attack someone, they were able to avoid most player versus player fights.

If they were attacked by another *character* or *squadron* en route to the hunt or on their way back, they could just escape at full speed. If that were not possible, they could just quickly put their weapons into *storage* to avoid the *random drops* and *log out* on the spot.

In GGO, a *character's* body did not disappear immediately when logging out outside the safety of towns, thus if they were killed during that time they would more or less lose “*character*” experience points. However, seeing as they were playing for “*player*” experience, it was not something to worry about.

"The attacking *team* is surely disappointed right about now, huh."

Is what they could say with a laugh.

And yet, despite them doing this all the time till now—

She did not think anyone sane would suggest participating in a player versus player *battle royale* tournament of their own initiative.

Mai, feeling disgust from the bottom of her heart, had believed that there was no way her other associates would agree to such a thing, but,

『Sounds nice! Let's do it let's do it!』

『Hey, I was hoping to test how good my skills are.』

『I'm up for it! Shirley, what about you?』

By the time she noticed, the unbelievable had happened - the only one who had not stated their intent to participate among her associates with free time... was herself.

Hiding her anger, Mai wrote a calm and polite *email* questioning the appropriateness of participating in SJ2, but,

『Oh, so you were worried about something trifling like that! There's no need to take a "game" seriously. A *game* is a *game*. Shirley, I think that, in the sense of clarifying the boundary between *RL* and a *game*, you should participate too.』

She received a shockingly condescending and lecturing persuasive *email* as an answer.

She wondered whether a cerebral blood vessel had ruptured.

For a moment, Mai considered cutting her connection with them, but *IRL* they were valuable associates, and her seniors with abundant experience and knowledge. Considering the yield from hunting, a valuable source of income to her in Winter, she could not so easily cut her ties with them.

Just as she schemed to fake an illness or a task,

『Come on, we're begging you! We'd have five people if you'd join us, Shirley! Going in with four is kinda, you know!』

『I'll treat you to a helping of ramen and char siu<sup>20</sup>!』

『I'll add that favourite *cake* of yours!』

Mai's associates implored her in a light manner with no regard for her feelings, and in the end, with her umpteenth sigh, she decided to participate.

However,

“I'll just think of an appropriate excuse and obstruct them by not firing a shot!„

She decided in her mind.

"It was my first time shooting a person, so I couldn't pull the trigger."

Is what she could just say, and her *sabotage* would probably not be discovered.

And so, the day of the preliminaries that she had no interest in came.

Together with her four associates, Shirley participated in the preliminaries wearing her usual hunting-*style* outfit, as they had no combat uniforms.

'Thinking about it composedly, we, a group with zero player versus player battle experience, would probably have no chance of winning against a *team* that would be participating in the tournament.'

---

<sup>20</sup> Roasted pork in Cantonese cuisine. The Japanese have adapted it to their cuisine with some changes.

Thought Shirley as she participated in the preliminaries, awaiting an easy defeat. 'If they were exhausted by the enemy *team* here, they would know their place and never again have the motivation to go into player versus player fights', she believed.

And— the unthinkable happened.

The enemy *team* resorted to unbelievable behaviour.

All six of them alike charged with a roar while grasping 《*photon swords*》 —SF swords that used light for their blades.

The *rifles* of her associates, who “only” excelled at firing technique, spouted fire simultaneously. They aimed to avoid using the *Bullet Circle* in their shooting as much as possible, thus their *Line-less* shooting gave no opportunity for their opponents to dodge.

After 6 gunshots roared, the pitiable sword fighters all found themselves shot in the chest and died; that was the sorrowful conclusion of the battle.

Shirley had absolutely no idea why they used swords of light as weapons, nor why they came charging with their bodies clearly exposed and muzzles pointing at them.

In any case, their *team* ended up passing the preliminaries. Shirley, “having no choice but to participate”, in the main battle—

Decided to continue playing no role till the end.

Without having fired a single shot in the first battle, she exposed herself under the guise of searching for the enemy in hopes of getting shot as soon as possible and thus being able to leave.

However, nobody would grace her with a bullet.

Afterwards, for some reason, no enemy came to them.

Her *team*, which had only thought of ambush sniping, continued to lose their chances of battling until they eventually became one of the seven *teams* still standing.

Their *leader* proposed teaming up with the favourites, so they made contact with them, but were rejected—

"That woman! That woman! That woman!"

The *tattooed* woman who called herself Pitohui mercilessly shot them from behind.

While fleeing, Shirley heard for the first time the sound of a supersonic bullet grazing her ears.

Driven by fear that she could be shot, she ran and ran, engrossed as red *Bullet Lines* danced around her—

She no longer knew how far she ran.

When she came to, Shirley was already in a place with only the snowy mountains ahead of her.

The comrade that she should have been trying to carry to safety,

" ....."

Was no longer there when she turned around. She could not recall when or where he had fallen at all.

She could see a large *dome* to her right and a forest and rocky mountain to her left, while in the plains in-between, she saw a trail of her own footprints.

By moving her eyes to the upper-left, she observed the *hit points* displayed there. Including the man that she had been trying to save, all four of her comrades had died and the *leader mark* had been transferred to her. It seemed like a miracle that her bar was the only one to not decrease at all.

" ....."

Mentally exhausted, Shirley squatted down on the spot. She was surrounded by dirt, moist from the snow thaw. \*Bechan\*, a sound resounded.

With her buttocks and hands full of mud,

"That woman!"

Grated her teeth loud enough for anyone nearby to hear.

And then,

" ....."

Strength left her face as she looked up to the sky.

The wind had stopped. The clouds in the sky stopped moving, seemingly weighing down on her,

"Oh whatever..... Seeing as I've become the *leader*, I guess I'll just resign and say "goodbye" to this tournament already..... I can just say 'Everyone died so I thought it was pointless to continue'..... in the end, I can finish this without firing a single bullet, just as I wished....."

She raised her muddy left arm and waved it in the air.

The *window* screen appeared, first displaying the *item* list that was set to appear with minimal commands.

Before Shirley's eyes, as she moved it aside and tried to look for the *command* to resign,

" ....."

A single *graphic* image and a string of characters were displayed.

The *graphic* image was of an ominously-shaped *rifle*, with a large *scope* and a stock that looked like it was broken midway, that looked like a malformed fish born in polluted water..

The string of characters below it was 《*Blaser R93 Tactical 2*》 .

It was a German-made, high-power sniper rifle. It used 7.62x51 *mm* bullets.

The only thing that made it different from the *normal model* R93, a *rifle* that she actually used for hunting, was the *stock* that was improved for sniping. The *normal model* did not exist in GGO, thus, seeing as this gun worked the same, she chose it as her partner.

And, it possessed power.

The power to kill, no matter how strong the animal, with one hit to the vitals.

The power for a woman lacking brute strength like herself to bring down an opponent, no matter how huge.

" ....."

Shirley only needed to press the “*Y e s*” button for the resign *command* that she had called out, but her finger stopped.

"That..... that woman....."

With her hand in the air, Shirley's mouth moved. With a rumbling voice that sounded like she was about to vent her deep resentment,

"That thing..... is not..... human. It's vermin... that hurts people....."

Her finger touched it.

Not "resign," but her R93 *Tactical 2*. Particles of light gathered in the air and began forming the shape of a *rifle*.

"Hah!"

Shirley took a sharp breath and struck her cheeks with her hands. The mud on her hands adhered to her cheeks, and Shirley wiped it horizontally with just her right hand.

Extending her hands to the *rifle* suspended in the air, she lovingly caught it in her arms,

"Vermin——"



With her right hand, she pulled the *bolt handle* straight back and returned it to its original position.

The unique function of the gun, called *straight pull action*, made a sound that radiated the sense of high-precision—

"That I'll exterminate."

And sent in the first bullet from the *magazine* into the chamber.

The woman, who made a lateral stripe of mud on her face as camouflage, stood up with grim eyes and a smiling mouth that exposed her white teeth,

"I'll bring down my prey in 1 shot."

She was about to return from where she came by following her own footprints,

" ....."

But stopped in her tracks.

Shirley hung her R93 *Tactical 2* on her shoulder by its cord and looked at the watch on her left wrist.

13:59.

1 minute till the next *scan*.

Shirley abruptly turned aside and began running at full speed in the opposite direction of Pitohui and the others, in other words, towards the snowy mountain.



**SECT.13**

## 第十三章 SHINC走る

## SECT.13

# SHINC Running

It was almost exactly 1 hour since SJ2 began.

As LLENN sprinted at full speed with a *suppressor*-equipped P90 in her right hand, she was made aware by the vibration of her wristwatch that only 30 seconds remained till 14:00.

While running, LLENN turned her head sharply in search of the closest hiding place at that moment.

"There!"

Having found a hollow so small that a normal person would probably stick out, LLENN *slid* into it.

Sliding atop the tender soil, she killed her speed and hid her entire body in the hollow.

Face-up, she stuck just her head out to survey her surroundings and saw the upper portion of the *dome*, the upper part of the hills in the hilly area, and the snowy mountains about the same distance away. There were no human figures, including that of Fukaziroh, around her.

"LLENN, it's time. You ready?"

As Fukaziroh's voice reached her ears,

"I'm fine. I've hid. We're going according to plan!"

LLENN gave her a reply. Then,

"We're going according to plan."

Repeated the same thing again.

The sixth *scan* at exactly 14:00,

"Uho! We survived for an hour!"

"Yippie!"

"*Bravooo!*"

"Aww yeah! Aww yeah!"

"We really can do it if we try!"

Was met with joy-filled shouts from the five members of the Zen-Nihon *Machine Gun Lovers*.

They had barely moved from the hills they *started* at. They learnt a lesson from their first battle. That 'there is no need to abandon an advantageous position.'

During the past hour, they lay close to the ground atop the summit of a hill with a good view and, upon spotting an approaching enemy *team* as they surveyed the area, pulled back a bit,

"Not yet, not yet....."

Somehow resisted their impulses using what little fortitude they had,

"Just a bit more..... Just a bit more....."

And, after waiting for the enemy to cross the hill, enter their range, and descend the hill a bit,

"Now! Fireeee!"

"Uhhyoh!" "Yahoh!" "Douryaaaaa!"

They suddenly leaned forward and launched a long-range *machine gun* attack from an advantageous position.

Unlike sniper rifles, the precision of *machine guns* was not that high, thus they required a considerable number of bullets to wipe out the enemy.

However, as far as bullets and, incidentally, spare gun barrels in preparation for overheating and abrasion were concerned, these guys had plenty of them stockpiled. Because they knew very well that *machine guns* without bullets or spare barrels were useless.

Shoot, bring down an enemy *team*, then wait, shoot, and bring down another one - that was how they passed an hour. The defeat of three *teams* was their result, incomparable to that of the previous tournament.

And now was the time of the sixth *scan*.

It was, once again, an excessively slow one from the north.

All of them, lying on all fours in the confined *space* of hill's summit as before, stared at the screens of their terminals while keeping watch on their surroundings and confirmed their own position.

Their current position was the northern outskirts of the hilly area. Behind them stood a 60 *metre*-high rampart, thus it was impossible to advance beyond this point. Naturally, there was no chance of enemies coming from there, thus they thought that it was safe to guard only three directions.

Then, as they looked at the screen for the location of the closest *team*—

"Huh? What the.....is this thing right?"

Further to their north was the tag of another *team*. Upon this being touched, the name T-S appeared.

In many ways... this was impossible.

"I think the *scan* is broken."

"Yeah. That's definitely impossible."

There were two reasons for this conclusion.

The first.

Was the fact that a rampart stood to their north and the 150 *metres* of land leading to it consisted of a gently descending slope that was completely visible to them.

If someone had approached the location indicated by the *scan*, it was impossible for them not to have been spotted unless they were invisible.

The second.

This *team* named T-S had been at the north-western tip of the map, in other words, the town, at the time of the last *scan*. There was at least 5 *km* distance between the two locations. 'They were able to leave town and run across the land at an average speed of 30 *km* per hour without being seen?' Impossible.

"What the heck! A *system error* should be totally impossible during a tournament, right? That's anticlimactic!"

The shocked *minimi* user said, then the M60E3 user,

"Seeing as the *server computer* is just a machine, it's not flawless, y'know. Even a *machine gun* breaks down if you don't show your love for it properly, right? That's why even *IRL* I sleep embracing my M60E3 *air gun*. I also place it on a nearby chair during meals and talk to it, and we watch movies on the *sofa* together."

Said a considerably crazy thing without any hesitation.

"I see!" "You're right." "Well put." "Way to go."

And yet all of them nodded in agreement; that's the kind of *team* they were.

"The other survivors are— MMTM is to the north of the *dome*, huh. About 2 *km* from here. They left the *dome* and are heading here. Our next contact will most definitely be with these guys. The others... too far."

The M240B user reported the results of the *scan*,

"The veterans that took third place last time, huh..... Can we really win?"

And an anxious remark slipped out from the man holding the Israeli-made *machine gun* 《*Negev*》 .

"No worries!"

The one who replied full of confidence was the prone FN MAG user.

"We did our research by watching videos of the previous tournament, right? The HK21 *machine gun* is scary, but that's all they have as far as 7 mm class guns go. The others all use 5.56 mm *assault rifles*. In this open terrain, our firepower is overwhelmingly superior!"

'Yeah!', said the impressed comrades as he faced them and continued his speech.

"We'll defend this place to the last and become the victors! Come at us with arrows or guns or whatever you've got!"

The moment he shouted this, red hit *effects* began shining throughout his body: his back, legs, shoulders, and head,

"Hebobe?"

After uttering a word not listed in the Japanese dictionary, the man died.

The other four... did not have the time to consider the cause.

Being similarly shot in the back numerous times, their *hit points* decreased quickly and they died one after another,

"Huh? Hey—. Wha—"

The last of them, the *Negev* user, was kicked out of SJ2 in just 20 seconds.

The Zen-Nihon *Machine Gun Lovers* were thus wiped out.

As the *scan* was still underway, the *members* of other *teams* were able to see the moment their white marker turned gray.

"Haah? Those *machine gun* bastards just vanished."

A member of MMTM watching the 14:00 *scan* exclaimed in shock.

The *team* was looking at the terminal screen while keeping watch on their surroundings at the entrance to the hilly area where the slopes began.

North of the hilly area, a *team* named T-S were in close range, and had undoubtedly been responsible for doing them in.

"What kind of blockhead do you have to be to not notice an enemy right behind you..... And yet I thought that we'd be taking them on next, seeing as they managed to survive this long."

"Before we get to whether they noticed, wouldn't it be weird for them not to have started fighting before the *scan* when they were so close? Did they settle it just now?"

"Could it be.....that they were betrayed when they met up to conspire?"

The *members* exchanged plausible guesses and predictions, but,

"No, that's not it."

The *leader*, holding his STM-556 in one hand, realised the *trick*.

"Aww."

The spectators in the bar had long since known that *trick*.

Because they had seen the entire scene of the battle— or more like a one-sided slaughter, between T-S and ZEMAL.

There were no *errors* or other problems in *Squad Jam's system*. The six people of T-S really were 150 *metres* to the north of ZEMAL.

However, none of the five members of ZEMAL had realised a very important detail. That "the *scan* doesn't distinguish between different altitudes, .

The screen in the bar showed the *cameras* overlooking a scene from an unprecedented height. They were streaming from a point even higher than the rampart itself.

At the top of the rampart was a passage approximately 5 *metres*-wide. This passage had a *concrete* path and, to prevent falls, an approximately 1 *metre*-high wall on both sides.

And there were six men with only their gun barrels sticking out from the wall who had fired at a target 150 *metres* away, and 60 *metres* down.

These men were soldiers of an SF world.

They had dull-gray *protectors* made from unknown materials covering their bodies, which did not leave even a single *centimetre* of their skin exposed. They were wearing full armour not only on their torsos, but also from their thighs to their shins, excluding the mobile parts.

Additionally, there were shields equipped on their weaponless left arms (for left-handed *members* - their right arms). Rectangular, bullet-proof *plates* were placed on their upper arms. When holding a gun normally, they would *cover* the part of the body where the user's heart was located.

Naturally, they were wearing spacesuit-like *helmets*. There was a sturdy *guard* even covering their cheeks and they were wearing *goggles*, thus their faces could not be seen at all.

All in all, they were wearing an almost perfect soldier-of-the-future outfit that was feasible in GGO.

Perhaps to help distinguish them by means other than physique, they all had numbers ranging from "001" to "006" written in a scrupulous font on the back of their *helmets* and on their left arm shields.

The matching *team emblems* on the backs of their *helmets* each depicted an orca rising out of the water, baring its sharp fangs.

They usually carried optical guns, but just this once they were using live-ammunition guns. However, they still picked guns that looked as sci-fi as possible.

The *machine gun* user was wielding a 5.56 mm HK 《GR9》 machine gun. The gun, as well as the *scope* that came with it, had unique traits featuring a curvy, glistening design.

The other four were carrying 《Steyr AUGs》 and 《SAR21s》 .

These 2 guns were both 《*bullpup*》 *assault rifles*. The term *bullpup* refers to a *design* where the *magazine* is located behind the *grip*. This allowed the gun to have a shorter length than ordinary guns, but empty shells would be launched out right beside the face when held at the shoulder, thus the downside of this design was that the gun could not be fired from the left.

Additionally, there was a member carrying an HK 《XM8》 *assault rifle* that never went beyond the prototype stage. This gun also looked curvy and bulky from the side, as if it were the silhouette of a fish.

Although their SF outfits were perfectly coordinated—

That did not mean that their respective *character* abilities and *team* coordination were all that good.

In fact, they were one of the *teams* that competed and lost against another nameless *team* in the preliminaries, but a repechage was enacted. Although they were heavily armoured and thus had high defence, it came at the price of “low mobility” .

However, right after the start of the *game*, one of the six pointed to the rampart,

"Hey! By any chance..... could there be a way to climb that thing somewhere?"

And said this, thus altering their fate.

"Looking at the *field map*, the rampart does indeed barely fall within the boundary....."

"Since we've got nothing to worry about for the first 10 minutes and nothing to lose, how's about looking for a spot where we can climb it?"

"Aight!"

After this conversation, the men examined the area while hugging the wall, until,

"There it is....."

They found... a hidden door.

While prodding all around, one of them witnessed the *concrete*-like wall opening up. It was set such that it was completely unnoticeable from further away, but had faint gaps that could be noticed when straining one's eyes up-close. It seemed that similar entrances were set up every 100 *metres*.

Entering inside, they found a faintly lit room with a spiral staircase leading upwards.

'Since we've got this far, we have to see how high we can get', was their thought as they climbed, and what they found was the top of the rampart. A 60 *metre*-high place with a very good view.

"A peerless view, a peerless view!"

Beside the man, who was acting as Ishikawa Gouemon<sup>21</sup> as he overlooked the *dome*, fields, and town,

"What the heck! The *game designers* are slacking off!"

His teammate, who was observing the opposite side, said in shock.

'You're right', 'That's terrible', the others agreed. After all, the exterior of the special *field* consisted solely of a blank space the colour of clouds, stretching out from top to bottom.

In other words, since none of the *players* participating in SJ2 would see it, no *computer graphics* were made for it.

'In that case, why were we able to climb up the rampart?'

'Was there no mutual understanding between the *designer* who created the stairs and the *chief designer*?'

'No, there probably was, but they didn't think that there would be any idiots to climb it!'

'No, they made this *surreal* scenery so that only the people who climb up here could see it!'

---

21 A Japanese outlaw hero who was like the Japanese equivalent of Robin Hood. He is frequently depicted in popular culture and Kabuki drama. The dialogue line is a quote from a scene in one such Kabuki play.

Thus, their discussion unrelated to SJ2 heated up.

Setting that aside—

"Oi! We don't have time to keep fooling around!"

Coming to their senses that the time of the first *scan* was upon them, they became concerned. It was nice that they could climb up, but what would they do now?

If they were on top, they could unilaterally shoot whatever was below them, but that only applied if the enemy was within the 400 *metre* effective range. Would there constantly be enemies in such a convenient place?

The group was split between those thinking that it would be best to go down immediately and fight regularly in the *field*, and those thinking that, seeing as they had already climbed up, they should use the top of the rampart to escape while shooting any enemies they could from above, until the number of *teams* decreased to some extent.

The "let's go down" faction argued that it would be hard to navigate atop the rampart due to the distance involved. At that moment, the "let's advance" faction noticed something.

That something was *items* they saw from afar. Using their binoculars, they confirmed that those were, surprisingly, six bikes. They were courteously left behind to allow quick movement around the rampart. Due to this, the "let's go down" faction gave in.

Thus, they chose to move from place to place atop the rampart as their battle strategy.

The scene of the men clad in SF outfits, carrying *stylish* guns and riding atop the tall rampart on bikes as if they were being sold there, was a *surreal* sight.

They continued *cycling* atop the rampart with a superb view with no real *chance* to shoot anyone for a while, until they encountered the first enemy that was within their effective range, the Zen-Nihon *Machine Gun Lovers*.

The moment when they claimed their first victory with a unilateral attack was exactly 1 hour after the start of the tournament.

"Those guys came to them atop the rampart. Since they were in the north-western corner 10 minutes ago, they probably have some method of quick transportation. Those *machine gun* guys didn't notice this and were flanked from behind."

Said the MMTM *leader*, and his comrades responded saying 'I see'.

Jake, the HK21 user,

"So, isn't it a pain in the ass for us if they took up position there? If they're lying down, we can't get them from below, y'know?"

Asked a natural question.

And the *leader*,

"That's why we're attacking from above."

Tapped the *grenade launcher* on his beloved gun.

\* \* \*

Turning the clocks back a bit; at exactly 14:00.

"*Scan check, begin!*"

Hiding in the hollow, LLENN kept her eyes on the screen of her terminal.

In other places—

Fukaziroh, *Boss* and co., Pitohui and co., and all the other survivors gazed at the sixth *scan*.

As did the spectators in the bar.

The slow *scan* that began from the north—

First displayed T-S and ZEMAL, and informed everyone of the latter's wipeout.

This state of affairs was also displayed on the screens in the bar,

"Awww."

"What a shame....."

"And they were doing so well."

And people let out remarks mourning the Zen-Nihon *Machine Gun Lovers*, who had been fighting relatively hard thus far.

On the screen displaying the map, the results of the *scan* continued to appear.

SJ2 was finally approaching the endgame. The *teams* that had survived until now were either truly powerful, blessed with luck, or both.

After this *scan*, each *team* would probably come at the nearest *team* proactively, and at full force. Since there was no longer any reason to wait.

The battles would probably increase in intensity and most likely end within the next 30 minutes or so, at around the time that the previous tournament ended.

Knowing that, the spectators observed the *scan* result nearly as closely as the *characters* actually fighting in order to fully grasp where the surviving *teams* were.

As the *scan* went on southward, the veteran MMTM was shown to be located in the vicinity of the hills, about 2 *km* to the south of T-S.

Since there were no battles going on, the screen displayed them, with their *leader* tapping the *grenade launcher* on his STM-556 while smiling refreshingly.

"Those SF guys are in MMTM's sights."

"Will the skilled or the ones on top prevail....."

As the spectators shared their thoughts, the next to emerge on the *scan* was the position of LLENN's group, LF. They were about 2 *km* to the north-east (upper-right) of the *dome*.

The screen displayed a scene of the *pink* chibi hiding in a hollow and looking at her *satelite scan* terminal.

"Hmm..... She sure went far to the north-east after leaving the *dome*..... Does that mean she's trying to avoid running into PM4?"

Someone voiced a question, but, naturally, there was no one who could answer it. As the *camera* slowly pulled back, LLENN's body continued to shrink.

The surroundings consisted solely of moist soil without grass, and nobody could be seen.

"Her partner, the *grenade launcher* girl, is nowhere in sight... why?"

Someone voiced another question, but, of course, there was no one who could answer it.

The *scan* gradually went south from the top of the map, displaying a single dot about 2 *km* to the right, in other words, the east, of LLENN's position.

The *team* name is immediately shown in the *scan* results displayed to people in the bar, thus the four characters of KKHC were displayed. This dot was moving even now. It was running to the north-east, in other words, the snowy mountains.

Just then, a green-haired woman wearing a *jacket* with camouflage realistically depicting trees was displayed. She was shown at an awfully close *camera angle*, depicting only her back and the back of her head.

On her back was the unrefined *silhouette* of a black *rifle*.

"Ooh! So the woman who survived moments ago hasn't resigned yet!"

"A *Blaser R93 Tactical 2*; yet another elegant gun she's using."

"Good luck! Get your magnificent revenge!"

With the murder of the majority of her *team* still fresh in their minds, the spectators were hyped up.

"Though, what's she gonna do by herself.....?"

"Indeed..... Moreover, isn't she running in the opposite direction?"

Yet they had such natural questions.

They could not see what was at her feet, but they could tell from the direction of the scenery change. She was currently advancing determinedly towards the top of the snowy mountains, in other words, the direction away from the other *teams*.

"Her strategy is to run and hide till there's only one *team* left. And then snipe them to death from the top of the mountain."

"I see..... That's all you can do when you're all alone, I guess."

The *scan* proceeded south, displaying the position of PM4; the four masked men led by M, and that dangerous woman. They were about 2 *km* away to the east (right) of the *dome*. Map-wise, they were around where the valley between the southern and northern mountains began. They were at least 3 *km* away from LLENN's position.

The visual changed entirely, now displaying six people from the sky.

Short grass grew on the ground. In the field, excluding the interior of the *dome*, it was the area with the most abundant greenery. It was a spot reminiscent of a nature park, dotted with streams and marshes. If it weren't for the reddish, leaden sky, it would probably have looked very beautiful.

In the midst of the greenery, there was but one building.

It was a full two-storey, 8 *metre*-tall *log house* that had a 50 *metre* frontage.

Although it was not really possible to make a gigantic building out of a *log house* constructed by assembling logs, this house was quite huge.

The building had a rather stylish appearance, reminiscent of a plateau *hotel*.

The four masked men were about 300 *metres* away from the *log house*.

They were lying beside plants, 10 *metres* apart, ready to fire their beloved guns at any time as they kept watch on the area.

The small man with the strange-looking UTS-15 *shotgun* was peeking through his large binoculars.

The tall and thin man acting as the carrier was to the left of the large man armed with an MG3 *machine gun*, and was entrusted with assisting in loading the ammunition connected to the *belt link*.

In the middle of the group, M was looking at the terminal in a half-rising posture.

The M107A1 anti-materiel *rifle with suppressor* that displayed its power some time ago was placed in front of him, in line with his M14 EBR. His posture allowed him to take either gun in hand as needed.

All five of them were wearing camouflage, thus, in the midst of the greenery, it was nigh impossible to spot them.

As for that woman—

She was in her post-transformation, *fully* equipped state with her prized KTR-09 in hand, facing the opposite direction, behind M, and was, of course, hugging the ground atop the grass.

In front of her lay M's *backpack* with the bulletproof shield.

The woman's right hand was grasping the grip; her index finger was extended, but it was away from the safety device and *selector*, which was set to *full auto*.

At her stern expression in a state of complete battle readiness,

"Oh? I figured that Onee-san would be more cocky..... how unexpected."

This remark could be heard in the bar, and a rebuttal came at once.

"She knows that the surviving *teams* are all formidable. Negligence is naturally a taboo. In this game, even a single stray bullet can kill you."

"I see. A soldier is always alert, huh."

There were six surviving *teams*, thus the last to be displayed was SHINC's position.

They were in the fields to the south-east of the *dome*.

They were a little less than 2 *km* in a straight line to the southwest of M's group. The never-ending fields had a very good line-of-sight, but even an M107A1 obviously could not hit at this distance.

The screen changed to show them.

Anticipating the time of the *scan*, the amazons were lying on the fields in a circle and keeping watch on their surroundings.

Despite the considerably low likelihood of any enemies being further to the south or west of them based on the previous *scan*, it was a splendid sight to see them keeping watch in all directions nonetheless.

"It's because those amazons used a *truck* for high-speed travel last time. They considered the possibility of enemy *teams* doing that this time too."

"Stop saying that with that smug face of yours. You do know that everyone already knows that?"

"That reminds me, there haven't been any vehicles this time, huh."

"Indeed. It could be that they just haven't appeared or been found by the participants yet."

"Oh? Weren't there bikes, those eco-vehicles?"

"Can you really ride them?"

On the screen, *Boss* stared at her terminal in a half-rising posture.

As she literally stared at it, the wrinkles on her brow increased. At that moment, she suddenly raised her face.

Her stare was undoubtedly directed towards PM4. A space where fields with a good line-of-sight extended.

The slow *scan* finally ended—

And the dots of light disappeared from the map in the bar as well.

For the next 9 minutes, it would be impossible to know an opponent's position without finding out in person. How to act, or not to act, was the question in each *team*'s mind.

The spectators in the bar had been voicing their opinions as they pleased, but all of them thought that the *battle royale* had reached the endgame, and everyone shared the same opinion.

That—

Using their excellent *team* power and the *leader's grenade launcher*, MMTM would effortlessly bring down T-S from their position atop the rampart.

As LLENN was running away from a battle with PM4, she would be focused on being on the move until the next *scan*. Their *team* consisted of only two people, thus they would wait for their formidable opponents to tire themselves out.

The sole member of KKHC would continue running and avoid entering battle. Like a tiger, she would wait for her chance to somehow snipe down the final *team*.

As it stood, SHINC and PM4 would confront each other on open ground. Being smart, they would do their best to avoid a direct battle and instead try to flank their opponents.

At that moment, the spectators had absolutely no idea.

That all of their expectations... would be shattered.

\* \* \*

Right after the *scan*, which took a full minute, ended,

"Girls, let's do it! Everyone, get your game face on!"

While putting her terminal into the *pocket* on her left arm, *Boss* sharply called out.

"Da!"

Answered the black-haired Tohma with a *knit cap*, grasping her Dragunov tightly,

"Aww yeah!"

Answered the redhead, freckled Mother Courage Rosa, holding her PKM *machine gun*,

"Let's do it!"

Answered Sophie, the dwarfess with ammunition boxes beside her,

"Okay!"

Answered Anna, the golden-haired beauty and other Dragunov user,

"Aight!"

Answered the silver-haired, fox-faced Tanya with a Bizon in her hands; all full of determination.

Raising her silent sniper rifle Vintorez, *Boss*,

"Alright! Our target is PM4! "Plan Sweets, begin!"

On the screen in the bar, SHINC started to move.

While putting moderate distance between each other, the six women began fast-walking or half-running.

Their formation consisted of Rosa with her PKM *machine gun* in the middle, Sophie beside her, the two snipers to the left and right accordingly, *Boss* in the center, and Tanya watching their rear.

Knowing that their enemy was far away, they would divide into two *teams*, one advancing as the other kept watch... or so one would think. The six of them actually charged on as one group.

Their goal—

"Huh?"

"Oo!"

Based on the position of the *dome* and snowy mountains on the screen, it was, without a doubt, the place where their greatest enemy, PM4, had taken up position.

Seeing them crossing the fields, consisting merely of plains of great line-of-sight with no cover at all,

"WHA—! What are those women thinking?"

"It's as though they're saying 'please shoot me', ain't it?"

Voices filled with questions came from the spectators in the bar.

Being a little less than 2 *km* away from them, it did not seem like a good plan to just rush headlong at their opponents.

If they entered the range of PM4's M107A1, boasting an effective range of 1500 *metres*, and the range where the fangs of the *Savage* 110BA could reach them, it would end with them being unilaterally sniped.

"What are they doing?"

"Did they fall into despair?"

In the bar engulfed by question marks, someone realised it.

"No! The amazons don't know that PM4 has ultra-high range sniper rifles, right? If they took lessons from the previous tournament..... they should only be wary of M's M14 EBR and that shield, right?"

"Ah, that's right! We're the only one's who know that because we saw it on screen, huh."

"So, they're thinking that it's OK to recklessly close the distance to the 7.62 *mm*'s effective range— about 800 *metres*!"

'I see I see', the bar was engulfed in a storm of assent, but—

Someone immediately realised.

"Like, they're done for at any rate! They're gonna get shot!"

14:03.

"They did come."

M made a short report.

He had exposed his large build by standing up to peek through his binoculars. The direction was the south-west.

Through the perfectly circular view of the binoculars, he saw the enemy soldiers advancing towards them.

"*Team SHINC*— the amazons. One PKM machine gun, two Dragunov sniper rifles, a Vintorez, and Bizon. One other is... *support* for the machine gun? Not carrying anything. Distance approximately 1600. Also, on foot and heading straight for us."

Hearing the report from M, the fat *sniper* keeping watch on the opposite site while prone with his *Savage 110BA* at the ready,

"So they're coming, huh. No movement on the opposite site; coming over to you."

As he said this, he took his black sniper rifle into one hand and crawled on the grass. At the same time, the large man lying prone with his *MG3 machine gun* at the ready slowly changed the direction of his muzzle at his own position.

Continuing to keep watch on the opposite side was the small man carrying a *UTS-15 shotgun* and the tall carrier man. Both used binoculars, ready for an attack from the rear.

"We don't know how they'll be attacking yet, but we'll take them out from as large a distance as possible. I'll be the one to shoot with the *M107A1* from my shield. I'll set up right away, but just in case, lure them in till about 1300."

At M's words,

"Eeh, what about my showtime?"

Enquired Pitohui, keeping watch on their flanks while lying beside the *backpack*, and M answered.

"Go down a bit and keep a watch on the rear and flanks from a hollow."

"Eeh? You won't let me fire some bullet-chans? C'mon, c'mon, c'mon."

At Pitohui's tantrum,

"We're not dealing with an easy enemy this time. You really think your sniping skills are better than mine?"

Came M's merciless answer.

"Tsk."

Pouting lightly, Pitohui shrugged right away,

"Well, guess I'll save up my energy and strength for LLENN-chan."

And, muttering this, pulled back as instructed.

The screen in the bar switched to PM4, which had begun to move.

Pitohui moved away from M's *backpack* to a spot that was sunken even among the flat grassland, and began keeping watch on the opposite side.

M opened the cover of that *backpack*,

"Here it comes! The *shield*!"

And took out multiple piled-up, tile-like objects. Each of them was about 50 *cm*-tall and 30 *cm*-wide.

M put his strength into expanding it, and the eight plates opened horizontally. After the *links* at the top and bottom were connected, it formed an approximately 50 *cm*-tall, 240 *cm*-long, fan-shaped arc wall that stood obliquely.

It was the impenetrable shield that M used from beyond the waterfall, Pitohui used when sniping the *leaders* at the bottom of the mountain, and that M would now use again.

"Isn't that..... unfair."

"I think you meant "I want one, ?"

"You could say that."

Awfully frank impressions gushed out from the spectators.

"Enemy spotted! M's shield! 1600 forward! Just to the left of the *log house!*"

Anna shouted sharply as she looked through her binoculars while walking at a quick pace with her Dragunov on her back,

"Everyone, don't stop! Continue charging while pretending not to have noticed that!"

*Boss* immediately gave instructions in response. And then,

"Anna, fill me in on the situation in as much detail as you can."

"Roger. —M is currently expanding his shield towards us in a grassland. There's a fat man with a mask and *goggles*. His gun is... a black sniper rifle that I've never seen."

"He's expanding the shield?"

At *Boss's* question in surprise,

"No doubts about it."

Anna answered.

"I can confirm that."

The other *sniper*, Tohma, agreed with the report.

As *Boss* continued walking, her face turned grim.

"Why.....? There's still 1600 *metres* left, so why.....?"

As their *leader* asked herself, the vice-president of the rhythmic gymnastics club Kana— 's controlled Sophie,

"That is too early, huh, *Boss*."

Agreed with her and helped her think.

"Yeah..... Considering M's gun, their effective range is 800 *metres*. Even if they need preparations, it's weird that they're expanding it so soon....."

"Right.They could have still remained unseen by being prone, yet they gave themselves away by taking out that shield."

"In that case..... there's only one logical explanation."

*Boss* derived her answer through the process of elimination.

And conveyed it to her comrades.

"M's group has a gun that can hit from more than 1 *km* away!"

"At this point, they've noticed us as well."

The fat *sniper* told M. The man had mounted his *Savage 110BA* on a *bipod* at the right edge of M's shield.

Although not to the extent of M with his M107A1 at the center of the shield, he too was in a position where at least half of his body would be protected by the shield while using his gun at M's right.

M opened the caps at the front and back of his *scope*. With the magnification at maximum, he held his gun at the ready.

"I don't care. Hereon, we'll keep on firing unilaterally at them to dwindle their numbers. The *machine gun* will probably scatter bullets. If you see a *Line*, dodge it at once."

"Roger. But let's take them all out before that!"

"Yeah."

The eyes of the two men saw scenery magnified through the *scope*.

There were six women walking towards them on the other side of the field. The fat *sniper* read the rangefinder on his *scope*.

"1500 *metres* left."

"1500 *metres*."

Anna read the remaining distance.

The six SHINC members were still advancing.

"We're facing what seems to be a 12.7 *mm* anti-materiel *rifle*. We're already in range, but based on the fact they haven't fired yet, it seems that they're waiting for us to get closer for a sure hit. But they're definitely going to fire before we close in to our own firing range of 800. Whether that'll be 1000 or 1200... I have no clue."

Boss's strained voice reached the "six" of them.

"M's gonna use his *Line*-less shooting. Go all out!"

Boss gave them such instructions, but it was impossible to predict *Line*-less sniping no matter how much effort they put in. If anything, all they could do was to "sense his bloodlust" .

"They're still quite a bit away, but we're going on with the "Anti-Shield *Plan*" as planned! Get ready for my command! Tohma, Sophie, Tanya, I'm counting on you!"

That same moment, she heard "Roger" from the three girls who were named.

"Now then, they're gonna clash, I can't wait....."

"I wonder who's gonna win?"

The spectators in the bar were excited for a long-awaited battle.

It seemed that there were no other battles in progress, thus all the *cameras* were focused on PM4 and SHINC from various angles.

It was strange that the anticipated MMTM vs T-S battle had not begun, but the spectators no longer cared about it, as they were currently bursting with anticipation for the frontal face-off between two veteran *teams*.

PM4, lying in wait in their encampment. M's M107A and another man's *Savage* 110BA ultra-long range sniper rifles, protected by the shield that was set up in the meadow. For *support*, a 7.62 mm caliber MG3 *machine gun*.

The amazons of SHINC, coming at them nonchalantly.

"Who's gonna win, you ask? Well, that's gonna be M's guys of course! Those women will end up being unilaterally shot down from long-distance! Same as with those *leaders* of that alliance! Even if they counterattack, their bullets will just be deflected by that shield!"

"Like, even if they can't see the *Bullet Lines*, they can dodge the sniping by moving around since they're quite a distance away, right? Because it'll take at least 2 seconds for the bullets to hit. Right now, when they know the position of their opponents, they probably won't just be done in one-sidedly.

Each side brought forth their view on the matter, but,

"Can they shoot down M, hiding behind his shield, while moving around to not get shot themselves? Even if they tried going around the *side*, his other mates are there, ya know? They could hold out for a while, but I think they'll all end up being shot down eventually.女"

There was no one who could counter this prediction.

"Distance 1300."

At the fat man's report,

"About time we begin."

M gave his answer.

Through their *scopes*, magnified to their maximum, they could clearly see the six women walking towards them on the withered fields. All that was left was to raise their sights to account for the distance, and pull their triggers.

"How's the rear?"

When M asked this,

"As far as I can see, no signs of any enemies."

An answer came from the short man peeking through his binoculars while prone. And also,

"Since I left it to you, bring them down lickety-split."

An answer from the bored Pitohui.

"Alright."

M shifted his entire focus to the round view of his *scope*. Without closing his left eye, he brought his focus to his dominant eye.

Six women far away. Among them were women who looked so tough that they did not even look like women, but they were women nonetheless.

He first considered which of the women, spread out and walking towards them, he should snipe first. He had to inform his comrade next to him of this to avoid shooting the same person.

The *Savage 110BA*-using fat man was an excellent *GGO sniper*, but lacked practice shooting actual guns. At this long range, he could not hit without the *Bullet Circle assist*.

Thus, creating the *Circle* and then *Line* at the same time as M's own first shot was the *best* sniping tactic in this case.

M quickly calculated in his mind. At 1200 *metres*, the M107A1's bullets would take about 2 seconds to hit.

After he put his finger on the trigger, it would take tenths of a second for the *Bullet Circle* to appear in view. If all went well, he could fire before his target was hit.

He had no idea how good the enemy's reaction speed in hitting the ground after seeing their comrades shot was, but if it were slow enough, the second target would be shot.

"Alright. I'll take the *leader*. The rough-looking one with braids and carrying a Vintorez. The moment I discharge, you shoot the golden-haired, *sunglasses-wearing sniper* on the right side."

"Golden-haired, roger."

After hearing the reply, M's eyes focused on the woman with braids.

Her mouth... was saying something.

"It's about to commence....."

Hearing *Boss's* soliloquy,

"I'm ready any time, y'know?"

Tanya, who was at the end of the line, answered. She had stopped keeping watch on their rear and come right next to *Boss* at some point.

The *members* of SHINC were walking with stern expressions.

These 2-3 minutes went by knowing that *Bullet Lines* could light up from behind the shield at any time, nay, that bullets could come roaring towards them at any time.

To her comrades, who continued walking while bearing this fear as they feigned ignorance,

"Well done. Let's do it! Don't forget the "3" and "2" seconds! Charge!"

Boss shouted her order.

The order reached all "six" of them.

The six of them started moving at once.

First, Tanya, who was farthest to the back, grasped her Bizon tightly and began dashing, her silver hair swaying. Just like that, she passed everyone and became the vanguard.

"Yahhouuuuuu!"

In GGO, the full-sprint dash of a *character* that raised their Agility was already superhuman.

Although not on LLENN's level, Tanya was the fastest on this *team*. Kicking the ground at an extreme *pace*, she blew up dust from the dry fields. While leaving a tail of brown smoke, she charged towards her opponents.

Of course, Tanya was not the only one charging.

The other five had also begun their full-speed dashes to close the distance as fast as possible.

However, simply running in a straight line would leave them as open targets, thus they suddenly changed direction every few seconds, running in *zigzag*.

This situation was reflected through his *scope*,

"M-san!"

"Yeah, I see that. —Shit!"

A clear curse coming from M's mouth was a rare sight.

They took the initiative a mere 2 seconds before they could be shot during their walk.

"That *leader* has good battle sense. —Change of targets. I'm aiming for that short one up front. You shoot one of those in the rear as you please. *machine gun*, if they enter range, stop their approach. But do it with the minimum bullet count. Rear, continue your watch."

"Roger!" "Roger!" "Roger!" "Roger!" "Okie dokie."

The moment he received the replies from the others, M discharged his M107A1.

Despite the *suppressor*, a rather loud gunshot roared and *gas* expelled from the holes on the sides of the tip, shaking the surrounding grass hard enough to mow it down.

The expelled 12.7 *mm* bullet came at Tanya in a gentle parabola—

And with a roar, passed 30 *cm* to her right as she suddenly changed her trajectory.

"Uhyaa! I saw it! That was close!"

Feeling the shockwave on her cheeks, Tanya let out a shriek with a smile.

"If that had hit me, I would have become even more of a runt!"

"It's started!"

"She dodged!"

The spectators in the bar were so hyped that they were very close to crushing their glasses.

On one screen, the *scene* of M discharging from behind his shield—

On the other screen, the short body of Tanya, who barely dodged, was displayed.

"A little over 1000 *metres* left, I guess? Now, I wonder how far they can close in while dodging?"

"Why you....."

The fat *Savage* 110BA user gradually moved his gun while prone.

Through his *scope*, he saw women running in *zigzag* in intervals of 3 seconds. Although there was no need to move his gun by large angles yet, as the enemies were still quite far away, it was still rather hard to lock on.

His finger was on the trigger, thus the *Bullet Circle* was displayed, and all he had to do was to use it to move it to the place where the woman would be when the bullet reached her, but,

"Tsk!"

She could see the red *Bullet Line*, thus, naturally, she could dodge it.

Nonetheless, he had to prevent the enemy from closing in. Even if he missed, it would be enough to impede their assault.

With a thunderous roar, the *Savage* 110BA spouted fire.

The 338 Lapua Magnum bullet flew with multiple shockwaves—

"Whoa!"

And passed right in front of Tohma as she suddenly stopped after seeing the *Line*.

Holding her Dragunov in both hands, she dodged,

"I'm not done yet!"

And, without shooting, immediately continued charging at the enemy.

They had been practicing the methodology of charging towards an enemy *sniper* in an open field. Using real bullets; actually shooting at their friends.

And what they grasped from that,

『If you go in the same direction for 3 seconds, you're shot. If you stop for 2 seconds, you're shot.』

Was this iron rule.

"One and two and three."

Tohma ran as she skillfully counted in Japanese, and then abruptly changed her trajectory. This was a sharp move she had cultivated in her rhythmic gymnastics *simulations*.

A bullet passed where a person was no longer present.

"Craap! M-san, this is really tough. Those guys sure are nimble."

Hearing the fat man's complaints while operating the *bolt handle* to load the next bullet, and having fired his third bullet at Tanya, M,

"Seems so."

Had no objections. And so,

"Change of plans. We're switching up our individual shooting. You restrain them with your *Line* and I'll bring them down when they stop."

He instructed without delay.

This was the *technique* they used to bring down those *leaders* minutes ago. At that time, shooting with the M107A1 was,

"Let me shoot let me shoot let me shoot bullets if you don't I'll shoot, y'know?"

Pitohui, now throwing such a tantrum.

The fat man,

"Roger! Then, I'll start with the blonde!"

Said this, and locked on to the golden-haired beauty running at the forefront.

"About 900 left! Just a bit more!"

*Boss* appealed while running.

Continuing to run without a moment to rest and continuing to change one's trajectory all the time were considerably taxing on the mind, but they would be shot if they stopped. If they were shot by an anti-material *rifle*, it would lead to instant death.

Just a bit more; if they could not reach the 800 *metre* mark, they could not retaliate.

870 left..... 860 left.....

As the six ran, a *Line* came at Anna, running farthest to the left of the group. *Boss*, running behind her, saw the *Line*, and how Anna dodged it.

Then how a bullet came, as the *Line* disappeared, and pierced the ground with no one there—

"Hahah!"

And at the same time, Anna, who had dodged it, gave a smile.

The next moment—

The body with that smile was blown away and disappeared from view.

"Shit!"

*Boss's* swear,

"Well done!"

The fat man's cheer,

"She's done for!"

And the shouts from the spectators in the bar were practically synchronised.

While running, *Boss* moved her eyes to the left corner of her view, at the edge of which she saw the *hit point gauge* of her teammates. The one for Anna decreased until it eventually reached zero.

"Cra! Anna's dead!"

Unable to even check on the corpse, *Boss*— and the other four continued their run. While leaping to the left and right.

Right afterwards,

"We're ready! Let's do it! Anna bought us time!"

Hearing Tohma, *Boss* made a split-second decision. She gave a short command.

"Alright! Do it!"

As 850 *metres* remained, the five began their plan.

"Who's next?"

The fat man, who succeeded in restraining the golden-haired *sniper* with his *Bullet Line* and saw M take her down, said in anticipation as he inserted a new *magazine* into his gun.

"Next— no..... wait."

M's dubious voice responded.

The fat man also saw it.

When the women, who had been desperately closing the distance just moments ago and were prepared to die to do it, seemed ready to come to a sudden stop, they dropped to the ground forcefully.

Despite focusing on the eye looking through the *scope*, somehow, all he could see atop the horizon line was the tip of a hat.

It was dubious whether he would be able to successfully snipe them, and they could easily dodge it by just spotting the *Line* and rolling sideways.

"Distance, 855 *metres*."

The large MG3 *machine gun* user reported the data from his binocular's rangefinder.

"Why.....?"

The fat man muttered.

'855 *metres* should still be further than the effective range of their weapons.'

'They could've just advanced a bit further, so why did they come to a sudden stop?'

'Because one of them died?'

No, if one death was enough to stop their charge, they would have probably done so from the start. At this point, they should have continued breaking through even if it meant more casualties.

"M-san, I cannot comprehend their intention."

The fat man told M frankly, as it went beyond his understanding. The fact that he did not lie by saying 'I get it' to show off was the nature of an excellent *player*.

"I don't get it either. But don't let your guard down."

M also admitted honestly.

Even in the bar, suddenly,

"Why'd they stop? Shouldn't they have continued charging, ignoring several casualties?"

A voice from a spectator broke out.

The only ones who knew the answer,

"Alright! Do it!"

Were *Boss*, who gave this order, and the other women of SHINC.

The short and stout dwarfess Sophie,

"I'm going for it!"

Waved her left hand in the air while lying face-down on the ground.

An *item window* that only she could see appeared in front of her, then she quickly chose the *item* to materialise, and pressed the *OK button* right away.

During that time, crawling behind Sophie was the black-haired *sniper* Tohma. As she crawled forward, her Dragunov got stuck in the dirt, thus she left it beside her.

"I'm here!"

The moment Tohma notified Sophie, particles of light gathered between them, and something began to materialise.

And then,

"Everyone! I'm counting on you!"

Sophie shouted with a smile and stood up on the spot.

"Aah?" "Haah?"

'What is she thinking, standing up in the line of sight of the enemy *sniper*?'

In the bar, everyone had the same doubt—

"Haah?"

In the battlefield too, the fat enemy *sniper* himself was, likewise, utterly stumped.

The dwarfess who stood up was but a mere target. Just when he thought that she was about to break into a dash, and prepared for it,

"Haaaah?"

The woman flumped to the ground. Sitting down cross-legged, the large woman looked at them with a broad grin.

And then, the woman extended the fingers of her large arms and thrust them into the ground. Just as he thought she was planning to dig, she stopped with her hands pierced through the ground.

".....M-san? What is that? What is that woman trying to achieve?"

As the turn of events still eluded his understanding like before, nay, even more than before, the fat man turned to his *leader* for help.

"I have no clue at all, but..... I'll just shoot her."

Said M as he aligned the M107A1's *scope* on the dwarfess; at that moment—

Something even more unbelievable occurred.

A hit effect appeared on the grinning dwarfess's head. With the left side of her head shining red and *polygon* fragments scattering from it, the large head on her large neck inclined to the right just a bit.

After 3-4 seconds of her *hit points* decreasing, a 【D e a d】 *marker* lit up above the woman. Announcing her instant death. The sitting dwarfess turned into a sitting corpse.

"Wha—"

M, who was about to touch the trigger of his M107A1 with his finger, stopped.

He understood that the instant death was the result of her being shot in the head.

But who was the one who shot her?

Her head was shot to the right side from his perspective and to the left from hers, but it did not seem that there was any other *team* in that direction.

Nevertheless, M moved his M107A1 to the right to solve the mystery, and there he found the answer.

She dropped to the ground right away, so he could not shoot, but the scene he saw through his *scope* burned clearly into M's eyes.

The scene of the enemy *team's Boss* aiming her Vintorez at her comrade.



SECT.14

## 第十四章 砲撃戦

## SECT.14

### Shoot-out

The spectators in the bar—

Due to one of the cameras broadcasting SHINC's situation the whole time, saw the whole thing clearly.

How the *leader* of the amazons, the woman with braided hair, shot her comrade with her own gun.

The prone *leader* half-rose up, readied her silent Vintorez sniper rifle, and fired a single bullet at the woman sitting firmly in place about 30 *metres* beside her.

The exceedingly heavy 9 x 39 *mm* bullet hit her left temple, causing instant death.

"Wha!"

"Hey!"

"Ooi!"

"Has she gone mad!"

"Haaaaah?"

"Why!"

Shriek-like exclamations enveloped the bar.

And before the ruckus settled down, they saw.

How, behind Sophie's corpse, the *item* she took out from her *storage* right before dying finished materialising.

And how the particles of light gathered, forming a long rod.

"What's going on?"

Pitohui's inquisitive voice reached the ears of M and the other members of PM4.

"Right now, one of the enemies... was shot in the head by the enemy *leader* and died."

M explained awfully briefly. Unsurprisingly, Pitohui seemed to be stumped by this as well,

"Excuuuse me? Why?"

As she let out in an abnormal voice.

"Dunno....."

"Friendly fire? In that case, it's just like what you did last time, huh, M!"

Pitohui was filled with excitement, but none of her *teammates* reacted, neither with smiles nor irritation.

And right afterwards,

"Hey, I can't really see what's going on, so how was she killed... by that person? Details please."

An additional question came from Pitohui.

M,

"Ah? Yeah. They came charging at us to close the distance, but we sniped one down. Right afterwards, at a range of 855, all of them dropped to the ground. However, one of them rose up and sat cross-legged, then was shot by an ally and immediately d—"

Was unable to finish saying 'immediately died'.

Because M's explanation was interrupted by Pitohui. With a shout.

"Drop as close to the ground as you can, now!"

The ones who knew the situation better than the ones fighting on site—

Were the spectators watching the broadcast in the bar.

When the *item* left behind in the *dwarf* woman's last moments materialised, the spectators half-understood SHINC's strategy.

The particles of light formed a gigantic gun.

Its overall length was actually over 2 *metres*.

The barrel was a bare, simple, metal *pipe*. There was a *bipod* attached at its middle for support. The muzzle had a part, known as a *muzzle brake*, used to spout gas out to the sides and reduce recoil.

The barrel alone was about 1.3 *metres*-long. A larger value than the "overall length" of most *assault rifles*.

In order for a human to use it as a gun, the trigger, *grip*, and *stock* for supporting it with the shoulder were all located behind its centre of gravity.

At its sights, protruding from the left of the barrel, was a *scope* that should not have been there originally, meaning that it was custom-installed.

The name of this laundry pole-like and shockingly long gun was,

" 《Degtyaryov Anti-Tank *Rifle*》 !"

Several people at the bar shouted almost simultaneously. *Gun maniacs* were creatures who wanted to say the name of a gun before anyone else.

And both of them were correct.

It was an "anti-tank *rifle*," adopted by the Soviet Union Army, which fought in World War II, in 1941.

Degtyaryov was the name of its developer and the "D," in PTRD. Hence, the name Degtyaryov Anti-Tank *Rifle* was also known in Japan.

It is an ultra-high calibre *rifle* designed to pierce the still-thin armour of tanks at the time. Such a gun became unable to pierce tanks in the latter half of World War II, thus the "anti-tank *rifle*" category no longer exists and it is instead called an "anti-materiel *rifle*."

It was *bolt-action* and its ammunition was the Soviet Russian-made 14.5 x 114 *mm* bullet. This meant that the bullet's diameter was 14.5 *mm* and the cartridge was 114 *mm*-long.

Considering that M's M107A1 was .50 calibre, thus his bullets were 12.7 x 99 *mm*, it was clear that the ammunition of this rifle was an additional size bigger and had more force. Naturally, the *power* of the bullets was also far greater.

At the monster *rifle* that followed the M107A1,

"What the heck!"

"That's some antique we've got there!"

"How did they get their hands on it! That thing!"

"So they're going to counterattack with ~~that~~!"

"So that's why they were carrying it in their *storage* all this time?"

"They sure thought it out..... With that kind of firepower, they can compete with M's shield from the front."

"They didn't have it last time, did they? They must have gone out of their way to complete a super tough *quest* to *get* it."

The spectators who all shared the illness known as *gun mania* were fired up.

However,

"But, why? They can't really have a shootout at such a long range on such flat terrain, right?"

A natural question came forth.

They were glaring at each other on an awfully flat terrain.

Just like M and the others could not properly aim at the prone SHINC, the women could not aim at M and the others without raising their guns to some extent.

On the other hand, if they just stood up to fire, no, sat down to fire, they would be perfect targets.

And most of all, it was impossible to think that one would be able to snipe accurately with such a heavy gun even while sitting, much less while standing.

Such an ultra-heavy-class gun was intended to be fired from an elbow rest— meaning that it should be fired while set against something.

'How the heck are they gonna use that gun?'

This spectator's question was answered by the actions of the *sniper* using the gun.

The shooter of this monster *rifle* was the black-haired *sniper* right behind it.

Those who had seen the previous SJ would know.

That this woman, wearing a *knitted* hat on her black hair, was the most skilled member of the *team* and the person who was just a step away from using her Dragunov with a variable magnification *scope* to snipe LLENN down during the previous tournament.

Moreover, she was also the last *character* to die in the previous SJ.

She sat behind the corpse and slowly raised the approximately 2 *metre*-long, 16 *kilogram* gun that materialised in the meantime.

And then, she placed the front of the long barrel. Onto the left shoulder of the corpse of her comrade, who remained seated.

"Aah....."

At that moment, the spectators realised as a shiver of fear went down their spines.

The reason for the *dwarfess* sitting down in front of her enemies.

The reason why that *leader* woman shot her comrade to death.

And why she fired at her head from the left.

"Those women— are gonna fuckin' use their comrade as a " shield, and "emplacement, !"

In *Squad Jam*—

A corpse would remain on the spot for 10 minutes as an indestructible *object*.

In that case, during that time—

A corpse would become an indestructible shield.

Tohma raised the silver *bolt handle* of her PTRD 1941 with her right hand and pulled it toward herself.

Bullets so huge that it looked like just hitting someone with one would kill them materialised along with the gun in a waterproof cloth bag. They numbered 10.

Tohma picked up 1 of them with her left hand, some oil staining her gloves. A large quantity of oil was used on the bullets to improve the function of the gun.

She inserted a bullet into the gun through a hole on the underside and quickly pushed the *bolt* forward to load it.

1 *metre* behind the corpse with its arms piercing the ground, she readied her gun in a kneeling posture.

Peeking through the *scope* quite a bit away from her eyes, she stared through the *lens* at the shield she saw 855 *metres* away.

The moment she placed her finger on the trigger, a pale green *Bullet Circle* came into view, and the moment it contracted for the first time,

"I'll be— taking yer life!"

Tohma, operated by Milana, the group's Russian, muttered an aged line.<sup>22</sup>

And fired.

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<sup>22</sup> The expression she used was o-inochi-- choudai itasu! (お命一、頂戴いたす!). It seems that it's an expression that you'd probably only hear in historical plays nowadays. Possibly an expression used by samurais or something.



Rather than a gunshot, the sound it made was more like an “ explosion.”

"Drop as close to the ground as you can, now!"

Hearing Pitohui's voice,

"!"

M let go of his M107A1 and dropped to the ground on the spot. Grass and dirt entered his mouth.

"Huh?"

The fat man was slow to respond.

And, to his further misfortune, Tohma's *Bullet Line* was intercepted by the shield in front of him, thus it did not enter his vision.

The 14.5 *mm* diameter bullet—

Hit the right edge of the fan-shaped shield.

And was repelled.

As expected from a space battleship's outer wallboard. Partially because of the fact that it was oblique, it could not be penetrated even by a 14.5 *mm* bullet from 855 *metres* away. Violent sparks scattered, an intense sound rang, but it held its ground.

However—

“It didn't penetrate,” did not mean “the power was not passed on.”

The kinetic energy of that bullet was tremendous. Due to the intense impact, naturally, extreme pressure was put on a sheet of the shield.

The shield was a powerful object that could withstand any heat or pressure.

The metal *joints* connecting the top and bottom of the shield, however, were not that strong.

The *joints* supporting the pressured sheet at two points instantly bent like toffee and broke due to the twisting.

And then the sheet of the shield burst backwards—

Landing a direct hit on the face of the man holding his *Savage* 110BA right behind it.

He was unable to utter a sound. Neither a scream, nor a complaint, nor a surprised squeal.

Hit by the firm sheet, the man's neck twisted to an angle that was impossible for the structure of the human body, and a red *effect* light, proof of the recognition of the *damage* dealt, came forth from it.

A 【D e a d】 *marker* lit up, indicating the position of the first casualty of PM4.

The moment the PTRD 1941 discharged, a tremendous blast assailed the surroundings, raising a huge amount of dirt from the dry ground.

Although the intense recoil jolted her body backwards, she was able to withstand it, in part because she had shifted her body forward with her kneeling posture.

Although the gun was *bolt-action*, it employed a peculiar system of “opening the *bolt* with the force of the recoil and ejecting the empty cartridge”. GGO perfectly reproduced this feature.

Upon firing, the gun itself, including the *grip*— namely, almost the entire thing except for the *stock* applied to the shoulder and the *cheek pad* applied to the cheek, jerked backwards by roughly 65 mm from the powerful recoil.

Due to this force, the *bolt handle* flicked upwards towards the metal fittings at the back, opening it up. Which meant that the action of opening the *bolt handle*, which would normally be done by hand, was done by the recoil.

The opened *bolt* would retrace further due to inertia. An empty cartridge, with improved sliding due to the oil, was dragged out—

And ejected below the gun.

Tohma picked up another oil-drenched bullet and once again slid it into the gun from below. With the lowered *bolt* pushed forward and *locked*, she was once again able to fire.

"Next!"

\* \* \*

What SHINC chose for the “M’s shield countermeasure”, absolutely necessary to win the tournament,

"In any case, starting now we're getting our hands on a far stronger weapon!"

Was that simple.

'If we can't beat him with our current firepower, we can just get stronger "arms" and smash down his "shield" .

'In that case, what would that be?'

First, they considered using a *grenade launcher* like the ones Fukaziroh used. 'We could just attack from above where M's shield doesn't cover him by making use of a parabolic trajectory.'

However, the maximum 400 *metre* range was just not enough. They had to get something that they could attack with from outside the 800 *metre* range of M's M14 EBR, or at least from the same range.

In that case, only one option remained.

Their goal was to acquire a large calibre and high-power anti-materiel *rifle*.

'Even if it didn't penetrate the armoured sheets, it should probably have enough *punch* to at least destroy the *joints*. Or even shift the position of the shield.'

As such, the girls made use of the little time they had in between their hectic studies, club activities, and intense practices to gather information.

They knew that merely 10 or so anti-materiel *rifles* existed in the Japanese GGO *server*, but,

『That is a thing of the past. Recently, it seems that the number of them being implemented suddenly increased, thus there should actually be more of them available, and easier to get than before.』

They got their hands on such a rumour. And their hopes grew larger.

Next, as if they were data collectors, they attempted to ask people who already had anti-materiel *rifles* how they were able to acquire them.

Every time they caught rumours of someone having one, they sought them out, but in the end, they only managed to get ahold of four of them and, furthermore, only two of them answered their question properly.

Both of them,

『I got it as a *drop* by miraculously *clearing* a difficult *quest* and taking down the *boss*.』

Uttered the same thing. As expected, they were not things that would be sold at regular stores.

Naturally, the chances of a person who had acquired one selling it were far lower than that for other guns; when one of them did appear on *auction*, it went for such a shocking price that it totaled 200,000 Japanese yen when converted to *real money*.

One of the two people who had given them an answer was a female *player*. A lovely, light-blue-haired girl named Sinon.

Of course, this was based on *avatar* appearance; the *player* could be an aged adult woman. This player named Sinon was so skilled that she could fight in the finals of the BoB. She was not the kind of opponent that anyone from SHINC could rival in a one-on-one.

At that time, the ones to meet with Sinon were *Boss* and Anna, who managed to finish their homework early. Sinon went into quite a bit of detail, perhaps because they were all girls.

According to her, the depths of the *dungeons* below the capital Glocken was more difficult than the ones out in the wilderness, and thus it should be easier to get a rare weapon there. The probability should be especially high in places that you could forcibly fall into through *traps*. After all, that was the case for her.

Since that day, they began a reckless quest to acquire an anti-materiel *rifle* for the rhythmic gymnastics club.

After charging into *areas* that were, without a doubt, not *clearable* at their *level*, they were chased around by super gigantic *boss-class monsters* and huge machines, and trampled by them at times. Yet they continued this merciless battle that did not allow them to earn any experience points at all, as they kept “returning by death” to the safe zone every time their *squadron* was wiped out.

After who knows how many times, when they had already lost count, the goddess of fortune smiled upon them.

This took place during a battle in a long and narrow *dungeon* that may have formerly been a subway station.

During a back-and-forth battle with their enemy— a machine that looked like a huge tank with numerous *power shovels* for arms, they were all shot up by its *laser* beams. Then, their *machine gunner* Rosa failed to avoid the monster's ramming attack, thus she was squished by its large *caterpillar* tracks and died with her body in tatters.

However, be it the result of her tenaciousness or her grudge, her right hand continued pulling the trigger even as her body was torn to pieces.

The PKM *machine gun* continued to function as if avenging its owner.

During the short moment before her corpse shattered into *polygon* fragments and disappeared, she had fired around 20 bullets at the side of the underground space; some of these bullets hit the *pipes* running along the side, opening holes in them.

With extreme force, hot water used to heat the underground gushed out from them.

The water gushing out of the high-pressure hot water *pipes* landed directly on the machine. Perhaps because of the *damage* to its electrical system, its movements slowed down drastically. The steam enveloping it also dampened the power of the *laser* beams fired from the tips of its *arms*.

"Now's our *chance*! Attack at once!"

"Aww yeah!"

"Let's get 'im!"

"Crush it to pieces!"

"Uoooo!"

Enthusiastic, the five survivors assaulted it simultaneously without paying heed to the hot water shower—

And they were immediately wiped out.

Regretfully, the *damage* they accumulated till then was just too great. If it were possible to win a conflict through spirit alone, no country would lose a war.

However, they found a clue to beat it.

Invading the same *dungeon* again the next day, they first set up explosives on the warm water *pipes*. Then, they lured the enemy there and ensured that it took an even bigger shower than last time, and at an early phase of the battle.

Afterwards, it again came down to brute force.

They pounded and pounded and pounded away at the now slow-moving opponent. By shooting its *arms* as they were about to fire *lasers*, they immediately threw its aim off.

Nevertheless, the merciless battle continued for over 30 minutes and, when the *boss's hit points* were nearly depleted, they even resorted to using all the *plasma grenades* in their pockets in a suicide attack, resulting in their deaths—

And they finally defeated it.

In the end, a shot fired from Tohma's Dragunov tore off one of its panels and hit the now-exposed part that looked like a nuclear reactor.

But then, aside from her and Anna, the two *snipers* who had been shooting from a distance, all of their comrades were wiped out because of the flashy explosion.

While a gaudy *Congratulations* string floated in the musty room, a single small *window* came out in front of Tohma, the one who dealt the *last attack*.

What materialised in front of her upon touching it was a laundry pole-like anti-tank *rifle*, the PTRD 1941.

For them, who only used Soviet Russian-made guns—

They got yet another Soviet Russian arm, as if they had been aiming for one.

Remembering Sinon's words that, upon defeating a boss with a French sniper rifle, she got a French anti-materiel *rifle*,

"I see, so the gun you *get* depends on the gun you use to defeat it, huh."

Concluded thus. Whether that was accurate or not... none could answer.

When Tohma and Anna brought back the huge laundry pole—the PTRD 1941, their comrades, who had returned to town by death, were all overjoyed.

The way they embraced each other, cried together, and rejoiced showed not a hint of the bad relationship they had when they first met. These rhythmic gymnastics club girls had been face-to-face with death numerous times, guns in their hands, and had thus become irreplaceable comrades.

As such, they acquired a powerful armament.

Now, they had to master using it.

The PTRD 1941, weighing 16 kg, was really heavy, thus it naturally required a *character* to have high Strength in order to wield it.

Among their *team*, the only ones who could make use of it right away, that is, to run normally while carrying it, were Sophie and Rosa. Because those two had always carried heavy *machine guns*, a large number of spare ammunition, and spare barrels.

However, this gun was a sniper rifle.

Either Tohma or Anna, the ones with specialised *skills* for improving their sniping capabilities, should be the one to use it, thus the two devoted themselves to further intensive training to raise their Strength stat. Taking advantage of their spring break, they spent all of their time outside of club activities training themselves.

Eventually, Tohma raised her *parameters* high enough that despite having a weight *penalty* when carrying it, she could at least fire it, thus the gun now belonged to Tohma.

When Tohma first shot with it while adhering to the instructions shown on the gun's *window*, she thought her shoulder would be dislocated due to the recoil, incomparable to that of her Dragunov. She felt that this was not a weapon that a human being (though she was using an *avatar*) could fire.

However, unless she tamed this *monster*, her *team* could not win. Having prepared a large number of 14.5 *mm* bullets, Tohma kept repeating her shooting practice. And refined her willpower to endure the recoil.

There was no *scope* on this gun. The anti-tank *rifles* of such an age did not have them to begin with. In that case, feeling uneasy about a long-range battle with M,

Nai no nara, tsuketeshimae, ho  
"If there is none here, Proceed. Not enough morae."<sup>23</sup>

Tohma used the guns *customisation* function and equipped one.

She crushed the metal sights attached to the barrel's left side and welded a *scope mount*; a crude process, but not a problem as long as it worked.

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<sup>23</sup> Tohma tried making a haiku, but a typical haiku has 5-7-5 morae (Japanese syllables), while hers is 5-6-5. Also, Hototogisu (lesser cuckoo) is the name of a (primarily) haiku magazine.

If she used a *rifle scope* as-is, she feared that the gun's recoil would cause it to hit her in the eye. Thus, she procured a pistol *scope* with much longer *eye relief* (distance between the ocular *lens* and the eye) than that of a *rifle*'s. And equipped it.

Thus, what they completed was,

The “PTRD 1941 Anti-Tank *Rifle* - Attached Girls' School Rhythmic Gymnastics Club *Special*”

Alias,

The “Decisive Battle Weapon Against M” —abbreviated as “M Gun” .

For a test battle, the girls once again tried fighting against the machine that *dropped* this gun.

They restrained its movement with hot water and had Tohma snipe it repeatedly from long range. Seeing the armoured plates be so easily shot off the enemy they had had so much trouble with before,

"We can win thiiiiis!"

*Boss* cried in the underground hollow.

As if their hardships last time were a lie, they took down the machine. Of course, another anti-material *rifle drop*... did not happen, but they did earn experience points and money.

Looking at her overjoyed friends, Tohma presented a problem.

"Though, what are we supposed to do if we can't use the *bipod* in a place with good line-of-sight? Since I can't move with this gun....."

Once this excessively heavy and long gun was fixed in place, it would not be easy to move from there. Tohma's anxiety was apt.

And then, both the *machine gunners*, Rosa and Sophie, smiled simultaneously.

Rosa,

"Guys, whenever we're shooting with our *machine guns*, you support us by standing in front as pedestals!"

Sophie,

"That's right. We could just do the same thing ourselves. When someone as tough as us sits down firmly, you could just fire with your barrel on one of our shoulders!"

Tohma's eyes bulged open in surprise.

"But! If we do that, either of you could be shot and die!"

And then, Sophie,

"That is a problem. —In that case, we can't fulfil our role as a pedestal properly."

"No, that's not what I meant....."

"In that case, the solution is simple!"

The *dwarfess* grinned and answered with the sense of responsibility of a club vice-president.

"You just need to kill me beforehand. Then I'll become an indestructible pedestal, capable of defending against any kind of attack for 10 minutes!"

\* \* \*

"Next!"

Before the dust from her first bullet could clear, Tohma loaded her second.

Her target was a bit to the right of her previous one. The center of the fan-shaped shield.

If she managed to send a bullet in there, she would not only blow away the shield, but also deal *damage* to M and his gun there.

M bringing an anti-materiel *rifle* was clearly beyond their expectations.

Their plan was to shoot from as close as possible while staying just outside the M14 EBR's 800 *metre* effective range, but it was pointless to complain now. "If we managed to procure one, they should also be coming with one, —not considering this possibility was their mistake.

"Eat this!"

She fired.

Along with a roar that shook the earth, a 60 *gram*, ultra-high-alloy mass flew out at 1,000 *metres* per second, that is, at an unbelievable speed of Mach 3.

The next moment, it hit the shield.

Tohma's aim was a bit off, thus the bullet hit the left edge of the shield, causing the sheet to burst off there.

If he had not taken cover as ordered by Pitohui, M's head would have been hit by the shield's burst sheet, and he would have probably died as well.

M immediately raised his head and grabbed his M107A1.

M, too, had already realised their intention.

Making one of their own into a corpse, an indestructible *object*, and using it as a high-calibre rifle pedestal in an open field, as well as a shield; an awfully dirty, yet effective, strategy.

Through his *scope*, he saw a *dwarfess* sitting with her eyes closed, and a woman inserting a bullet into a huge iron *pipe* behind her.

"Enemy! Degtyaryov anti-tank *rifle*! The slightest graze will kill you! Don't you dare raise your heads!"

At the same moment he reported this to his comrades, he fired.

Although not as good as theirs, he, too, had an ultra-high calibre rifle. The counterattack bullet made a roar as it flew and was easily repelled by the corpse's head.

"Crap!"

The broadcast in the bar projected the exchange of blows between the great guns.

A member of the amazons fired her PTRD 1941, using her comrade's corpse as a pedestal. The roar sprung out from the *speakers* as well, causing the air and intestines of the *avatars* to tremble.

PM4's fat man was hit in the head by the shield and died immediately,

"Uooooo!"

"Yippie! They fuckin' did him in!"

"The invincible shield smashed!"

And then, with a quick reload, the woman fired her second shot.

Another sheet was blown away, but M did not flinch.

He shouted something and immediately counterattacked. However, the attack was easily blocked by the now-indestructible *object* corpse.

In that time, the woman loaded her third bullet. And began aiming quickly. When her face appeared on the screen, they could see a joyful... and ferocious smile beneath her black hair.

"This is... a shoot-out....."

Someone's muttering was erased by the thunder-like discharge of the gun.

The third bullet Tohma fired pressed on along the dry earth.

Underneath the *route* of the bullet, a shockwave drew a straight *line* of dust. The bullet hit the shield and tore off a third sheet.

Right after being shot, the sheet flew just above M's head just as he hit the dirt, and pierced the grass about 5 *metres* away.

The shield that had had eight sheets was whittled from the left and right, and was now down to five sheets. However, M was not shaken.

His opponent had automatic shell ejection but manual loading. He had an automatic loading *semi-auto* gun. There were still 5 bullets left in his *magazine*.

"Come at me!"

Raising his head and readying his M107A1, M yelled.

He stared at his enemy as if looks could kill, blurred by the cloud of dust, and squeezed the trigger.

"Taah!"

At exactly the same time as M fired, Tohma unleashed her fourth bullet.

The same composition as their last match in the previous SJ.

Tohma and M simultaneously spouted fire from their respective guns. Their respective empty cartridges sprung out from their guns.

The bullets passed by each other mid-air, about 20 *cm* away—

One of them hit the left shoulder of a corpse, had its force instantly stopped by the unnatural firmness of the corpse, and fell down.

The other one hit the central part of the shield and tore it off. The shield split open, colliding with the M107A1,

"Guh!"

And hit the side of M's body.

Collapsed to the left, M pulled the gun toward him, looked at its side,

" ....."

And understood.

That this gun would be useless unless brought to a weapon shop for repairs. Meaning that it had finished its role in SJ2.

Because the edge of the shield, made out of absurdly sturdy material, that crashed into the barrel had created a deep cavity in it.

If he fired another bullet without noticing this, the bullet would be stopped by this cavity and, having lost a place to go, the pressure would end up tearing the barrel apart. This level of reproduction was only present in GGO, a game with plenty of *gun maniacs* who fussed over the *damage* to guns.

".50 calibre done in. Can no longer fire unless repaired."

Reporting this, M parted with his M107A1 by laying it on its side and slowly retreated.

And the moment he was about 3 *metres* away from his shield—

A fifth bullet came flying and hit the shield that no longer protected anyone.

A metallic clank that would have broken their eardrums if they were not in GGO resounded and the sheet in the centre was blown away. The shield could no longer maintain its arc and collapsed to pieces.

With one of their comrades killed, the iron wall shield broken, and a long-range sniper rifle rendered unusable—

" ..... " " ..... " " ..... "

The three masked men turned around while lying face-down and simultaneously gulped. Although it was impossible to see their expressions, it was possible to guess.

And then,

"Not baaaad!"

Pitohui alone remarked in sheer elation.

"Not half baaaaaad!"

The roar of joy could be heard in the bar as well.

The amazons had went as far as sacrificing their own comrade to break the shield belonging to M, the previous winner, and caused the first casualty for PM4, thus everyone was awfully hyped up.

"Yippie yippie yippie! SHINC's victory is settled now!"

While there were people who supported the amazons,

"You don't get it! It's five against four, ya know? M still has his M14 EBR and, most of all, that brutal woman is still unhurt!"

There were also people who supported PM4.

The cheering *teams* in the bar war were cleanly split in half and exceedingly fired up.

Among them was a man who, slowly slurping his *shot glass whiskey*, muttered lonesomely.

"My LLENN-chan..... what happened to her..... What is she doing....."

"Haah....., haah....."

Holding the heated PTRD 1941 with smoke drifting about from its long long barrel, Tohma continued breathing wildly.

"Defea..... ted..... We defeated him..... Sophie! Thaaaaaanks!"

And shouted with a tear-stained face to her comrade in front of her, who had become a corpse and pedestal.

"Alriiiiight!"

In the wide field, *Boss's* roar resounded while she lay prone.

Despite losing Anna and Sophie, they splendidly accomplished their goal of sealing the use of M's shield.

Looking at her wristwatch, it was half past 14:08. What an intense time that was.

"Alri~ght! What great *timing!* We're going to charge again, so get ready! —Tanya, you take the lead again. Tohma, thank your Degtyaryov! Rosa, provide supporting fire as soon as you're in range."

She gave orders to her surviving comrades in succession. And received affirmative replies from all of them.

They could no longer make use of the PTRD 1941. Because Sophie was dead and there was no one to carry it.

If Tohma carried it, not only would she be unable to move freely due to its weight, she would also be unable to carry and use her Dragunov, a *semi-auto* rifle that would be beneficial in the upcoming battle. If she had to choose, the natural choice would be the Dragunov. The same applied to Rosa and her PKM *machine gun*.

"I truly thank you. Let's meet again later, okay."

Tohma thanked her beloved gun, which beautifully carried out its role, with a smile and laid it beside Sophie's remains. She put the remaining ammunition into her *storage* so that no one would be able to fire it on the off chance that they picked it up.

While standing up, *Boss* shouted to the "four" of them.

"We defeated M's shield! The time is ripe! —Attack!"

At the start of the amazon's assault,

"Incoming!"

The masked and *goggled macho* man started firing his MG3 *machine gun*. Making strange, *suppressed* gunshots.

Although they were still quite far away and only visible as dots to the naked eye, he fired in bursts of 5 bullets after aligning his sights. Empty cartridges fell to the grass, turned into *polygon* fragments, and disappeared.

He continued firing. Even if he did not hit, just forcing his opponents to dodge or hit the dirt upon seeing the *Lines* was enough. This way, he could prevent them from firing back.

At that point, a bullet struck one of them, who then switched from running in *zigzags* to hitting the dirt. It did not seem like she had been killed, but the moment he thought he succeeded in stopping her,

"Pull back!"

He heard M's sharp voice and, as instructed, the man forcibly pulled his beloved gun and got down.

Several *Bullet Lines* blanketed the area he had just been in and, a beat late, a hail of bullets came crashing down. The tracer bullets drew *orange* lines in the air. Grass fluttered down in various places, while some dirt was kicked up.

"Uhi!"

He had been engrossed solely in shooting to bring his opponents down, thus he was late to notice the *Lines* coming at him diagonally. If not for M's order, he would have probably been shot.

Their enemy continued firing. *\*Byun\* \*byun\**, he heard bullets soaring above his head.

"Crap!"

He could not see them, but this way, while one of the enemies fired with their *machine gun*, the others undoubtedly advanced quickly. And the men— well, they were all women, so the women advanced forward to some extent before hitting the dirt, then provided cover fire for the others to move.

"It's fine. No need to panic."

A voice came from M.

"They're still far enough to use the *Lines* to dodge. Even if they try to flank us, they won't have cover. I'll be counting on you for suppressing fire when they come a bit closer. Until then, I'll snipe them."

"Roger that."

Having heard the reply, M crawled along the grassland at full speed, his M14 EBR in hand.

The ground was almost perfectly flat, but he was looking for a spot that was at least slightly elevated to mount his *bipod* and use for sniping. It would be easy to hide on the ground, as well as easy to aim.

While crawling—

'Why are they muscling through like this?'

M harboured a huge misgiving about the enemy *team* SHINC's actions.

His group had a shield and an ultra-long-range sniper rifle, thus they chose to take up position at such a flat location.

The enemy had an anti-tank *rifle*, so they chose to have their showdown there. And the enemy was declared the winner. This much he understood.

However, now that the shield was magnificently destroyed, meaning that they accomplished their goal and thus had no reason attack head-on.

Logically thinking, would it not be best for them to fall back for now to reorganise?

'Why... on a plain with such good line-of-sight with no merit to attack... why are they muscling through to us?'

'Have they lost themselves to anger after losing their comrade?'

The odds of that were not zero but considerably low for a *team* like that.

In that case—

"So they have some sort of plan, huh....."

Muttering, M found the perfect spot, set up his M14 EBR where there were no *Bullet Lines*, and aimed at the silver-haired woman he saw through his *scope*.

The woman was fast. She was carrying a Bizon *submachine gun*. In the previous SJ, she ran into LLENN and held a *dogfight* in a place full of rocks.

After 3 second of running, the woman changed her trajectory, then changed it again as she continued to get closer. The distance was about 700 *metres*.

'Is she going to turn right or left next time?'

'And what angle will that be?'

With no answer, M relied on his intuition, aimed at a spot with no one there,

"Oh whatever."

And squeezed the trigger.

The moment Tanya, running at full speed, was about to change the direction of her *zig zag* run,

"Kyafun!"

She was splendidly shot in her left shoulder.

The shining hit *effect* also entered her view. As is, she tumbled flashily, raising dust.

Her *hit points* decreased, immediately reaching halfway point. Turning from green to yellow.

"Crap! I got sniped! That's the *Lineless* sniping! He read my moves!"

As she let out a frustrated voice, Tanya took out a first-aid *kit* from her waist and applied it to her nape. Slowly slowly, her *hit points* began to recover.

"Boss! Getting closer would be nuts!"

At Tanya's usual vigour and complaint,

"I know! But we're still doing it! Just as planned!"

*Boss* answered, lying on the dirt.

5 seconds later, when she was about to stand up, the wristwatch on her left arm violently vibrated, thus *Boss* looked at the dial.

14:09:30.

"Now! It's time!"

In response to *Boss*,

"Roger!"

LLENN replied.



SECT.15

## 第十五章 所詮ゲームだから

## SECT.15

# It's a Game After All

It was not shown on the broadcast at all, but—

Starting at about 14:05, when SHINC and PM4 were engaged in a grand battle, and till 14:09:20, two *characters* had been crawling the entire time.

The first was LLENN.

Wearing a brown camouflaged *poncho* atop her *pink* combat uniform, she was crawling at full throttle along the ground, which was practically of an identical colour.

LLENN had high Agility, but how fast would she be if she crawled with all she had?

It would be so ultra-fast that it would look like someone had put the video on fast-forward.

She was crawling along the ground at the speed of a regular man's half-run. She seemed like some flat insect.

The other was Fukaziroh.

Her camouflage was effective in a place like this, thus she did not put on a *poncho*. Dragging her 2 MGL-140s along,

"Oof. Oof. Umph."

She was crawling slowly, like a regular human being. She was more like a caterpillar.

Just how difficult this type of crawling was could only be known by those who had tried it. Constantly moving using one's elbows and legs, as if licking the ground; just how taxing was it on the body and mind?

In GGO, physical strength would not be expended. However, mental strength was a different matter. The feeling of fatigue coming from the mind should be assaulting the *player*.

However, LLENN pushed forward nonetheless.

'Defeat Pito-san. Defeat Pito-san. Defeat Pito-san.'

Reciting these words in her mind, she used them for *rhythm*. Upon "Pito-san", she moved her right elbow and knee forward; upon "defeat", she moved her left elbow and knee forward.

Slightly raising her head from time to time to look forward, she used the scenery in the distance to check her trajectory.

The brown, low horizon; above it a small land of greenery could be seen.

Her target—

The place where Pitohui was during the 14:00 *scan*.

And the place where SHINC was currently fighting desperately for her.

\*                    \*                    \*

Turning the clocks back slightly,

At 13:50 in the *dome*.

When *Boss* requested a sportsmanlike fight with LLENN after seeing the *scan*, LLENN could not respond to her request.

When she hesitated to explain herself due to not wanting to expose her reasons, Fukaziroh disclosed them with ease.

And she tactfully explained the situation.

That LLENN had only entered SJ2 to save Pitohui *IRL*. She spilled all the beans unconcernedly.

"Hmm....."

*Boss* moaned.

Just when it seemed that a bitter expression would appear on her face, she spent a few seconds contemplating, and then asked.

"So..... is there anything we could do? Karen-san."

In a truly short period of time, LLENN and *Boss* formed a plan.

A plan to form a pincer attack with two *teams*.

*Boss*'s group would exit the *dome* to the south and LLENN's group to the east, then both would wait for the *scan* at 14:00.

At that moment, the first to attack would be SHINC from the south. While they drew attention with their fight, LLENN's group would attack from the rear.

LLENN would be the one to defeat Pitohui in the end, but as *support*, SHINC would thin down PM4's manpower as much as possible.

"It's gonna work! We've come up with an anti-shield plan for M this time, you see! For this duration, we can divert PM4! Oh come now, we don't mind being wiped out because of that!"

LLENN, knowing better than anyone that *Boss* and the others were truly aiming for victory,

"....."

Was about to say something, but stopped.

She just bowed her small head deeply and said,

"This time, I'll treat you to more sweets than you can eat! I promise!"

And then, before the 14:00 *scan*.

Having rushed out of the *dome*, LLENN dashed practically northward, towards a place far away from the *area* where she presumed PM4 would be.

To make them think "This girl is running away. She probably won't make contact with us within the next 10 minutes" .

And, at 14:00, having run to no end, LLENN arrived at the foot of the snowy mountain. There, she witnessed the *scan*, confirming that PM4's position was just as she had predicted.

And then, right after the *scan* ended,

"Taaaaah!"

She began an oni-like full-speed dash towards them, at a place about 3 *km* away from her position.

At the same time, Fukaziroh, who had separated from LLENN and hid within the *dome*, also began slowly advancing towards that location.

LLENN, who was running at superhuman speed, and Fukaziroh, who was close to the target from the start, quickly closed the distance to PM4.

However, if they continued running as is, they would naturally be spotted in places with clear line-of-sight. M's PM4 were unlikely to be negligent about their surroundings, no matter the situation.

Thus, both LLENN and Fukaziroh dropped to the ground as soon as they had advanced to some extent, and began crawling.

In just under 3 minutes, LLENN ran a little under 2 *km*, then put on her camouflage *poncho* and began crawling on the ground to close the remaining 1 *km* as much as possible. The same applied to Fukaziroh.

The fact that SHINC and PM4 had engaged in battle as planned reached LLENN's ears. In the form of gunshots in the distance.

And then,

"Alright! Our target is PM4! "Plan Sweets" , begin!"

In the form of *Boss's* voice.

This was made possible by the comm *item* that *Boss* had stolen from a *team* they defeated in the early stages of SJ2.

Weapons and equipment stolen from other *characters* could be used until the end of the tournament. Up till now, *Boss* had been giving instructions to her comrades "plus one" .

That is how LLENN was able to know as she crawled forward.

That Anna had been sniped by M's ultra-long-range sniper rifle and died. Or that Sophie had died as planned, and became a pedestal.

Or,

"We defeated M's shield! The time is ripe! —Attack!"

That the four from *Boss's* group had magnificently smashed that shield and began a diversionary assault.

The gunshots she heard belonged to SHINC's *machine gun* and M's M14 EBR. A merciless gunfight was probably going down.

LLENN could not see as she had been constantly crawling, but— she should have crossed the 500 *metre* mark to PM4.

Her hard work would now be rewarded.

\*                    \*                    \*

LLENN's wristwatch vibrated, informing her that it was 14:09:30.

"It's time!"

At *Boss's* words that reached her ears,

"Roger!"

LLENN responded.

Until the 14:10 *scan*, close in as much as possible and attack PM4 just before they notice— that was the final stage of the plan.

"Fuka! If you please!"

The moment the clock hit 14:09:40, LLENN shouted.

"Okie dokie!"

Fukaziroh responded immediately and readied her MGL-140 while prone,

"Sorya soryaa!"

From the 45th to the 50th second, she fired 6 grenades in rapid succession.

Her target was the area between where PM4 appeared to be and LLENN's current position. Dying that space *pink* to hide LLENN's ultra-fast assault was Fukaziroh's role.

The 6 *smoke grenades* reserved for that flew right where she aimed, creating a smokescreen. LLENN saw how the area in front of her was dyed the same colour as her clothes.

"Alright! I'm charging in!"

"I wish you luck!" "Do your best!"

Hearing Fukaziroh's and *Boss's* voices and taking off her *poncho*, LLENN stood up.

With the determination that the feet supporting her body would no longer stop until she assaulted Pitohui's windpipe.

'Come now!'

Having stood up and raised her gaze higher than usual, LLENN saw.

A small black mass at the left edge of her view.

At first, she thought that it was a black, wet bulge of dirt, like an anthill.

The next moment, she saw a short, black line extending to the side.

And she realised that it was a barrel.

Just after she noticed the existence of the gun, the figure of a person holding it came into sight.

The black mass was a person sitting with their legs stretched out forward. A person holding a long and narrow *rifle* and aiming. The figure was approximately 200 *metres* away from her.

The muzzle was aiming in the exact same direction that she was about to strike.

The place where PM4 was.

The probability was only one in five.

But... a bad premonition ran through LLENN's spine.

LLENN stopped her attempt to go into a dash,

"No!"

Shouted just as she aimed her P90.

And fired.

\*                    \*                    \*

The strategy that Shirley took was practically the same as LLENN's.

To snipe Pitohui to death.

Having decided thus, she forcibly halted her burning desire for revenge and calmly thought out a plan to achieve it.

In hunting, the most important thing was to shoot one's gun skillfully, was it not?

How to act in order to bring about a situation where a shot would be guaranteed to hit.

This was the same as the question 'how close can you get to your prey?' The more capable the *hunter*, the closer they can get to their prey to shoot and bring them down.

At 13:59, Shirley began climbing the snowy mountain. In order to mask her intentions with her position during the *scan* that soon took place.

For that reason, she materialised another *item* from her *storage*.

It was a tool that she made use of during her hunting sessions *IRL* and an *item* she obtained for activities in snowy GGO fields as well - *skis*.

Additionally, they were not ordinary *skis* for casual sliding. They were special skis designed for *hunters* and the like to work on snowy mountains. «Mountain *skis*» was probably the most popular name, but, among the *hunters* in Japan, they were known as «Sommerski» .

Their length was about 1.5 *metres*. The foot-fastening heels were not fixed, allowing the user to move their feet forward and back, just like when *cross-country skiing*.

Its biggest feature was the anti-skidding device known as a «*seal*» attached to the back of the *skis*.

It was the pelt of a seal or sea lion, whose fur grows facing the same direction. Hence, "it allowed sliding forward, but not backwards, as it would get stuck in the snow, preventing it from sliding". By simply moving their feet back and forth, the *skier* could quickly climb any slope.

Mai had mastered the use of these Sommerski. Because they were the ultimate tool for running around snowy mountains freely. Shirley as well.

Carrying the R93 *Tactical 2* on her shoulders with the *stock* in her hands and climbing the snowy slope smoothly, Shirley looked just like a foot soldier from the mountains.

Once the clock struck 14:00, a slow *scan* began.

While looking at her terminal screen in one hand, Shirley climbed the snowy mountain. She took note of PM4's position and drilled it into her head.

Until the *scan* ended, Shirley continued climbing the snowy mountain. In order to make the other *players* think "she's running away".

Before long, 1 minute had passed and the *scan* ended,

" ....."

The woman with mud on her face stopped and turned around.

She had climbed considerably high. What she could see below the gentle, snowy slope was a huge *dome* on her right. On her left - a valley, a long bridge, and a rocky mountain beyond it.

And in front, a space abundant in greenery stretched out. And there, a small *log house*.

"Hah!"

Expelling air with a smile—

She quickly repositioned her feet and began sliding down straight forward. Towards the target she wanted to kill.

The speed of her descent was more than twice that of her ascent.

With her bullet-like schuss, Shirley slid down the mountain in no time. She did not have the *Skiing skill*, but she was able to accomplish this due being an expert at *skiing IRL*.

The distance to her target was about 1.5 *km*.

And then Shirley used the exact same trick as LLENN. Crawling forward. In order to ensure that her target, or the enemies in the area, would not notice her closing in, this was the only way.

Though, unlike LLENN, she crawled forward for a longer time and her position was awfully muddy due to the water from the snow thaw.

In order to prevent mud from entering the muzzle of her R93 *Tactical 2*, she put two layers of her gloves onto the tip of the barrel. Then, she turned the gun sideways and, holding it on her elbows, she began swimming through the muddy dirt.

Naturally, her body was completely covered in mud in no time. Both the upper and lower half of her body, as well as her lovely green hair, were almost entirely dyed black.

While crawling forward, she learnt from the gunshots that a battle between PM4 and another *team* had begun. Probably a battle against the *team* that came from the south.

The awfully loud gunshots sounded like distant thunder. It was as if someone were firing cannons.

Their battle was just what she needed. Shirley snickered. White teeth appeared at her muddy cheeks.

She continued forward and forward with determination—

When the wristwatch on her left arm informed her that it was past 14:09, Shirley stopped.

In another 50 seconds, it would be easy for her position to be given away by the *scan*. She did not know how close she got to that woman, but she had no choice other than to wield her beloved gun on the spot.

To avoid being noticed, Shirley moved slowly. First, she rolled from a face-down position to a face-up one. Then, she turned 180 degrees, with her feet towards the enemy.

Readying her R93 *Tactical 2* after taking the gloves off the muzzle, she raised her upper body using only her abdominal muscles. Raising and slightly opening up her knees, she pressed against the medial side of her thighs with the lateral sides of her elbows, stabilising her firing posture.

Having opened the front and back cover of her *scope*, she peeked through the *lens*,

"There you are....."

And quickly grasped the whereabouts of PM4.

In the meadow about 500 *metres* away. The enemy several hundred *metres* beyond that were firing *machine guns*, thus tracer bullets revealed their position.

She searched for the woman who killed her comrades and, with fortune on her side, soon found her target. Lying in a hollow in the meadow.

However, she had not allowed her guard to drop at all as she lay, thus only her *ponytail* could be barely seen. With this, her sniping would only cut through her hair.

If she aimed at a slightly lower point over the grass, her face could be shot with a direct...— she considered this option, but stopped. Because Shirley thought that, knowing that woman, she would have obviously placed her gun there to *guard* her face.

"Craap!"

Even though she succeeded at creeping up within her effective range and one-sidedly catching her in her *scope*—

Shirley cursed at how irritating it was for her to be unable to aim at the vitals and shoot. When she looked at her wristwatch, it was 14:09:45.

In another 15 seconds, the *scan* would begin.

The fact that she was here would be instantly exposed, thus she would undoubtedly be dealt with by PM4.

She did not know whether it would be by the merciless rapid-fire of the *machine guns*, or an attack from the enemy *snipers*, or a shot from that woman, but—

Entirely alone and only having a single *bolt-action* sniper rifle, there was no chance from the start that Shirley could win.

'Should I deem my approach a failure and run away while I can?'

'Or, should I charge in prepared to die in battle?'

As Shirley began thinking about her final decision, the faint sound of someone shooting reached her ears.

A sound that was different from the rapid-fire of the *machine guns* she had heard earlier.

\*Pon\* \*pon\* \*pon\* \*pon\* \*pon\*, such somewhat cute sounds.

It sounded louder in her right ear, thus it probably came from her right.

Before she could figure out what had emitted that sound upon discharge,

"Wha?"

Her right eye peeking through her *scope* caught an unbelievable spectacle unfold to the right. One, two, three— in six spots, clouds of *pink* smoke rose in succession. Without any wind in the *field*, the smoke rose straight up.

'Why..... smoke?'

'No, why..... *pink*?'

Shirley was unable to comprehend it at all.

She had not even glimpsed the videos of the previous SJ, and thus she was unaware that an entirely *pink* chibi had won it. As such, she was unable to grasp the point of the *pink smoke* and wondered whether a festival or something had suddenly begun.

Then at the next moment, new visual data entered her confused mind from her right eye.

In her field of view, magnified by the *lens*, that woman, the one she loathed for deceiving and shooting all of her comrades, raised her head.

Atop her head was a *headgear*-like protector that she did not have before, but the brazen *tattooed* face was undoubtedly hers.

And her face had a joyful smile. Even baring her white teeth.

'Why, for what reason, for what—'

Shirley had no idea if that woman, who had been so alert and had not let her guard down for even a moment, raised her head solely due to having seen the *pink* smoke.

However, she did not let go of the unexpected *chance* she received.

Even without using the *Bullet Circle*, she did not believe she would miss a practically still target at this range.

Shirley instantly aligned the center, actually, a point slightly below the center of the *scope's* crosshair on the woman's right eye. This was done in anticipation of the bullet's fall due to the 400 *metre* distance.

The woman was looking a little to the left, thus if she hit her right eye, the bullet should instantly sink right into the middle of her brain.

The instant her heart, convinced of the impending kill, pounded unprecedentedly—

'Ahahaha.'

Shirley laughed in her heart.

And what a laugh it was.

She, who had so stubbornly believed that “it is wrong to aim a gun at a person even in a *game*” —

Shaking with rage, had climbed and descended a snowy mountain, determinedly crawled through mud for minutes, and was now holding her beloved gun, about to fire the moment she saw her *chance*.

'How would her old self have reacted if she had seen herself now?'

But she did not care.

This was a *game*, and it was meant to be played.

Her face having instantly regained composure, Shirley concluded thus.

That just because she shot with guns *IRL* there was no point in getting angry at “aiming at a person!”, even in a *game*.

That, just like her comrades had once said with frivolous smiles, there was no need to lump *reality* and games together.

That the woman deceiving and shooting her comrades was a *game* as well.

In this *battle royale* where anything goes, the ones who were tricked and had so easily turned their backs were the ones at fault.

And even this current attempt to snipe her was a *game*.

The one who nonchalantly raised her head was the one at fault.

This was a *game*.

'It's not like you yourself die if your *avatar* does.'

'Likewise, it's not like someone else dies if their *avatar* does.'

Shirley finally felt that she could enjoy the *Squad Jam* from the bottom of her heart.

'I am now going snipe and kill that woman, but—'

'This only applies to SJ2 itself. Once the tournament is over, I could even meet up with her at the bar and, as fellow female *players*, we could have a conversation, saying 'Gotcha', 'Ya got me.'"

Thinking thus, without any grudge or hatred, Shirley—

Squeezed the trigger of her R93 *Tactical 2* solely to enjoy herself.

As if venting its anger for being kept waiting for over an hour, her beloved gun let out a high-pitched roar.

She let her guard down for a mere moment.

"Aha! That's LLENN-chan!"

Seeing the *pink smoke*, Pitohui understood everything.

That LLENN would take advantage of that to charge forward.

That's why she raised her head. With a smile.

The bullet with neither hatred nor grudge flew—

And sank into Pitohui's right eye.

"Aww yeah!"

Having seen through her *scope* that a hit *effect* appeared on the woman's eye, Shirley gave a shout as loud as her gunshot.

Just like her comrades in the preliminaries and the battle in the fields when they slaughtered the enemy *team*.

Her white teeth glittered on her muddy face.

At that moment, a hail of 5.7 *mm* bullets soared through her surroundings, raising a clutter of columns of mud unlike columns of water in the area—

\*Bishi\*

And 1 of the bullets hit her right temple.

"Huh?"

At the attack to her vitals, Shirley's *hit points* instantly diminished.

Looking at the upper-right corner of her vision, Shirley,

"Ah. I was shot. Crap. So there was an enemy nearby. I let my guard down, huh."

Saying this cheerfully, she collapsed face-up.

Treated as instant death, her *hit points* turned zero—

And a 【D e a d】 *marker* lit up above the mud-covered woman's body.

Looking up at the sky with an awfully satisfied smile, Shirley was killed in action in SJ2.

"Hah..... Hah....."

Having unleashed all 50 bullets in her *magazine* in *full-auto* at a target 200 *metres* ahead, LLENN,

"Alright!"

Saw a small red *marker* appear after about 3 seconds.

She had no idea who that was, but at any rate, she defeated them.

They were barely within the P90's effective range and not at a distance that LLENN could accurately hit with her skill, thus it was totally a *lucky shot*, a fluke at the end of her scatter of bullets.

"W-what happened?"

Fukaziroh's surprised voice reached her ears.

That was natural. Because, despite creating a smokescreen by firing the last of their *smoke grenades*, LLENN did not charge and instead suddenly unleashed a full-power barrage to the left. Her shots probably alerted their opponents of LLENN's whereabouts.

Crouching and reloading her *magazine*, LLENN answered Fukaziroh and *Boss*.

"There was another *team's sniper* right nearby! They were aiming at Pito-san's group! So, I fired at them first and somehow managed to bring them down!"

A reply came from Fukaziroh.

"What! Nice work! —But, did the guy shoot anyone?"

"I-I don't know! The sounds blended together!"

LLENN answered honestly. She had been completely unable to tell whether or not the *sniper* was able to fire even a single bullet during her full-power barrage.

If she had fired..... And if her target was Pitohui..... And if she hit.....

The moment LLENN's face turned pale, the needles of her wristwatch passed 14:10:00.

It was the starting time for the *scan*, but neither *Boss's* group nor LLENN's group had any time to take out their terminals and look at the *scan* results.

This applied to M's group as well.

Having landed a hit on Tanya and now looking for his next target, M,

"Rear! *Smoke grenades!* New enemy!"

Received a report from the short *shotgun* user.

He had not been told the colour, thus M temporarily stopped aiming with his beloved gun and turned around while lowering his stance a bit.

And saw *pink smoke* that would have normally been impossible.

M understood just about everything in an instant.

The reason why SHINC had been pushing their way through this was because they were cooperating with LLENN, trying to whittle down their forces and serve as a distraction. Though he did not know when and where they had held a conversation.

And that *pink smoke* was meant to conceal LLENN's assault.

Shooting LLENN, who was short and could move at high speed, was quite difficult even if she could be seen, but if she were hidden in smoke of a similar colour it would be a pain in the ass.

'I see, that is a nice plan. LLENN is probably charging in through that smoke at the time of the *scan*.'

"LLENN's coming! Guard the rear!"

Rousing caution from his comrades, M looked at Pitohui, about 10 *metres* ahead of him to the right.

"Aha! That's LLENN-chan!"

Pitohui, too, arrived at the same conclusion as M and raised her head slightly as she said this in joy—

3 seconds later.

As red hit *effect* spread gaudily, she fell prostrate onto the grass.

"That woman was shot!"

One of the *cameras* showed the woman as a bright red *effect* light spouted from her right eye,

"Ooi!"

"Uwah! You serious!"

"Hyaa!"

And the bar instantly heated up.

The strongest and craziest female *player*, who half of the spectators thought would undoubtedly win, had actually been sniped. And in the face no less.

"From where? Who?"

As if answering someone's question, one of the screens changed to a woman covered entirely in mud and sitting with her R93 *Tactical 2* at the ready,

"So it was her! Well done!"

And the next moment, it showed how she was assailed by a storm of bullets and died.

"Aww!"

"She got done in!"

The screen hectically changed to display LLENN, who had fired her P90 until it was dry.

"LLENN-chan! Nice!"

The time was 14:10.

The *scan* had begun, thus one of the screens changed to the map, but no one was looking at it.

"Pito!"

Screaming, M rushed over to Pitohui, grasped her upside-down body, turned her over, and embraced her to have his large figure be a shield from the *sniper*.

There was a bright red hit *effect* on her right eye and, instead of blood, *polygon* fragments flickered,

"Haha, ahahahaaha ahahahahaahahaha!"

Her left eye opened up as if bursting, tears flowing like a waterfall from it, she smirked,

"Ahahahahahahahahaa!"

And unleashed a grand laugh.

M took out a first-aid *kit* from his *pouch* and applied it to Pitohui's nape. Then, he gazed at the top-left corner of his vision, at his team's *hit point bar*.

" ....."

Pitohui's was decreasing speedily and went past yellow—

"Ahahahaha! So this is ittttt! This is my "death" , huuuuuuh!"

Then turned red—

"I'm dying! I'm finally dying! Ahahahahahahaahahahahaha!"

And with that shout—

It stopped.

Her remaining *hit points* were so measly that they could not even be seen on the *bar*.

"Haah....."

Embracing Pitohui, M gave a loud sigh.

At that moment, his rough face was flooded with tears, just like in SJ.

"Hyahaaaaah! What are you crying for, Goushi-kun!"

The woman without her right eye slithered out of his embrace like a serpent and turned towards him.

"I haven't died yet! Uhihihihi! I haven't died yeet!"

Lying face-up on the grass, Pitohui continued shouting.

"This is fuuuuun! Right! It's fuuuuuun!"

Wriggling with her slender body like a dying cicada,

"Ahahahahahaha! Uahahahahaha!"

She continued shouting very joyfully.

"Director! Let's end this already! You should have realised already! That you really are scared of death! So, let's end this already!"

At M's words, shouted in-between tears,

"What are you blabbering about, Goushi-kun. Are you really telling me to stop something so scary and fun?"

Pitohui answered with these words and immediately threw a punch with her right hand.

"Gehoh!"

M's face, supported by his firm neck, was easily turned.

"I sure as heck can still go on, and on, and on, and on, and on——"

Pitohui's shouting abruptly ended and the upper half of her body collapsed backwards.

A 【D e a d】 *marker*—

Did not appear.

The UTS-15 *shotgun*-wielding short man, who was closest to Pitohui,

"....."

Watched over the unfolding events since she had been shot, unaware of the proper way to react.

Pitohui was shot in the right eye; since it was from long-range, it had to have been by a *rifle*; however, she avoided instant death by a hair's breadth.

In the end, GGO was just a *game*, thus a very simple calculation between the “*character's numbers*” and the “*attack's numbers*” was performed when she was shot.

If one had trained as much as Pitohui and the bullet went from the right eye to the right side of the brain, it would not be strange for this to happen.

As a matter of fact, Pitohui's luck in battle was highly admirable.

The man also observed their dialogue afterwards.

And he was slightly envious of Pitohui and M being so excited about “*life and death*” in the *game*.

No matter how *realistic* the sensations were, a *virtual* world was still *virtual*. Even though one could die, it did not mean that they would actually die.

Meanwhile, they were so pumped up that they even shed tears of excitement.

Both of them were probably too addicted to the world, but they truly looked happy.

He felt that *real* names kinda came up during their dance of joy, but kindly ignoring that bit was a part of being an excellent *gamer*. An ignoring *skill* was important.

Finally, the man—

Thought of a single question.

Pitohui became so excited that she had even fainted.

And yet, why did the *AmuSphere* not *shut down*?

They had seen VR *game* newbies who had, overwhelmed by the fear of exceedingly *realistic* battles, mistakenly believed “I’m actually going to be killed!” and panicked.

Having their bodies cut, shot, burnt, or blown away— despite all these being *virtual* experiences and not hurting like *IRL*, the *FullDive* experience was still really scary.

However, they did not need to feel so scared.

That was because one would be forced out of the VR *game* world before their fear reached its *peak*.

An abnormal state of mind usually caused abnormalities in the body. A remarkable increase in heart and breathing rate, sudden perspiration, violent fluctuations of blood pressure, et cetera, et cetera.

Sensing these, the *AmuSphere* would trigger the kind, kind safeties and forcibly pull the *panicking* person from the “dream world” back into reality.

Awakening suddenly after having a nightmare,

"Oh, it was a dream..... Ah, thank goodness....."

Followed by this; that is what it would feel like.

So, based on Pitohui and M's strange excitement just now, it would not have been strange for the *AmuSphere* to enter its meddling *mode*.

'Don't tell me... could they have.....!'

The sole possibility came to the man's mind, but—

'No no. Whatever the circumstances may be, they couldn't have used that, no, they couldn't have gone "that far".'

The possibility was so awfully low that it was even unthinkable.

That Pitohui could be using the first generation home-use VR *machine* that was able to arbitrarily *cancel* the bodily perception safety «*health monitor*», that is, the NerveGear.

Having easily denied this possibility, the man looked at the upper-left corner of his vision, where he saw that the fainted Pitohui's *hit points* were increasing awfully slowly, at the speed of a slug's movement.

What he should be worrying about now—

Was that Pitohui, who, along with M, could be called the *team's* main force, had suffered a lot of *damage* and that considerable time would be needed for her to heal.

The tall man who had not let his guard down the entire time continued peeking through his binoculars while kneeling,

"The *sniper* is north-northwest, approximately 500 *metres*. It was that woman from the *hunter team* who survived. She's dead now. The odds are high that there is another *team* nearby who killed her. Probably in the back of the *pink smoke*."

And reported without concern.

Immediately, M, the *leader* who was no longer crying,

"That's LLENN. She planned to take advantage of the *smoke* to break through, but she noticed a *sniper* before that and shot her. The other one from LF is using a powerful *grenade launcher*, capable of rapidly firing 6 grenades, as her weapon. Don't let your guard down."

Sent precise instructions.

Next, suppressed shots from the MG3 *machine gun* resounded, and the shooter who fired 20 rounds in *full-auto*,

"Still fine here! The amazons are currently all lying on the ground!"

Reported with full confidence. And then,

"Though! I can't say if I'll hold out if they all come at once, resolved for a suicide attack!"

Complained faint-heartedly.

M made a prompt decision,

"Pull back."

And sent an order to the three men.

"I'm carrying Pito. Abandon the Barrett. In its stead, I'm leaving the M14 and *Savage* in your care."

The tall man who had put the M107A1 into *storage* and was now carrying it replied with a short 'Roger'.

"Our retreat point is the *log house*. We're confining ourselves in a high place till Pito recovers. Everyone, we'll be running at full speed. Prepare!"

At the bar,

"Did that woman..... die.....?"

"But the 【D e a d】 *marker* didn't appear....."

Pitohui, who had collapsed backwards and was no longer moving, had become the central topic.

Before the woman collapsed, she seemed to have shouted something joyfully, but luckily or unluckily, the *cameras* did not pick up voices unless they went in awfully close.

If her emotions got the better of her and forced a *shutdown*, according to the SJ-original *rules*, the *avatar* should have disappeared, but that did not seem to have been the case.

'Then, what happened?'

In the end, with no one understanding this, M's group began to move.

The tall man crawled through the grass and got his hands on M's M14 EBR and the *Savage* 110BA beside the fat *sniper's* corpse. He then began manipulating his left arm to immediately put them into *storage*.

In the case of the *Savage*, its owner had died, but it seemed it could still be used by the *team*. He also fished out the spare *magazines* from the corpse's *pouch*.

As for M, he crawled nimbly and picked up the two sheets that had not been shot from his now-broken shield.

"Oh! What's he planning to do?"

M answered a spectator's question with his actions.

M lifted the collapsed Pitohui, with all her equipment, in a so-called "princess carry" and placed the two sheets onto her stomach for defence.

"I get it..... He's taking great care of that woman....."

"Well, she is the *team's attacker*."

"No, to me, it looks like "love". Those two are in love!"

" "Love", huh..... Where do I need to go to buy mine, I wonder?"

"Yeah. Don't ask me."

The large *machine gunner* stood up after loading a new ammunition box and propping his MG3 against his shoulder. He then began his suppressing fire, several bullets at a time, towards the lurking amazons.

Using it as a signal, M's group began running.

Anyone watching that realised what they were doing. They were retreating from that place.

"So they really are running away....."

"Well, it's understandable."

Everyone in the bar understood that that was the best option.

And then,

"PM4 has one casualty and one heavily injured, huh..... Now it's no longer possible to tell which *team* is gonna win....."

Looking through her *lens* at the fleeing M and his group was Tohma.

While the *Bullet Lines* fired by the MG3 *machine gun* still scattered about the area—

As if to say “because of the *Lines*, I can just dodge\ , she had boldly stood up and was peeking through large binoculars with her eyes set on a high place.

"M's group has begun moving to the *log house*. Current distance - 900. From here to the *log house* - 1100."

Tohma reported to *Boss*. *Boss* repeated the same thing to impart it to LLENN. And LLENN to Fukaziroh.

"M is carrying a woman. There's a hit *effect* on her face. Shot by a sniper. I can't see the *marker*, so she hasn't died, but she's not moving.

This was passed down to LLENN through the telephone *game*,

"Ugyaaaaa! That really was Pito-saaaaaan! She was shoooooot!"

"Calm down. She's not dead. Probably, she was shot and her *hit points* are nearly gone. Though I don't know why she's being carried."

*Boss* said in a calm tone.

And then, she asked LLENN a question.

"What do we do? Are we pursuing them right away? Of course, we probably won't be able to catch them before they hole up in the *log house*, but we can commence a pincer attack before M's guys set up camp and prep for defence. If LLENN could get inside, she could probably assault them before Pitohui's *hit points* recover."

"....."

Squatting with her P90 in hand, LLENN was unable to answer right away.

In the grasslands, the *smoke* had mostly cleared away. In the end, the 6 grenades they saved for their special move went to waste meaninglessly.

She had a good understanding of what *Boss* was trying to say.

Right now, M's group was retreating. If her team surrounded the *log house* right now and she broke into the building to fight while *Boss's* group provided a diversion, the plan would be the same as before.

However, currently, Pitohui should have just suffered considerable *damage*. It would take at least 6 minutes, or even more, for her *hit points* to fully recover.

If she attacked her before she recovered—

"If I deal the finishing blow after she has suffered great *damage*, would that count as me bringing down Pito-san.....?"

LLENN's mutter,

"I dunno about that." "I don't know."

Prompted Fukaziroh's and *Boss*'s answers, which reached her right and left ears simultaneously.

And then,

"The one to decide that." "The one to decide that."

This time, their voices were completely in-sync.

"Is you, LLENN."

LLENN closed her eyes for a bit.

Feeling the weight of P-chan in her right hand, she contemplated for 4 seconds—

Then suddenly raised her head.

In her eyes,

"We're going in for a pincer attack right now! We're massacring all of PM4! Pito-san alone will be mine to bring down! *Damage?* It's the fault of the one who let her guard down during a tournament! This is GGO! We're bringing down Pito-san no matter what! That is the reason I am here right now!

An intent to kill shined through.



SECT.16

## 第十六章 メメント・モリ

## SECT.16

### Memento Mori

14:13.

The video in the bar was displaying the *log house* from mid-air.

50 *metres* wide and 10-15 *metres* long. An approximately 8 *metre*-high, full two-storey *log house*.

Both the walls and the roof were constructed from shockingly thick logs. Each was around 70 *cm* in diameter.

Four brick chimneys stood on the gable roof made from slightly narrow logs. Likewise, four *balconies* lined the south side of the second floor.

Around the *log house* was a pleasant-looking meadow, among which numerous esplanade-like, well-maintained gravel roads extended to the east.

Several streams flowed along the esplanade, at times forming ponds—

Once the *cameras* got closer, they caught a wondrous spectacle. From the streams, and the ponds, rose a rather large quantity of steam.

Having noticed this, a spectator remarked,

"Oh? A hot spring?"

"Ahaha. That's not a hot spring."

Just as someone else said this while laughing, the water from one of the ponds spouted with violent force.

The 50 *cm*-wide fountain rose about 20 *metres* high, scattered water and steam throughout the area for about 10 seconds, and finally ended abruptly.

Among the flabbergasted spectators,

"Hmm..... a hot spring would have been better. It's a geyser. Those things that periodically spout up geothermally-heated water from underground."

"I see! So the reason why there was so much greenery solely in this area was because it was heated geothermally and the water hadn't dried up."

"And the *log house* is a *hotel* for people who've come to see the geyser—I suppose. Now I get what's with all the chimneys. On the second floor, there are as many guest rooms as there are chimneys."

Intelligent people remarked.

"Oh, M's guys, a tour ple~ase!"

M's group had now arrived at the building.

Holding his angular UTS-15 *shotgun* at his shoulder, the short man went to the entrance at the middle of the *log house*. After quickly *checking* for any *traps*, he pulled the large door open. Apparently, it was not locked.

Then M, carrying the woman like a princess, followed by the tall man who had put away the weapons into *storage*, and finally the big man carrying the MG3 *machine gun* with a suppressor entered it one after the other.

During that time, there were no attacks from the enemy *teams*.

"They've all entered the *log house*."

Tohma's report was transmitted to LLENN through *Boss*,

"Roger!"

And LLENN's answer reached the other survivors of SHINC, namely Tanya, Tohma, and Rosa, through *Boss*.

Neither LLENN's group nor *Boss*'s attacked, but they did grasp PM4's actions.

At the moment, LLENN and Fukaziroh were 500 *metres* north of the *log house*. They were 10 *metres* apart, hugging the ground in the meadow.

To avoid being spotted and sniped, LLENN once again donned her green camouflage *poncho*.

*Boss*'s group was on the exact opposite side. 500 *metres* south of the *log house* with a view of the entrance.

Aside from the kneeling Tohma, all of them were lying on the grass, prepared for the *Line*-less sniping from M.

LLENN observed the situation north of the *log house* through her monocle in great detail.

From her position till the building, there was knee-high grass growing on mostly flat terrain. There was not a single piece of cover.

The *log house* was constructed on a 10 *cm*-high *concrete* foundation.

There were no big entrances on the north side; there were only small service entrance-like *doors* at either end.

It seemed that there was a straight corridor on both the first and second floor on the north side, as several small windows were lined up at equal intervals. For a building in GGO, it was bizarrely beautiful. Not a single pane of *glass* was broken.

She could not see the electric lights inside, but due to the lack of curtains it should be quite bright.

*Boss's* voice reached LLENN's ears.

"As agreed, we'll begin all-out suppressive fire. We're moving to a better position and range to make it a bit easier to shoot, so wait a bit. I'll give the signal."

'Roger', replied LLENN and informed Fukaziroh of this.

'Uu..... Thanks.....'

LLENN thanked her deep inside. All the members of SHINC should be frantically crawling right about now.

Despite their change in position, the plan remained unchanged.

During SHINC's vehement attack from the south, LLENN would approach from the north and, one way or another, no matter what it took, defeat Pitohui.

However, right now, LLENN had to break into that building.

The problem was to decide which entrance to use.

The *log house* windows were awfully small and had thick, sturdy-looking wooden frames. That windows probably opened not sideways, but upwards.

The plan of using an approaching run to smash down the windows with her body and break in, just like in their first battle, was not entirely impossible, but it did look too *risky*.

An image of her being repelled by the window frame or getting the angle wrong and crashing into the logs came to LLENN's mind.

Thus, they had no choice but to use the side doors at the edges of the building.

"I'm going in through the *door* at the building's western edge. Don't shoot there."

LLENN reported to *Boss* and *Fukaziroh*, and received 'Roger' replies from the two.

She would no longer have the cover of *smoke*, thus she had no choice but to dash to the building. If anyone from PM4 had foreseen their plan and stationed even a single man there, she would come under fire.

"Haa....."

As LLENN exhaled, firmly grasping the *grip* of her P90 under her *poncho* with a grim expression, *Fukaziroh*, who stood 10 *metres* to her right, used the comm *item*,

"*Relax relax*. You can do it you can do it."

To send her these calming words of encouragement. Then,

"LLENN, you sure are a *lucky girl*. Pito-san suffered *damage* from that sniper back then, so she's now an easy target, and since the battlefield moved indoors, the difference between the range of their *rifles* and your P-chan has become negligible. In a confined place like this, LLENN's small and fast body will give you the advantage. All you have to do now is to break in without a hitch. Go in there with a bang, a bang I say!"

Continuing to focus her gaze forward, she responded to her ever so reliable partner.

"Got it..... I truly, truly want to thank you, Fuka. For being by my side all this time."

"Yeah. It's the final showdown. Go out there and do your best. Go out there and bring down Pito-san... magnificently."

LLENN focused her glance from the *log house* to Fukaziroh on her right.

As she was once told by Pito-hui, she knew that she absolutely had to avoid making any unnecessary *eye contact* while on guard, but—

Just this once, before starting the assault, she wanted to see her partner's smile.

'Yeah! Will do!'

The moment she was about to say that, as she focused on Fukaziroh's face,

"Wha?"

LLENN saw.

The meadows, Fukaziroh, and the brown land beyond.

And also—

A thick cloud of dust rising in the distance.

At first, she thought that it could have been a whirlwind.

Because that cloud of dust looked way too big. Even if one, two, no, even if six people ran together, they would probably be unable blow up that much dust.

But, after 3 seconds, she realised that she was mistaken.

Because she saw the cloud rapidly becoming bigger,

"Ah!"

And that its source seemed to be rising from beneath the horizon.

Those were three cars rushing through the dry land in a line.

Recognising the angular *silhouette* of four-wheel-drive cars,

"Cars carsing from the west!"<sup>24</sup>

LLENN shouted. Overwhelmed with shock, she misspoke "coming!" ,

"Buhoh!"

Fukaziroh spouted.

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24 LLENN said kuruma ga kuruma (車がくるま). Kuruma (車) is Japanese for "car", while the second kuruma was supposed to be kuru, the verb for "come". We've accounted for this by changing "coming" to "carsing".

Hearing the punny report from LLENN,

"Haah—?"

*Boss* was a moment late to react, but while continuing to lie on the meadow, she quickly glanced in the indicated direction.

And there she confirmed the sight of dust rising into the sky.

At nearly the same time, Tohma raised the upper half of her body just a little and took a quick look toward the western horizon with her Dragunov's *scope*, even though she should have aimed at one of the *log house's* windows.

"Cars! Three *off-road vehicles*! They're coming right at us— no, the *log house*!"

Just after her report, Tohma was hit in the right shoulder by a bullet that came from a window on the *log house's* second floor,

"Kyan!"

And dropped to the ground while letting out a cute scream.

She had not caught sight of any *Lines*, thus she had undoubtedly been sniped by M. As one would expect from a renowned *sniper*. Firing the moment he saw even a part of his target's body, and assuredly succeed in hitting it.

"Craap!"

*Boss* uttered a resentful complaint to both sides.

"Something's comiiiiing!"

The footage in the bar now focused on the three four-wheel-drive cars causing the cloud of dust.

They were 《*Humvees*》, military transport vehicles employed by the US Armed Forces, among others.

Their colour was *sand-yellow*. A little less than 5 *metres* in length. Over 2 *metres* in width.

Its large *tyres* were supported by the long *suspension*, thus it featured very high ground clearance. Even on rather bad roads, the vehicle would be able push forward without the bottom of its frame being scraped.

A great variety of *Humvees* existed, but the one being driven on screen was the US Army *type* “M1114,” which had an over-the-top number of bulletproof armour plates installed.

Atop its circular, open *roof* was a *rack* for a .50 calibre 《M2》 heavy machine gun and a bulletproof plate to protect the shooter. It also had bulletproof *glass*, allowing its user to oversee their surroundings without sticking their head out.

Of course, it was impossible for *players* to receive new arms, thus there were no M2 heavy machine guns on the vehicles.

The three *Humvees*, travelling in an oblique line about 20 *metres* apart and causing a long cloud of dust to trail them, continued driving at a recklessly fast speed, paying no heed to the wasteland. The provided aerial view looked like a broadcast of an automobile *rally* or a *TV* commercial for a new car.

Vehicles could not be made into personal *items*, thus, like the *hovercrafts* and *trucks* in the previous tournament, they must have been found lying around somewhere.

Due to the reflective nature of *glass*, the insides could not be seen, but the audience could easily predict which *team* was driving them. After all, there were only two other *teams* still alive at this point.

"It's undoubtedly— those guys!"

"Let's go, you bastards! We'll push forward and take control of the *log house*!"

The *leader* of MMTM, the group that had acquired *hovercrafts* and rampaged through the previous tournament, sent instructions to his comrades while sitting in one of the *Humvee*'s passenger seats.

He was a hardcore GGO *player* who had been playing the *game* since its inception.

As he had mentioned in the bar, at the time, he had formed a *squadron* with Pitohui.

He was a man who did not fool around with other *games*, exhaustively trained himself, and thus held the power to participate in the BoB main tournament that decided the strongest *player* in the game.

And right now, he was enjoying himself by fighting alongside his comrades in SJ.

This man,

"The battle here will essentially be the final showdown! Go wild to your heart's content! Bullets, courage, and your lives— don't spare a single one of them!"

He shouted with a truly joyful, boyish smile.

"So thaaaaat's it! It's you guys agaaaain! Stay outta my waaaaaaaay!"

The scream of LLENN's soul was aimed at the three *Humvees*, but, of course, that would not stop their assault.

They were 900 *metres* away from the *log house* when she spotted them, but that distance was being shortened before her eyes.

Gunshots began.

The heavy sound of a barrage in the distance was Rosa's PKM *machine gun*. It was an attack from the opposite side of the *log house*.

She also saw the *glass* pane of a window on the west side of the *log house's* second floor breaking, and bullets flying out of it. She was practically unable to hear it firing for some reason, but the vivid light of tracer bullets extending one after another undoubtedly belonged to a *machine gun*.

The PM4 *machine gunner* was set up somewhere deep inside so that neither his muzzle nor the fire from his gun could be seen, and he had begun shooting at the *Humvees* with all he had.

"Ugh....."

If LLENN had carried out her decisive assault through the *door* on the west side as planned, she would have been found by that shooter and would have had to slip through all that fire—

'Thinking of it that way, they helped me out, I guess?'

She felt quite conflicted about the matter.

LLENN took out her monocle and set her sight on the approaching *Humvees*.

'Nice work! Get 'em!'

She anticipated the barrage of the 2 *machine guns* mercilessly turning those guys and their cars into beehives. In that case, she would immediately begin *dashing*.

Eventually, she chose the maximum magnification to see the *details* of the car clearly, and in the circular view of her monocle,

"Huh?"

Weren't the bullets that hit the vehicles merely creating sparks as the three vehicles continued charging forward with no concern at all?

Based on the knowledge she had once acquired from Pitohui, LLENN thought that vehicle plating and *glass* were thin and could easily be pierced by bullets,

"No fair!"

Thus she subconsciously shouted out.

Completely forgetting that in the previous tournament, MMTM had felt exactly the same when they went up against her team.

"Shiiit....."

On the opposite side beyond the *log house*, *Boss* also groaned as she looked through her binoculars while lying on the ground.

*Boss* did not know much about military vehicles, but still understood what was going on. That four-wheel-drive car was an armoured vehicle. It paid no heed to attacks from 7.62 *mm machine guns*.

Even though they could have mercilessly kicked its ass if they still had their anti-tank rifle with them.

It was meaningless to regret it now.

After Tohma, who had her *hit points* decreased by thirty percent when she was shot by M, applied a first-aid *kit* on herself,

"Why you!"

She aimed the Dragunov placed right beside her at the *Humvee* while maintaining a just-barely-low-enough prone stance,

"Enough. Don't fire."

And was stopped by *Boss*.

"You too, Rosa, hold your fire. Unfortunately, it's a waste of bullets. All hands, while watching out for M's sniping, prepare for the perfect *timing* to fire at them as they disembark.

The roaring PKM quickly fell silent.

Tanya, whose attacks could not even reach them with her weapon,

"But what're we gonna do then? At this rate, they'll head straight for the *log house*, ya know? As far as I could see from footage of the previous tournament, MMTM is super strong in indoor battles, ya know? If they happened to defeat PM4——"

She did not finish, but everyone knew what would happen.

All of LLENN's effort thus far would go to waste.

*Boss* did not put it to words as they would be transmitted to the person herself, but she had a thought.

'Sheesh, is LLENN *unlucky* this time?'

"Go go! Charge on!"

The spectators in the bar,

"Support the *team* that is currently doing their best to attack."

Because of that logic, or rather, because of the atmosphere,

"Kick all three *teams'* asses in one go!"

"Show your manliness!"

Were currently sending fired-up cheers to MMTM.

As if the excitement from the bar had reached them, MMTM continued the assault.

"LF's on the left and SHINC's on the right, but you can just ignore them for now! We're not getting much of a counterattack, so we're just going to break into the *log house* like this! PM4 is undoubtedly wounded!"

The *leader* concluded thus about the circumstances.

Based on their position during the previous *scan*, PM4 had undoubtedly taken up positions in the *log house* and should have the advantage.

Since their enemies only attacked them with 1 *machine gun*, it could be surmised that they had suffered quite some *damage* during the battles so far. Of course, nothing was certain on a battlefield, but it was standard tactics to assume the most likely case when it came to making a decision.

"I'll fire a *grenade* through the second floor window beforehand. No need for *support*. Cover your heads! Afterwards, it's time for the indoor battle tactics that we take pride in! Let's clean this up good!"

At the *leader's* instructions, all his comrades responded with a short 'Roger'.

There were two people in each of the three vehicles.

The leftmost *Humvee* was driven by a man carrying an Italian ARX160 *assault rifle*; his name was "Bold,".

Among the six men, he had the darkest skin and most compact figure. Coupled with his short dreadlocks, he had an *exotic* appearance.

He was also the only one of the men killed by LLENN in the previous SJ. Naturally, he was burning for *revenge* against LLENN.

To his right, in the passenger seat sat a man who used a German G36K.

His name was "Lax,". He was the *team's gun maniac* and the man who had been thrown out of his *hovercraft* and drowned at the bottom of a lake in the previous tournament.

He was a medium-build with no special traits, but this time, because he felt like it, he had equipped a pair of *sunglasses* that linked the *lens* sideways. In GGO, there was never a moment where it was “too dazzling”, thus the *sunglasses* were unnecessary, but he used them for the atmosphere.

In the central *Humvee* sat the *leader* in the passenger's seat. In the driver's seat sat a man carrying a Belgian SCAR-L *assault rifle*. His name was “Samon”.

He had the most macho *avatar* among the men, thus his gun looked small. Though he was also the newest member of the *squadron*, and his *character* was the weakest. As such, he was made to carry Jake's ammunition at times.

The driver of the last vehicle was another guy with a G36K, “Kenta”.

He had a short physique and black hair; coupled with his name, his *avatar* looked the most Japanese. However, his *naming* was not based on his real name; it originated from the name of a certain *fast food* restaurant that sold his favourite *fried chicken*.

Within the *team*, he was often nicknamed “*chicken*”, but he was actually a brave man who was not wary of charging into a dangerous spot.

In the car's... back seat rather than the passenger's seat, was Jake, who held a role that could be called *sub-leader* and was also the *team's* only *machine gunner*.

He had an awfully slender body, thus, at a glance, it would seem like he did not have much strength, but that was *avatar magic*. In reality, he was a muscleman boasting the highest Strength stat.

In MMTM, which mostly focused on 5.56 *mm assault rifles*, Jake's HK21 7.62 *mm machine gun's* firepower was valuable.

Additionally, his HK21 was equipped with a variable magnification *scope*. It also had a *semi-auto* firing mode that was rare for this kind of *machine gun*, and it fulfilled the role of the team's sole long-range sniper rifle.

He was the only one sitting in the back and preparing to pound away by sticking his gun out through the *roof* while on the move.

Though, they were currently driving on rough road, thus the shaking of the car was intense,

"Uhi!"

Having not fastened his *seat belt*, he had to use his all to avoid hurting himself.

From their experience in the previous tournament, they knew that "as the tournament goes on, vehicles to make it easier to move around will start to appear."

Therefore, MMTM simply but stubbornly kept an eye on their surroundings for one.

And they found some.

This happened around 14:03. While they were running through the hilly area to attack T-S, they found an object covered by a camouflage *sheet* at the bottom of a valley.

When they descended into the valley and tore off the *cover*, there lay their treasure, three vehicles.

The *leader* instantly decided.

That they would postpone their attack on the *team* running around on the rampart and, with their newly acquired mobility, launch a surprise attack on the three formidable *teams*. And that defeating them would herald victory.

And so, they went around the *dome* counter-clockwise, and during the 14:10 *scan* confirmed for the last time the site where the hectic battle between the three *teams* unfolded.

Seeing cars move from left to right in her field of vision, driving recklessly fast while raising a cloud of dust,

"Shiit.....!"

The camouflage *poncho*-wearing LLENN ground her teeth. Fukaziroh, lying nearby,

"Aww, if only they had come a bit closer..... I could have just blown them away....."

Said regretfully.

Before long, the three vehicles traversed 500 *metres* ahead of them. A distance that neither of their weapons could reach.

If it were at least 300 *metres*, Fukaziroh could have just blown them away by consecutively firing 12 *grenades*. Even if hitting the cars themselves were unlikely, they could have at least damaged one of the *tyres*.

LLENN was driven by an impulse to run at full speed to assault the three vehicles, but—

"Guu....."

She knew that she would only end up having the tables turned on her. If hit by one of the cars, the light LLENN could potentially be sent flying over the rampart.

"M-san, Pito-san! Run!"

Having thought of bringing the two of them down just moments ago, LLENN let out a shout that was like a prayer.

The *machine gun* that had been continuing to shoot from the second floor of the *log house* fired numerous bullets at the *Humvee*, creating flashy sparks, until it reached the 200 *metre* mark, but eventually fell silent.

She did not know whether the guy ran out of ammo, his barrel overheated, or he grasped that it was ineffective.

When 150 *metres* remained, the three vehicles finally slowed down.

The middle vehicle decelerated the most, and from its *roof*, guarded by armoured plates, a *grenade* was fired,

"Ah!" "Oh!"

Before LLENN's and Fukaziroh's eyes, with magnificent aim, the black dot went through the window on the second floor. A beat later, it exploded. The *glass* pane, as well as the frame of the window, were blown away from inside and rained down below.

She had no clue how big that room was, but if the PM4 *machine gunner* was still inside, he undoubtedly could not be unhurt.

The three *Humvees* approached the western entrance of the *log house* and stopped just barely away from it. Regretfully, those guys were superb drivers.

Immediately, the men came out.

Green camouflage uniforms. Just as she was told by *Boss*, that was undoubtedly MMTM's equipment.

She once again began to hear the gunshots of the PKM *machine gun* that caused sparks as it hit the *Humvees*.

With nimble moves, one of them carefully opened the *door*, another kept watch on the second floor window, and the remaining four entered inside as if they were sucked in.

One of the two who were left passed by the other, tapping on his shoulder, and the final one followed suit.

Due to parking right next to the building, all of that took a mere few seconds. Not a single one of Rosa's bullets hit their target.

"What are those guys, special ops!"

"They got in without a hitch."

"That was too quick....."

From the spectators watching the event came voices of admiration.

"Have you seen the video of the previous tournament? Their battle in the spaceship was like a model demonstration of indoor combat. Without leaving any blind spots or stopping their momentum, they "*cleared*," each area in succession."

Just as someone finished his words, the *camera* changed to the inside of the *log house*.

The video showed the *log house's* corridor on the first floor from above the entrance. There was little light compared to the outside, but it was not dim either, thus they saw the scene clearly.

The men of MMTM advanced through the corridor between the walls of thick logs while holding their *rifles compactly*, and one after another rushed into one of the nearest rooms on the right.

The time was 14:15.

"So they got in....."

M's rock-like face showed signs of impatience and regret as he muttered this.

His current position was the second floor of the *log house*. Inside a guest room.

It was a rather large room, about 10 square *metres* in size.

Inside were four firm-looking, wooden *single beds* lined up along the wall.

Additionally, there was a *closet*, a *sofa*, as well as a fireplace at a corner of the window. Part of the room served as the *kitchen*. The room, just like the entirety of the building, was very lovely. It looked like visitors could lodge here even now.

The room was located to the east of a staircase in the middle of the *log house*.

On a wall not covered by logs hung a large picture—

A 『Geyser park *map*』 was placed there. It introduced the *area* of grass and water on the east side of the *log house* and explained how deep each pond was, the intervals at which water spouted from each geyser, and how high the water would reach; all of it was in English, of course, but it was explained in detail.

Atop one of the *beds* lay Pitohui. The hit *effect* on her right eye had already disappeared, but her eyes were still closed.

At the top left corner of their field of vision, M and the others could see that Pitohui's *hit points* had already recovered past fifty percent. The *bar* was yellow. It would still take a few minutes to fully recover.

And, most importantly,

"Oi, get up. We don't have the time for you to lose consciousness."

Despite M addressing her and slightly hitting her on the cheeks, Pitohui remained asleep.

PM4 was put in its biggest predicament yet.

Pitohui was sniped and fainted due to getting too excited. They safely retreated to the *log house* to make preparations, but thus far, all of this did not prove much of a problem.

The second floor of the *log house* had a splendid line of sight, so they could see farther away than lying on the plains, and could aim farther.

Hindering SHINC and LLENN, who were probably coming from the south and north, would have been simple with their *machine gun* and sniper rifles. In fact, M had shot the shoulder of a female sniper who carelessly revealed her upper body.

Holding their ground here, awaiting Pitohui's full recovery, and, afterwards, borrowing her power to continue the battle.

To M and the three masked men, the plan had sufficient odds of succeeding.

That did not account for MMTM's unexpected intrusion and break-in.

There was no point in regretting it now, but they should have foreseen that cars would appear.

"No dice! Returning to you for now!"

The voice of M's comrade with the *machine gun* reached his ears. He was in one piece. However, a large *machine gun* was awfully disadvantageous in close quarters combat indoors.

They were being put in a more and more disadvantageous situation, but,

"Alright."

Nevertheless, that did not mean that they could just do nothing and be killed.

M instantly thought of the next best plan and conveyed it to his three comrades. Currently, the UTS-15 *shotgun* user was atop the central stairway, while the tall man was in the corridor in front of the room. The *machine gunner* was running towards him through that corridor right about now.

"We're gonna use the central stairway as our line of defence. That's the only stairway in the building."

While saying this, M operated his *storage* with his left hand. He materialised a large number of *grenades*. Not *plasma grenades*, which were just as dangerous to them with all that power in such a confined space, but regular fragmentation grenades.

"No matter what it takes, don't let them get up to the second floor."

He began materialising *grenades* one by one, and while waiting for that to finish, M drew out the 《HK45》 pistol from his right thigh *holster*. After confirming that it was loaded, he returned it to its *holster*. He intended to fight not with his M14 EBR, but with the pistol.

At that moment.

"M-san—I know that our agreement was to “follow orders without asking questions, but can I ask a question?"

The not-so-talkative tall man asked a question as he went into the room while materialising a *Savage 110BA* from his own *storage*.

"Yeah. Sure."

"Alright, then I'll ask. —What is Pitohui-san to you, M-san?"

At this awfully unexpected question,

"Hah?"

M's thoughts came to a halt. The tall man turned his face, hidden under the mask and *goggles*, straight at M,

"Umm, I mean—is she someone that you want to protect that much, is what I'd like to know."

".....Yeah!"

After a moment of silence, he firmly answered in agreement.

This also reached the ears of the other two men.

"Hu—"

The tall man... smiled. In front of him, the *Savage 110BA* and its *magazines* materialised and fell to the floor.

"You heard him guys. It's our time to shine."

In response to the tall man, the *shotgun* user,

"Now yer talkin'!"

And then the *machine gunner* on the way back,

"You got it!"

Responded in excitement.

The tall man took out his *Glock 21* from its *holster* and reloaded its *magazine*. With a 25-round *long magazine* that stuck far out from the .45 caliber pistol's grip.

"We'll be sure to block off the stairs for a while, so in the meantime, M-san, please wake up our sleeping beauty. Once you do, we'll leave the rest to the princess. We'll be waiting for her order to "kill everyone."

Once he said what he wanted, the tall man suddenly turned around.

And left the room.

The video in the bar displayed MMTM's merciless *room clearing*.

As if they were actually “cleaning”, they swept through the building where their enemies lurked; it was a close combat *technique*.

One man continued covering the corridor while the remaining five entered the room one by one and, the moment they were in, they thrust their *assault rifles* forward like blades to cover each other's blind spots. It need not be said that they would fire the instant they saw anyone.

After checking a room, they once again stepped out into the corridor, and while keeping watch on their surroundings through the windows, broke into the next room. They did not stop.

The *members* of MMTM finished inspecting the two small guest rooms and the rather big room that looked like an office on the the first floor.

They passed by the stairs in the middle of the building, leaving one of their men to stand guard as they broke into the remaining rooms. Just like that, they were done *clearing* the first floor of the building.

All that time, they remained silent.

The spectators in the bar did not know when and at what moment the grand indoor battle would begin, thus they watched on, swallowing their saliva.

And so, MMTM came to the central stairway.

Who would take the lead during their assault was dependent on their current *formation*. Aside from the *machine gunner* Jake, any one of them could be the vanguard.

The SCAR-L macho man had just been the vanguard and Samon was providing *support* in the corridor, thus the ones who charged into the *hall* as the vanguard were the two G36K users, the black-haired Kenta, and the *sunglasses*-wearing Lax.

The stairway in the centre of the building was about 3 *metres* wide. It began from the first floor corridor (north) side, had a large landing midway, then continued up to the second floor after a 180 degree turn.

The two men climbing up the stairs with their muzzles aimed upwards,

\*Pakon!\*

Were assailed by a rain of shots.

"Yeah..... they're in a fight....."

It had been tens of seconds since MMTM broke into the *log house*.

LLENN was peeking through her monocle from the same spot as before. Through the windows, she got glimpses of MMTM's camouflage uniforms, and understood that they were entering and then leaving the rooms.

And then finally, when they moved to the center of the building, she heard muffled gunshots and saw something shining inside.

"LLENN, it would be pointless for you to go into a place like that."

At Fukaziroh's calm voice that sounded like a rebuttal,

"I-I know that! I know....."

LLENN responded as if she were admonishing herself.

Right now, even if she entered that place, it was obvious that she could not make use of the fight to go after and bring down Pitohui.

No, if she carelessly approached the *log house*, there was even a chance of being sniped by the *members* of MMTM. They still had six people alive, and they were undoubtedly formidable.

Currently, LLENN—

'God sorry please protect Pito-san till I bring her down myself!'

Could only pray that Pitohui's side would win, even if she were the only survivor of the PM4 versus MMTM battle.

"They're upstairs, just as I thought."

Kenta spoke out for the first time, informing his comrades.

Simultaneously, Lax continued aiming up the stairs for suppressing fire. The two returned to bottom of the stairs, prepared for a hand grenade to come from above.

The two almost predicted that the enemy would come shooting down the stairs.

Forcibly rushing in was not their way of fighting—

"Based on the structure of the stairway, if we stick our heads out a bit, the enemy upstairs will probably come down shooting. ㄥ

With this in mind, it was natural to intentionally pretend to run up the stairs to draw out the enemy's fire. Just like what happened moments ago.

The short man who “fired” his UTS-15,

"Hah! Not bad!"

Praised the enemy, pulling the *foregrip* of his angular *shotgun* backwards and expelling an empty shell.

"But, this will buy time."

Next to the man who muttered this, the large *machine gunner* was working on something while crouching.

His work was forming a roll out of the large number of *grenades* that M had taken out, using a dull gray and highly adhesive *tape* called *duct tape*.

*Duct tape* was far more adhesive than Japanese *gummed tape*; Americans used it for any kind of repair work, and at times for other uses.

Even in GGO, it was one of the *items* that everyone had at least one of on them, as if it were only natural. This was to such an extent that there were even *players* who were awakened to how useful the tape was, and thus bought it *IRL* by mail order to use it.

With intricate finger movements that were unbecoming of his build, the man linked twelve *grenades* into a row by using the *duct tape*, creating an approximately 2 *metre*-long “hand grenade rope”. Finally, he wrapped the *tape* around the safety *pins* so that they could all be removed at the same time when pulled.

Then, he put that on his large body like a belt so that it would not fall off his body. He wrapped the tip of the *tape* for pulling out the safety *pins* around his right hand, grasped it tightly,

"Well, I leave the rest to you."

And, stating this lightheartedly as if he were asking to turn off the lights, ran loudly down the stairs.

Kenta and Lax, who were at the ready at the bottom of the stairs—

Despite being surprised by the man suddenly coming down the stairs, the moment he exposed himself at the landing, they fired their G36Ks simultaneously.

It was a quick *semi-auto* barrage. About 5 bullets went into the man's body, but he had crossed his arms in front of his face and was wearing a bulletproof *plate* on his chest, thus that alone was not enough to result in his death.

While running down the stairs,

"Uoryaa!"

With a yell, the masked man forcibly pulled his right hand, taking out the safety *pins* of all the hand grenades on his body.

Kenta and Lax immediately realised.

That he was a special suicide bombing soldier.

If the enemy had simply dropped a hand grenade from above, the two could have escaped.

So, the man's plan was to wrap them around his body and run out. Even if he were shot several times, he planned to continue running during the few seconds before his *hit points* fell to zero, and he exploded.

If that happened, neither they nor their *teammates* would escape unscathed.

However, even if they sacrificed one of their own to stop the man, it did not seem like they could stop the kinetic *energy* of his large physique descending the stairs. If they tried ramming into him, they would be the ones blown away.

'Then, what should we do?'

The two men instantly and simultaneously came up with the answer, and simultaneously took action.

The two pointed their G36Ks 3 *metres*, or about five steps, upwards—

And focused on the man's left ankle that had just stepped there.

The 2 G36Ks made well-matched roars as the 5.56 *mm* bullets they fired were soaked up by the man's black *boots*.

In an instant, several bullets made contact with the narrow area of the ankle, and it was torn off. Unable to support the man's weight, his foot was separated from the shin.

"Ga?"

The man, trying to step forward with his right foot in order to support his left, inclined greatly to the left. He then collapsed sideways atop the stairs and slid down the remaining three steps.

Kenta and Lax ran away by hopping to the left and right,

"Crap, they got me."

The man, no longer able to give chase, groaned a single phrase as he was enveloped in consecutive explosions from the hand grenades on his body. His upper body was engulfed in red *effects* and shattered.

\*Zuzuzuzuzuzuzun\*, an explosion resounded throughout the entire building, and hearing that,

" ....."

M, still standing, looked down at the face of the sleeping beauty on the *bed*.

The well-featured face, engraved with a *tattoo*, was quietly breathing in slumber.

He had already applied a third first-aid *kit*; her *hit points* continued to rise gradually and had already passed seventy percent. It would probably reach the green state soon.

M no longer attempted to awaken Pitohui.

He neither hit her cheeks, nor called her, nor did anything else of the sort.

He just remained silent, quietly waiting.

The voice of the short man reached his ears.

"M-san. It seems that our suicide attack was quite the failure. But, well, I'll be buying time next. No need to worry!"

And then, seconds later, he could hear the sound of the UTS-15 *shotgun's* grand rapid-fire through the logs.

Then the sound of several *assault rifles* that were hiding there tearing a single man to pieces.

M did not look at his comrade's *hit points*. He did not need them to know how many were left.

MMTM prepared their *formation* and, at the exact moment they were about to charge upstairs—

A masked man continuously firing his UTS-15 ran down the stairs.

Immediately, Samon, who had moved to the vanguard, pounded away with his SCAR-L.

Although he managed to land a few shots on his target's chest, he had also been hit in the feet by some shots and toppled over on the spot. His *hit points* decreased by twenty percent.

If this were a one-on-one battle, Samon would probably suffer a finishing round of shots and die, but,

"Uraa!" "Hah!" "Tah!"

If Kenta and Lax, as well as the *leader* behind them, simultaneously added their firepower, the short man would be unable to continue his next attack.

His left hand, which handled the *pump action*, was shot, thus the man was left with no way to counterattack.

Hit *effects* sparkled throughout his body, and he turned into a corpse while still standing.

Then, he collapsed, slipping down the stairs while leaning forward, and stopped at the spot where the large man had exploded and scattered.

Just as the 【D e a d】 *marker* lit up, the restoration of a large body began, creating a human shape with its limbs in place.

It regained the form of a corpse belonging to the man who died first, and the body landed heavily atop the short man.

"That sure looks heavy....."

Bold muttered shortly.

'Alright, get up!'

The *leader's* final command via *hand signs*.

Kenta and Lax, Bold and the *leader* behind them, as well as Samon, who had risen after being shot, all ran up the stairs at once.

Stairways were one of the most dangerous places in indoor battles. Especially when they had to attack from below, as was their current situation.

If a *plasma grenade* were dropped, the whole *team* could even be wiped out.

Thus, once they decided to climb up, speed was life. They had no choice but to instantly run up as a *team* and take control of the upstairs area.

The men of MMTM went beyond the landing, saw the second floor—

And saw a *bed* sliding down.

"Uwa" "Aah?" "Uhh" "Hah?"

Even the *members* of MMTM were surprised by this.

Because a wooden *single bed*, turned sideways, slid down from the top while bouncing due to the stairs.

One by one, the lower bodies of the four men were rammed by the *bed*—

And pushed back to the landing by that force.

Then, their backs hit the log wall, being *sandwiched* by the *bed*.

Their feet, lower bodies, and *rifles* were caught by it. They also suffered some *damage*, albeit very minuscule.

"Hah!"

At the exceedingly unexpected attack, a smile subconsciously appeared on the sandwiched *leader's* face.

And when he raised his head, he saw a tall, masked man standing at the top of the stairs.

Above the man's head, a *single bed* was being held up.

"Wha?"

And at that moment, it was thrown. At them.

The masked men of PM4, and the *bed* attack by the last of them with terrifyingly superhuman strength,

" ..... " " ..... "

Was broadcast to the bar as well, and the spectators were all dumbfounded.

From the room right beside the stairs, while his comrades were being brought down, the man took out two *beds*.

'I see, so when you raise your Strength high enough, you can do something like that, huh', everyone learnt something new.

"Long ago..... I think there was a *video game* where a large *gorilla* threw barrels from above....."

Someone said.

Another *bed*, identical to the first, landed atop the one that sandwiched the four men on the *log house's* landing.

The dull sound of wood crashing into wood resounded,

"Guhah!" "Oooh!" "Buh!" "Gah!"

Followed by the helpless shrieks of the squashed men.

*Damage* was registered again. Though it could not possibly be enough to kill them.

While being sandwiched, the *leader* saw.

That the man who threw the two beds had quickly drawn a *Glock* from his hip *holster*.

And how he mercilessly and slowly pointed his black pistol with the *long magazine* at them. Of course, he would probably fire out all of his bullets.

The tall man took a step closer to improve his aim. He stood at the edge of the stairs.

Before the man could fire,

"Jake! Now!"

The *leader* shouted.

Naturally, the tall man also heard his voice,

"!"

His aim with the *Glock*... faltered slightly. The *Bullet Lines* coming from his muzzle went from the four people, whose movements were sealed, to the corner of the landing.

However, a new enemy... did not appear there. Instead—

\*Doka doka doka doka doka doka\*.

One by one, holes opened up on the board the man was standing on.

The bullets that came from below pierced the man's feet and body one by one. Red hit *effects* began shining from his lower body.

"Nuu....."

The tall man let out an anguish-filled groan and, while being shot, aimed his *Glock* at the MMTM *leader*, and fired 1 bullet.

The .45 caliber bullet hit the *bed* in front of the leader, and its wooden frame caused a small wound on his cheek.

"Uooooooooooraah!"

The man underneath, Jake, pounded away with his beloved HK21 *machine gun* from the first floor.

Holding it with both hands, he raised the muzzle overhead and pulled the trigger. He unleashed a *full auto* rapid-fire.

The bullets on the *belt* coming from the ammunition box were sucked in and fired out with a roar. The bullets pierced the first floor ceiling boards, pierced the heat insulation in between, and then pierced the floorboards of the second floor.

\*Kachin\*.

The moment the last of the 50 bullets on the ammunition *belt* had been exhausted, the man standing there turned into a corpse.

As the 【D e a d】 *marker* popped up, the tall man collapsed.

"Jake! Dodge!"

Hearing the *leader's* voice,

"Hah!"

Jake took a step back.

Piercing the ravaged floor, the corpse fell down to where he had been standing.

"Uhya!"

Gun shots from a *machine gun* resounded beyond the log wall and his comrade's *hit points* turned to zero instantly.

M's large body was kneeling beside the *bed*.

Among the four *beds* lined up westward, atop the second bed from the window, the sleeping beauty had her eyelids closed.

" ....."

M lifted up a *plasma grenade* from the floor. The *timer* was set rather long, at 5 seconds.

His lips... moved quietly, forming words.

"You..... saved..... me....."

Tears flowed from his eyes and dripped on the *plasma grenade*.

"Thanks."

M slowly inclined his large body—

And placed a short kiss on the sleeping beauty's lips.

Then, he returned to his former position and quietly pulled the explosion *switch* of the *plasma grenade* on his left palm.

This event was not broadcast to the bar.

The *members* of MMTM,

'Hold on!'

'Sorry!'

Were conducting a rescue of the four men sandwiched on the landing.

While the *leader*, who was released first, and Samon, who had not been sandwiched in, were pushing the beds, the remaining three members were released one by one. During that time, having reloaded his HK21, Jake was standing at a corner of the landing, aiming upstairs.

A few seconds later, when all of them regained their freedom of movement and quickly finished *checking* on their beloved guns,

'Alright, we're going up!'

The moment they were about to climb over the *bed* and rush to the second floor, following the *leader's hand signs*.

A roar that seemed like it made the whole building shake resounded and hit their earlobes.

'A *plasma grenade* explosion? Where?'

Instantly, they all had the exact same idea.



SECT.17

## 第十七章 魔王復活

## SECT.17

# Return of the Demon

The sound of the explosion from the *plasma grenade* that would put them out of their misery,

"Wha?"

Reached M from outside the window.

Even with his eyes closed, he knew what the *hit point gauges* at the top left showed. His own was...*green*. And, Pitohui's... was also *green*.

The moment M opened his eyes, he saw,

"Whoa whoa, what're you doing? A lovers' suicide? Are we in Sonezaki?<sup>25</sup> Or Roppongi?<sup>26</sup> We're not! This is GGO!"

The *avatar* of the woman he loved, glaring at him as she said that.

Pitohui had raised the top half of her body from the *bed*, her right arm pointing straight out the window.

M understood.

That, having regained consciousness, Pitohui threw the *plasma grenade* outside the open window, and it exploded on the ground.

"Aah!"

---

25 The Love Suicides at Sonezaki (曾根崎心中) is love-suicide bunraku (puppet) play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon.

26 There's a song titled Roppongi Shinjuu (六本木心中, love suicide at Roppongi). It could be a reference to that, but I can't really guarantee it.

When M opened his eyes and tears of joy began flowing down, his face,

"You dumbass!"

Was assaulted by Pitohui's right hand, which had formed a fist.

"Augh!"

His left cheek was punched.

"You dummy!"

"Gefuh!"

His right cheek received a backhand blow.

"You idiot!"

"Gah!"

His chest received a strike from the heel of her palm, or the firm part below the palm, in other words.

His huge body was easily blown back and he collapsed, shaking the floor.

"And here I was having a nice dream!"

Having suddenly leapt up from the *bed*, Pitohui stood up in front of M. Then,

"Why you why you!"

She used her foot to press on M's nether region with extreme force,

"Gaugaugagagagagah!"

And, as if struck by electricity, his large limbs began flailing noisily.

"Gaugagaaaagagagagagaga!"

"Don't ya just up an' decide to kill me!"

"Gagagagagagagaga!"

This situation... was fortunately not broadcast either.

Several seconds later—

Having suddenly removed her leg from M, Pitohui lifted her beloved KTR-09, left beside the *bed*, with her right hand,

"It's just the two of us, huh. What about the enemy?"

And requested a status update.

"MMTM, down the stairs. They'll be rushing up here very soon."

Quickly standing up with a serious look, M nimbly drew his HK45 from his right thigh. On his burly figure, there was no sign of him having been in agony just moments ago.

"Welp, guess we'll just massacre them!"

Giving a broad grin, Pitohui turned her left hand toward her waist. She opened the cover of the *pouch* there, and her hand went inside.

M asked a question.

"You said "And here I was having a nice dream, —about what?"

While pulling out the contents of her *pouch*, Pitohui answered.

"A dream of going wild in the *death game* that *Sword Art Online* had become, with sword in hand, together with my merry buddies from the *beta* period!"

A pale light illuminated her fiendish smile.

The MMTM *members*, who went up to the second floor fluidly like a stream, rushed into the guest room to their immediate left, in other words, the western side of the building.

The tall man had brought the *bed* from this room, thus they had concluded that the remaining PM4 *members* were there.

However, there was no one inside the spacious guest room.

As Jake kept watch on the east side with his *machine gun* in the corridor, MMTM rushed into the next room—

'*Clear!*'

And confirmed that no one was there. The room was a mess from the *leader's grenade* attack, but there were no corpses there. Nor were there any places to hide. An MG3 *machine gun* that had lost its owner stood there in silence.

In that case—

With simple *hand signs*, the *leader* gave an order.

"Opposite side, eastern room, we're goin' in."

The situation was broadcast to the bar.

Keeping their posture low, the six men crossed the centre of the approximately 2 *metre*-wide corridor, doing their best to avoid their footsteps making any sound.

GGO *players* avoided walking along the walls as much as possible,

The reason for that was ricochet. When an enemy bullet hit the wall obliquely, its angle would drop, and it would come at them mostly along the wall.

MMTM crossed the centre of the corridor in a line. They were prepared for the man in the lead to be shot if the enemy jumped out and fired at them.

But his body would become a shield that would protect the others. And the man behind him would bring down the enemy.

There were only two rooms left.

M and that woman... were in one of the two.

Without a sound or a word, the six men advanced through the corridor.

Avoiding the hole in front of the stairs where a man had fallen down, they shifted the direction of their muzzles bit by bit.

In the lead was the not-*chicken* G36K wielder, Kenta, boasting the highest speed on the *team*.

Following him was Lax, the *sunglasses* man with the same gun.

Bold, the dark-skinned ARX160 man.

The muscular Samon, holding a SCAR-L.

Then, it was the turn of the *leader*, a *handsome* man wielding an STM-556 switched to its *short barrel*.

The slender Jake, having taken some distance from them, was the rearguard—the valuable man keeping watch on their rear.

There were roughly 7 *metres* from the stairs to the *door* that served as the entrance to the room on their right-hand side.

In fights taking place inside buildings, alongside ricochet, one absolutely had to watch out for “Wall piercing<sup>Kabenuki</sup>” .

As the name implied, it referred to bullets piercing through cover, such as walls and *doors*, and flying at them. In other words, a sudden attack from an unseen enemy.

In GGO, it was possible to sense enemies beyond the wall through *items* like *sonar sensors*, which used sound to determine the position of the enemy, or *skills* with a similar effect. Even more simply, a “gut feeling” that the enemy was around there.

Be that as it may, even if you knew their position, kabenuki would be impossible if the attack could not reach its target. Whether or not it was possible varied based on the gun caliber, as well as the type and thickness of the cover.

*Rifle* bullets had an awful lot of penetration, thus walls in a simple wooden house could easily be pierced. Exactly like how, just moments ago, Jake was able to bring down the enemy on the second floor by shooting through the floorboards.

However, at the moment, to MMTM's left and right were large logs, about 70 *cm*-wide.

Shooting through them with anything other than an anti-materiel *rifle*, even though not completely impossible, would still be quite difficult. And even if the bullets were to somehow pierce, they would lose a large amount of power, the remainder of which would be greatly insufficient to kill.

In that sense, in this corridor, it would be enough to be cautious of attacks from the front and back, as well as the windows. It was relatively safe.

Or it should have been safe.

The moment Kenta was three steps away from the *door*—

Vehement gunshots resounded in the corridor, and the *leader* saw.

How Samon, who was walking in front of him, had hit *effects* light up in succession on his right side.

"Gyafu!"

His large body twisted to the right, and as more light spouted, his SCAR-L's enhanced *plastic stock* was torn to pieces. Once the bullets finished destroying the *stock*, they again assailed its owner.

His *hit points* began decreasing at an alarming rate. Having seen such situations many times over, he knew what it meant. This momentum indicated instant death.

"Right! From the window!"

The *leader* broke the silence to shout to his comrades, but even he was unable to understand.

He understood that the attack was coming from the room, but—

'How could so many bullets pierce the massive logs, and yet attack without losing their power?'

'Could it be that these logs were only here for the sake of appearance, like in a movie *set*? Can kabenuki work on them?'

"Why yooou!"

Bold, who had been walking ahead of the dying Samon, unleashed a *semi-auto* rapid fire on the wall with his ARX160, causing wood chips to scatter.

They clearly did not pierce the wall,

"Stop!"

And just as the *leader* gave this order, the enemy's shooting also stopped. Samon, who seemed to have been shot in the abdomen,

"Grud!"

Cursed as he collapsed and fell to the floor, the *emblem* on his left shoulder depicting a skull holding a *knife* in its mouth hitting the floor first. A 【D e a d】 *marker* lit up.

Since it had come to this, they had to break in as soon as possible and kill the two inside.

As if having having foreseen the *leader's* thoughts, a large hole opened up in the *door* in front of Kenta.

Seeing several holes open with one attack, it was undoubtedly caused by a *shotgun*. An attack from inside. And it was three consecutive attacks.

"Tch!"

If he had been just one, no, half a step ahead, Kenta would have been turned into beehive just like the door, but he, along with his G36K, managed to pull back. It was already too dangerous to stand in front.

At that moment, MMTM's fluid movements suddenly came to a halt.

Having stopped shooting, Bold drew closer to the edge of the wall and, from the side, brought his face closer to the place where the bullets that shot his comrades came from.

And, he informed his comrades of what he had found with a whisper.

"There's a hole!"

'So that's it, they got us good!'

MMTM's *leader* was astonished at the exceedingly simple, and effective, *trick*—, no *trap*.

PM4 had, naturally, predicted that they would pass through here, thus while the mask- and *goggle*-wearing men bought time, the enemy had secretly made holes where a log met another log.

He did not know how yet, though. It did not seem like they had the leeway to open holes with bullets, thus perhaps there was a powerful electric *drill* inside. The *plasma grenade* explosion outside just moments ago could have been done to camouflage the noise from that work.

Bold, who found the hole, pressed his back against the wall next to it and, without delay, inserted the muzzle of his own gun, the ARX160. This way, even if the enemy fired, the only thing that would be hit would be the gun. Then, he began *rhythmically* firing the gun in *semi-auto*—

When, after 2 shots, it stopped.

"Gah.....?"

His face... froze with an expression of anguish and confusion.

Then, the *leader* - and the others, aside from Kenta, who was in the lead and keeping an eye on the *door* - saw.

How, leaning against the wall, Bold, or specifically, his right eye, began shining a bluish-white.

Then, the light increased in intensity and formed the shape of a rod, slowly piercing his eye. Having projected about 3 *cm* out of his eye, it stopped there.

"Gaaaaaaaah."

Bold began trembling as his right eye shined blue. His hand let go of the gun, and, still having its muzzle inserted into the hole, the ARX160 became a part of the wall.

In the upper left corner of the *leader's* view, Bold's *hit points* were decreasing with terrifying momentum.

'Aah....., shit..... So that's what it was!'

He was a bit too late to realise it. This time, he did not have the leeway to commend his enemy; he just cursed himself.

He had forgotten about a weapon that could easily pierce the 70 *cm*-wide logs, and the head of a person standing beyond them.

Because there was no way he would use such a thing, it fell outside of his memory.

Although, a newbie *player*, whose name he had never heard, had run wild with one during the previous, third BoB tournament.

It was an ultra powerful and ultra-close range weapon that did not exist in the real world.

A weapon that produced a blade of light about 1 *metre* in length and cut up anything it touched.

The sword of the gun world— a *photon sword*.

Bold turned into a corpse and his feet lost their strength.

At the same time, the *photon sword* was pulled out of him, and the ghost-like bluish-white light disappeared from the corridor. Then, the corpse tumbled down.

The next moment, a bluish-white circle was drawn on the wall.

An instant, one-stroke sketch of a circle, about 1.5 *metres* in diameter, appeared on the log wall. And it was right in front of the aforementioned vanguard, Kenta—

"Dodge!"

The *leader's* shout and the moment the wall attacked Kenta coincided. With extreme force from inside the room, the round logs were blown away—

"Fubeh!"

After sending Kenta flying, they *sandwiched* him against the wall on the other side of the corridor.

And from the resulting hole in the wall suddenly came... a very ordinary hand grenade. It fell atop the head of Kenta, trapped between the wall and circle, and exploded there.

Kenta's upper body, from the chest up, was blown to pieces, and a red *polygon* light shone inside the corridor. The logs cut in a circular shape separated on the spot and crumbled down.

Several fragments from the hand grenade assaulted the closest man, Lax. The blast blew the *sunglasses* off his face.

"Why yooou!"

Undaunted by the *damage*, he unleashed a *semi-auto* rapid fire with his G36K placed firmly against his right shoulder. Passing through the newly-created hole, his bullets went into the room.

The *leader* followed suit right away by beginning to fire, aiming his beloved gun at the hole located about 3 *metres* diagonally forward while moving sideways towards the front of the hole.

At this rate, they had no choice but to approach the hole while shooting intermittently, then rush into the room at once to bring them down. Compare to being attacked unilaterally, it was better to rush forward and fight in a place where they could at least see their enemy, and defeat them.

From the hole, at a low position, something came rolling out into the corridor.

It was a black, round, large, spherical mass that looked like a smallish watermelon.

It was a gigantic *plasma grenade*, commonly known as a “Giga-nade”.

As proof that its activation *switch* has been pressed, a part of it was giving off flickering light.

"Hih!" "Bah—!"

Lax's and the *leader*'s stiff voices were magnificently synchronised. They stopped shooting.

'Is the enemy an idiot! Do they want to die with us!'

The *leader* questioned the sanity of his opponents. Who would have thought that, in such a confined space, they would use strong-even-in-normal-circumstances *plasma grenades*... three times stronger version, the Giga-nade.

They did not know how many seconds were set on the *timer*, but when it exploded, it would, naturally, not only take them out due to being in close vicinity, but also not leave the one who threw the grenade, hiding beyond the hole, unscathed.

And then he understood.

'Aah..... knowing her..... she'd do it.'

'Knowing that crazed woman, knowing Pitohui—'

'If it were to kill an enemy standing before her, she was entirely unwary of dying herself. In the past, when I had just began playing GGO, I had seen such conduct... many times over.'

'She's prepared to die and take us with her! That shithead!'

The *leader*, despite thinking that it was pointless, attempted to dodge. At that very moment, he saw.

How Lax, whose feet were right next to the fallen Giga-nade, threw away his gun and covered the Giga-nade.

“If it covered a hand grenade, the person's body would become a shield, protecting his comrades in the area despite dying himself.”

Such an act overflowing with self-sacrifice repeated itself time and time again in *RL* battlefields at all times and places. And even in GGO's world.

However, that was the case for ordinary hand grenades that launched fragments with the blast.

But if one were to ask how effective this would be on high-power *plasma grenades*, and the even more destructive Giga-nades—

The answer would probably be 'negligible'.

The *leader* was prepared for his death several seconds later. However, at the same time, he was anticipating his enemies likely being annihilated along with him.

The bluish-white explosion torrent would also assail the room and blow up anyone inside. He did not know how sturdy the *log house* was, but its walls and ceiling would probably be blown away.

'In that case, why don't I watch the explosion from the front.'

Having made up his mind, the *leader* stopped running away. He stopped turning. And then he saw.

A lone woman coming out from the hole in the wall.

A woman wearing tight, dark-blue overalls and equipped with protectors and weapons seemingly throughout her body.

A woman who had gathered her long, black hair behind her into a *ponytail*.

A woman who had a brick-coloured, geometric *tattoo* on her brown face.

A woman who named herself after a bird so poisonous that one could die just by touching it.

Pitohui.

With her hands behind her back as she entered the corridor, Pitohui first brought her right arm forward.

From the tip of the dull-silver rod in her hands, it seemed as if a bluish-white line extended, and, along with an afterimage, it swung down at high speed. A motion from the bottom upwards, grazing the floor as it went up.

With just that, Lax, who had been covering the Giga-nade, had his head separated from his body, and the head rolled away.

The *leader* knew even without needing to look at his *team's hit point gauges*. Because even in the world of GGO, there was no one who could survive after having their head severed from their body.

Seeing the woman, standing beside the corpse that held the powerful explosive with a smile,

'So that's it!'

The *leader* realised. That the Giga-nade... would not be exploding for a while.

Just like when she lured out *bosses* in *dungeons* to bring them down, she had probably set the explosion *timer* to a long time of several minutes. It was a *trap*... meant to stop their shooting for a moment.

Naturally, he should have thought of that possibility, but based on past experience that he did not want to recall, "Knowing Pitohui, knowing that woman, she wouldn't hesitate. Actually, she'd definitely do it," he arbitrarily decided.

'In that case, die.'

The moment the *leader* aimed his muzzle at Pitohui, Pitohui herself brought her left hand in front of her.

And then, a gunshot.

The STM-556 spouted fire, and a 5.56 *mm* bullet flew at Pitohui's chest, merely 4 *metres* away, faster than sound—

There, it created sparks as it sprung to the side, piercing a log in the wall.

The 50 *cm* x 30 *cm* metal plate that Pitohui was grasping in her left hand repelled the bullet diagonally. It was a piece of M's shield. Having expected such a use for it, there was a small *handle* welded on its back.

"Taaaaaaaah!"

Along with a high-pitched roar, Pitohui kicked off the floor with all her might. The *leader's* second shot was once again repelled by the shield due to the *Bullet Line*—

"Fuck you!"

She avoided the third shot aimed at her feet with a minor *side step*—

Before the fourth shot could be fired, she sharply swung the 1 *metre*-long rod of light of her light sword, shining a bluish-white.

The bluish-white blade made the short barrel of the STM-556 even shorter. Melting the metal, it sawed through the barrel, completely cutting off the front half, along with the large *grenade launcher barrel*.

If the *leader* had not promptly pulled back his left hand, letting go of his gun, it would probably have been cut off at the wrist.

"Uraah!"

The *leader* threw his beloved gun that was now in need of repair.

The metal mass flew towards Pitohui in front of him, but Pitohui did not dodge. She received it with the forehead part of her *headgear* and parried it by slightly shaking her head.

During that meager opening, the *leader* moved his right hand towards his side *holster* while backstepping. He pulled out the 9 *mm* caliber 《Steyr M9-A1》 automatic pistol from it.

Still holding it at his side, he began firing consecutively. He did not aim. He just fired.

One of the recklessly fired 9 *mm* bullet sank into Pitohui's thigh and another cut through her side, but—

"Hyaai!"

With that cheerful sound, Pitohui swung her left hand and the tip of the shield made a direct hit on the M9-A1, plucking it from the *leader's* hand with a dull metallic sound.

The *machine gunner* Jake had been looking for a *chance* to fire at Pitohui the entire time.

Standing furthest to the back in the corridor, he held his HK21 *machine gun* at his shoulder and had time to switch the *selector* to *semi-auto*.

However, having rushed out from the hole, Pitohui kept moving on the other side of the *leader*. It seemed like she could not see him at all, but in fact, she saw him well. Such a terrifying lack of any opening.

"Shit!"

As a result of having heavy firepower, Jake could not fire.

Having knocked out the *leader's* pistol, Pitohui suddenly pulled the *photon sword* in her right hand behind her, pushed the shield in her left hand forward,

"Shaaah!"

And, letting out a strange voice, she rammed the *leader*.

"Gah!"

Receiving a direct hit with the hard plate from his chest to his face, the *leader* was pushed back with terrifyingly superhuman strength, and his feet were moved backwards with no regard to his will.

"Uhi!"

There, he collided with Jake, holding his HK21 at the ready.

The superwoman's charge blew Jake and his *machine gun* backwards.

"Doon't fuck with meee!"

Having gained a chance to stop because of this, the *leader* put all his might into his feet that had regained their *grip*, planting them firmly on the ground. Clinging to the shield in front of him with his hands, he used all his strength to tear it out and throw it away.

What the *leader* saw the next moment was Pitohui holding her light sword in an overhand stance and smiling.

Holding a sword in an overhead stance during an indoor fight was the height of folly.

That was because the sword would hit the ceiling and it would be impossible to swing it. Long ago, there were probably a number of warriors who had subconsciously raised their katana into an overhead stance in a desperate fight but their blades got stuck in the lintel or beams.

But for a *photon sword*, this was of no concern.

"Well then, die for me, okay."

Along with mutter-like voice, Pitohui, drawing her left hand closer to herself, instantly swung downward. The tip of the bluish-white light sword increased in speed while smoothly tearing through the ceiling boards, heading straight for the *leader's* forehead,

"Uraaaaaa!"

But was stopped.

The *leader's* hands extended skywards and seized Pitohui's hands, which were grasping the handle of the *photon sword*, from above, stopping the blow there.

The two instantly stopped moving. With practically identical physiques, the two became connected through their hands.



Forcefully adding strength from above, Pitohui,

"Oh dear. How persistent."

Lifting her arms from below, the *leader*,

"What's the matter, is that all you've got?"

The two had put all their strength into their arms, continuing their battle of power.

And so, Pitohui's arms slowly went back. The blade rapidly went upwards, until its tip eventually touched the ceiling once again.

Having passed right above her, the blade closed in on Pitohui's forehead. The *leader* put even more strength into his arms, slowly but assuredly pushing it back.

"Hah! Something as silly as a light sword is, after all, a toy!"

When the *leader*, glaring the woman in front of him, cried out, the woman gave a smile.

"Oh dear. You're one to talk for a guy who has no interest whatsoever in *photon swords*. You *gun maniac-san*."

"So what!"

"So... you don't know, right? Right right? That this 《Muramasa F9》 has a *nice* function!"

Pitohui's right thumb speedily turned the *dial* at the top of the *grip* to the left. At that moment, the blade of light suddenly disappeared and the two ended up scrambling for a mere rod, less than 30 *cm* in length—

"Hah?"

Having no clue about Pitohui's intentions, the *leader's* pupils once again saw the ominous, bluish-white light. More vivid and dazzling than before.

Pitohui's finger began turning the *dial* even further to the left. This time, awfully slowly.

"Wha——"

The *leader* saw.

How the festival day toy-like rod that he and the woman had been pushing with their hands——

Had its blade come out from the hole on the opposite side, giving off a bluish-white light.

And how it slowly but assuredly spread towards his own face.

"Wha! ——Y-you bastard!"

'This light sword is able to bring out a blade of light from either the top or bottom.'

The *leader* understood that "function", giving him goosebumps all over his body.

"Look look..... I'll make it longer..... Long, longer, longest....."

In proportion to Pitohui's finger turning the *dial*, the blade slowly but assuredly grew.

As the *leader* slightly lost strength in his arms, Pitohui also loosened her strength appropriately, maintaining the *photon sword's* angle.

"Wh..... why you madwoman!"

"Oh stop now, the one who knows me best is myself."

"You find this fun? You shithead!"

"I feel like I was asked the same thing by someone just moments ago, but— yes, of course I'm having fun! This is awesome! You're enjoying life and death too, right? Hei hei!"

The blade continued to grow and grow even during their conversation—

"Pitohuuuuuuuu!"

"Yees, that... is... me!"

The tip of the bluish-white blade of light touched the *leader's* forehead.

"Gaah!"

\*Juri\*, with a strange sound, the light sank into his head,

"Gogaaagagagaagagagagagagaah!"

The *leader's* face became stiff with an expression of mental anguish to such an extent that even the shape of his eyes began to differ.

"Hmm, what language is that? I can only speak Japanese and English, ya know. *Understand?*"

"Biiidoobuuuuuugiuuuuuu!"

The hands of the man, giving a shout of agony as his brain was eroded by the light, suddenly lost their strength. Sluggishly, they dangled down.

"Oh no you don't donncha die on me yeeeeet!"

Keeping the *photon sword* inserted several *cm* into her opponent's brain, Pitohui,

"Houraaaaaaaaah!"

Grabbed the *leader* by his collar with her left hand and charged forward. The *leader's* back once again collided with Jake, who had somehow been able to get up,

"Fi! Nal! Blow!"

This time, she instantly turned the *dial* all the way to the end.

\*Buon\*, with a growl, the Muramasa F9's bluish-white blade instantly grew out to its maximum 100 *cm* length—

Completely piercing the *leader's* head,

"Gahah!"

And sinking into Jake's left eye behind him.

From the time MMTM was about to assault the last room till the final two died—

No other battles were taking place, thus, naturally, the whole thing was broadcast to the bar.

Beginning with the shooting from the hole in the wall at the approaching MMTM till the conclusion was finally reached, the time taken was not even 2 minutes.

Even the spectators, who had been cheering with excitement at the abrupt battle at first—

Growing quiet around the part where Pitohui decapitated the head of a man lying on his face, they went completely silent around the final struggle to the death.

The moment MMTM was wiped out,

"Aah."

Seeing the two men being joined together by the sword of light, someone said.

"I... won't be able... to eat dried sardines for a while."<sup>27</sup>

Another person, seeing Pitohui's devil king-like rampage,

" ....."

Was dumbfounded and held the most conflicted emotions about the ordeal.

A woman, who, unlike all others, participated in SJ2 to save and to kill this Pitohui—

It was LLENN.

At a place about 500 *metres* away from the *log house*, hiding in a small hollow she had found in the flat meadow with a camouflage *poncho* obscuring her, she had been peeking through her monocle.

The entire time since MMTM broke in,

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<sup>27</sup> Dried sardines are held together by a bamboo skewer or string piercing their eye sockets.

"Aah..... they're fighting....."

She reported the situation of the battle from what she could see through the window to the nearby Fukaziroh, and *Boss* on the other side of the *log house*.

"Aah, they came to the stairs. Though the masked men are on the second floor— aah, seems like one of them got shot!"

Such as this,

"Explosion in the middle of the stairway! A suicide attack? A suicide explosion? But, MMTM still has six guys....."

Or this,

"Wow, a masked man attacked with a *bed*! —A second *bed*! Aah, there's a *machine gun* below; run run! —Shot! —He died....."

And other such live commentary continued.

Naturally, at the *bed* part, *Boss*,

"Is that some kind of name for a gun?"

Replied with such words.

And, upon seeing MMTM, still unscathed, beginning their attack on the room where Pitohui was probably hiding,

"Run run Pito-san run run for now!"

LLENN began muttering as if she were praying and was heard by the other two, but—

From that moment on, she saw something conversely terrifying.

How MMTM, who had been slaughtering them one by one without any decent counterattack.

And how, when Pitohui began to wield her sword of bluish-white light, the scene changed to a picture of hell that left her unable to comment as she continued watching through the round view of her monocle.

"Ooi, LLENN. What happened? Did ya fall asleep?"

"LLENN, what's wrong? What's happening?"

Unable to respond to the two voices, she continued watching intently.

Seeing the two men skewered and falling down on the floor the moment the will-o'-the-wisp-like bluish-white light disappeared,

"Hii!"

LLENN returned to her senses.

"What's wrong? "LLENN?"

"T-they've... been wiped out..... Pito-san... alone... all six of them....."

Just as LLENN finished her report to the two,

"Ah—I have to win against that....."

The cry of LLENN's heart sprung out from her mouth.

When her left wrist suddenly began to vibrate right afterwards,

"Hyaaaaaa!"

Mistakenly thinking that someone had caught her by the wrist, LLENN gave a shriek in surprise and saw an illusion for a moment. An illusion that Pitohui had come crawling through the ground and was smirking as she grasped her wrist. Her heart throbbed as if it had exploded, and she was nearly brought back to *RL* by the meddlesome *AmuSphere*.

As her heart continued its barrage, the wristwatch on the inner part of her wrist told her that the *scan* was coming soon.

14:20.

The eighth *satellite scan* in SJ2 began.



SECT.18

## 第十八章 イカレたレン

## SECT.18

### Deranged LLENN

As the 14:20 *satellite scan* began, the spectators in the bar,

"This is probably the last *scan*."

All watched it with the same sentiment. After all, the previous tournament was resolved in 1 hour and 28 minutes, and merely four *teams* remained at the moment.

The *scan* that began from the west displayed the results on the left half of the map at high speed, while slowly on the right half.

It did not seem like such a handy artificial satellite could exist, but no one retorted at that.

On the screen, the light dots of the survivors stretched out from south to north, forming a nearly straight line— this signified the position of LLENN's group, PM4, and the amazon group. They were within 1,000 *metres* of each other; so close that they could only be recognised as individual dots after greatly magnifying the map.

As for the final *team*, the group of six armoured guys running around atop the rampart with bicycles, *Team T-S*—

They were positioned at practically the centre of the eastern rampart.

During the previous 14:10 *scan*, they were in the north-eastern corner, thus they had travelled along the rampart by bike to advance further south.

"Their goal is to approach and assault the ones who survive the fierce fight among the three *teams* from the valley."

"Keh! Those guys make me sick! If you're really men, go at them with dignity! Aside from M, all the survivors are women!"

Among the group of men,

"Girls, do your beeeeeeeest!"

The *sunglasses*-wearing, golden-haired beauty Anna, having returned from the after-death standby *area*, shouted loudly.

She was still wearing her equipment and camouflage, and there was a large hole, the *damage* from being shot with a .50 calibre, open in her *vest*. This was because players would return with all the damage to their equipment left as is.

It was not just her *vest*, as the camouflage around that area was also shredded. The T-*shirt* that made the bulge of her *sexy* breasts obvious— was, of course, fixed up.

Filth would not be brought over during SJ, so her long, golden hair was still pretty, though quite ruffled. With the long Dragunov sniper on her shoulder, she had a rather strong "remnant" feel to her.

The bar had momentarily turned silent due to the shout with all of Anna's heart and soul, but,

"You're right, yeah, I understand how you feel. Hey, how about watching it with me? I could teach you quite a bit about sniping."

"How about going on a quest with me after this? I know a place with quite the *romantic* sight."

The men, filled with ulterior motives and making use of the *chance* they had because none of the other amazons were there, approached Anna with lewd looks on their faces,

"Shut yer trap! Wud ya be able to say that to me *IRL*, haah? Be quiet an' watch the damn monitor!"

And dejectedly pulled back after the thundering cry from the beauty.

"Ugh, what a creeper..... I'm taking that offer back."

"So uncute. She's probably quite the damn *bitch* in reality anyway....."

The men secretly muttered excuses, but if they met the meek and timid high school girl that was Annaka Moe *IRL*, they would probably die from shock.

The *scan* results were also seen by the surviving *players*.

Thinking "this is probably the last time this terminal would serve its purpose,"

LLENN and Fukaziroh, as well as the survivors of SHINC— *Boss*, Tanya, Tohma and Rosa were hugging the ground in the same spot as before MMTM had rushed inside.

About 500 *metres* to the *log house*. A distance where they could not be sure when they would be sniped by M if they showed themselves.

They confirmed that PM4 was still inside the building and that the *team* called T-S was barely away from the eastern edge.

*Boss*,

"This *team* is moving atop the rampart. Probably with vehicles. And unscathed."

Informed her own comrades and LLENN. Anything else was unimaginable, thus everyone agreed.

Having seen Pitohui's overwhelming display of power, LLENN,

"Only one *team* left.....Could it be that, even if I don't do anything, Pito-san will just end up winning at this rate....."

Let out her umpteenth faintheartedness and hope.

" ....."

Neither *Boss*,

" ....."

Nor Fukaziroh answered her.

Lying upside-down, LLENN forcefully gripped her hands,

"But no, that's wrong! I'm gonna do something! But what should I do what should I do what should I do——"

Repeated this as if it were a Buddhist prayer. In her mind, she desperately thought out a plan.

'Can we win if we just charge in like this? I do have confidence in my speed, so I should be able to reach the building. But, will I win the battle that'd ensue? Even though someone like MMTM couldn't win with six guys?'

"What should I do what should I do what should I do——"

'How would I have Fukaziroh support me in an indoor fight? How about cooperating with SHINC? Won't we end up in friendly fire? If somebody carelessly brings down Pito, it'd all be for naught, so how can I prevent that?'

"What should I do what should I do what should I do——"

'It'd be bad if everyone just charged in haphazardly I need to think of a plan or like MMTM we'll end up losing being killed losing losing.'

"What should I do I need a plan a plan a plan a plan some kind of plan plan plan p l a n plan ——"

LLENN's Buddhist prayer, with her brain *overheating*,

"Girls, get ready to charge all at once!"

Was stopped by *Boss's* words.

"Wha?"

"We ain't waiting for LLENN's instructions anymore. We'll do it ourselves! Begin supporting fire!"

"Wha?"

And she heard... gunshots from the PKM *machine gun*.

On the other side of the *log house*, they were undoubtedly conducting suppressive fire towards the window where Pitohui and M would probably be.

"He-hey! Not yet——"

As LLENN raised her head in panic,

"What's wrong?"

Fukaziroh, who had crept up right next to her before she noticed, touched her face with her own as she asked. Surprised by such intimacy, LLENN,

"B-Boss just ordered an assault of her own accord!"

"Hoh....."

Fukaziroh grinned broadly. With an impish smile.

"Girls, wait! We're not yet ready!"

LLENN's words to *Boss*,

"Too slacky! We shall be doing things as we please!"

Were dismissed with such a reply. *Boss*,

"Everyone, charge!"

Referring to SHINC rather than her, gave a command.

"Ah, hold on—— No way! Hold up!"

LLENN's appeal did not receive a reply from *Boss*.

"Hoh, so in short, *Boss* and the others are assaulting of their own accord without any coordination or any clear chance of winning."

Fukaziroh enquired,

"Apparently..... It's suicide! Why! We can't beat Pito-san without cooperating! A plan! We need a plan! A plan! A plan! A plan!"

Shouting the same words numerous times while hitting the grass with her hands, LLENN,

"Huhuuhn....."

Did not notice Fukaziroh working on something behind her while humming unconcernedly.

And so, after 5 seconds,

"Well then, I'm gonna go too!"

When Fukaziroh stood up with these words,

"A plan— Hah?"

Lying on the ground, LLENN raised her half-weeping face.

With the same smile as before, holding an MGL-140 only in her right hand, Fukaziroh,

"They to whom only bad ideas come might as well be asleep! Nothing will come of just saying "plan plan, ! If you're like that, LLENN, you can just cry yourself to sleep there! Alone, you're just a weak crybaby who can't do a thing!"

Added an elementary school student jeer as she began running.  
Towards the *log house*.

"Hah—?"

"Oh you just watch! We'll capture Pito-san alive, wrap her up in a bamboo mat<sup>28</sup>, and bring her here!"

Telling her such an impossible plan, Fukaziroh ran out.

Seeing her back become smaller and smaller with one MGL-140 in hand, LLENN's thoughts came to a standstill.

'Err?'

'Meaning?'

'Err?'

After about 2 seconds worth of thinking, she realised but a single truth.

Namely,

'My comrades, all of them, have left me behind.'

"Hey wait noooo!"

Shouting this, LLENN was about to stand up,

"—Fuwah! Bubeh."

But she was unable to do so. She returned to lying on her belly on the grass.

---

28 Wrapping someone in a bamboo mat to throw them into a river was an unofficial punishment during the Edo period.

She had attempted to stand up as agilely as always, but her left leg did not move as usual. She fell on the grass chest-first,

"Wh-y.....?"

Turned her body to look at it,

"—Wha? Whaaaaa?"

And caught sight of the reason.

Her realisation lagged behind for a moment due to the excessive shock, but it was impossible not to believe what she saw.

Her left leg, specifically, the ankle of her boot was wrapped in a wide, *nylon* cloth. And mounted at its end was an MGL-140 *grenade launcher*.

She did not know whether this was “Yuuta” or “Sako”, but it was undoubtedly Fukaziroh's weapon. The absurdly heavy weapon had become LLENN's shackle. The iron ball was replaced with a gun, but she was otherwise no different from a prisoner of old.

The culprit was evident. While LLENN hesitated, Fukaziroh had fucking done it.

'Annyarooooooooooooooooooooo!'

A shout from the depths of her mind resounded in LLENN's brain.

She immediately extended her hand and attempted to pick it up,

"Why you! Shit! Why you!"

After her hands slipped numerous times, she had no choice but to take off both of her *pink* gloves and try it again, but the *sling* that was wrapped around her,

"Ohhhh, c'mon!"

Could not be taken off at all.

The *sling* was dreadfully firm and, through Fukaziroh's idiotic strength, tightened so severely that the thick *nylon* was turned into a small ball.

Even while keeping her head low so as not to be spotted and shot, she desperately pulled on the knot and her hand slipped once again,

"Ohhhhhhhh coooome on!"

As she let out a scream, LLENN's ears,

"Calm down, listen, just untie it slowly."

Caught the completely disparaging voice of Fukaziroh, who had foreseen what she was doing, through her comm *item*.

"Fukaaaaaaa! What are you thinkinnnnng! Don't go off on your ooown!"

LLENN stopped her hand movements, shouted, and glared at the small back sprinting away from her through the grass.

The reply from Fukaziroh,

" "Whoever untangles that knot shall surely be king of this world! , ahahhahhahha!"

Was this.

"Yo— you idiooooooooooooooot!"

Hearing LLENN's scream through her comm *item*, *Boss* chuckled.

With her Vintorez in hand and dashing at full speed in *zig-zags* through the meadow, she turned the *switch* for her comm *item* with LLENN to off,

"This is to make LLENN fight like before! Everyone, charge ahead boldly!"

She gave a strict command to her comrades.

Instantly understanding the "plan", first came Tanya,

"In order to make LLENN show off her lovely <sup>karen</sup> skills, that's our only choice!"

Then came Tohma,

"This will make her greatly indebted, <sup>kashi</sup> so let's get our sweets! <sup>kashi</sup>"

And then Rosa,

"So we're going with a splendid <sup>umai</sup> plan to eat something <sup>umai</sup> tasty!"

In succession, replies filled with puns reached her.

"....."

*Boss* fell silent for a moment, but eventually,

"Shhit! I can't think of anything!"

She felt honestly bitter.

"The four amazons have begun their assault. Distance 400. And still approaching."

M held his beloved M14 EBR in a prone stance.

This was on the south side of the building, atop a *balcony* connected to the room. It was not all that wide to begin with, thus almost the entirety of M's large body was inside.

The barrel of the M14 EBR, erected on a *bipod*, was only slightly sticking out through the gaps in the *balcony's* guardrail.

On the thick, wooden guardrail, the same "sheets" that Pitohui had also used some time ago were affixed.

Joining the two sheets while leaving a gap for the barrel to stick out of were "crossbars" and *duct tape*—

Used as crossbars were the *assault rifles* used by the MMTM members, the G36K and ARX160. The 2 *assault rifles* were wound together with *duct tape*, and the product was attached to the shield.

*Characters-turned-corpses* spent 10 minutes in a standby *area* and could watch the battle broadcast to kill time. The owners of the 2 rifles were surely lamenting right now.

The *Bullet Lines* from Rosa's PKM flickered around the room, then scattered bullets came through the *glass* window, opening holes and creating sounds as they sank into the thick logs.

Carefully aimed Dragunov sniper bullets also came flying, but, fired from a low position, they only hit the thick logs or roof of the *balcony*.

Not minding them as long as they would not hit him, M calmly ignored the numerous bullets,

"Awaiting the *leader's* orders."

And asked Pitohui, who had been handed the role.

"Let's see....."

Pitohui was on the building's north side, that is to say, the corridor side.

She was holding a *bolt-action* sniper rifle, the *Savage 110BA* that her comrades had left behind, in a prone position.

The *bipod* equipped on it... was not used. What was used to support the gun was—

A *member* of MMTM, that is to say, a corpse. She had placed the body of Kenta, which had been restored from his burst and scattered state merely for form's sake, upside down and was using the hollow of his back to support her gun.

It would not move, it would be bulletproof, and its height was just right; it was practically the same plan as SHINC's just a while ago, except that theirs was an ally while hers was an enemy.

'How would that look ethics-wise?' was a question that remained, but it did not seem like Pitohui was concerned with that. In this case as well, how would Kenta himself, most likely watching the video stream at the corpse standby area right now, think of this?

There were no windows to serve as eyelets at such a low position in the corridor, but if there were none, you could just make one. There was a hole about 40 *cm* in diameter gouged out by piercing the thick log with her *photon sword*, and Pitohui was currently aiming her barrel and *scope* at it.

In the round field of view of her *scope*, she saw the figure of a tiny enemy dashing through the meadow. There was but one of them. A *grenade launcher* that could consecutively fire 6 grenades in hand. The distance was still long, more than 450 *metres*.

"On my side, I wonder *why*, LLENN-chan isn't coming out..... The girl with the 6-shot *grenlaun* is approaching happily and boldly by herself. What d'ya think? Former *leader*."

Maintaining her status of being able to fire at her at any moment, Pitohui asked in return.

"What do I think..... I can't read their intentions with a plan that has them recklessly plunging right at us. In this situation, it's as if they're telling us to shoot them."

"True..... It's kinda weird. I wonder if they have something up their sleeve.....?"

Pitohui also said dubiously. If she had not placed her cheek on the *stock* to peek through her *scope*, she would probably have inclined her head.

"However, the enemy count should be decreased while we can decrease it."

"I guess that's our only choice. Okay then, here's my command. Fire at will and destroy them. If they get within 200 *metres*, we'll revise."

"Roger."

1 second later.

M's M14 EBR and Pitohui's *Savage* 110BA spouted fired at the exact same moment.

The streaming screen in the bar—

Showed how a hit *effect* gleamed from the head of the woman who had been firing her PKM *machine gun* from a prone position.

"Aww!"

"She got hit!"

Among the screams of the men,

" ....."

Anna watched the battle of her comrades in silence, with her arms folded in an imposing stance.

"I got shot— but not dead yet! I'm covering you!"

While reporting to her comrades, who were running ahead, with a red light shining from the edge of her head, Mother Courage Rosa stood up with her PKM in hand. Her *hit points* decreased until it stopped in the deep red zone of twenty percent.

She did not apply a first aid kit. As if saying 'like I have the time for that', she pressed the heavy *machine gun* against her shoulder and aimed it at the second floor of the *log house* about 300 *metres* ahead, towards the muzzle that had just shot her,

"Doryaaaaaaaa!"

She unleashed as much firepower as she could.

While using her Strength to press down the rising gun, she continued sending the light of her tracer bullets into the room.

As if embodying the fighting spirit of its owner, the PKM continued roaring smoothly.

Fire and hot wind spouted from her muzzle, radially swaying the grass around her. Her empty cartridges were expelled with extreme force to the left, then they eventually shattered into *polygon* fragments, and brilliantly disappeared.

And so, 5 seconds later.

The 100 round ammunition *belt* supplied from the ammunition box below her gun were completely used up and the world suddenly went silent.

"Huu....."

As Rosa lowered her PKM, a single bullet flew right at her brow—

And pierced all the way to the other side.

Fukaziroh, running as she heard the gaudy gunfire on the south side of the building,

\*Jagyari!\*

Heard a metallic clank she had never heard before atop her head.

At the same moment, as if being pressed down by an invisible person, her head slightly inclined to the right.

"Uhi, a bullet grazed my *helmet* daaamn scary... But *lucky!*"

Nevertheless, she continued running.

Having fired, Pitohui,

"Being so tiny is unfair....."

Operated the *bolt* of her *Savage 110BA*, expelled an empty cartridge, and loaded the next bullet into the chamber. Then,

"How's it going on your end?"

She asked M, who was shooting on the opposite side of the building,

"I just brought down a second one. I can take them all.

And heard his voice.

The spectators in the bar,

"This... looks bad."

"They're done for....."

Were in a *mood* of complete resignation.

On the screen, a *member* of SHINC, the Dragunov user Tohma, was shot during her decisive though reckless assault.

She had been repeating the actions of running, firing a few shots, running again, then firing again, but once the *support machine gun* user Rosa was shot and stopped firing, it was only natural that she would be chosen as the next target.

The 10-round *magazine* of her Dragunov was used up and the *bolt* which had been vehemently going back and forth stopped in the backward position, and the moment she was about to take out her next *magazine* from her *pouch*—

A bullet to her head.

Then another one high up her chest.

Having received a merciless rapid-fire attack, Tohma fell knees-first, and collapsed with her face on the ground. Before long, a 【 D e a d 】 *marker* lit up.

"I guess... the revenge for the "shield" was taken....."

"SHINC only has two more. The Bizon user and the Vintorez user."

"Their moves together are great, but they have yet to land an attack on M."

"However, considering how hard they've been trying so far, it seems like it will end up in a relatively painful end....."

One of the spectators in the exchange glimpsed at the woman standing to the left behind him.

Anna, still in her imposing stance, had her eyes fixed on the screen.

She was wearing *sunglasses* even indoors, thus her eyes could not be seen.

What kind of eyes could she be looking with at how her comrades were shot, or about to be shot?

There, a *member* of the amazons *team*, a very short and stout woman, appeared. It was the woman who had intentionally turned into a corpse and became a pedestal for the PTRD 1941. She had just now returned from the standby *area*.

"Anna, how is it?"

At the *dwarfess's* question,

"*Boss* and the others are carrying out the plan."

Without turning her gaze, the golden-haired beauty gave a short answer.

M reloaded his *magazine* and turned his *scope* towards the next target.

The silver-haired woman, running the fastest, with a Bizon. The distance was about 250 *metres*. She was running in *zig-zags* in intervals of about 3 seconds, but her pattern was monotonous,

"Right..... left..... right....."

M easily predicted it and, because her body was small, he aimed at her torso rather than her head, and fired.

The bullet went into the target's abdomen and her body was knocked over, collapsing frontward. Despite having dealt large *damage*, she did not suffer instant death, thus the woman, still lying on the ground, searched for her dropped Bizon, grasped it, aimed it at him, and fired out a magazine with her right hand.

This was nothing but futile resistance.

No matter how much she fired the *submachine gun* that used pistol bullets, they would not reach him.

In fact, far from hitting M, the *Bullet Lines* did not even extend to his surroundings—

M calmly fixed his aim on the head of the woman that had become a still target and squeezed the trigger.

During the instant between the firing of his gun and the impact of the bullet, M saw.

A cheerful smile on the woman's face.

"....."

The two eyes on M's stern face opened wider than ever before—

Due to the angle, it was not displayed on the broadcast.

"Oh dear, so I'm the only one left, huh."

Running at a speed that did not suit her large build, *Boss* confirmed the elimination of her comrades by looking at the *hit point gauge* at the upper left corner of her view.

Returning her gaze, she continued running to no end, close to 200 *metres* remaining.

There was now a rather large *log house* before her and on its second floor, she saw the figure of a man with his gun at the ready.

"So, what are we gonna do now.....?"

The moment she muttered this, a deep red *Bullet Line* shone from the man's gun,

"Hoh!"

*Boss* smiled.

It was undoubtedly her first time receiving a *Line* from M, who had always used *Lineless* fire,

"Hah! Not bad! Typical M! You've already caught on to what we're thinking!"

*Boss* gave great praise to the man who was attempting to kill her.

At the same moment, she stopped and jumped aside to avoid the *Line*. Her large body lightly revolved through the air, as a bullet pierced through the spot she had been just a moment ago. *Boss* landed on her hand and went into a forward ukemi.

Having displayed a magnificent evasion, *Boss*,

"My chance!"

Still in her half-rising posture, readied her Vintorez, aimed at the man with her *scope*, and squeezed her trigger.

The certain-kill silent sniper rifle fired out a bullet at a truly low volume, and the bullet sank into the guardrail of the *balcony*, creating wood chips.

"Dah! She missed!"

Among the shouts of the spectators, M fired on-screen.

In this case, with perfect aiming as before, a bullet sank into the left eye of the braid-haired *gorilla* with her Vintorez at the ready. As the head of that large body swayed, a second bullet hit nearly the exact same spot.

\*Dosun\*, the *gorilla* woman toppled over face-up so heavily that such a sound could even be heard—

A 【D e a d】 *marker* conveyed. The elimination of the previous runner-ups, *team SHINC*.

In the audience, rather than praising M's skills, there were more voices feeling sorry for the defeat.

Among them,

"Fuh!"

Anna smiled lightly,

"Oh dear. That is overkill, *Boss*."

Next to her, Sophie muttered.

Taking off her *sunglasses*, Anna turned to meet the face of the short Sophie to her left. Her eyes were vivid *emerald green*, increasing her voluptuous beauty even further, and a sigh escaped the mouths of the men in the bar who managed to steal a glance.

Without any regard to the men, Anna asked Sophie.

"How many points would you give *Boss* just now?"

Having shot down *Boss* and completely eliminated the threat on his side, M,

"I eliminated SHINC."

First gave Pitohui a short report,

"How's your end?"

Before asking this.

During M's shooting, Pitohui had also fired twice.

The superb sound of discharge of the 338 *lapua magnum* that boasted twice the power of M's 7.62 x 51 *mm* bullets spread to the side of the *Savage* 110BA's muzzle due to its muzzle breaker, and was echoing through the corridor. The gunshot should be louder inside than outside.

This was a question to confirm his thoughts that 'she had naturally taken them down', but,

"Well, about that— not coming out."

There was no subject, thus he did not understand the meaning of her reply.

"I'm coming to you."

"Go ahead."

Lifting his beloved gun, M stood and passed through the door, filled with holes he had made himself as the 1.5 *metre* hole was small, into the corridor.

First, he stopped the giga-nade whose *timer* was still ticking.

Then, he stood beside Pitohui, who had her *Savage* 110BA placed on a corpse that served as a pedestal, readied his own M14 EBR, and peeked through the window *glass* with his *scope*.

"11 o'clock. 370 *metres*."

He moved his gaze to the direction that Pitohui told him,

"....."

There, he saw a girl *character* that was not LLENN, meaning that it was probably LLENN's partner.

The girl had an MGL-140 hanging on her shoulder via its *sling*, a large *helmet* on her head, a large *backpack* on her back, and she was desperately crawling through the meadow. Her course was straight at them.

And, the girl lacked the ends of her legs.

He could tell what was going on by looking through the magnified field of his *scope*. The legs moving in tandem with her arms, specifically, the ends of her slender ankles were shining red and were missing.

"The first one was a coincidence, y'know?"

While aiming, Pitohui explained.

"I hit the left foot of the cute girl and tore her leg off. Then she fell. I tried waiting for a bit, but nobody came out, so I shot the other foot. But, still nobody came out. I wonder where LLENN-chan is.....? Or perhaps she has zero motivation to save her comrade?"

Pitohui said in such a tone as if she were searching for her partner in hide-and-seek.

Wounding one person to an extent that they would not die instantly, and shooting down every single soldier that came to save them, due to being unable to abandon their comrade-in-arms who were moaning in pain and fear of death—

A cruel, yet effective sniper technique frequently used in actual battles.

Though, GGO was just a *game*, thus a more likely scenario was,

"Soz, you're unlucky, so give up."

"How heartless."

"If you'd like, I could put you out of your misery?"

"You bastard, don't mess with me."

A conversation like that.

"Enough already, bring her down in 1 shot. You should be able to do it easily. Or did you, in fact, run out of bullets?"

When M said this,

"What is that? Kindness? Love? Compassion?"

Pitohui pouted. While M,

"Love and compassion are the same thing. And all of them are wrong. This is not a *real* battle. LLENN won't come out to help her comrade who recklessly jumped out. She is a brave who paired up with me and fought all those battles. She happens to have that much composure."

Answered indifferently.

"More importantly, a bigger concern is whether LLENN has secretly went around into our blind spot, and whether the other surviving *team* has found a vehicle and closed in on us. I cleaned up the south side. All that remains is the north and east sides. I want us to just hurry up and slaughter that girl, then return to being on the lookout on the surroundings. We don't have time to play around."

As M slowly gave a drawn-out speech, the enemy girl continued to show guts by crawling forward and closing in.

About 340 *metres* remained. It was a distance that a *grenade launcher* could reach, and if she had the luck to get one in through the window, even if that was considerably difficult to do, it would be quite dangerous.

Though, she had yet to ready her gun while going towards them, thus Pitohui nonchalantly,

"Can we wait a bit more?"

"No. I'll do it then."

M opened the *glass* window in front of him with one hand. He slid it up, fixed it in place, and once again held his M14 EBR.

"Good grief."

Pitohui fired.

Along with a roar, the bullet flew and it the crawling girl's left wrist.

Together with a red hit *effect*, her small hand wearing a glove fluttered in the air.

The shot girl twisted her body with shock and pseudo-pain, then—

Lying sideways, she pressed down on her left wrist with her right hand. Her movement was as if she had actually lost a hand and was trying to stem the flow of blood.

"Ah, sorry. I was aiming for the head but missed. I'm not experienced with this gun, you see."

Loading the next bullet, Pitohui said brazenly, then fired again.

The second one also "went off aim" and hit the girl's right wrist. Just like with her left one, it was blown away.

"Pito....."

M said in a bitter tone but did not fire.

Without loading the next bullet,

"With this much *damage*, she should die right about now— wait what?"

Unexpectedly, atop the girl who didn't move after lying down, or more accurately, became unable to move, a 【D e a d】 *marker* did not lit up.

That is to say, despite suffering enough *damage* to blow all of her limbs off, her *hit points* had yet to reach zero. In SJ, one could not see the opponent's *hit points*, thus it was impossible to tell how much remained, but,

"How *tough*! Just what you can expect from LLENN-chan's partner! I wonder where she brought her from..... Was there such a small and strong girl in GGO before, I wonder....."

Pitohui expressed admiration, doubt, and finally she said with no hesitation.

"But now she can't do a thing for more than 2 minutes, right? Without hands, she can't shoot."

In the bar—

Fukaziroh's great *pinch* was broadcast live.

"Hey! Dat's naaaasty!"

"This should be off-limits to anyone under eighteen....."

"Even though it's just an *avatar*, how is bullying such a tiny girl fun to you!"

To which there were people who said this,

"With heads blown off and chopped off moments ago, what are you talking about now of all times!"

"Even that girl herself mercilessly *minced* several people in that station back then, 'm I rite?"

"And the one bullying is also a woman, so....."

There were also people with reason.

And finally,

"Well, no matter how nasty it looks, a *game* is just a *game*. Be sure to make it a proper distinction from *RL*, 'kay?"

Someone concluded in a blunt tone.

Turning the clocks back a bit—

"Why you! Why you!"

When LLENN failed to untie the knot for the umpteenth time, she heard a gunshot. Evidently, the shot came from this side of the building.

And then,

"Uhi, a bullet grazed my *helmet* daaamn scary... But *lucky!*"

Fukaziroh's voice.

"Are you being shot? Hit the dirt!"

"I don't wanna!"

She heard her answer, as well as faintly heard the flashy gunfight taking place on the other side of the building. She recalled the sound of a rapid-fire sniper rifle. It was M's M14 EBR.

As SHINC charged at them, M responded with his gun— having been once trained by M, LLENN understood.

In that case, the one shooting Fukaziroh was undoubtedly Pitohui.

'What should I do?'

At any rate, she had to take off her shackles.

LLENN once again put great effort into untying the *sling*, but still failed

"Shhittt!"

She gave a cry as if she were cursing the world.

"Oi oi, are ya still doin' that? Alexander the Great-san."

Hearing Fukaziroh's voice,

"Hah?"

The flabbergasted LLENN opened her mouth and then realised. When departing, Fukaziroh had said something strange.

『 "Whoever untangles that knot shall surely be king of this world!、" 』

And then again,

『Alexander the Great-san』

This.

She put the two *hints* together in her brain, and after 0.5 seconds,

"Shitt!"

LLENN stopped her hand from untying the knot and turned it to her back—

"I should have done this from the start!"

Like Alexander the Great, who deemed the "Gordian Knot、" to be impossible to untangle and thus cut it in one fell swoop, she cut off the knot on her ankle with the *combat knife* she had pulled out.

Having finally regained her freedom, put away her *knife*, and put on her gloves again, LLENN caught another gunshot with her ears.

And then,

"Uhi! I was shot!"

She heard Fukaziroh's tensionless voice.

"Wha! Safe!?"

While asking that, 'Oh right, I could just look at that', she gazed to the upper left corner of her view.

Fukaziroh's *hit points* were decreasing, until they decreased by 10 *percent* and a bit. Luckily, it wasn't that great of a *damage*. The bullet probably missed her head and chest.

"Fuka! Enough already, hide! I'm going in for support!"

"No, that's impossible."

"Why?"

"They shot my left foot. Cut off again. Honestly, the youth these days are so easy to snap."<sup>29</sup>

"Haaaah?"

With her monocle, LLENN searched for Fukaziroh. She found her. And saw how she was crawling through the meadow 129 *metres* away with a red light shining from the end of her left foot.

The next moment, another roar.

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<sup>29</sup> The word 切れる can either mean 1) to cut off, in the sense of her foot literally being cut off, 2) to cut off as in (suddenly) drop a call/get disconnected, 3) to snap/get angry. She seems to have combined all three meanings for a joke in this line.

And this time, she saw. How Fukaziroh's right foot was blown away.

"Buhih! Uwah— oh right foot, not you too! Ah, I wanna eat some Caesar's *salad*."

Was Fukaziroh's voice, unclear whether it was composed or chaotic. Her *hit points* decreased even further. The remainder was about seventy percent.

LLENN searched for the shooter.

She roughly know the location, thus she instantly found them.

In the vicinity of the centre of the building, on the wall of the second floor corridor, there was a small hole that was not there before. At maximum magnification, she was somehow able to see the muzzle. She still intermittently heard the gunshots from the M14 EBR even now, thus this was undoubtedly Pitohui.

'Seeing as I found her, might as well shoot her', she was about to draw her P-chan that was placed ahead of her,

" ....."

When her left arm stopped.

There was no chance of her being able to aim properly with a P90 at a distance close to 500 *metres*. If she only had to send some bullets in, she could probably do it, but she had no expectation of hitting the target and, most importantly, the *Bullet Lines* would give away her own position.

If only she had a sniper rifle of her own, setting aside whether she would actually be able to hit with it, she could at least *pinpoint* her aim on that hole.

"Aww, I should have taken that first *tutorial*, the sniper rifle *course* seriously....."

It was too late to think about that now. In the first place, if she had not used a *submachine gun-type* gun all this time, LLENN would probably not have been able to grow so much.

"Uhm..... My dear LLENN.....My dear partner..... Heed my words with caution....."

Fukaziroh sent her these words.

"Right now, I have finally realised. I can't move freely, so this probably isn't gonna work out."

"You knew that from the start! Seeing as you went on such a reckless attack!"

"But I don't have any regrets or reflect on anything."

"Well do so! Going off like that without a thought!"

"It's better than worrying incessantly like you just did, LLENN. Haven't you heard the famous words "A soldier values swiftness most of all, ? You've done so during Science class in primary school, right?"

"No, I haven't!"

In her view, LLENN saw Fukaziroh, who had lost both of her feet, still advancing forward.

"Heave, ho. And a one, and a two."

Using her elbows and knees, she continued crawling.

"Enough already, just fire your *grenades* from there! You don't even need to reach them! You don't even need to hit them! Because I'll use the timing of the explosion to jump out! Okay?"

"I see, that might not be a bad idea——"

A roar.

"Uhyo?"

Came Fukaziroh's shriek—— or something like that, probably.

And scattering in the centre of her view was a hit *effect*. LLENN saw her partner's left hand being blown away. Her *hit points* decreased by another twenty percent.

"Guyah! My left hand! How can I possibly put on an engagement ring now!"

Shouted Fukaziroh, who had no such intention.

".....:"

LLENN could only watch on in silence now.

How, along with yet another gunshot, even the right wrist that was pressing down on her blown off left hand was blown off.

"Ah..... I'm done for,huh..... Bullets coming without a *Line* sure is unfair, after all....."

Fukaziroh muttered feebly and became unable to move while still lying on her sides——

Her *hit points* were in the *yellow area*, around thirty percent,

"S-s-s——"

"Shiit!"

Shouted while punching the ground.

Before she knew it, the M14 EBR's gunshots stopped.

As if the tumult thus far were all a lie, the world of GGO fell silent,

"Damn it all....."

LLENN lay on the meadow, wearing her camouflage *poncho*, all alone.

"Damn it all....."

Like a *soumato*<sup>30</sup>, recent events replayed in her mind.

SJ2 was pretty much full of just about anything that could have gone wrong.

She just needed to find Pitohui quickly and bring her down somehow—

Yet she was placed at the farthest point from her target, and during her long journey she was forced to engage multiple nuisances in battle,

"Damn it all....."

They were forced to consume a ton of bullets and although she was able to increase her own supplies, Fukaziroh's *pink smoke grenades* were largely used up,

"Damn it all....."

---

30 A lantern adorned with paper horses which revolve in a circle.

Nevertheless, they held on, formed a plan, and when they used it at the “critical moment”, an unthinkable nuisance entered the fray,

"Damn it all....."

Nevertheless, they frantically regained control, and when they were about to execute their plan, this time a veteran *team* riding a car barged in,

"Damn it all....."

Those guys were taken down in the end, but because of them, she saw the strength of a fierce god or monster in the opponent she had to fight now,

"Damn it all....."

Then, when she tried to think of a new strategy, a splendid plan, her comrades all decisively began an assault of their own accord and, as she feared, they were all torn to shreds,

"Damn it all....."

And right now, she could only tremble with nothing to do.

"Aaaaah! Enough of this!"

LLENN shouted this to the sky.

"Why should I care about Pito-san! She can just win this thing already! She's as strong as a monster, so as if she's gonna die!"

'Hohoh.....'

Still collapsed, Fukaziroh listened to shout of LLENN's soul with a broad grin.

"Pito-san's obliteration, aaah, like I care about that anymore! Enough of this enough! If that's the case, I didn't have to go through all that trouble! I can just die!"

"So, what should ya do?"

Fukaziroh's voice asked her, as if it were a question from a god,

"Beat to a pulp!"

LLENN answered.

"Whom?"

"Pito-san!"

"How?"

"Like I care!"

\*Buwasa!\*

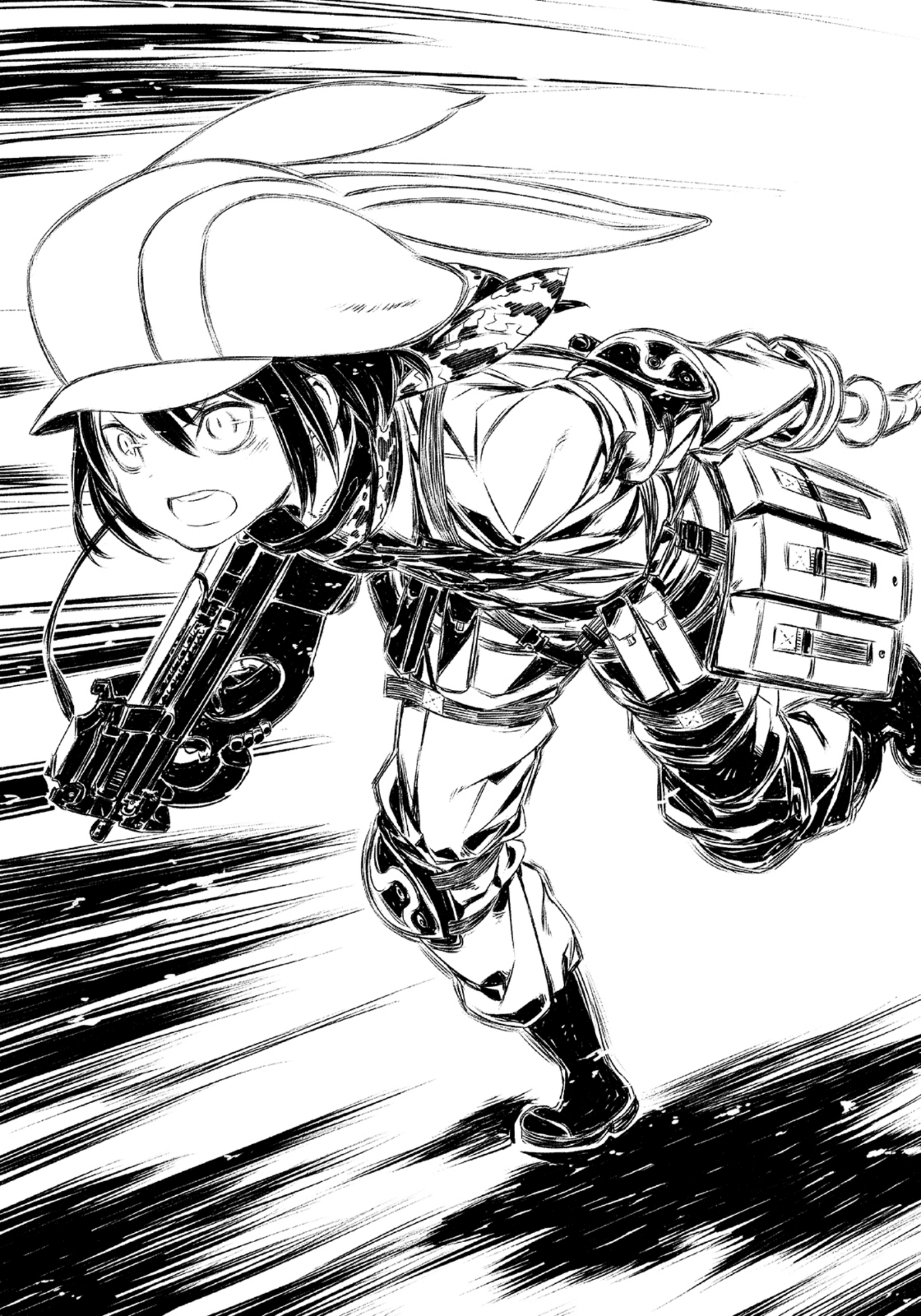
LLENN stood up with a jump and tore off the camouflage *poncho* she had been wearing.

"I don't care how, I'm just gonna shoot her to death one way or another! Or by *knife*! Or by any other means!"

*Pink* appeared on the meadow, clearly conspicuous. There stood a strange-looking girl.

" I'm gonna beat Pito-san to a pulp!"

And right now, her feet kicked off the ground.



"Nice! In that case, I'll also help! LLENN-chan!"

Her beloved "P-chan" in hand spoke to her in high spirits from below, and LLENN clearly heard it.

"Alright! Let's go! P-chan!"

Answering it, LLENN began dashing at full speed.

Hearing that shout,

'Buhahahahahahahah!'

Fukaziroh spouted out in her mind, and then thought.

'I see, so that's what a deranged LLENN is like, huh.'



SECT.19

## 第十九章 ラストバトルは私に

## SECT.19

# This Last Battle of Mine

On the screens showing a video feed in the bar—

A *pink* chibi stood up while tearing off her disguise and showed off her gallant, *pink* figure.

"It's timeee! The previous champion!"

"So that's where she was!"

"Nice; go at them!"

Cheers,

"Idiooot! Why did you come out at a place like that!"

"You took off your camouflage *poncho* too soon!"

"Ah, she's done for....."

And voices of despair came out at the exact same moment.

As if responding to both sides, the *pink* chibi began sprinting with all of her well-trained agility.

"Huh?"

Directly northwest.

In other words, she was running away from the *log house*.

"There she isssssssssssss!"

Pitohui was pleasantly surprised.

Through her *scope*, demagnified in order to look for enemies, she saw something *pink* standing up from the grass at the top of her view.

"I saw it too. It's LLENN."

Having set up his M14 EBR on a window frame, M reported,

"She's mine, you hear me! If you arbitrarily decide to kill her, I'm gonna kill you, got it?"

While Pitohui gave him a warning in advance. And then,

"Now then! Come at me!"

She gazed through her *scope* with an expression that looked like a cluster of fighting spirit,

"Huh?"

And saw LLENN, fleeing at the speed of a rabbit.

Her small back was getting even smaller.

"Hey! Wha! She fuckin' ran away! Unbelievable! Unbelievable!"

Due to her terrifyingly high speed, LLENN had already used the opening to disappear, thus Pitohui moved the *Savage 110BA* away from her body and rose up.

She grabbed the KTR-09 *assault rifle*, the beloved gun that was actually hers, placed beside her,

"We're going after her! Come!"

And gave a forceful order to M, who was, naturally, flabbergasted.

"Y-yeah, okay..... What're we going to do about her partner?"

"We'll handle her later!"

"However, if she recovers her limbs, her *grenades* will be a pain in the ass, you know?"

"Oh shut it!"

Pitohui used her black boots to kick M's nether region with all her might.

"Fugurih!"

As M fell on the spot knees-first, along with a strange scream,

"I said! We're going!"

She sent him these extremely rash words.

"Guuuh— H-however....."

It was unclear whether M was suffering or enjoying himself, but with his knees and elbows on the floor,

"If LLENN's seriously running away..... even if we pursue..... we can't even catch her....."

He concluded calmly.

"I know that. 'Cause LLENN-chan runs car-like fast."

With his pain or pleasure seemingly having lessened, M suddenly raised his head,

"In that case?"

"We're obviously going after her in a car!"

LLENN beginning her grand escape at full speed before the final, decisive battle was, of course, broadcast—

The *cameras* in the air caught sight of LLENN's back and the meadow flowing by at extreme speeds beside her.

"Bhahahahahahahahaha!"

In a waiting *area*, where only a *monitor* floated in a dim space with no sky or walls, *Boss* burst into laughter.

Beside her,

"Way to go!"

Tanya,

"LLENN! Do your best!"

Tohma,

"We're counting on you!"

And Rosa, finishing the group of the dead, their bottoms on the black floor as they cheerfully watched on.

Boss turned her tough-looking expression into a smile and muttered.

"Oh, yes. That's the LLENN I wanted to beat."

Having run through the meadows at full speed, LLENN suddenly stopped and turned around.

Keeping the P90 held by its *sling* in her left hand, she brought the monocle she had been grasping in her right hand the entire time to her eyes.

Just like that, she distanced herself from the *log house* by about 1 *km*. At its western edge, she caught sight of three four-wheelers. There were two figures embarking on one of them. And it began to move.

"Hehehehe."

With a broad, fiendish grin, LLENN,

"C'mon, come at me!"

She changed her course.

Her goal was the east.

"There! She's running east!"

Shouted M, while grasping a thin handle in the driver's seat of a *Humvee* that was trampling the grass in the meadow.

"I see heeeeeer!"

Pitohui was standing at the middle of the four seats with her head stuck out from the *roof* that was surrounded by a bulletproof plate.

"Hold on!"

With M's voice, the *Humvee* turned to the right. Through centrifugal force, Pitohui's body was pressed onto the side of the *roof*,

"Kyahahahahahahaha!"

And she seemed awfully cheerful.

"Taaaaaaah!"

LLENN ran and ran, and ran to no end.

She ran at full speed, to the utmost of her abilities.

Since this was a meadow, she could not see what she was stepping on. If there were a slightly big stone there, she would undoubtedly tumble immediately and roll a long way on the ground.

Yet, she did not slow down at all. While running, she glanced back and, seeing a brown car coming towards her,

"Not yet, still not yet!"

Continued running earnestly.

She ran eastward, while the *log house* to her right had already disappeared from sight, left behind to her right.

Stretching out ahead of her was a valley, located in-between the snowy and rocky mountains, — meadows, ponds, and rivers.

Chasing the *pink* chibi dashing through the meadow like a swift horse was a single *Humvee* about 400 *metres* away.

"C'mon M! Step on the *accelerator* moreeee! I can't target her like this!"

LLENN's dash lost to the automobile in speed. The distance was gradually diminishing for a while now, but no matter how good Pitohui was, the distance was not suitable for successfully shooting any target with one hand in a violently shaking car.

M objected from the driver's seat.

"I can step on it, but if the frame gets even more stressed, the car might end up flipping, you know? I have no idea how rough the ground will be beyond here."

"Like I care! Do it!"

With her left foot, Pitohui kicked M's head hard as he drove.

"Gafuh! —This is on you!"

M's big leg stepped on the *accelerator* even further.

The V6 *diesel turbo engine* with a displacement of 6500 cc roared up and, after a pause, the *Humvee* accelerated with a jerk. In addition, Pitohui's body was taken aback by the jerk, while her strong arms supported her.

"Hi-yo! Silveeeeer!"<sup>31</sup>

---

31 Reference to the Lone Ranger, a fictional, masked, former Texas Ranger from the 1930s.

Pitohui shouted like a certain protagonist—

With her *pony tail* blown by the wind, her eyes glittered atop the *Humvee*.

"Now, LLENN-chan! Show me how you will fight!

Watching as LLENN ran and the car pursued it,

"I wonder what LLENN-chan is planning!"

"She can't possibly be going without a plan. I'm looking forward to it!"

The bar spectators' chests pounded with excitement,

"LLENN, you have nothing in mind, huh."

"Yeah. She's going in super-blind."

In the waiting *area*, Tanya and *Boss* had such a conversational exchange.

"Yet, that's the best option."

On the north side of the *log house*, waiting for her limbs to recover, Fukaziroh somehow succeeded in applying a first aid *kit* with just her arms and mouth.

As her *hit points* recovered bit by bit—

And looking at LLENN's bar that was still completely full and *green*,

'Do your best do your best.'

She wished in her mind.

'If you do your best, you can do anything.'

'What do I do what do I do what do I do what do I do?'

While running, that was all that LLENN thought about.

She jumped out due to succumbing to anger, but that did not mean she had some sort of plan. She just avoided an impossigame of having to break into a building encamped by skilled *snipers* for the time being.

Once again, she glanced behind her,

'Ugeh.'

The rectangular car was far closer than it was just a few moments ago, around 250-300 *metres* away.

She was able to discern the smile on Pitohui's face as the top half of her body protruded from the roof. In her right hand was a long, black rod. She did not know what that was, but it was obvious that it was not a carpet beater.

'Shitt!'

After spitting out a dirty word for the umpteenth time today, LLENN thought.

'After starting GGO, I sure have turned foul-mouthed.'

That aside, she thought of a plan.

'Should I turn around and intercept them with my P90?'

'I've been able to hit a target at 200 *metres* distance before, so should I hope for a fluke *hit*?'

"No way! At such a distance, they'll also be shooting us, y'know? The moment we stop, we'll be shot."

P-chan rejected the idea.

That would actually be the case, seeing as Pitohui's gun would probably be an *assault rifle*. She would undoubtedly lose the shoot-out.

LLENN continued running and noticed.

To the left of her course, at a place about 100 *metres* away she saw something that looked like a pond.

It was a round puddle several tens of *metres* in diameter; its surface only reflected the lead-coloured sky, while it was impossible to tell how deep it was.

"....."

LLENN slightly changed her trajectory towards it.

The spectators in the bar, seeing LLENN change course on the screen,

"Oi oi! That's a pond!"

"Don't tell me she's going to jump in it and swim away?"

"That's not so bad of a plan. No matter how great a *Humvee* is, it'll become unable to move if it plunges into a pond."

"And what if it's shallow? It could just be a simple puddle in the wetland, y'know? If the water is only about 50 *cm* deep, it could be easily crossed, right?"

"Though, you need to get very close to it to be able to tell, right?"

Said whatever came to their minds in excitement.

LLENN continued running towards the pond.

'Please don't let Pito-san shoot me!'

With just this wish in mind.

Glimpsing behind herself, she saw that her distance from the car was 200 *metres*.

Facing forward, the distance to the pond was 30 *metres*.

'Alright! Let's doooo it!'

LLENN sent a command from her brain to stop. Her legs, having been moving as if they were automated, instantly came to a sudden halt.

LLENN's soles slid through the meadow while kicking up the dirt, lowering her speed.

It was an unbelievably sudden *brake*, but LLENN endured the deceleration burden that forced her body backwards, and, flawlessly maintaining her balance with her legs, she successfully stopped without tumbling down.

Her stopping distance was merely around 5 *metres*.

"Now that was something!"

"That move was awesome."

Spectators voiced out in the bar,

"Uhyaa! What the how the!

"Хорошо! If LLENN took up *virtual* rhythmic gymnastics, she'd definitely be great at it!"

In the waiting *area*, Tanya and Tohma shared their impressions.

Having suddenly stopped and speedily turned around, LLENN,

"Gotcha, we'll shoot them down here, I see!"

As if ignoring P-chan's voice, she took the gun hanging by the *sling* and moved it behind her.

"Huh? You're not going to shoot with me? You're not? You're not?"

Ignoring her annoying, beloved gun, LLENN brought her right hand to the back of her waist,

"Fuh!"

And pulled out the *combat knife* with black luster which was located there in a backhand grip.

Bringing it in front of her, she held it in a pugilist's stance,

"Come at me! Pitohui!"

"Fuheh?"

Pitohui raised her voice hysterically.

The *pink* chibi she had been chasing this long stopped like a plane that landed on an aircraft carrier, turned around right at that instant, and pointed its *knife* towards her, riding on a car that was chasing it.

Her wide-open eyes instantly gave way to a smile of a pleasant surprise,

"Hyaaaah! How wonderfuuuuuul!"

Pitohui exclaimed atop her *Humvee*.

She nonchalantly threw the KTR-09 she had been trying to lock onto her target with her right hand onto the *Humvee's* rear seat. A dull metallic sound could be heard.

150 *metres* remaining.

"Horseey! Continue onwards! It's single combat time!"

Pitohui gave an order to M and tightly grasped a different weapon with her right hand,

"Hyahou!"

From there, a bluish-white light came forth.

Holding her Muramasa F9 *photon sword* horizontally, Pitohui quickly turned around on the spot. The sword of light completely cut off the bulletproof plates installed around the *Humvee's roof*. The disconnected bulletproof plates fell to the sides and behind the car, one after another.

Now, there was nothing on the *Humvee's roof*, aside from Pitohui's figure from the waist up, with a sword in hand.

Holding up the sword in her right hand imposingly,

"<sup>Sessha</sup> I shall serve as your opponent in battle!"

Pitohui cried out like a samurai.

M did not let go of the *accelerator*.

'Aww yeah!'

LLENN chuckled.

The *Humvee* was just 100 *metres* away; Pitohui was riding on it while holding a sword of light and charging straight at her.

"Hey hey! Can't you just shoot that woman on the car right now! It's your super *chance*, LLENN-chan! Hurry up and lift me up to fire!"

'Shut up keep quiet I'll sell you.'

LLENN yelled at her beloved gun in her mind, and glared at the enemy knight coming at her on a huge horse beyond the black blade held in front of her.

"Single combat! The chibi is planning to attack her with a jump!"

"How's it gonna turn out!"

The voices from the bar,

"How cool!"

"Get 'er!"

"Stab 'er!"

And the voices from the waiting *area* did not reach LLENN, of course.

On the video feed screen.

The distance between the *pink* chibi standing in wait and the *Humvee* drawing near her with a roaring *engine* was—

50 *metres*.

40 *metres*.

30 *metres*.

"Uooo!"

LLENN broke into a run. 20 *metres*.

The woman atop the car slightly pulled back her right arm, which was holding her *photon sword*, and took up a posture for a stab without leaving any openings. Her left arm, conversely, was brought forward with the intent of sacrificing it for defence.

Everyone watching the stream understood.

That this battle would be resolved in an instant which would not allow anyone to even blink.

2-3 seconds after this moment—

LLENN would probably make use of her approaching run and Agility to attack with a great jump, while the woman would meet the attack with her *photon sword*.

Thus, whose head will it be?

The distance between the charging car and accelerating LLENN—

Was 10 more *metres*.

And thus the spectators witnessed.

The unbelievable instant.

\*Petan\*

Hit the dirt.

The *pink* chibi—

Hit the dirt.

The moment LLENN, having been charging towards the *Humvee*, stopped, she dropped onto the ground.

Lying atop the grassland, LLENN became awfully flat—

The *Humvee*'s front and back wheels passed by her sides, while the car's frame passed above her.

"Whaaaaaaat!"

Pitohui, who had been gazing at her opponent all this time, saw how the girl flattened to the ground and was engulfed under the car,

"LLENN-chan, you bastaaaaard!"

She quickly turned around on the *Humvee*'s roof.

Looking behind her, she saw a *pink* figure appear, instantly rise up, take her P90 with her left hand, and aim at her,

"And you call yourself a samuraaaaai!"

'That's where you are wrong', as if saying this, she began firing.

"LLENN-chan! This is what you were planning all this time?"

Spouting fire, P-chan asked in a questioning tone,

'Like hell I'd fling myself at someone riding on a car! I'm not Pito-san!'

LLENN answered in her mind.

Aiming with only her left hand was unreliable, but this would be her first and final *chance* of having the enemy this close. Planning to shoot out all 50 bullets, LLENN squeezed the trigger.

"Why yooooou!"

Pitohui roared out.

Multiple red *Bullet Lines* were extending towards her in a radial pattern.

Realising that she had been completely deceived by LLENN, Pitohui made a face so grim that it looked like it would make children cry,

"Uraaah!"

A *Bullet Line* that was on her face was met with the bluish-white light of her *photon sword*.

Mixed in with the dry metallic sounds of bullets hitting the car all around—

\*Juh!\*

The sound of something evaporating resounded.

LLENN's P90's *magazine* came with 50 bullets. She was still shooting.

Pitohui gave up on a counter attack. The moment she used the *photon sword's switch* to turn it off, she threw her legs forward and sat down inside the *Humvee* with a thud. Several more bullets grazed overhead.

"A pond! I'm stopping!"

Pitohui answered to the driver's voice.

"No worries, continue forward!"

While shooting with her left hand alone,

'Alright, this will work!'

LLENN saw.

How the car that passed over her charged towards the pond without dropping in speed.

'If it continued without stopping, the car would likely sink. No matter how sturdy the car was, it is hard to think that it is amphibious.'

Using that *chance*, I'll approach the edge of the pond while reloading my P90, switch it to my right hand to aim properly, of course, wait for the two to come to the surface and mercilessly make use of their weakness as they flounder about in the water to shoot them to death.'

'Since the two were wearing heavy equipment, they should need to frantically move both their arms and legs to avoid sinking, making them unable to counterattack.'

'Of course, they could just drown to death for all I care?'

At that point, she could just watch on to save bullets, thinking, 'Are they done yet are they done yet? Have they already drowned?'

"That's dirty in so many ways, LLENN-chan!"

'Shut it the victor is always right!'<sup>32</sup>

LLENN answered her beloved gun. At that moment, she fired out the last of her 50 bullets and her *magazine* ran dry.

LLENN returned the *knife* in her right hand to her waist *sheath*, and switched the P90 to her now empty right hand. She pulled out the empty *magazine* from the gun with her left hand,

\*Zappaan!\*

And heard a loud splash.

The *Humvee* charged towards the pond—

"C'mon, M! Continue forward!"

"Ou!"

And continued driving.

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32 This here is part of a saying 勝てば官軍、負ければ賊軍, which literally means, "if you win, you're a loyalist, if you lose, you're a rebel", in the sense that the victors get to decide what's right, while the losers are always branded as being in the wrong. Seems to come from the historical context of the Meiji Restoration.

"Whaaaaaa?"

As LLENN was about install the new *magazine*, her hand suddenly stopped.

Above the pond beyond the meadow, the car was still going. Its large *tyres* were hoisting up a lot of water and it had considerably slowed down, but it was still going.

It looked like a water strider.

'Don't tell me it's some awesome feature of the *tyres*?', LLENN thought for a moment, but instantly came up with a more ordinary explanation.

'Son of a! It's shallow!'

\*Pachin\*. LLENN inlayed the new *magazine* into the P90 and pulled the loading *lever*.

The car riding on the pond— no, a large puddle, turned right for a moment, then began a big *turn* left. Once it turns around, it would obviously come back for her.

"What do we do? LLENN-chan?"

Hearing P-chan's voice, LLENN once again began *dashing* at full speed. Towards that car.

"This thing is shallow! Though you can't tell just from looking at it!"

Inside the *Humvee* riding atop the gigantic puddle, Pitohui said this while extending her hand for the beloved gun she had dropped.

"How'd you know?"

Hearing M ask this as he began a turn to the left, Pitohui, once again grasping her KTR-09, answered.

"The times and locations of the water eruptions were on the walls in that house! Didn't you read them?"

The *Humvee*, kicking up water as it drove, made a 180 degree turn. And slightly dropped in speed.

In front of M, *wipers*, hanging on the top, in contrast to normal cars, were moving and wiping the wet windshield.

And what he saw was LLENN, standing upright before the pond, with her P90 at the ready. About 50 *metres* away.

"What do we do?"

Behind him, Pitohui suddenly moved her face closer to him and answered.

"Ain't it obvious! We're going in again. But this time, make a sudden turn a moment in advance! Squash her with your *tyres*!"

" ....."

M slightly frowned, but Pitohui looked like she was awfully enjoying herself.

"So far, I've only killed with my hands, guns, *grenades*, and sword, but I've yet to "kill by running over". Now's the perfect chance. —Go!"

Having been pat on the shoulder, M stepped on the *accelerator*.

Once again, LLENN readied her P90 for the brown, angular beast coming at her.

Her goal was the *roof*. In case Pitohui stuck her head out, she got ready to fire out in *full auto* at full power.

The *tyres* kicked hoisted up water as the car rushed on.

Pitohui... did not appear.

" ....."

Holding her P90 at the ready, LLENN stepped back.

"Alright, forwaaard!"

Instead of sticking out her head through the *roof*, Pitohui maintained a low posture as she glared at LLENN through the windshield.

LLENN took a few steps back,

"Squash her even if she tries to run away!"

M remained silent, but did not let go of the *accelerator*.

3 seconds before she could be splattered.

LLENN broke into a run. Aiming forward. And then, she leaped.

Soaring through the air due to her superhuman jump, LLENN aimed her P90's muzzle at the *Humvee roof* with a large hole in it.

\*Kakakakan!\*

Several metallic sounds could be heard within the car as sparks scattered,

"Gah!"

And Pitohui's voice stacked on top.

Having jumped instead of dropping to the ground this time, LLENN unleashed her gunfire at the *roof* of the car, specifically, the hole in it, as it passed under her.

When Pitohui turned around, Pitohui's face looked like an afterimage and she saw 2-3 hit *effects* caused by bullets the next moment, but all of them were on her legs.

'Shit! I missed!'

Preparing to land on the water, LLENN brought her legs forward.

"What do we do? What's our next plan?"

In response to her beloved gun's question, LLENN answered in her mind.

'We have no choice but to run!'

While driving the *Humvee* away from LLENN to get some distance,

"You alright?"

M turned clockwise behind him to ask.

"Now you've done it now you've done it!"

Pitohui, collapsed atop the rear seat,

"LLENN-chan, now you've done it!"

Said very cheerfully. There were two hit *effects* on her right thigh. Her *hit points* were still over eighty percent.

M turned forward and made another U *turn* with the *Humvee*.

LLENN was running atop the shallow puddle away from them. Although she was slower than running on the meadow, she was still running away at magnificent speed.

"Halt! I have no choice but to shoot her down!"

Pitohui stuck her head out from the *roof* of the *Humvee* that stopped as ordered, affixed the KTR-09 against her shoulder, and adjusted the *selector* to the *full-auto position*.

Her target was LLENN, running along the puddle. The distance was around 70 *metres*.

"This here... will end it, ho."

The KTR-09 roared in *full-auto*.

And created several large columns of water.

The over 2 *metre* columns of water appeared one after another around LLENN as she continued running. It looked beautiful, like an unpredictable fountain.

The columns of water chased after LLENN and hid her figure, but bright red hit *effects* shone through them.

'No choice but to run no choice but to run no choice but to run!'

With only this in mind, LLENN was running atop the puddle that was not the best footing for her, when she suddenly felt like her path was obstructed by water.

The moment she realised that it was a column of water formed by gunfire, she was completely surrounded and, without even the time to drop to the ground, she felt a dull pain running through her right knee.

'Ah—'

She tumbled while turning around and plunged into the water back-first.

She saw the cloudy sky, she saw the columns of water still arising around her, and she saw gleaming *Bullet Lines*.

'I'm... likely... already..... done for.'

She saw how her *hit points* steadily decreased, but—  
The sudden decrease from being shot stopped at about halfway. However, most of her body was under water, thus, as usual in GGO, it continued decreasing gradually.

'If I fall asleep like this, I'll eventually die.'

'But if I stand up and receive even a single bullseye, I'll die.'

Just as LLENN finished her thought, the gunshots and columns of water suddenly stopped.

"Did I get her?"

Having stopped her fire for the moment, Pitohui gazed at the water where the columns disappeared, at noticed a *pink* figure floating face-up there. Above her... there was no **【 D e a d 】** *marker*.

"Fell short! Could it be that I only got 1 bullet in? Yep, my bad luck is strong! Eh, or perhaps it's because she's so tiny? Or both?"

"Pito, shall we get closer?"

M asked,

"Wha, it's not like we really need to? I'll hit on the next shot."

"Well, I just figured that you would want to see the face of your dying prey, seeing as she's right in front of you anyway."

"Hou..... Thou, too, are catching on fast, huh."

"So what do we do?"

"But nah. Honestly, I find LLENN-chan eerie. I'm scared of being done in myself if I carelessly get too close."

"Hou..... So even you can feel fear....."

"What's with you; treating people like monsters. I am scared. Specifically because I'm scared of dying is why I'm having so much fun! You and me need to have a talk, it seems; sit down there for a bit."

"I am sitting though."

Floating face-up, LLENN—

'Why aren't they coming to shoot me?'

Had this thought.

As her equipment was light, LLENN's body floated just enough for her to be able to breathe.

She did not feel so bad about floating like this.

Her *chances* for a counterattack was not zero, but if she stood up, she would probably be shot instantly. Nearly zero is not much different from zero.

After starting to not give a damn, she had come this far by getting absorbed in her task, but now it seemed her time had come.

Suddenly feeling curious, she raised her left hand and looked at her wristwatch.

14:27.

The previous tournament ended at 28 minutes, thus it was just the right time.

"LLENN-chan! Don't you give up on me!"

'Shut it, enough already.'

"LLENN-chan! There's still a chance!"

'It's not zero, but nearly zero nonetheless.'

"LLENN! You alive? I'm coming to you!"

'You don't need to come.'

"LENN! You are alive, aren't you! What area are you in?"

'Hah—!'

Overcome with surprise, she pulled her chin in, thus a lot of the muddy water entered her mouth and nose.

"Gabuhah!"

"Ah, LENN-chan's suffering? She's drowning?"

Gazing from the *roof* of the *Humvee*, Pitohui said.

"Possibly. Her *hit points* are decreasing under water, so we could just leave her to die."

"Yeah, that is a possible choice....."

Right after Pitohui's words, M took his foot off the *brake pedal*. As he stepped on the *accelerator*; the *diesel engine* became louder and the *Humvee* started slowly moving forward.

"Hey?"

"I won't go in too far. Just about 10 more *metres*."

"Hmph..... Whatever. Well then, I'll shoot. I'm kinda reluctant to let her drown."

Pitohui fixed her KTR-09 onto the *pink* target floating face-up on the water.

The *Humvee* gradually closed the distance and stopped at the edge of the puddle.

Pitohui, and M too, saw.

LLENN's right hand holding her P90 thrust upwards towards the sky grandly—

"Whoa?"

Pitohui suddenly crouched, but the muzzle suddenly aimed at the sky, instead of her, and began firing.

"Excuse me?"

\*Pararararararararara\*, hearing these gunshots, Pitohui's head inclined noticeably,

"What's... that? Some kind of ritual?"

"Who knows."

\*Pararararararararara\*, the long barrage of 50 gunshots continued and then suddenly ceased.

"I guess there are no more regrets? Well then—"

Pitohui firmly readied her KTR-09. She aimed steadily at LLENN.

She took a breath, let it out a bit, and stopped—

And right at the moment she was about to shoot,

\*Zudoon!\*

In the pond ahead of her, between her and LLENN, a column of water at least 5 *metres* in diameter rose up.



**SECT.20**

## **第二十章 最終決戰**

## SECT.20

# The Final Showdown

"She sure did her best, but I guess she's won't hold out much longer....."

A spectator in the bar said in pain.

From the time LLENN began dashing away till now, the majority of the spectators had supported LLENN.

Utterly deceiving her opponents, passing under the *Humvee*, and then inflicting damage to the passengers while leaping over it—

Each of LLENN's feats had caused thunderous cheers.

So, when she was mercilessly assailed by a hail of bullets, got caught in the resulting column of water and collapsed, screams could be heard in the bar.

Thus swiftly came the final moment.

On the screen, the *Humvee* approached LLENN a little; on its *roof* was that woman, aiming steadily. It was a distance where it would be impossible to miss.

When LLENN abruptly began pounding away into the air with her P90, some thought that she had been seized by panic, others thought that she was expressing her final regrets.

And then, the woman once again took aim, placed her finger on the trigger,

"Nanmaidabutsu."

Some spectators heard her invoke the Buddha prematurely.

So,

\*Zudoon!\*

The explosion and large column of water,

"Uhi!" "Uhyaa!" "Doha!"

Prompted screams throughout the bar.

The only ones to instantly grasp the situation,

"Hou." "Oh."

Anna and Sophie, gazing at the screen while still standing.

"I see..... that serial fire into the sky was meant to cover the noise of her partner's *grenades* being fired."

Said Sophie,

"Just a coincidence, but because their car was moving, they didn't hear the other car's *engine*, huh."

Concluded Anna, but Sophie smiled,

"I wonder, is that really a coincidence?"

On multiple screens, different action scenes took place simultaneously.

On one screen, having been pulled up by the wave made by the column of water, LLENN used that momentum to stand up, applying a first aid *kit* to herself and inserting a new *magazine* into her P90.

On another screen, Pitohui turned 180 degrees and pointed the muzzle of her KTR-09 right behind her.

And on the final screen—

Another *Humvee* was rushing through the grass. It was about 200 *metres* away from the pond. And closing in.

Inside the car, made visible by adjusting the lighting, grasping the wheel on the driver's seat was a girl who had regained her limbs.

"Tsk! I played around too long!"

With a bitter shout, Pitohui began pounding away with her KTR-09 in *full-auto*.

The bullets sank into the *Humvee* driven by Fukaziroh, but, naturally, all of them were repelled. After firing about 10 shots,

"Oh, forget this!"

Pitohui gave up.

The enemy *Humvee* was charging straight at them.

"She's planning to ram us! Move it, get her!"

M started the *Humvee*. While Pito sat down on the rear seat.

"Oraoraoraoraah!"

Fukaziroh was stepping on the *accelerator* using the entire might of her small body, and driving the vehicle as if clinging to the large wheel.

Beyond the windscreen,

"Move it move it moooove it!"

She could see an identical car.

On the screen, the newly-arrived *Humvee* was charging towards the one M and Pito were on.

The new one still had its bulletproof plate on the *roof*, thus it was easy to tell them apart. As the *Humvee* with the bulletproof plate continued to close in,

"Ooh! She's gonna ram them!"

"Well, that is the most surefire way to wreck a vehicle."

"Though..... the chibi riding it won't get out of this unscathed, ya know?"

"Who cares. That's one versus two. Get 'em!"

The spectators, who had been ready for a funeral when LLENN was about to die, once again got fired up.

M turned his *Humvee* towards the one charging at his.

Knowing that their opponent was trying to ram them, they could not just move to the side.

Because the car would end up being raised from the side.

If it came to that, the car would undoubtedly topple over. This would probably lead to their bodies hitting the various parts of the car and suffering great *damage*. If any neck bone fractures were registered, it was even possible to end up with instant death.

The ideal course of action was, of course, to turn tail and run away. That was because suffering a rear-end collision resulted in the least *damage*.

However, when there was no time for that, charging head on was the best way to dodge. If *timed* right on the verge of collision, it was possible to dodge with a sudden turn of the wheel to the right or left.

Right now, the two cars continued charging on a collision *course*—

When one of them suddenly turned.

"Aah!" "Haah?"

Came the surprise from the spectators.

This was only natural. After all, the vehicle that changed course was the one with the bulletproof plate.

The two cars passed by each other on the grassland at extreme *speed* and one of them charged straight into the pond.

Splashing its way through it, it arrived beside the *pink* running chibi in no time and, turning to face the chibi with its right side to act as a shield from gunfire, the car stopped.

Gazing at LLENN through the bulletproof *glass*,

"Hey there, pretty lady! Aren't we all soaking-wet! How's about going for a ride in daddy's kool lil' supercar?"

Fukaziroh flirted.

"I will I will! Take me for a ride!"

As LLENN, entirely covered in muddy water, answered, Fukaziroh gave a smile.

"I love honest girls! Don't think you're going home tonight!"

LLENN went for the back *door*,

"So heavy!"

And, upon somehow opening the *door* that seemed like a vault door due to its armoured plate, she got in and closed it.

She then moved to the center of the car, got up through the *roof*, and looking behind,

'Uhya!"

She saw that, naturally, it was closing in. The other *Humvee* driven by M. It was currently plunging into the puddle from the grassland. About 40 *metres* away.

"Fuka! I don't care where to, just drive!"

"You betcha! I wonder, are there any *love hotels* in this world?"

Fukaziroh stepped on the *accelerator* with her small foot.

And so, SJ2's first—

And undoubtedly final *car chase* began.

From the sky, the escaping vehicle and the chasing vehicle were caught on *camera*.

Going through the puddle and once again out into the meadow.

Inside one of the cars,

"M! Hand over all the *grenades* on you!"

Upon Pitohui shouting her order, M complied.

Steering with just his right hand, he operated his *storage* and materialised anything with *grenade* in their name, be it *plasma* or otherwise.

Once the particles of light took form, a great variety of explosives poured down atop the passenger *seat*.

Inside the other car,

"Fuka, does your ammo explode even when it's just thrown?"

LLEN enquired. Fukaziroh's MGL-140 and *backpack* were atop the passenger seat.

And the reply of their owner was,

"No can do. You have to fire them."

"Shit!"

"Hey, you wanna take the wheel?"

"I can't! —Wait, Fuka, when did you get a license?"

Despite being in the midst of battle, LLENN's curiosity overwhelmed her, prompting her to ask the question.

"I've started going to a driving school just recently. I figured that it was quite inconvenient without a car. Come to think of it, I should have taken it up sooner! Rather than studying for a test! —Ehm? Did I never tell you about this before?"

"First time I heard of it! But this is amazing! I'm surprised you can drive so well already!"

"Eh, we had the entrance ceremony just recently. Actually, I've been busy with all this prep work."

"Haaah? Then how can you drive?"

There were streamlets running through the meadow, but despite the vehicle becoming unstable when the *tyres* caught some of the water, Fukaziroh was able to maintain an almost straight course all this time by slightly turning the wheel to account for whenever this happened. That was quite some skill.

"Oh that. I've been spendin' a wee bit'a time on a *driving game* with a different *account*."

"After all that time spent in GGO! Just how much a *game* maniac can you be!"

"But it turned out useful dough?"

"Eeh? Uh, yeah."

The moment LLENN answered, the rear end of the car slid to the right. Explosions.

"Uhoh!"

Fukaziroh turned the wheel to the right, stabilising the car through her counter-steering. She skillfully pulled the car together.

LLENN stuck her head out through the *roof* enclosed by a bulletproof plate. Through the bulletproof *glass*, she saw M's car keeping up with them, being only 20 *metres* to the left behind them.

Only Pitohui's hand stuck out from within the circular *roof*, throwing something. Coming in a parabola was a *plasma grenade*,

"Hih!"

As it fell on the rear of the car with a sound, LLENN pulled her head back inside.

However, it did not explode. It rolled down the downward-slanting rear of the car, fell down on the grass, and exploded when it was about 5 *metres* away.

It seemed that the detonation *timer* was set to a high value. Thanks to that, they were spared.

Nevertheless, the blast considerably shook the car, lowering its speed.

"Shhhit!"

LLENN once again stuck out her head from the *roof* and aimed her P90 at the *Humvee* to the left behind her. The car was shaking slightly, thus she could not lock on properly even at such a close distance. However, she did not care. She fired around 10 rounds at full power.

Sparks were made on the *roof* and *bonnet*, but she could not land a hit on Pitohui inside. As proof of this came yet another throw.

This time, it was aimed flawlessly.

The *plasma grenade* flew straight at her—

'Ah, it's going to fall inside the car at this rate.'

'Then, it's going to explode inside... killing... me and Fuka.'

The scene having switched to *slow motion*, she fully understood what would happen next.

LLENN had two options.

The first was for her alone to jump out right away. Knowing how good LLENN was, she could change her trajectory mid-air and land with *no damage*.

The other option... was what LLENN chose.

She raised her P90 with her hands and, using one of its sides,

"Derya!"

\*Gon!\*

Struck the *plasma grenade* just before it plunged into the car. The round ball fell outside the car, hit the ground, and exploded quite a bit away from both cars.

'Whew!'

As LLENN took a breath,

"That was mean, LLENN-chan! Using me as a *bat!*"

P-chan made a complaint, but LLENN ignored it.

Although she was prepared for the next throw, M's car suddenly took some distance from them and started falling back.

'Did they give up?'

The moment LLENN questioned this,

"LLENN! Front!"

Hearing Fukaziroh's scream-like voice, LLENN turned around to face forward, and witnessed an unbelievable thing.

There was a small puddle about 30 *metres* ahead, from which a 10 *metre*-high water column had arisen.

It was not a column made by projectiles. The water was blown up from the ground like an actual fountain. When she had taken a look there moments ago, there was definitely no such thing there.

"What the heck is thaaaaaaat!"

"Heck if I knooooooooow!"

As Fukaziroh and LLENN shouted this, their car was about to plunge straight into that fountain. Fukaziroh somehow managed to slightly change their course to the right, thus they were at least able to avoid colliding with it head-first. The large fountain passed through just tens of *cm* to the left of the car.

The water fell like downpour into the car,

"Buh— ouch!"

LLENN was surprised that the water caused a sense of pseudo-pain.

Upon checking her skin, she noticed that there were some *damage effects* shining on it, Even her *hit points*, though not on the level of being shot, had clearly decreased. It was currently at around half.

"The water is boiling hot!"

"Hah?"

"We're in a hot springs area! All of those puddles are geysers that can burst out at any moment! We sure picked one heck of a place to come to!"

LLENN understood. That this was an *area* filled with traps made by Mother Nature that one had to avoid stepping in carelessly.

"Whoa!"

Fukaziroh's surprised voice reached LLENN's ears.

"So, that means we can use all that hot water as much as we want! It's so handy for making instant yakisoba that you could die for it!"

"Eh? That's what you thought of?"

The video feed greatly surprised the audience in the bar as well.

They had already learnt about the geysers from the video some time ago, so the geysers were not the cause for this.

"How come M's car avoided it in advance?"

Just before the geyser burst out, M's *Humvee* changed course as if knowing what would happen, and that is what caused the confusion.

There was not a single man with the answer.

On the wall in the *log house's* guest rooms was a map of the valley, with the locations of the geyser (-producing puddles), as well as the *timing* for their eruption.

Having memorised all of that, Pitohui muttered while looking at her wristwatch on the *Humvee's* back seat.

"Superbly on time. That's a *virtual* world for ya."

"Fuka! This place is dangerous! Let's get out of here!"

Looking at M's car on the left, LLENN gave an order to Fukaziroh, but,

"Yea, that's a great idea, but no dice."

Got this answer.

"Eh? How come?"

"This car... is going to stop soon."

"Why?"

"Out of *gas*. The lights suddenly started flashing. The lights that thoughtfully tell you 'how many *metres* you can still drive' has also come up."

"H-how many?"

"300 *metres*, it says."

"Wha!"

That was no time at all.

There was probably not that much fuel in the car to start with. On that subject, she recalled that the *hovercrafts* in the previous tournament had also run out relatively quickly.

"What do we do? LLENN."

Pressed for a quick decision, LLENN,

"Well then, we don't really... have much of a choice."

Glaring at the car driven by M, with Pitohui in it, she answered.

"Crash into ~~that~~ thing!"

Inside the other car,

"Pito, we're out of fuel. 500 more *metres*."

"Oh my. That's leaves us in a bind."

Inserting a 30-round *magazine* into her KTR-09, Pitohui answered in a tone as if there was absolutely no issue,

"Then, crash into ~~that~~ thing."

The bird's eye view video showed two *Humvees* riding side-by-side down the grassland with puddles and brooks all around—

And now, they suddenly got close.

From the right one, the head of a *pink* chibi, covered in mud, stuck out.

From the left one, the head of a woman, wearing dark blue overalls, stuck out.

LLENN saw the face of Pitohui as she drew near.

Pitohui saw the face of LLENN as she drew near.

The two cars continued on until they clashed front-first—

Just before that happened, the two girls leapt from their *roofs*, jumping off their cars.

Landing on the grass, the two used their momentum to curl into balls and roll on the ground, avoiding death.

LLENN, hugging her P90, turned even smaller.

Pitohui, on the other hand, also assumed a similar posture, but the long length of her gun backfired on her. Pitohui's KTR-09 got caught in the grass and was plucked out of her hands.

"Tsk!"

While the two continued rolling,

"Uhyaaaaa!"

"Guwaah!"

The two *Humvees* toppled over from the momentum of their collision and fell sideways to the left and right.

\*Goron goron\*, the two vehicles rolled sideways,

"Buhyaaa."

"Guuuh!"

Sitting in the driver's seats, Fukaziroh and M got stuck in high-speed rotation, as if they were in an *attraction* at an amusement park.

They desperately held onto their wheels and, using their leg and arm muscles to the utmost, pressed themselves against the back of their chairs to endure.

If they were thrown out of their seats, they would either be slammed around their car, or be thrown out from the large, open *roof*.

The two vehicles, having similarly turned around five times and similarly went upside-down again, stopped about 50 *metres* away from each other.

"Guhii....."

"Whew....."

Both Fukaziroh and M certainly had well-trained muscles. They somehow managed to avoid getting expelled from the *seatbelt-less attraction*.

Fukaziroh, suffering from her *helmet's* chin strap having dug into her chin,

"If this had been *RL*, I sure would have died..... If I get my license, I'm always gonna fasten my *seatbelt* and drive safe....."

Having jumped out of her car, rolled who knows how many times, yet still able to stand up easily, LLENN,

'Where are ya!'

Carrying her P90 at waist level, she turned to look for Pitohui.

LLENN saw her when she jumped out. She had to be close.

And so, LLENN found her figure just a mere 10 *metres* away.

At Pitohui, who had not yet fully stood up and did not have her gun in hand,

"Uwaaa!"

She unleashed her P90. A *metre*-high barrage. As if she was sprinkling water from a *hose*. If her target attempted to jump to the side, she should be hit by one of the bullets.

Pitohui did not stand up.

Instead, she used the momentum to collapse on her back, and the moment she took out the XDM pistols from her thigh *holsters* with her hands, she fired.

The bullet fired with her right hand brushed against LLENN's left shoulder, while the bullet fired with her left hand against LLENN's right shoulder, creating hit *effects* as if she had been cut. She took her finger away from the P90's trigger.

'If that's how it is!'

LLENN aimed her right shoulder towards Pitohui. Holding her P90 solely in her right hand, she pushed out her gun like a pistol, exposing only half her body.

Pitohui's follow up shots passed just a bit away from LLENN's stomach and back. Combined with LLENN's nimble movements, it looked like she dodged the bullets.

'I can do this! If I continue firing while getting closer, I can bring her down!'

LLENN once again placed her finger on the P90's trigger—

'Last job! P-chan!'

"Gotcha!"

She opened fire at full-throttle.

The gunshots of her *full-auto* barrage reverberated through the meadow,

"Hyaa!"

At the same moment, Pitohui's coquettish voice did as well.

In LLENN's right arm, her P90 pointed upwards. Towards the sky. Naturally, the several bullets fired out of it flew towards the sky.

That was because Pitohui had fired her pistols for the third time with both hands and the 2 bullets made contact with her P90 at the same time, just below the muzzle, forcing it upwards.

LLENN saw.

The face-up Pitohui, having only lifted her head from the ground, aiming at her with the pistols in both hands, and her daunting smile.

Two *Bullet Lines* came out from the XDM and pierced LLENN's right and left eyes.

With her vision dyed in deep red, LLENN had a thought.

'P-chan, sorry.'

P-chan answered her.

"Oh come now, it's quite alright."

Pitohui's fourth pistol shot with both hands.

The 2 40 caliber pistol bullets were launched from their respective muzzles at the exact same time and flew at LLENN's face.

And thus, they collided with the P90 that LLENN had used to *guard* her face, breaking the reinforced *plastic*.

"Taaah!"

LLENN began running right away. Towards Pitohui. Carrying her 50 *cm*-long and 20 *cm*-wide shield in front of her.

"Hah!"

Pitohui - fifth discharge. The 2 bullets again went straight for the P90, hitting the receiver and barrel and creating sparks.

The sixth discharge.

The P90's magazine was shot off, causing the leftover bullets that had been kept in place by a spring to whirl in the air.

The seventh discharge—

Could not be made. By then, LLENN had closed in on Pitohui at god-speed,

"Taah!"

"Gefuh!"

And trampled on Pitohui's face with her right foot, before leaping away. Upon landing, while turning in mid-air, she took off the P90's *sling* from her body.

Pitohui, with a *damage effect* on her face that made it look like was bleeding from the nose, used the opening to stand up and thrust her XDMs, which retained an ample amount of spare bullets, in both hands at LLENN.

Before the pistols could fire, they were flicked away from Pitohui's hands.

"Wha!"

Because LLENN had made use of her Agility to close in and knock them out with her P90, held by its *sling*.

Even with tons of holes from bullets in its *plastic* body and its *magazine* blown away, the 50 *cm*-long object served as a fine weapon.

"Niiice one!"

Thus, LLENN heard Pitohui's cheerful voice praising her.

As the two stood facing each other at a 3 *metre* distance, their motions paused for a moment.

LLENN had released the *sling* from her right hand, freeing up both her hands. Although she believed that the P90 could still fire, she did not have the luxury of time to load a new *magazine*.

Having had her two pistols flicked away, both of Pitohui's hands became free as well.

"LLENN-chan."

Pitohui began speaking with a smile, just like that time they enjoyed doing a *quest* together,

"What iiis it? Pito-san."

LLENN answered with a smile just like that time. While answering, she gradually moved her right hand to the back of her waist.

"I'm truly grateful that you came to SJ2. It's thanks to you, LLENN-chan, that I've been cornered like this! I'm truly happy we can have such an exhilarating showdown."

"You're welcome. But because of you, I've been through so much that my stomach hurts!"

Slowly, slowly LLENN's right hand advanced towards her *knife's grip*.

"Oh my? But you're going to win third place after this, so all's well that ends well. Last time - champion, this time - third place. That's quite the achievement! Well, if I had taken part, I would have been the champion last time, ya know!"

"Oh no no, I'll let you have the third place, Pito-san."

While speaking, LLENN searched Pitohui for any remaining weapons. As far as she could see, there was no weapon that looked like a gun.

The only thing she could see right now were thin *knives* equipped on the exterior of her boots. They were located in a place that made it easy to draw them out, but their offensive ability did not look all that great, thus, as long as she could avoid getting hit in her vitals, such as being stabbed in the eyes, LLENN's current *hit points* would be able to hold out.

The more important thing was that fearsome *photon sword*. Against a 1 *metre* blade that could easily cut her *knife*, LLENN had no chance of winning.

'Where is that thing?'

'Seeing as I can't see it, it's probably equipped on her back, but how fast can she draw it out? Is it at a place where she could draw it out in one fell swoop like a master of *iai*<sup>33</sup>?'

'No, that's not it.'

LLENN concluded. Pitohui's *main* weapons were, after all, guns. She should have equipped them at the best spots and should give priority to using them. Like those pistols just moments ago.

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33 The art of drawing one's sword, cutting down one's opponent, and sheathing the sword again.

"Hmm, don't need it. I need nothing but victory. Actually, I don't even need victory. What I want is to "survive this *battle royale* ", that's all. Victory is a byproduct. Well, I will take what I can get, though."

Distance - 3 *metres*. Knowing her speed, it was a distance she could cross in a moment while drawing out her *knife*.

Nonetheless, if Pitohui went into full defence, LLENN's attack would be practically useless. For example, if she closed her legs. For example, if she *guarded* her nape and face.

If she had even smidgen of a chance to win, that would be during the moment when Pitohui engaged in a fierce attack against her. During that opening. If she went for the hard-to-retrieve *photon sword*, all the better.

Continuing her search, LLENN continued talking.

"This is a *game*, so it is not like there is anything wrong with dying. It's not like you'll die *IRL*."

"That might be the case for you, LLENN-chan. But....., it has a slightly different meaning for me."

Pitohui's tone became more permeated in dreariness. Thus, LLENN asked as cheerfully as she could.

"Oh, what kind of meaning? If you don't mind, please tell me in this final moment. Because we won't really be able to talk once I kill you."

What she needed was an attack on her to grant her a moment's worth of an opening. However, for a big opening.

There was only one way to achieve that.

"Hmm, I don't really think you'd understand even if I did tell you. Hmm, for example— "seriously putting your life on the line in the *game*, or something like that?"

As Pitohui said this jestfully, LLENN saw a never before seen level of seriousness in her eyes. Only her lips were smiling.

'Well then, it's about time—'

'Shall I poke the oni a bit. Though it's scary.'

Breathing slowly, LLENN wished for only one thing.

'*AmuSphere*, I beg of you. At least this once, don't initiate a forced *shutdown*.'

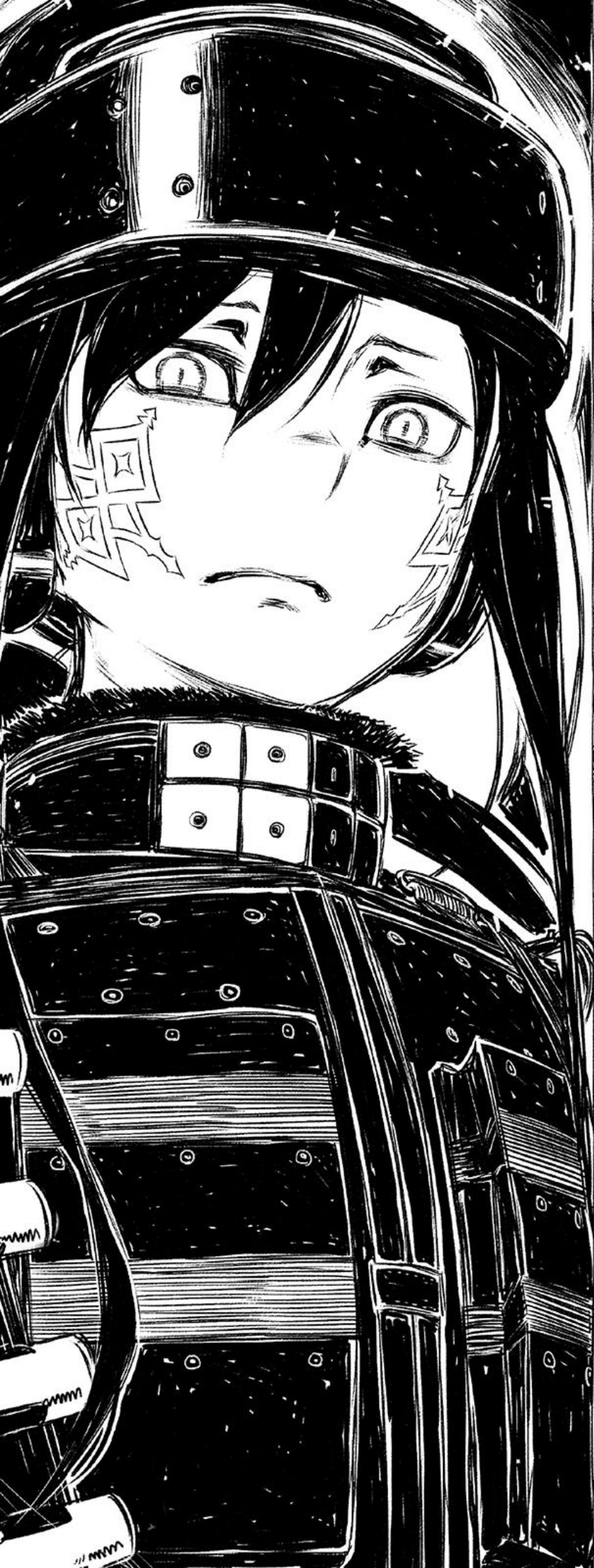
"Putting your life on the line for a *game* that's meant to be played? You mean, like that *Sword Art Online* game that hit the big news? That's—"

"That's?"

Pitohui's eyes as she asked in return seemed like muzzles, causing LLENN's heartbeat to jump up.

However, there was no longer any way back. LLENN formed her biggest smile yet as she declared.

"Awfully stupid! You sure are so lucky you didn't get to play that legendary shitgame!"



LLENN could never have predicted.

That Pitohui—

Would make such a sad expression. Such an expression on the verge of tears. Such an expression of sorrow.

Her right hand began moving for the back of her waist, giving LLENN the eagerly-awaited big opening.

'Gotcha.'

LLENN kicked off the ground.

Before she took her first step, her right hand grasped her *knife*.

With her second step, she drew out the *knife* with a reverse grip, while moving in towards the tall Pitohui.

With her third step, she passed through, splendidly slashing the inner side of her left thigh.

With her fourth step, she made a big jump to the right side, turning on the spot while twisting her hand,

And the *knife's* blade slashed on the left side of her nape, adding a new pattern to her *tattoo*.

"Gafuh!"

With a deep red *effect* shining from her nape, Pitohui's body collapsed to the right—

And the moment her right hand landed, she jumped up like a spring.

"Wha?"

Her move was exactly like that of a *breakdancer* who seemed to break the laws of physics. Pitohui supported her entire body with just her right arm, and, on top of that, even rose up—

Afterwards, her right arm swooped down at LLENN's face at a vehement speed.

A silver rod. It stretched out throughout LLENN's vision.

\*Gosu!\*

A strange sound came from inside her face.

LLENN's body was blown 3 *metres* away, sliding through the grass for another 5 *metres*, until finally, she fell into a large puddle there, and stopped with a splash.

The event only took a moment, but she was able to see the terrifying details clearly.

Pitohui had smacked her with the *photon sword* she drew out. She did not have the time to press the *switch*, meaning that she did not bring out the blade of light, but that was only a small mercy.

Her *hit points* decreased, leaving forty percent. She was still grasping the *knife* in her right hand, but that seemed like a miracle.

And thus, LLENN looked at Pitohui.

She should have completely cut through the left femoral artery and, more importantly, deeply cut through the carotid artery at her left nape.

If it was an ordinary *character*, that should have caused death.

'Ah, I forgot. Pito-san's not ordinary.'

That was a late realisation.

"Humph, I got done in."

Pitohui looked up to the sky sorrowfully.

"I only have twenty percent of my *hit points* left."

'You still have twenty percent left with all that! You monster!  
Immortal!'

LLENN thought, but, of course, did not put into words. At the edge of the 10 *metre*-wide puddle, she earnestly thought out what she could do.

Pitohui was 7-8 *metres* away.

'Naturally, if I come attacking with my *knife*, she'd either dodge, or cut me in half with her *photon sword*.

'In that case what should I do what should I do what should I do what should I do.'

Nothing could be done.

Even if LLENN were to throw her *knife*, with her throwing ability it would hardly even hit its target.

'No dice. I'm cornered.'

'I'm going to get killed very soon.'

'Speaking of which, is Fukaziroh alright?'

She still had plenty of *hit points*. Typical sturdy Fukaziroh.

However, that was meaningless. Fukaziroh killing Pitohui was completely meaningless.

'In the end, I'm done for.'

No longer able to come up with something, she gave up on thinking.

In her vision, Pitohui made an unbelievable action.

She picked up the P90 LLENN had used to flick away her pistols. Its *magazine* had been blown away, but there should still be a single bullet in the chamber. That bullet alone could still be fired.

Pitohui carefully pulled the loading *handle* to the midpoint, confirming the presence of the bullet in the chamber. Then, she pressed the gun against her shoulder,

"This is P-chan 2?"

And asked.

'Now that you mention it, it sounds like a weird address', with this thought, LLENN nodded.

"Well then, I'll at least allow you to die by your beloved gun. Don't move, okay."

Pitohui put her finger on the trigger.

Pitohui had fired practically every gun out there, so she probably had experience with a P90 too. And, at this distance, there was no way she would miss.

LLENN's mind was occupied solely by the fact that she would be killed by her beloved P-chan. Victory in SJ2 and obliterating Pitohui was no longer in her mind.

'Oh P-chan, isn't this cruel?'

Just as she began speaking in her mind, an answer came in return immediately.

"Don't give up! Look closely!"

'Hah?'

"Look closely!"

'Pardon?'

"Look closely!"

Getting awfully tired of all that nagging, LLENN did as she was told. P90 held by Pitohui. Finger on the trigger. And, a muzzle pointing straight at her.

'Nothing!'

'I see nothing!'

'I see... no *Bullet Lines*!'

'I see no red lines that should normally be pointing from the muzzle at my forehead!'

'How? Why?'

There was but one possibility.

\*Jabon\*

Causing a splash, LLENN stood up.

She tightly grasped the *knife* in her right hand,

"Taaaaah!"

And began running.

"Now then... die... LLENN-chan."

Towards the smiling Pitohui.

Pitohui's finger squeezed the trigger.

"I'll protect LLENN-chan!"

She heard a muffled plosive sound,

"Gah!"

And Pitohui's short scream.

In her hands, P-chan was able to offer its final act of resistance.

The barrel exploded. Rather than coming out from the muzzle, the fired bullet and the pressure of its gunpowder ruptured the barrel from inside, breaking its body from inside.

The P90 that had already been battered by Pitohui's shooting became a total wreck at this moment.

LLENN predicted all of that.

Because, there was but one reason that could explain why she could not see a *Bullet Line* despite Pitohui's finger touching the trigger. Namely—

The gun was unable to fire.

*Bullet Lines* did not come out of guns that people had forgotten to put bullets in, and guns that had run out of ammo. That also included guns that had broken down.

That is why LLENN realised this.

However, Pitohui did not notice. That was because the *Bullet Circle* would always be displayed, no matter the condition of the gun.

LLENN bet on that possibility and decisively charged out for the last time.

And so, her bet paid off.

When she thought whether the gun had simply misfired, she realised it was more than that. P-chan, at the very last moment, protected her.

'Thanks, P-chan!'

Shouting in her mind, LLENN—

Used this moment when Pitohui's eyes were assailed by the fragments, preventing her from seeing a thing, to charge at her.

She placed her left hand on the right hand holding the *knife* in a reverse grip and moved it in front of her chest. It seemed like she was praying.

The moment LLENN jumped away, water spouted out from the puddle she had been sitting in. It was a geyser eruption. If she had still been there, she would have been showered in the boiling water and probably would have instantly died.

With the several *metre*-high fountain as her background and the sound of a heavy eruption as her BGM,

LLENN crossed the distance between her and Pitohui instantly.

Finally, she jumped, pointing the tip of the *knife* at the face of the tall Pitohui, and attacked her.

The black blade stretched out for Pitohui's eye, still covered by the *damage effect*.

"Uraah!"

The supposed-to-be-blind Pitohui's hands grabbed LLENN's wrists.

This happened several *cm* before the tip of the *knife* could stab her eye. Of course, she probably was unable to see, but she was still able to catch her. Perhaps she sensed her bloodlust, or perhaps it was just her gut.

Using the momentum, Pitohui collapsed backwards, smacking LLENN in the abdomen with the sole of her right foot midway—

She chose a technique that would be called "tomaenage" in judo.<sup>34</sup>

With her world spinning, LLENN was thrown on the meadow back-first,

---

34 Tomaenage (巴投げ) refers to an overhead throw in judo.



'Then, how about the *knife*.'

'If I drop the *knife* still in my hands, wouldn't it hit Pitohui's face?'

She hesitated giving up her truly final of final weapons for a moment, but she had nothing else to do.

LLENN opened her hands, hoping for a miracle as her *knife* fell towards Pitohui's face,

"Haah."

And, with a laugh, Pitohui—

\*Gari.\*

Caught it with her mouth.

"Wha?"

She held the at least 20 *cm* long *knife* blade, on the sharp side no less, with her mouth, in-between her teeth. As a result, LLENN dealt no *damage* at all to Pitohui,

"Hee."

While Pitohui got a new weapon - the worst result.

Holding the *knife* with her left hand, Pitohui,

"What a nice *knife*. You're giving it away? Or, is this your way of telling me that you want me to kill you with it?"

Asked right away.

"Neither, you dummy!"

Irritated, LLENN answered like a child,

"Well then, let's throw this away."

While Pitohui, having said this like a childcare worker soothing a child, swung her left hand, dropping the *knife* on the grass.

As LLENN was finally cornered,

"You sure are awesome, LLENN-chan. I should learn from your determination to not give up till the end."

Pitohui uttered some words, unclear whether she was serious or joking.

And then,

"M! Come over here."

She said.

'Come to think of it, M was also here', LLENN came to a late realisation. He had entirely slipped her mind. If M had been targeting her, she would have undoubtedly been killed.

"Yeah, coming now."

The voice came from behind LLENN.

Still hanging, LLENN looked in that direction and saw M's large figure, holding his M14 EBR. And, what's more,

"Fuka!"

Wasn't he dragging her partner, Fukaziroh?

Fukaziroh had lost her *helmet* and her tied golden hair was uncovered. Some *duct tape* was wrapped around her wrists, and there was even a piece over her mouth.

She could tell that Fukaziroh was alive based on her *hit points* and she did find it strange that she had not heard her voice even once, but to think that this is what became of her.

And since she herself had been caught as well, *team LF* became PM4's prisoners.

M, having arrived at a spot 5 *metres* behind LLENN while dragging Fukaziroh with him,

"Sit down."

Sat Fukaziroh down on the spot. Fukaziroh could freely move her legs, but with her hands like that, it was pointless to run away. She remained silent as she sat down in a cross-legged position.

Pitohui gave M an order.

"Find me my XDM, 1 will do. It fell over there."

M quickly searched the grass and, the moment he found one as ordered, he returned it to Pitohui.

"Thanks."

Pitohui took it with her left hand and had M step back. M returned to Fukaziroh.

LLENN struggled with her legs, hoping to kick down the pistol, but,

"Yeah yeah, you stay here for a bit, kay."

Pitohui moved her right arm away, thus LLENN had no chance of reaching it. Although she was light, the fact that Pitohui continued to keep her suspended all this time with only her right hand without paying her any heed was terrifying.

Pitohui extended her left hand in the direction of Fukaziroh and M, pointing her XDM's muzzle that way.

\*Bam\*

She fired.

\*Bam\*

She fired again.

LLENN had seen tons of incredible sights in SJ2, but—

This one undoubtedly caused her the biggest shock.

"Guh....."

The one who was shot and groaned was M, a hit *effect* shining from both of his large cheeks,

\*Zushin\*

He fell knees-first. The 【D e a d】 *marker* had yet to lit up, thus he was probably still alive, but he had been shot in the face twice. It had undoubtedly caused substantial *damage*.

Beside him, Fukaziroh was, naturally, greatly shocked. Her eyes opened wide to comical extent.

"W-what the heck are ya doin'! Pito-san!"

Still suspended, LLENN shouted.

"That is not the one; not good that is your ally y'know; hey you get me huh?"

She was so shocked that even her words became jumbled up.

Pitohui glanced at her,

"Haiku?"

"W-wha, no! Why did you shoot M I can't believe this isn't he your comrade!"

"I have my reasons. Even you, LENN-chan, were shot by M in the last tournament, right?"

"Ugh— that, well, ehm, umm."

"I'll tell you the reason. —That M guy... betrayed me."

"Hah, hahi?"

This sounded familiar, thus LENN's voice broke down.

However, it seemed that Pitohui had not finished what she wanted to say,

"Moments ago, when your little partner was closing in with her *Humvee*, just before that happened, this guy began slightly moving the *Humvee* I was on. He said it was "to make it easier for me to aim, but that was a lie."

As she suddenly declared this.

"....."

Not getting what was going on, all LENN could do was to remain silent and listen on.

M, too, remained motionless on his knees all this time while light shone from his cheeks.

"This guy, you see, noticed another vehicle closing in through his car *mirror*. In order to prevent me from noticing this, he intentionally made an unnecessary move with the car to cause some noise with the *engine*. Then, what purpose was that for? To allow your partner to arrive before I could kill you, LLENN-chan, there you see. Well, even before that, perhaps to leave you, LLENN-chan, alone, he intentionally wiped out your friends, the amazons, though he was allowed to do that."

Unbelievable.

Despite the fact that M had been so persistent about not bringing his own feelings into a *game* and doing everything to help Pitohui.

'His feelings came out from deep down, huh.....'

The image of Goushi's face at that moment entered LLENN's mind.

The face of an ikemen, pressing down on her in a katedon out of true love.

As M remained silent,

"The accused, any objections?"

Pitohui asked him,

"None."

While M promptly answered. Pitohui pointed the muzzle of her XDM at M's face,

"Well then, any last words?"

"I... love you."

"I know. But bringing love into a *game* is a no-go."

\*Bam\*

The final bullet.

With a bullet having pierced his brow, M's figure on his knees slowly fell forward—

"Aah!"

The moment it collapsed on the grass, the **【 D e a d 】** *marker* lit up.

"He-hey! How could'ya do such a thing Pito-san! Unbelievable, you oni! You devil! You demon!"

"Oh, <sup>maou</sup>demon has a nice ring to it."

When Pitohui said this with serious delight, she suddenly took a breath and, while still keeping LLENN in her right arm, and while grasping her XDM in her left, she started singing all of a sudden.

"M e i n V a t e r , m e i n V a t e r , j e t z t f a ß t e r m i c h a n ! E r l k ö n i g h a t m i r e i n L e i d s g e t a n !"

The song beginning with <sup>Main fātā</sup> "Mein Vater! <sup>Main fātā</sup> Mein Vater! (Oh father! Oh father!) sounded familiar to LLENN.

It was a song composed by Schubert, 『Erlkönig』<sup>Maou</sup> .

Her splendid voice was shockingly beautiful and clear, with no signs of a demon at all.

"Hey, Pito-san! I want to give you some applause, so let go of my hands!"

"Hahaha. I'm not falling for that."

The moment Pitohui looked at LLENN's face, taking her eyes off Fukaziroh, the latter moved her *duct tape*-tied hands to the back of her head.

Once her hands slid through there, the firm *duct tape* was cut, restoring Fukaziroh's freedom.

Then her right hand moved around her head, grabbed the *grip* located there, and quickly pulled it out.

Fukaziroh's long, golden hair became untied and fell towards the ground. Before it could touch the grass, Fukaziroh broke into a run. While tearing off the *duct tape* on her mouth with her left hand.

"Ouchie!"

In her right hand was an "ornate hairpin" that had been keeping her hair in place a moment ago. It was her final weapon, made from a thin and sharp *knife* blade.

Pitohui noticed her before LLENN—

\*Bam bam bam\*

And fired her XDM. The bullets hit Fukaziroh in the shoulders and thigh, but that was not enough to stop her charge.

"Hah!"

Letting out a sound of admiration for the *tough* Fukaziroh, Pitohui quickly pulled her left leg and brought LLENN in her right hand in front of her.

"Ugh!"

Naturally, unable to stab her comrade, Fukaziroh pulled the emergency *brakes* on her charge.

Understanding the situation, LLENN shouted to Fukaziroh.

"Cut! Kick!"

The two words should have sounded like “kirekere!„ —

"Aye!"

But Fukaziroh understood her partner's order.

She jumped towards Pitohui, using LLENN's body as a shield,

"Haaaah!"

The blade made a horizontal slash.

Fukaziroh, having spent each day swinging a sword in ALO, did not know the word “blunder„ .

Even with a short *knife*, she flawlessly seized her target.

It was an arm.

LLENN's slender arm.

Both of them.

Slightly below the point that Pitohui was grasping, she completely cut them in half.

Then, the moment she landed on her left foot, she made a strong kick with her right foot.

A *kick* at the falling LLENN's back that could send her flying.

In exchange for the majority of her remaining *hit points* and her two hands, LLENN was able to regain her freedom of movement.

And then, she received a “back push” from her comrade.

"Gaaaaaaaaah!"

Bellowing, LLENN opened her mouth wide as she went for,

"Wha!"

Pitohui's right side of the nape.

\*Gaguchu!\*

A never before heard and strange sound was made as LLENN's teeth sank into Pitohui's nape. A red light came out.

"Gaah!"

Pitohui, losing LLENN's hands, twisted,

'Fugaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!'

While LLENN, having been shaken off, put more force into her jaw

'Kill Pitohui.'

With only that in mind.

Having her throat bitten and being unable to shake her off—

Pitohui observed how her *hit points* gradually decreased.

"L-LLENN-chan....."

In response to the soliloquy,

'Fuuuuuuuuu!'

LLENN answered with a strong breath from her mouth and nose.

"LLENN... chan..... just as I expected..... you..... brought..... my  
"death , huh....."

'Haaaaaaaaa!'

Without understanding whether her breath was a yes or a no,

"So that's how it is..... I... am going to die... here....."

Just as Pitohui finally muttered this, she slowly fell backwards.

As Pitohui collapsed, LLENN, still holding onto Pitohui's nape with her teeth, followed suit,

"Puhaa!"

LLENN finally opened her mouth.

Then, as Pitohui looked at her with eyes that said she was about to die,

"Pito-san, you will not die! No, you cannot die! Ah, err, I will kill you in just a moment here, but I'm talking about *IRL*!"

"Wh... at.....?"

"M san told me! That the Pito-san *IRL* is planning to die if she dies in SJ2!"

"Wha..... shit..... that dummy....."

As Pitohui smiled while collapsed,

"Pito-san, you and me made a promise that day, remember! That  
"We will some day have a serious showdown and if Pito-san loses, you will meet with me *IRL*. A women's promise, !"

Without her hands, LLENN smacked Pitohui with the cut off end of her arm.

"A kinchou!"<sup>35</sup>

"....."

Dumbfounded, Pitohui,

"Buh!"

---

35 A kinchou (金打) was the act of hitting each other's metal objects to signify that an oath will be kept. In the case of samurais, they would hit each other's sword, while women would use mirrors instead.

Burst into laughter with an expression of a dying person,

"Make sure to keep it, please!"

Just as LLENN opened her mouth after a smile.

Then, LLENN firmly bit into Pitohui's windpipe, crushing it completely with the strength of her jaw—

And causing Pitohui's miniscule *hit points* to run out entirely.

The moment LLENN “killed by biting” Pitohui—

The bar was silent, as if there was no one there.

In reality, the bar was practically full to the brim with audience members that had been watching the tournament from the start, as well as *characters* who had returned from the tournament, including the *members* of SHINC, but,

It was truly silent.

The silence was broken by some gunshots,

"Eh!" "Aah!" "Haah?"

As the two girls on the screen were turned into beehives.

Hit *effects* shone throughout their bodies as they collapsed on the spot, and 【D e a d】 *markers* instantly lit up. They died quickly.

Once the scene on screen changed, people saw *protector*-wearing soldiers of the future on the grass 400 *metres* away with smoke coming out from their respective guns.

In the air behind them,

『CONGRATULATIONS!!WINNER T-S!  
S!』

Were these characters.

"Ah....."

Meaning that T-S, who had been running around the map the entire time, snatched the biggest profit from the fight of others at the last of last moments.

The storm of bellows and jeers that arose in the bar at that moment could not possibly have reached them in the *field*, but—

The six members of T-S wisely did not return to the bar.

Match time - 1 hour 35 minutes.

Second *Squad Jam* concluded.

Winning *team* - 『T-S』 .



SECT.21

## 第二十一章 拍手

## SECT.21

# Applause

19th of April, 2026. Sunday.

With Tokyo's highest atmospheric temperature predicted to exceed 25 degrees Celsius, the day was too hot to just be called warm.

13:07. Parked along the road in front of a certain high-rise condominium in the city was a car. A shining, high-class German SUV.

"Uo, looks expensive! I really want to drive around in one of these!"

"You don't have your licence yet, Miyu."

"Then I'm fine with the back seat."

On the wide sidewalk, carrying their jackets on their arms, Miyu and Karen were slightly excited about the car.

Perhaps having liked the look, Miyu was still sporting the same hairstyle and glasses as when Karen had met her during spring break. As for Karen, there was no change to her appearance ever since she cut her hair.

The two were wearing simple *slacks* and *shirts*; their casual outfits were suitable for going out for a stroll, but a small, lovely *necklace* was shining on Karen's chest.

"Though, I wonder if M-san's here yet?"

Miyu,

"It's Goushi-san. Asougi Goushi-san."

And Karen were restlessly looking around, when,

"Please excuse me. I got stuck in traffic."

Upon hearing that voice, they once again looked at the car stopped in front of them.

Its driver-side *door* opened up and inside was an ikemen, dressed smartly in a deep blue *suit* with a very orderly hairstyle.

"Uhyo!"

Hearing Miyu's hysteric voice of surprise,

'Aa..... I'm glad he's alive.'

Thought Karen.

\* \* \*

15 days ago, on the 4th of April. The day of the SJ2 tournament—

Having been easily killed by some bullets that came from far away, Fukaziroh and LLENN were sent back to the standby *area*.

The moment the two died, SJ2 came to an end, so there was no need to wait 10 minutes in the room.

Like her last time in the dark room, LLENN saw a practically identical string of characters in the air: 『Would you like to return to the bar? Or would you like to *log out*?』 . Beside this was a string that said: 『Runners-up』 .

Fukaziroh, with her long hair still loose, had 2 MGL-140s dropped in front of her, while LLENN only had her *knife* and *magazines*.

Not having the time to lament the death of her second P-chan, LLENN immediately chose the option to return to the bar.

The moment they appeared atop a small *stage* in the bar, LLENN and Fukaziroh were greeted by a loud ovation. The cheers of countless people praising their valiant battle echoed throughout the bar. The girls from SHINC were there. And so were the *members* of MMTM.

LLENN asked but one thing.

'Are those two here? The third-ranked Pitohui and M.'

The spectators in the bar asked amongst their groups and personally searched for them, but— they were not present.

LLENN, 'Sorry I'll be right back', *logged out* with these words.

Having returned to her room, Karen sent an *email* to Goushi with her *AmuSphere* still on—

"I'm begging you!"

The moment she clutched her mobile phone, it vibrated.

The string of characters written on it was very short.

『I'm talking to her right now. About our future from this point on.』

\* \* \*

"Goushi-san, this is Miyu. Shinohara Miyu. She is my bosom friend and VR *game* teacher, Fukaziroh."

Introduced to Goushi,

"Yo! I still owe you some things! I haven't forgotten about that *tape* on my mouth, you know?"

Miyu greeted him with a thumbs up. And then,

"Though, you really are a super good-looker. What's up with this manga-like ikemen. I kinda want to get married, do you have time after this?"

Spoked unreservedly, as if still in GGO.

Neither smiling nor flinching, Goushi stared back straight at Miyu's eyes,

"Thank you for your kinds words. However, that is something I cannot do. As I already have my heart set on someone."

"Achaa!"

Having made an exaggerated X sign with her lips, Miyu,

"Is that... Pitohui-san *IRL*?"

Asked the obvious.

"Indeed."

"Welps, watcha gonna do."

Goushi bowed all of a sudden. Then,

"I have no words to thank you two ladies with. I have caused you quite the trouble. So, I would like to at least atone for that today. Pito *IRL* would also like to do so; she is looking forward to meeting you two from the bottom of her heart."

Smiling, Karen answered.

"Likewise!"

The next *email* from Goushi came—

Over a week after SJ2, on the 13th of April, last Monday.

Karen's new school term at her university had already started. She had been vigorously studying each day and had not *logged into* GGO even once since SJ2.

As for Miyu, while she did go to a university in Hokkaido, as well as a driving school, she continued enjoying ALO as before once she returned home.

All of Fukaziroh's GGO equipment was slumbering in a *locker* that LLENN had rented. Whether the time for the 2 MGL-140s to once again spout fire from their large muzzles would come— was yet unclear.

The content of Goushi's *email* was awfully *simple*.

『Pitohui says she want to meet you, so could we have some of your time next sunday, from noon till the evening?』

Karen, of course, agreed and enquired for more details, such as the location and how to get there.

Goushi then,

『A car will come to pick you up at your condominium at 13:00. Considering the traffic, please have lunch and visit the restroom before waiting for us.』

Gave only such an answer. Any further details were prevented by Pitohui.

Slightly worried, Karen called Miyu for consultation,

"Yep, she's gonna kill you. As revenge for what happened in the *game*."

And the first thing she heard were these frightening words,

"So, I'm comin' with you. "The cute *grenader* I fought with says she wants to meet you, — tell that to M. And add "Feel free to cover her expenses for travelling to Tokyo, as the postscript."

Followed by this reassuring proposal.

Not thinking much about the travel expenses, she sent an *email* to Goushi and quickly received an OK response. She also received an *email* with a number that could be exchanged for a round trip ticket.

Thus, the day before yesterday, on Friday, Miyu landed at Haneda through an evening flight. For lodging, she chose Karen's flat.

Yesterday, on the 18th, Saki and the others, the six girls from the associated high school's rhythmic gymnastics club, came to Karen's flat.

As *Boss* and the others chose to help Karen with her plan to obliterate Pitohui, foregoing the battle they had longed for so much, Karen had to ensure to thank and reward them appropriately. Karen went shopping with Miyu and brought home a surprisingly large quantity of sweets.

The 20th of April would be Karen's twentieth birthday. Saki and the others had apparently remembered this from a conversation they had,

"Though it's a bit early, we wish you a happy birthday! Karen-san!"

The girls had arranged a present for Karen. What they bought by pooling their pocket money,

"This is sure to look good on you!"

Was a *necklace* with a small ornament on a small chain.

It was an *item* that she herself would never have bought, but had always thought "I sure want to put on something as lovely as this."

"Aww! Thanks....."

With tears in her eyes and after several blunders, Karen put it on. The six members of the rhythmic gymnastics club gave cheers.

"How nice! Now then, here's mine!"

From Miyu, Karen received a whole lot of instant yakisoba that could only be bought in Hokkaido.

And then, on the 19th.

The SUV with Karen and Miyu on the rear seats began slowly moving out, Goushi acting as their driver. With Goushi's civil and safe driving, the car moved through the Sunday Tokyo streets.

"Uhhy, the inside is awesome too! I can barely hear anything from outside; so quiet. The leather *seats* are neither too soft nor too hard! I wish this was the kind of car we used at driving school!"

While Miyu was merrily captivated by the gorgeousness of the interior of the car, Karen asked the driver a question.

"Goushi-san. Where are we going?"

Miyu followed up immediately,

"She's right! That's important! Don't think you'll get a chance to nab us two budding maidens! You're surely planning to take us to a ship at the harbour and sell us off to a foreign country! So, I arranged that if I don't call home by night, the police will be sent after you!"

She said in a tone that sounded as if she were angry, or enjoying herself, or both. This was the first time Karen heard of the calling home thing, but knowing Miyu, she would not hesitate to do so. Karen made a mental note to ensure that her friend would not carelessly forget about the matter.

Goushi answered.

"Oh no, not to worry. We have no plans to board a ship today."

"'Not to worry' ain't exactly clear! We're still minors ya know! Though Kohi's twentieth birthday is tomorrow!"

"Oh..... I did not know that. Congratulations."

"Ikr? Have any present for her?"

Just as Miyu said this, the car stopped at the traffic lights, thus Goushi turned around.

"While I have nothing to give from my side, the manager probably will."

"Hou..... That "manager" you're talking about is referring to Pito-san *IRL*?"

Miyu asked, while, 'Correct', Goushi confirmed.

"That solves all the mysteries then! So, what kind of person is she?"

"She told me she would like to talk about that herself, thus I have nothing to offer."

When the lights turned blue, the car once again started moving.

With Goushi still driving truly civilly, they reached the entrance of the Shuto Expressway from the main street.

The moment they drove up the hill and were about to enter the Shuto Expressway, they found themselves in a big traffic jam. The car joined the line, but he was forced to drive at walking speed.

Goushi switched to auto-pilot and took his hand and feet off the wheel and *accelerator* respectively. The car moved on its own from there.

"That's why I hate Tokyo! Goushi-san, are we still on track?"

Miyu asked from the rear seat,

"I have ensured that we had enough time to spare, thus we should be all right."

"That so! —So, shall we chat about something! Or do you have anything to say, Goushi-san?"

Miyu brought up a subject,

"Let's see——"

While Goushi answered."

"In that case, how about mine and *IRL* Pito's... beginning of love?"

"Uho! What's that I hear, count me in!"

Miyu's eyes gleamed,

"Wha....."

While Karen stared in wonder.

"Are you really fine with that.....?"

Just as Karen began questioning why he suddenly brought up such a topic,

"Frankly....., *IRL* Pito told me "I hope you tell them, . 'It would probably be easier than explaining later on and you're gonna have nothing to do during the ride anyway', she said. —If she had not said that, I would have probably kept it a secret for the rest of my life."

Goushi gave her the answer.

"I seee." "I see....."

Facing the two girls who responded simultaneously,

"Though..... The story is going to be graphic, thus you might possibly feel unwell while listening to it."

Goushi gave them such a warning.

"As a girl my age who has tasted the bitters and sweets of life, I don't mind at all, what about you, Kohi?"

"I'll hear him out."

Karen answered immediately.

"Are you sure you'll be fine? You might be unable to sleep at night, ya know?"

"It's a boat I already embarked on. Besides——"

"Besides?"

"Pito-san said all that because she wanted us to hear it... is how I understand it."

"Hmm....."

Miyu gave an unusually serious look, when,

"Well then, looking forward to it, Goushi-san."

She slapped the real leather driver *seat* at around the shoulders.

"Understood. In that case, please take a look at *this* first."

With these words, Goushi's hands went around his back, giving them his *smartphone*.

When Karen took it, they saw a picture on the screen, on which,

"Hmmm?" ".....?"

They saw a single young and chubby man.

It seemed that it was cut out from a group photo as there were other people half inside the photo to the left and right. The scenery in the background looked like a *campus*, thus it was probably a university group photo.

The young man had gained a lot of weight; there was plenty of fat on both his face and his stomach. His pudding face still looked very childish, but due to his physique, he looked very old.

With his absurdly long hair, a dirty sweatshirt and loose *jeans* that were truly unfashionable; to put it in a word,

"Yeah, he's so tasteless."

It would be as Miyu brazenly said.

"So, who is this person? Don't tell me this is a marriage meeting photo. Unfortunately, there is no way I'm marrying that guy. Kohi, what about you?"

Miyu made a wild conjecture.

While Karen thought, 'Though this isn't a "marriage meeting photo", who exactly is this person and why is Goushi going out of his way to show it to us',

"Don't tell me....."

Once again, she stared at the *smartphone's* screen. She magnified it with her fingers, making the man's face bigger.

Since the photo was cropped from a group photo, the image quickly became distorted as it was magnified. Although details like the outlines of the man's eyes became unclear, Karen nonetheless,

"Could this, perhaps, be you, Goushi-san.....?"

Asked about what she had concluded.

"Wha, no way!"

Miyu's voice from the right,

"Yes, indeed."

Overlapped with Goushi's voice from the front.

"Buhi!"

"It is me. Around when I first met Pito."

"You kizzing?"

As Miyu's strange shouts of shock continued, she snatched the *smartphone* from Karen's hands and gazed at it closely,

"Now that I look at it again, he has quite the nice face. If he lost weight, he'd look good! If that were the case, I wouldn't mind marrying him."

Being able to say things so brazenly was Miyu's Miyu-like way of doing things. Karen forced a smile, while Goushi laughed cheerfully.

Having been given back the *smartphone* by Miyu, Karen took a look at it once more and returned it to the man in the seat in front of her.

Having taken the phone, Goushi also glanced at the picture, before turning the screen off and putting the phone back in his pocket. The car continued driving automatically, but it was illegal for a driver to gaze at his mobile phone.

"For as long as I remember, I have always been plump and lived my life without even a thought that I could be as thin as an average person. I also hated taking pictures, so this is probably the only one of me from that time."

Goushi continued speaking disinterestedly.

Karen considered remaining silent and listening on— but then Goushi would find it hard to continue speaking, she thought. Also, he was technically still driving, thus he had to look ahead.

However, as Karen worried how she should interject,

"People have their dark pasts, huh. And so?"

Miyu came to her rescue.

'I'm truly glad she came along.....'

With this thought, Karen listened to Goushi's story in silence.

"I had never had confidence in myself. As I continued leading a life without a ray of hope in sight, one day, I met a woman."

"Hyaa!"

A high-pitched cheer came from Miyu. The story suddenly took a turn towards *romanticness*.

"I became a *stalker* of that woman."

"Hya?"

A strange sound came from Miyu. The story suddenly took a turn towards criminal offense.

It did, but—

'Well, it's those two we're talking about.'

Karen was surprised how unaffected she was. Having been playing GGO and spending time with those two, she felt like she had become prepared for just about anything.

"Despite this being a deplorable and awkward story, please listen on. —A university student at the time, my job hunting was not going well and each day I felt like someone scraping my heart with sandpaper."

"But you didn't lose weight?"

"*Stress* made me eat, thus....."

"Then how did you lose weight— wait no, continue with the story."

"All right, one such evening, I got really hungry on my way home— but since there were no other stores in sight, I went to a stylish cafe that I would never have visited normally. And then, I saw the *waitress* that brought me some water, and felt like a .45 calibre went into my scalp."

Having sensitive ears, Karen could not overlook how a shred of happiness appeared in his indifferent tone.

Miyu asked.

"That was— Pito-san... *IRL*?"

"Yes. A woman who looked like a goddess. Throughout my life thus far, I have never laid eyes on such a beautiful woman."

"Hey hold on now, how's about looking behind you?"

"You two ladies are very lovely indeed, but not as much as *IRL* Pito. At the very least, in my eyes."

"I'll sue you for defamation! —So, continue please."

"From her conversations with the store manager, I learnt that she was following her dream while working there each day. She attended evening courses on business administration and was studying extra hard."

"Hmm, so, what's that about bein' a *stalker*? If all you did was frequent the shop, wouldn't that make you just a "good customer"?"

"Yes. I ended up being captivated by her beauty and—"

"You confessed?"

"No, I trailed her."

"Mister officer, it's *this* guy."

"Truly, there was something wrong with me at the time..... I believe it would not have been strange for me to have been arrested at that point. Almost every day, I trailed her on her way back from the *cafe* to her school and *apartment* a suitable distance away."

"And you didn't get caught? In Tokyo, you don't get caught?"

"I took great care not to get caught. Figuring that following her all the time would make me stand out too much, I memorised her *routes*, and thoroughly researched the *timing* for entering another alleyway and when to leave it to naturally appear behind her. Before I knew it, I was able to flawlessly recall the map in my head."

"Uwa, creepy!"

"Truly, what I have said is loathsome."

Listening to the conversation,

'I see, so that's how he has such an excellent geographical sense.....'

One mystery Karen had about M was resolved.

"But, such days eventually came to an end....."

Goushi said painfully, while Miyu asked in a worried tone.

"Are you sure..... that this story is alright for minors? Kohi is still nineteen, ya know?"

"Miyu, your birthday is way further!"

As could be expected, even Karen could not refrain from retorting.

"Well, don'cha worry. So, Goushi-san, continue."

"Okay. One evening. While following her, admiring her beautiful figure from behind and enjoying my fantasies that I was walking next to her——"

"Creepy! So?"

"I noticed that there was a man following her."

"Hah? Did you look in a mirror or something?"

"No. It was obviously a different man, a man whom I had seen visiting the *cafe* several times. He was an ikemen *salaryman* wearing a *suit*."

"Then?"

"I changed my *route* as always and came out behind her each time, but there was no doubt about it. He was, no, "he too" was a *stalker*."

"Then?"

Miyu's interjections shortened to the bare minimum. Karen felt the same as she waited for Goushi's following words.

"Then, the moment she went beside the least popular natural park on her route back—that *salaryman* bound her arms from behind, covered her mouth, and brought her into the park. I was taken aback for a moment, but the next moment, a vehement murderous impulse welled up in me and I rushed in the direction she had disappeared to; till this point, I remember everything clearly."

"W-what happened?"

"When I came to, I found myself lying on the ground in the park, nursed by the girl."

"Oooh!"

"I saw her beautiful face right next to me, 『Are you all right?』 , her sweet voice calling out to me..... I thought I had died. That I had come to heaven. But, that was not the case. According to her, I had leapt out while while shouting in a strange voice and brawled with the *salaryman*— is what I cannot even call what had happened - it was more like a childish scuffle; in the end, when I collapsed, the *salaryman* gave me a kick before running away, apparently. Although my body hurt all over, I had no exceptionally big injuries and she somehow helped me up."

"How nice! Wait, not nice! —So what then?"

"She told me. 『You are a relatively frequent visitor of our store, right? My flat is right nearby, so please come with me. I'll treat your injuries』 ."

"Wha! Then?"

"My brain was no longer capable of functioning properly, as I followed her with the thought "I must be dreaming. We went up to the girl's lovely and tidy flat; I could smell a nice scent and thought I would not mind dying at that point."

"How *romantic*. So that's how you got to know each other....."

Miyu said entranced,

"What happened next felt like a nightmare."

Goushi continued on in the same indifferent tone as before.

"When I came to, I found my hands and feet tied up. My memories are fuzzy, so I do not remember how and what happened. My memories from then feel like a movie I had seen a long time in the past."

"....." "....."

"Afterwards, I was utterly scolded, verbally abused, and beaten up by her. 『Why you asshole *stalker!*』 , 『I knew all along!』 , 『 You should have died along with that *laryman!*』 "

" ..... " " ....."

"I discovered that she was not a graceful angel, but a fearsome demon, concealing vehement violence and destructive impulses in her heart. Unable to do a thing, I spent the time till morning in a stream of tears. When I was finally released, 『If you tell the police about what happened this night, I'll expose everything about your *stalking*』 , she threatened me, and took some embarrassing photos as well."

" ..... " " ....."

"Henceforth, I became her "lover". Whenever she called, I had to go to her no matter how busy I was, without exception. I became unable to hunt for a job, nor attend university properly. And so, I began to think of my days as being wonderful. If I could be with a beautiful woman, to be useful to her, I could not imagine how a guy could be happier."

"Hold on, is the movie for that already in the works? If you'd like, I can be the director."

Admiring Miyu's strength to joke around no matter what the context was,

'Ah, so this is how Pito-san and M-san were born. I see, so the M didn't come from "map".'

Karen gave an expression of a great detective who resolved all the mysteries.

"Though, that is love, huh!"

Miyu said cheerfully.

"That is love. At the very least, there was love in my relationship with her. And even now."

"Uhya. So, Goushi-san, you became so thin for her as well?"

"No, I did not do anything in particular about that..... Just something that happened while I was doing my best working as "the demon's underling". Whenever she called, I ran to her and kept her company till morning without having had any meal. After losing some weight, I began paying attention to my appearance so that I would not embarrass her while walking next to her in town."

"Let's write a book 『The *Diet* that It Takes to be a Servant』 ! It'll surely sell!"

"Someday. —Thus, I lived with her in happiness, albeit distorted. She steadily advanced towards fulfilling her dream, while I supported her. Those were truly fine days. The 3 years and a bit before that... until that day."

For the first time in a long while, Karen interrupted the conversation.

"The 6th of November, 2022—"

"Yes."

Miyu came close to Karen's face.

"Mm, what is that day again?"

Karen answered.

"The day the official *service* of *Sword Art Online* began."

"Oh that!"

In order to explain the situation, Miyu was informed that Pito-hui was an SAO *beta tester* and what followed afterwards.

"I see..... I understand awfully well..... Wow, that truly was a very interesting tale....."

As Miyu nodded for the umpteenth time while saying this, Karen beside her asked Goushi.

"Pito-san wanted us to hear all of that? It wasn't your decision, Goushi-san?"

"It was her wish. 『There's nothing to hide from LLENN-chan!』 , she said."

"Is that so....."

After they passed a large *junction*, the Shuto Expressway jam ended and the car began riding *smoothly*. Goushi once again grabbed the wheel and began driving the high-class SUV smoothly. A group of tall *buildings* flowed through the windows.

After a bit of silence,

"Sorry, I'm gonna lie down a bit."

Miyu suddenly fell asleep, thus Karen gazed outside the window in silence.

The car descended from Shuto and began riding through a regular, empty road.

Gazing at the scenery, Karen thought about something the entire time—

" ....."

At times, Goushi looked at Karen's profile in his *rearview mirror*.

"We will be arriving soon. Please awaken Miyu-san."

As told by Goushi, Karen nudged Miyu.

The time was 13:57. Despite the jam, they managed to arrive in around 1 hour, but,

"Ugh, where are we? Osaka? Kyouto?"

"No, we are still within the twenty three wards."

Just as Goushi answered to Miyu, they were right in the centre of the metropolis, enclosed by *buildings*.

"That's the problem with Tokyo! In Hokkaido, 1 minute is 1 *km*!"

The car, mingling with *taxis* and other vehicles, advanced through the road with heavy pedestrian traffic.

"We are nearly there. The building that you can currently see to the front on your right."

The two girls brought their heads closer as Goushi said this and what they saw was a strange, black and rectangular building that was about the size of a school gym and had practically no windows.

Miyu,

"There's two possibilities for a building like that. Either it's the hideout of a mysterious organisation, or a *livehouse*."<sup>36</sup>

"Correct. Miyu-san, you have nice *senses*."

"I knew it! —It's a hideout, right?"

"No, the *livehouse* option."

"Dah, if that's true, we should have gone to Kanzaki Elsa's *mini live* concert today!"

Miyu floundered inside the car.

Kanzaki Elsa's *mini live* concert was today, in a certain place in Tokyo; the few tickets available were released through lottery and the girls did not manage to get any once again.

This time, the organisers used named mobile phone tickets, thus they could not be bought no matter how much money one had.

"Then you are in luck."

Goushi said while driving the car into the *livehouse*'s back parking lot.

"This is the venue for Kanzaki Elsa's *live* concert."

"Hah?"

Miyu's surprised voice,

"Goushi-san, don't tell me....."

Overlapped with Karen's question.

---

36 A wasei-eigo term for any store, bar, or other such establishment where live music is performed.

Goushi chose to answer Karen's question.

"Yes, that is correct. Pito is the *owner* of this *livehouse*. It is the place that had its eyes on Kanzaki Elsa first, and the place where she became a leading singer with her songs."

"Almost time; it begins at 2 o'clock. An employee will lead you to your reserved seats, so please enjoy the concert. We lack the time now, thus let's have the meeting with the manager after the *live* concert."

Said Goushi, before giving an order to a man in a *suit* that had approached the car to lead the two girls.

Silently, the man allowed the two girls through the staff entrance and gave them a *seal* to apply on their clothes as a sign of being *guests*.

The seats they were told about were in the front row of centre of the *livehouse's* second floor. A place they had a full view of the *stage* when seated. Truly, they were the best special seats in the house.

Looking down at the nearly a thousand guests and sitting in-between some ladies and gentlemen that blatantly looked like people from the business world, Miyu, having been dumbfounded the entire time,

"Ahh..... the debt has been repaid....."

Muttered to Karen.

When Karen smiled in silence, the lighting in the venue was turned off.

The *live* concert that they had dreamed about—

Felt like a dream.

The petite, tidy, black-haired beauty that was Kanzaki Elsa was far, far more beautiful and fleeting than in pictures and videos—

Her voice, too, sounded far more pleasant than through a music *player*.

\* \* \*

When the audience began leaving after the concert, Goushi came up to the two girls,

"Please wait a few more moments here. I shall lead you to the dressing room when there are fewer guests. The manager said she would like to meet you there. She says she will introduce you to Kanzaki Elsa."

And whispered this to their ears.

Sitting on the chair, Miyu,

"Oh Kohi..... I wouldn't mind dying now....."

Said with tears in her eyes.

Karen replied with a stern expression.

"Me too— is what I'd like to say, but we still have an important *mission* left, so we can't have that happen."

"Oh, that's right..... We can't possibly die until we meet Kanzaki Elsa to convey our love to her....."

"That's what's on your mind?"

"What else?"

"Ahaha."

As Karen smiled—

She sent a sharp look towards the *stage*.

The instruments on the *stage* were already being tidied up, but Karen still saw an after image of the woman who had been singing there just moments ago.

The audience left the stage, while the people sitting in the staff seats left for the *lobby*.

Goushi came to the two,

"They are going to participate in the "mid-party," — a mid-way closing party, we shall have them wait while we go to the dressing room."

And told them this, before prompting them to follow him.

"W-we're really going..... I'm so... don't be nervous, kay.....?"

Said Miyu, with an expression, the likes of which Karen had never seen, on her face.

The two followed behind Goushi from the first floor to the 『Staff Only!』 *area*. There was a scary man keeping a firm eye on the entrance there, but from just one look at Goushi, he let them *pass*.

"As you could expect from the manager's....."

Miyu murmured. It was unclear whether the end of that sentence would have been “boyfriend” or “servant”, but either way, Goushi certainly seemed like quite the person.

After moving through the pathway that seemed like it would go on forever for about 10 seconds,

"Here it is."

The three of them reached a dressing room with a label saying, 『Kanzaki Elsa-sama』 .

Without giving them the time to ask for time to prepare mentally, Goushi *knocked* without any reservation.

"Come in!"

From inside, they heard an awfully cheerful... and deep female voice.

Goushi opened the *door*, urging Karen and Miyu to step inside—

"Sorry for the intrusion."

After giving a small bow, Karen stepped inside.

And, she saw.

That inside the eight jō-sized room, there were only two women.

Sitting 4 *metres* ahead of them was Kanzaki Elsa, wearing the same casual *skirt* and *T-shirt* that she wore during the *encore*.

Standing beside her was another woman.

She seemed to be between her mid-thirties and her early forties.

She was about 170 *cm*-tall; her stature was quite high, though not as much as Karen's; her chests being big while her waist being slim, she had a voluptuous figure.

Her long hair, dyed brown, was tied up behind her; she was using a proper amount of cosmetics and wearing a dazzlingly red business outfit with a skirt.

She was a firm-looking woman who stood out so much that one only needed a moment to tell that 『That's the female manager! 』 without any need for an introduction.

Having closed the *door*, Goushi introduced the woman to the two girls.

"This is the manager of the company operating this *livehouse*, Satou Rei."

Rei, whose name sounded like it could be used as an *i*-adjective as is, looked at their somewhat nervous faces,

"Pleasure to meet you!"

And gave them an awfully energetic greeting with her far-reaching voice.

"Now then, which one is LLENN-chan and which is the *grenade* girl? Wait! Don't tell me, I'm sure to guess it!"

As Rei put her hand on her chin and began thinking after saying this,

"....." .....

Karen and Miyu exchanged glances and became silent,

"Hmm."

Miyu looked at Rei as the latter moaned,

" ....."

While Karen turned her head towards Kanzaki Elsa, who had been neglected the past few moments, and took two steps towards her seat.

And then,

\*Clap\*, \*clap\*, \*clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap—\*

As the small girl looked up to her, Karen began clapping for her.

" ....."

Looking straight at Kanzaki Elsa, who seemed to be puzzled, and even frightened,

\*Clap clap clap clap clap clap clap—\*

Karen continued clapping enthusiastically.

As Miyu, Goushi, and Rei stared at her with deeply uneasy expressions,

"Your voice was very marvelous! I have been dying to clap for you all this time!"

\*Clap clap clap clap clap clap—\*

Continuing her applause, Karen practically shouted this.

"U..... umm....."

Feeling pressured by the huge, 183 *cm*-tall woman, Kanzaki Elsa's petite figure attempted to pull back, but she was instantly stopped by the *table*.

While the clapping still continued, Miyu's voice blended in with the sound.

"U-umm..... sorry my partner is so close to blowing a fuse that she ended up losing track of what she should be prioritising....."

Then, she moved beside Karen, whose hands continued to clap,

"Hey hey, Kohi, save that for later! I said, you've got the order wrong! The first thing to do is to greet manager Pito-san of course!

And attempted to pull her arms back.

The clapping in the dressing room suddenly stopped, the room abruptly becoming silent,

"What a marvelous, truly marvelous——"

Karen's voice broke the silence.

"A marvelous "Maou, that was!"

When the room turned silent again, the silence was broken,

"Pft!"

By a burst of laughter from a woman, who then,

"Pfahahaahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha!"

Had a loud laughter spill out of her mouth.

"Pfahahahaahahahahahahah! —Hii,  
ahahaahahahahahaha!"

Kanzaki Elsa continued laughing; a laugh so loud that one could only wonder where all that energy could lie in such a small body. She rolled around laughing on the chair, tears in her eyes.

"Wha?"

Having stiffened from her lack of understanding on what was going on, Miyu turned towards Goushi and Rei,

"Teheh?"

Thus finding Rei shrugging with her tongue sticking out,

"....."

And Goushi looking up to the ceiling in silence.

And so she realised.

"Eehh!"

That this wildly laughing girl, Kanzaki Elsa, was Pitohui.

"Bhahahahahahah! Hiih! Ahahaahaha!"

Her feet flouncing around and herself looking as if she had eaten a mushroom that no one should eat, Elsa continued laughing. With such vigour that if there had been another person there, they would have called the ambulance.

This continued for an entire 20 seconds,

"Ahahahahahahah! Whew....."

Finally having fallen silent,

"The cause!"

Elsa flatly asked a question on her chair.

Addressing it to the 30 *cm* taller woman in front of her. In otherwards, to Karen.

"All this time, and on our way here as well, I had felt something strange."

Karen answered.

"Hou? Like what?"

"First, the feeling that something was off that I had today——"

"Hmm."

"Why did Goushi-san take such a roundabout path."

"Hmm?"

Elsa inclined her head,

"What does that mean?"

"It took nearly an hour to come here from my condominium. While there was a jam, we barely made it on time. At the perfect moment to just manage to reach our seats before the curtains rose."

"Lucky that you made it!"

"Yeah. But that seemed intentional."

"Why?"

"After going down from the expressway, Goushi-san had gone through quite a few roads. While we didn't go through the same road twice, having been looking through the window all that time, I could tell. That the umpteenth turns were for killing time. That's something I've become able to tell after learning to read maps in GGO."

At Karen's words, Miyu quickly turned to Goushi,

" ....."

Goushi averted his eyes in silence.

"You serious."

After Miyu muttered this, Elsa asked Karen.

"Heeeh..... So, for what purpose did you arrive right on time?"

"Perhaps, they're trying to avoid being exposed by arriving early, I thought. If there were time till the curtains rise, we could engage in conversation with the other invitees sitting next to us. That's just a lot of maybes, but we arrived right on time to ensure that there would be no chance of that happening. And so, we met up in the dressing room after the concert like this, with Rei-san being introduced as a *dummy*. All for Pito-san— Elsa-san to enjoy watching."

"Hou..... That all?"

"One more thing. This one was a far, far bigger issue."

"How's about sharing it?"

"Goushi-san... knew my address, full name, and appearance. Even though that was absolutely impossible."

"Seems like it. He went out to secretly ask you to come to SJ2, huh."

"I had been very perplexed about how that was possible..... I had never said a word about my real name, address, or about my stature. Not even to Pito-san, nor to anyone in GGO. So, there was no way for Goushi-san to know about it either; that's why it seemed extremely strange. Goushi-san didn't give me an answer on that."

"Hmhm. Though, how did that become the cause?"

"Because I finally recalled the sole possibility to explain that. The fact that I am Kohiruimaki Karen, that I live there, that I have a height *complex*, and that I had been playing GGO with a chibi *avatar* to evade that; all of it was written in a letter to someone, you see."

"Hou?"

"That was you— Kanzaki Elsa-san. I have never written a *fan letter* to anyone but you. And, even if you haven't read it yourself, someone like Goushi-san, who had been working at the same workplace, could have read it when he *checked* it beforehand. You are the manager of "Kanzaki Elsa's office," ! If you had said that Rei-san was the manager of the office, rather than the *livehouse*, I might have believed you."

"Achaa! I guess we screwed up with the final touches....."

\*Bashin\*, facepalmed Elsa, while Rei gave a few words from behind.

"And here even I took part with all that enthusiasm! How unfortunate!"

"Sorry. I'll handle this debt sooner or later, mentally."

"Well, I won't say a thing if you continue to sing here. —Well, I'll leave the rest to you young ones!"

Having said this, Rei, waving her hand, was about to leave the room, when,

"Oh, everyone's waiting for you for the mid-party, so be as quick as you can, okay."

She said this while closing the *door*.

As the *door* closed shut, Elsa stood up.

"Well, there seemed to be some final opposition, but what can you do about being so easily exposed."

Her eyes looked straight at Karen, who was gazing at her,

"I kept my promise, Karen."

The next moment, Karen hurled herself. At the small Elsa.

"Guh!"

Pressed by Karen's large body, and hugged tightly, Elsa stopped breathing for a moment.

"I'm so glaaaaaaad! I'm soooooooo glad you didn't die!"

And heard Karen's weeping.



"Because you murdered the heck outta me! Hey, it's hard to breathe, so let go. I'm gonna die I'm gonna die."

"Ahh, I'm so sorry!"

As Karen pulled back in a hurry, Elsa gave her a few words.

"Come down, come down, I can't see your face."

"Wha? Okay....."

Karen got down on one knee, letting Elsa see her tearful face.

Elsa's hands went for that face,

"Yep, you're just as cute *IRL!* I like it!"

And then, she pressed her lips onto Karen's.

"Mguh?"

Karen's eyes blinked several times as she was kissed, and after her face was released by Elsa about 2 seconds later,

"Mugaaah?"

Her face became as flushed as a boiled octopus in protest, but,

"What's the big deal, it's not something that you lose. Beside, I watched SJ2's video stream and you so easily *kissed* on the cheek the guy who gave you those *magazines*, right? This is far more wholesome than that!"

Elsa said, roaring with laughter.

"T-that person was a woman. I-i-it was just an expression of gratitude for the *magazines* that were necessary to bring down a certain someone!"

"Oh, I was right? The way that person moved was very feminine, right. I wonder how come no one around her realised that? Well then, it doesn't count among us girls, so I guess it's all completely fine?"

Just as she finished saying that, she went for another *kiss* on Karen's lips.

"Wha——"

As Karen was at a loss for words, Goushi,

"I forgot to mention this but... this girl is the kind of awful type who swings both ways. It would be best to take care not to get too close."

"Goushi-san, that's so late. Super late. Now my bosom friend can't become a bride anymore."

Karen,

"Fuhi....."

Lost strength in her other knee and staggered with a face so red that it seemed like she could have caught a fever.

Elsa drew the very image of neatness that was her face towards Karen and muttered in a clear voice, as if singing into her ear.

"Say, Karen-chan—— could you come over to my place next time? If you'd like, you could even sleep over."

"No!"

Karen shouted with a red face. Her reply was immediate.

And then,

"I am not going to meet with you outside GGO!"

-----

A certain day on a certain month.

A land of reddish-brown sand and rocks, a *GGO field* extending as far as the eye could see under the red sky.

There were two *characters* sitting in a line with their backs to a large rock.

The first was, no matter how you looked at it, a chibi clad entirely in pink. Atop her lap was a P90, dyed pink.

Another was a beauty that looked like a *cyborg*, outfitted in dark blue overalls. To her right was a KTR-09 *assault rifle*, loaded with a *drum magazine*.

"Don't you dare *kiss*! If you do, you'll get a *harassment* warning and I'll shoot you, you get me!"

"I won't I won't. Who'd *kiss* in GGO? Say, we should really meet *IRL*, right?"

"No thank you! You're playing despite being busy preparing for your next *live* performance; Goushi-san will be mad at you, ya know?"

"Oh come now, are you exchanging *emails* with him or something? If you want, I could let you have him!"

"No need! Treasure your partner more!"

"Of course I treasure him. But, you see, if I were to use a literary expression, it would be "That is that, and this is this," "

"Okay, this topic is coming to a close!"

"Tsk! Oh well. Being with LLENN-chan in GGO after all this time is plenty. *Games* really are fun, huh."

"That's right, *games* are places for having fun! Not for putting your life on the line!"

"Sorry sorry. I promised I won't do something as silly as that again. As long as I'm alive, I'll have fun by other means."

"Then it's okay! Though——"

"Hmm?"

"Pito-san, you sure are merciless in battle. You can never get rid of that attitude of doing anything it takes to win."

"True. But I never thought that there could be someone even better than me."

"Heeh, who made you say something like that..... Pito-san?"

"Eeh?"

As Pito-hui stared at her in wonder,

"Eeh?"

LLENN answered.

" ....."

Just when Pitohui worried about saying something,

\*Zuzun!\*

A muffled explosion came from the other side of the rock—

"The trap sprung!" "The trap sprung!"

The two grabbed their respective guns and leapt out at the same moment.



(The End)

## 特別感動一大掌編Ⅱ

『我は戦う己の誇りを胸にⅡ！　　く荒れ果てた街に響け魂の銃声く』

それは、第二回スクワッド・ジャムが始まってから10分が経過した頃。

風が吹くフィールドの西側市街地で、

「はあ……、はあ……」

一人のプレイヤーが、ひっくり返ったトラックの荷台を背に、荒い息を繰り返していました。

これといった特徴のない顔立ちと体型の、男アバターです。着ているのは、とても良くあるウッドランド迷彩の戦闘服。体には、マガジンポーチをいくつもつけた装備ベスト。

銃だけは、スイス製の高級狙撃銃、シグ社の《SG550スナイパー》です。アサルトライフルのSG550を狙撃銃にカスタマイズした銃で、5.56ミリを使う自動狙撃銃の中では、最も性能が、そして値段が高い1丁です。

「はあ……。はあ……。くそう……。味方は……。全滅か……」

男の視界の左上、同じチームの仲間五人のヒットポイントがゼロになっていました。体中に被弾エフェクトを煌めかせた自分のヒットポイントもまた、残り5パーセントといったところ。次に拳銃弾がかすただけで、死んでしまうでしょう。

トラックは大きな通りの交差点の真ん中であって、他にも廃車がゴロゴロ転がっていました。そして、その廃車の陰には、たくさん死体が転がっていました。その数、二十人以上。

# GUN GALE ONLINE SQUAD JAM Another Story

「ああ、どうしてこんなことに……」

男は、曇った空を見上げて、小声で呟きました。

前回の、第一回スクワッド・ジャムを見た人なら覚えているでしょう。

彼は、砂漠の戦場でSHINCのスナイパーに撃ち殺された男。そしてそのリアルは、五十代のガンアクション物ばかり書いている小説家であり、知る人ぞ知る、その大会のスポンサー。

自分がお金を出した大会にこっそり出場したはいいが、優勝どころかトップ5にも入ることができなかつた男です。

しかも、優勝者や上位入賞者に送ったとされる賞品が“サイン入り著作セット”だとネットで知られると、その評判がまあ悪いこと悪いこと。よせばいいのにエゴサーチしてみると、

『いらねえ！』『マジゴミだわ』『ステマ乙』『ステマにすらなつてねえ』『宛名入りじゃ売れもしない！』『イジメか！』『勇者への冒涇キタコレ』――、

心を削るような文字が躍っていました。正直凹みました。

ならば！ 彼はリベンジを決意しました。執筆仕事など放り投げてGGOで自らを鍛え、今度は優勝しようと。そして、

「主催者ですけど優勝しちゃいましたー、もちろん実力でー！ てへっ！ みんなごめーん」と、ウザさ全開のコメントを言い残してやろうと。

こうして、彼の残念な性格を承知している仲間達と共に、彼は今まで以上にGGOにのめり込み

ました。あまりにリアルでの連絡が取れないので、担当編集がGGOのアカウントを取ってゲーム世界にまで原稿を催促に来るといふアクシデントはありましたが、前回よりもだいぶ強くなりました。

そうして、「よっしゃ第二回を主催してやるでヒッパハー！」と意気込んでいた時のことです。どこかの誰かが第二回を主催すると言い出しやがって、しかもその賞品が自分のよりずっとずっと評判が良くて、

「きーっ！ 悔しいっ！ 悔しいっ！」

彼は、脳卒中で倒れるかと思いましたが。ジタバタ暴れました。しかし、こんなことで諦めるほど潔い男ではありません。優勝して賞品をかつ攫おうと、第二回SJへの出場を決め、予選も難なく突破しました。

そして十数分前に始まった大会ですが、彼のチームは作戦を立てました。『ギリギリまで逃げ回って、最後は漁夫の利狙いだ！』という情けない作戦を。

その為に、最初のスキャンからして逃げることを決意したのですが――、  
どうしてこうなった……？

強敵LFとSHINCから逃げるように集まってきた他のチームが、この市街地で大激突。複数チーム入り乱れての大乱戦になってしまったのです。

敵味方の位置も分からないまま、車の陰から容赦なく襲ってくる弾丸と、投げつけられるグレネード。わずか数分の戦闘が終わって、あたりは急に静かになりました。

# GUN GALE ONLINE SQUAD JAM Another Story

敵をだいぶ撃ち倒しましたが、彼自身も満身創痍です。生きていてただでラッキーです。そんな中で――、

がさごそ。トラックの向こうで、何かが動く音が聞こえました。この世界で何かが動いているとしたら、それは、どんなチームの誰かは分かりませんが、敵しかありません。

ああ……、優勝は……、無理か……。

彼は目を閉じて、己の人生を振り返りました。

わずか2秒の間に――、生まれて初めて手に入れた銀弾でっぼうから、海外で初めて撃った実銃の感触から、作家になって印税で撃ちまくったショットガンから、そしてGGOで楽しんだゲームまでを思い出しました。ついでに、中学二年生の時に教室でエアガンを撃って、

『うわなにあれ？ ガキ？ 小学生？』

などと言いたげな目で見てきた同級生女子の顔も思い出しました。

がさごそ。地面を擦る音が、さっきより近くで、より大きく聞こえた気がしました。多分ですがトラックの裏を、ゆっくりと近づいてきているのでしょうか。

こうなると、自慢の狙撃銃も役には立ちません。腰の拳銃は、さっきの乱戦の間に手を撃たれてしまい、どこかに落としてしまいました。

ならば、潔く死のう！

ここでジタバタしても仕方ありません。いつそここで、華々しく散ってやろうではありませんか。そうしない理由などあるでしょうか？ いやない。

# GUN GALE ONLINE SQUAD JAM Another Story

彼は心の中で否定すると、抱いていたSG550スナイパーを、そっと地面に横たえました。そして、それ以外に唯一残った武器、プラズマ・グレネードを腰の後ろから二つ取り出すと、両手に握りました。

さらばだ。愛銃に一言だけ、心の中でお別れを告げると――、  
ぽちっ。

「うおおおおおおつ！」

プラズマ・グレネードのスイッチを両手で押しながら、そして叫びながら、トラックの陰から飛び出しました。そして、見ました。

死体だらけのフィールドと、誰かの銃がトラックにぶら下がっていて、それが風に揺れて地面をかすかに擦っている様子を。

なんだ！ 敵いないじゃん！ ここで生き残ってるの俺だけじゃん！ やほー！ これまだ生き残れるじゃん！ ひよつとして、遠距離からの狙撃で優勝も狙えるんじゃないやね？

気持ち悪い笑顔でそんなことを思いながら男は、スイッチを切り忘れたプラズマ・グレネードの爆風に包まれていきました。

おしまい



## 作者からの重要なお知らせ

次のページから始まる解説は、登場銃器のネタバレがありますのでご注意ください。



Sword Art Online Alternative

# GUN GALE ONLINE

## 銃器解説 GUNS EXPLANATION

『ソードアート・オンライン オルタナティブ ガンゲイル・オンライン』に登場する銃器を著者・時雨沢恵一自ら解説。設定イラストとともにGGO世界で大活躍する銃器をチェックしよう!

銃器イラスト／秋本こうじ

KOUJI AKIMOTO

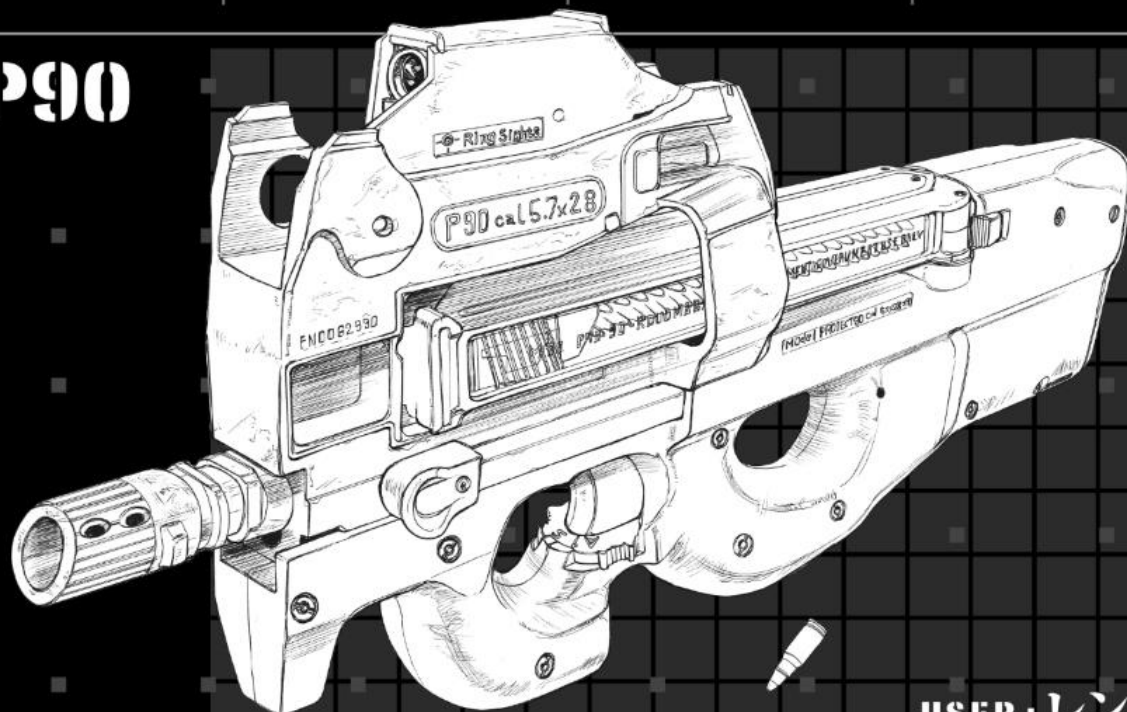
### PROFILE

時雨沢さんの代表作『キノの旅』でキノの持つ銃「フルート」のデザインを描かせて頂きました。Gペンアナログ作画で細かいメカを描くのが大好きです。時々漫画を描いたり自転車を作ったりしています。

### COMMENT

今回、川原さん時雨沢さん黒星さんの関わる本に私が描かせて頂けて感謝感激です。お陰で楽しく絵を描けました。尚このイラストの銃器は時雨沢ワールドの物なので細かい所のツッコミは無しでお願いしますね。(汗)

# P90

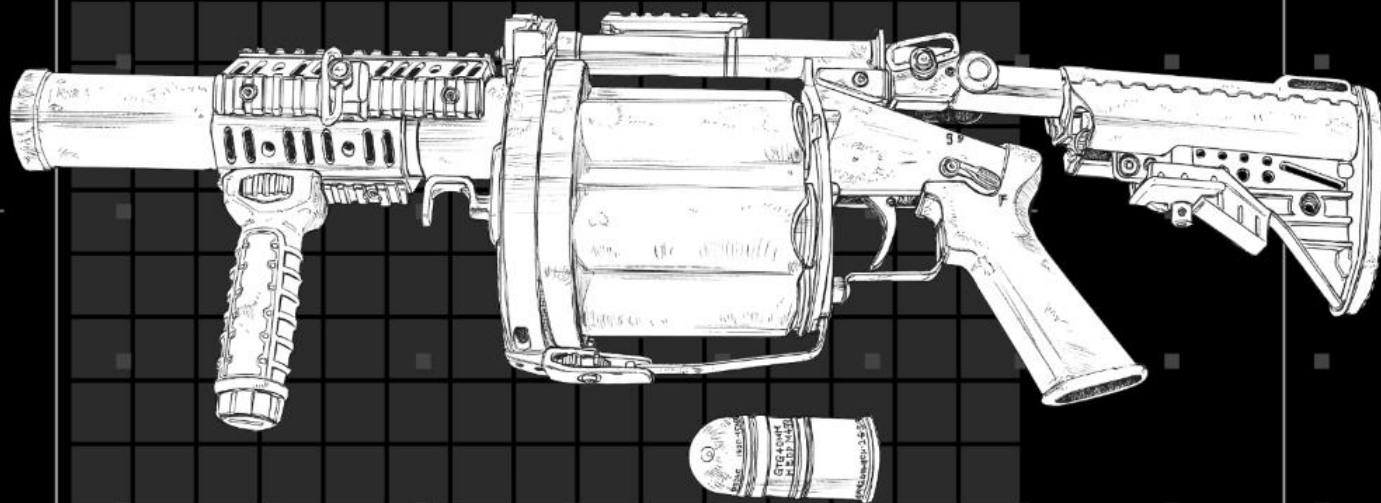


USER: レン

一見宇宙船のように見えて、よく見るとやっぱり宇宙船のような独創的すぎるスタイルの銃。弾丸はマガジンに横並びで、90度回転しながら銃に入っていく。主役レンの相棒なのに、毎回ヒドい目に遭わされて可哀想。



# MGL-140

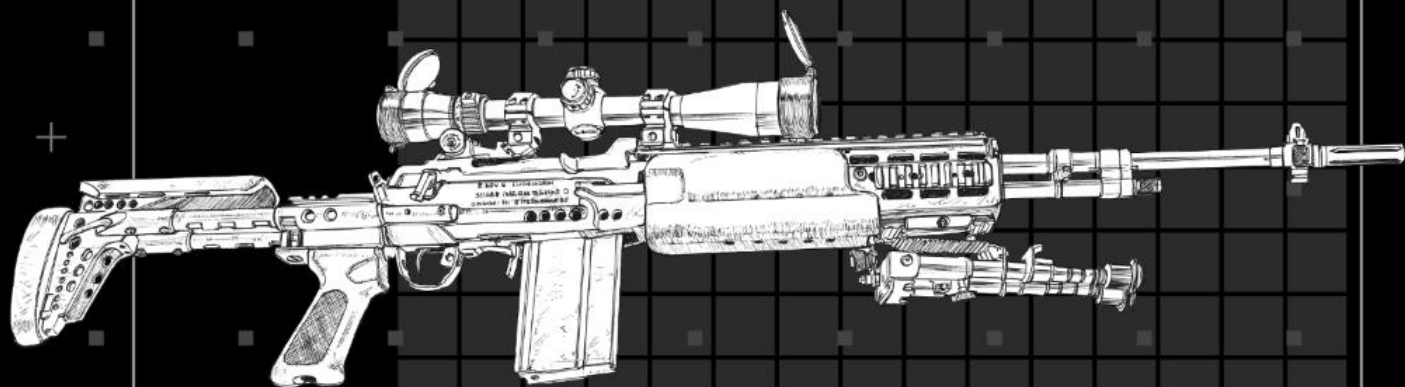


USER: フカ次郎



それだけでなく凶悪なグレネード・ランチャーの、さらに六連発バージョン。危ないので子供に持たせてはいけない。この形を美しいと思うか否かは人それぞれ。もちろん実際は、両手に持って使うような武器ではない。

# M14・EBR

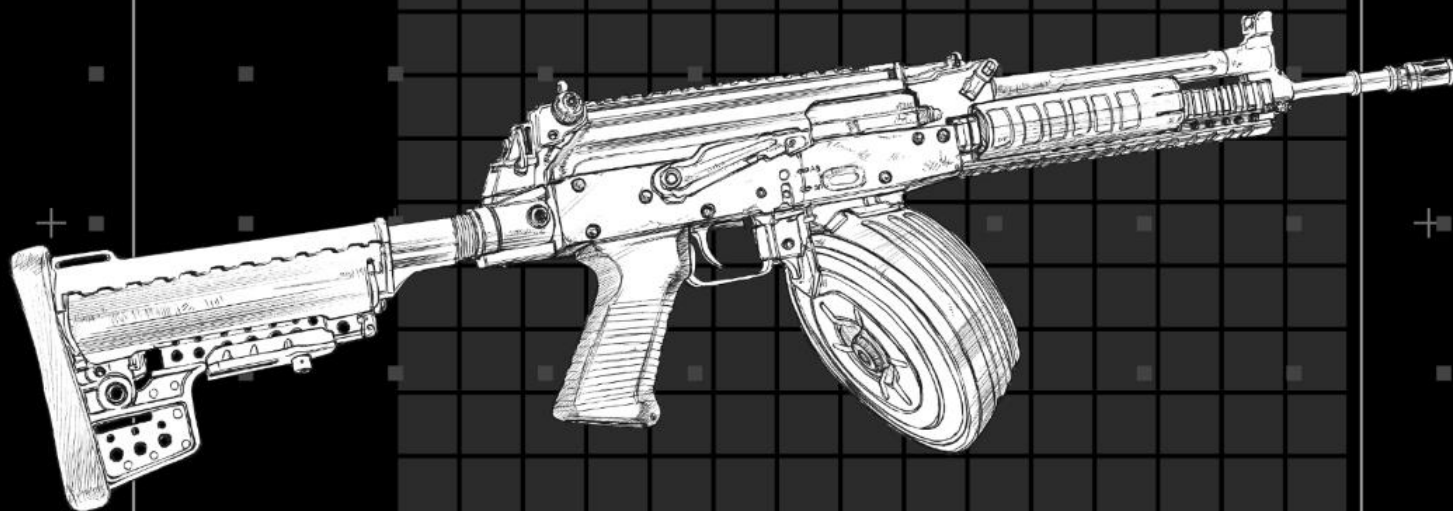


USER: エム

M14ライフルの原形を留めないまでカスタムした、いわば整形手術のしすぎで別人になってしまった人のような銃。機能だけをひたすら追い求めた結果このスタイルなら、これはこれで“美”と言えるのではないだろうか。



# KTR-09

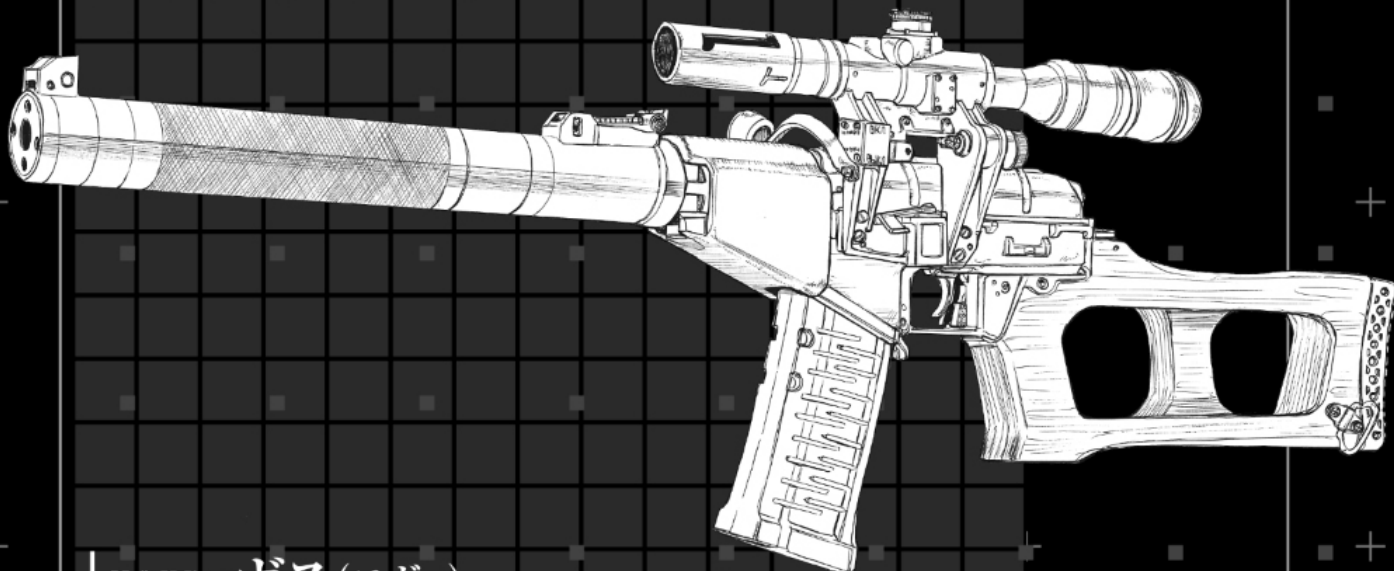


USER: ピトフィー

こちらはAKシリーズを米国でカスタムした銃。原形は留めてる。ライバルのM16系のストックをつけているという、東西融和の象徴のような出で立ち。冷戦は遠くになりけりと、この銃は訴えている、のかもしれない。



# ヴァントレス

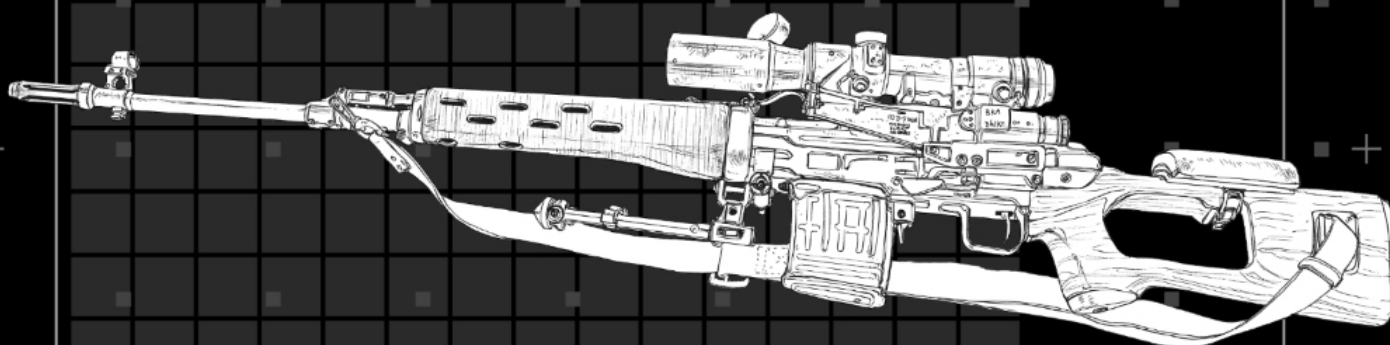


USER: ボス (エヴァ)



消音狙撃銃であり、その気になればフルオートでも撃てるという、おそロシアらしい変態銃。スタイルはドラグノフに似てるが、デフォルメを間違ったようなダサさがある。しかし怖い。音がしないというのは、本当に怖い。

# ドラグノフ

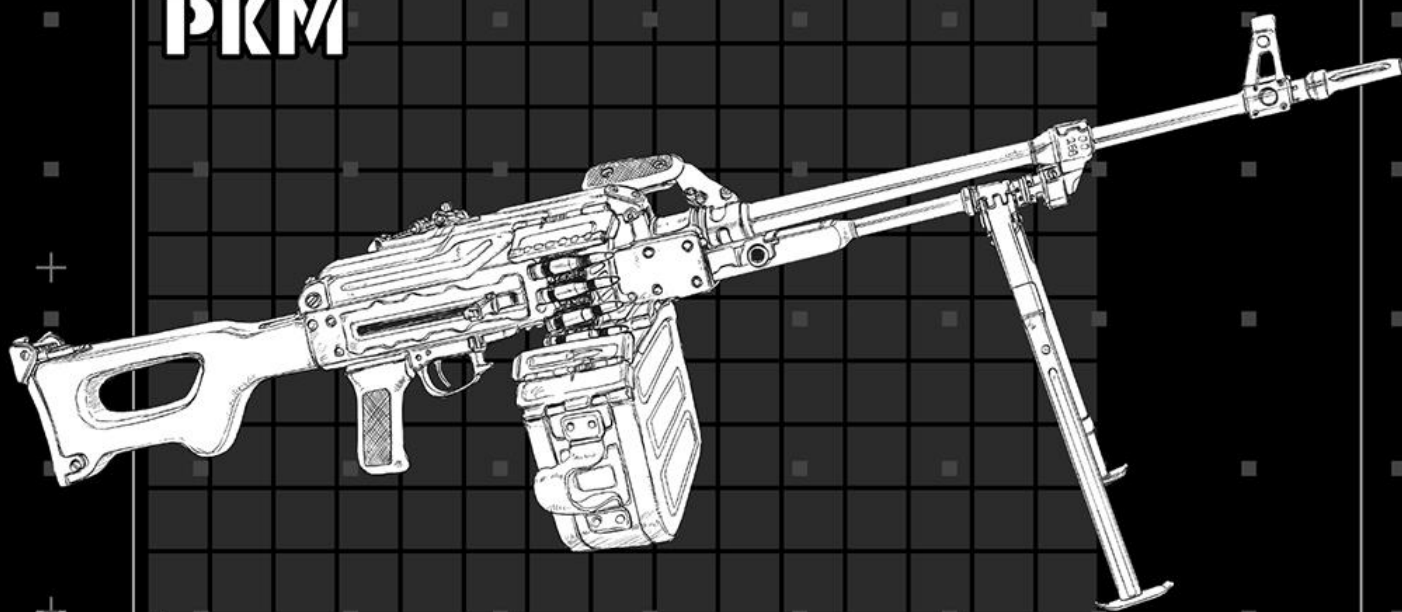


USER: トーマ / アンナ



中二病ガンマニアが一度は憧れて、一生憧れ続けるロシア製自動連発式狙撃銃。細身でスタイリッシュ、名前までクール。これを背負って学校に通えたら、どんなに人生バラ色だったろうか？ 捕まりますかそうですか。

# PKM

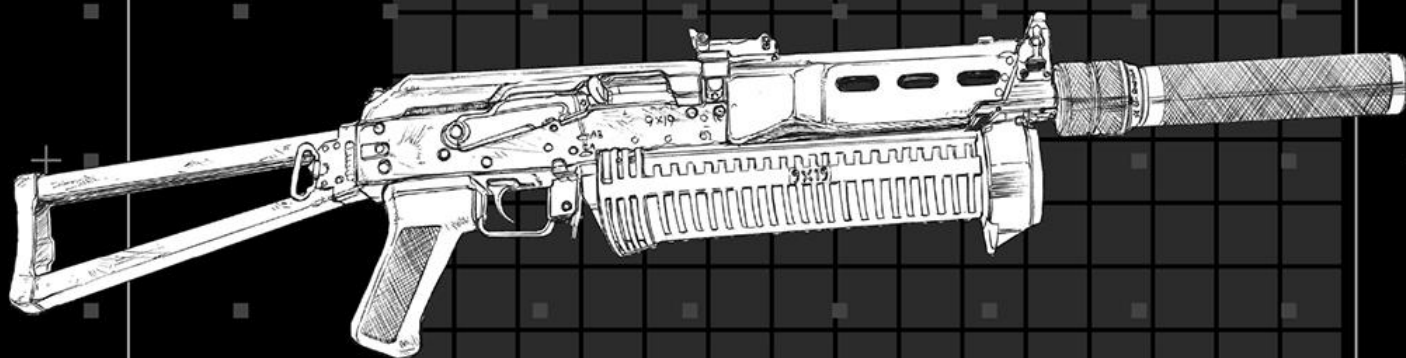


USER: ソフィー / ローザ



AKを造ったカラシニコフ氏が残した傑作機関銃。もっと評価されてもいいのにあまり作品に出てこないから出した。一般的なのと逆で、銃の右側から弾薬ベルトを吸い込んでいくので、道で拾った時は間違えないように。

# ビゾン

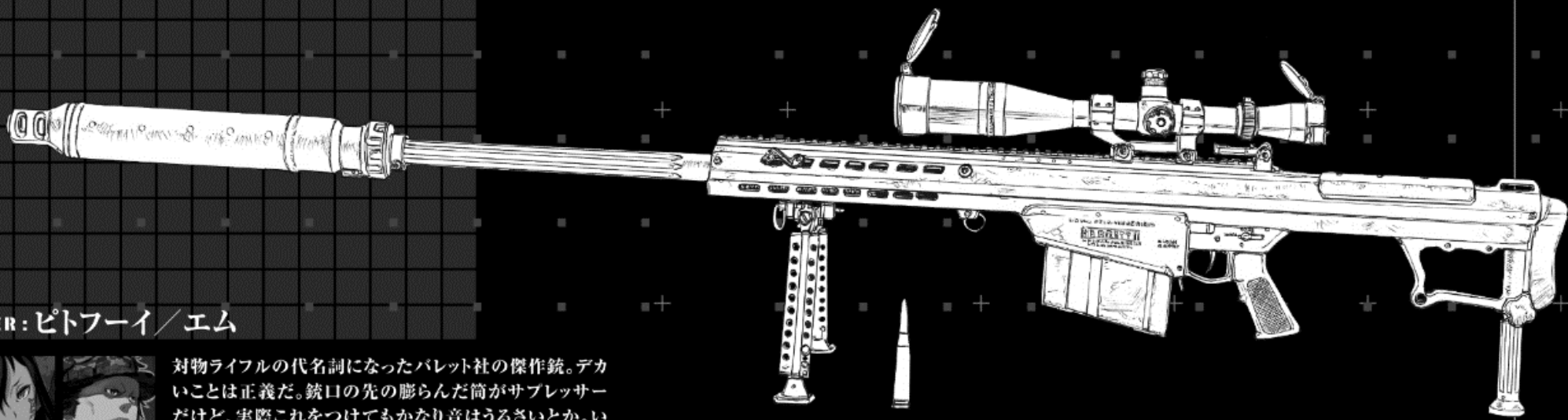


USER: ターニヤ

螺旋階段のように弾丸を送り込む筒型マガジンが特徴的な、ロシア製のサブマシンガン。ええい、ロシアには変態な銃しかないのか？ 野暮ったく泥臭いデザインセンスはここでも生きている。サプレッサー付きの方がいい。



# M107A1

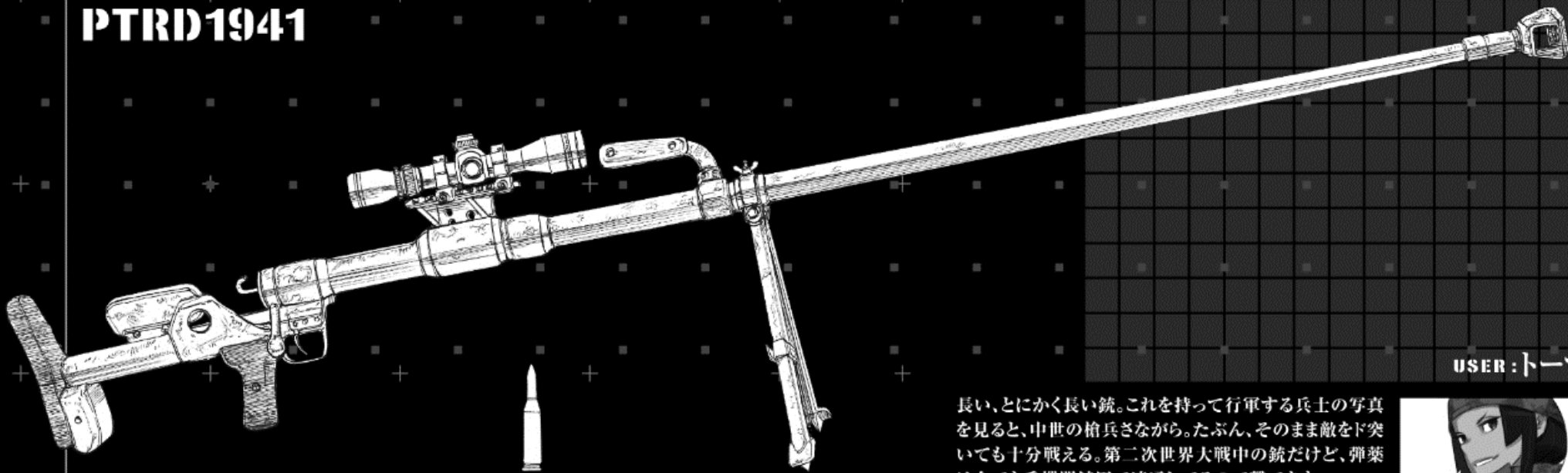


USER: ピトフーイ/エム



対物ライフルの代名詞になったバレット社の傑作銃。デカイことは正義だ。銃口の先の膨らんだ筒がサブレッサーだけど、実際これをつけてもかなり音はうるさいとか。いろいろな映画に出まくってますね。よっ、人気銃!

# PTRD1941

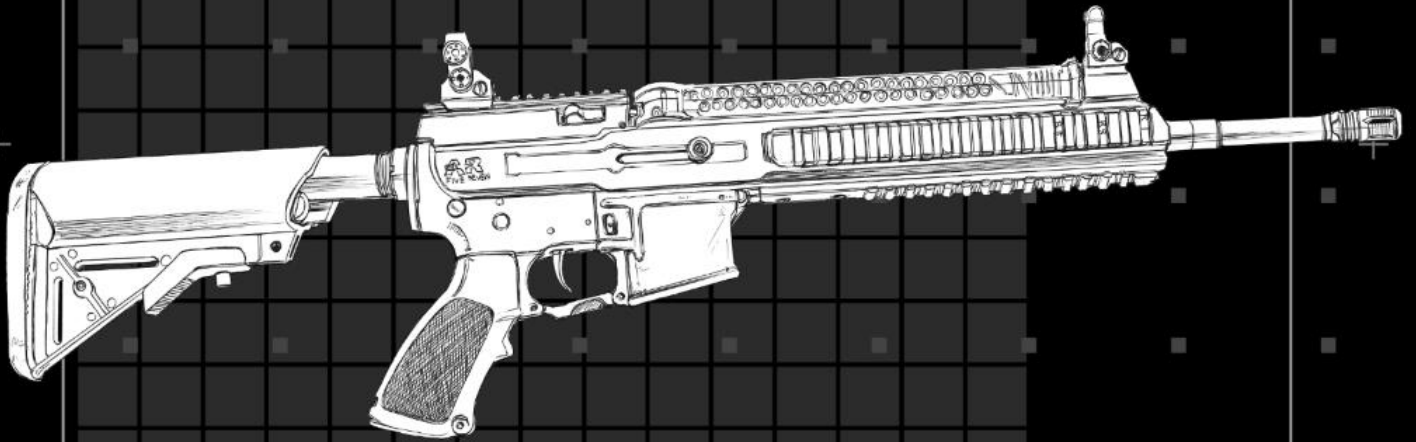


USER: トーマ



長い、とにかく長い銃。これを持って行軍する兵士の写真を見ると、中世の槍兵さながら。たぶん、そのまま敵をド突いても十分戦える。第二次世界大戦中の銃だけど、弾薬は今でも重機関銃用で流通してるので撃てます。

# AR-57

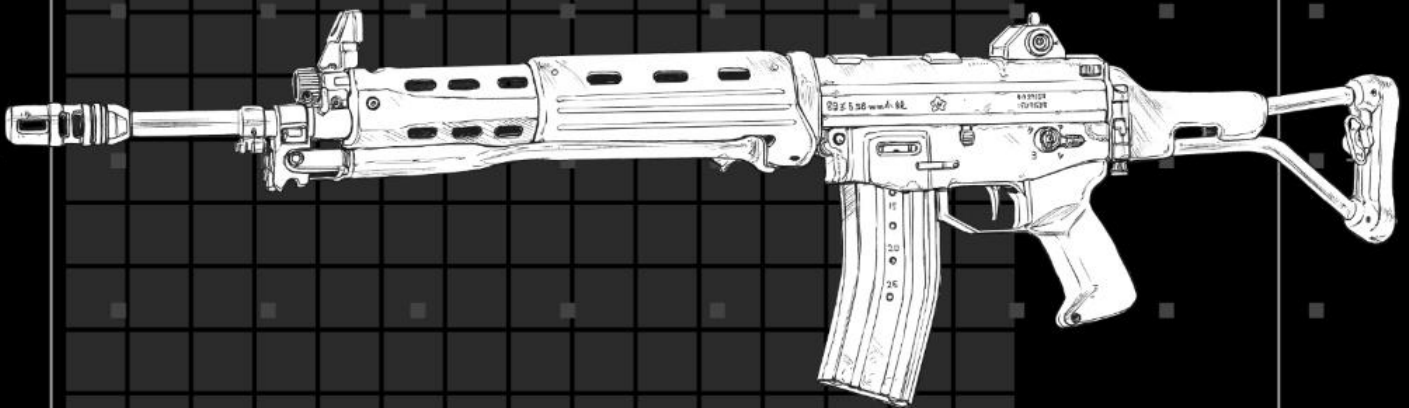


USER: クラレンス



P90のシステムを使って、米国で大人気のAR-15(いわゆるM16)の下パーツと合体させた超変態銃。なぜ考えた? なぜ実行した? 細かいことは気にはしていない。空薬莖は本来のマガジン穴から下に落ちる。

# 89式小銃

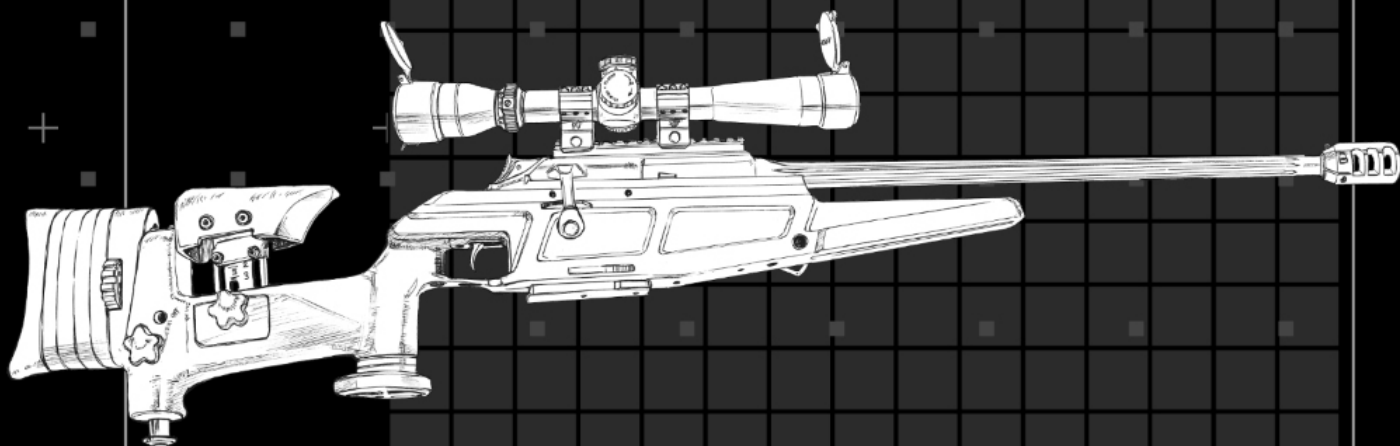


USER: 実況中継プレイヤー

No Image

祖国日本の銃にして、自衛官や海上保安官などのプロにならないと撃てない銃。輸出し米国で撃たせて欲しいのに! これはストックが折りたためるタイプで、当然持ち運びは楽になる。あなたの鞆にも入るかもしれない。

## R93タクティカル2

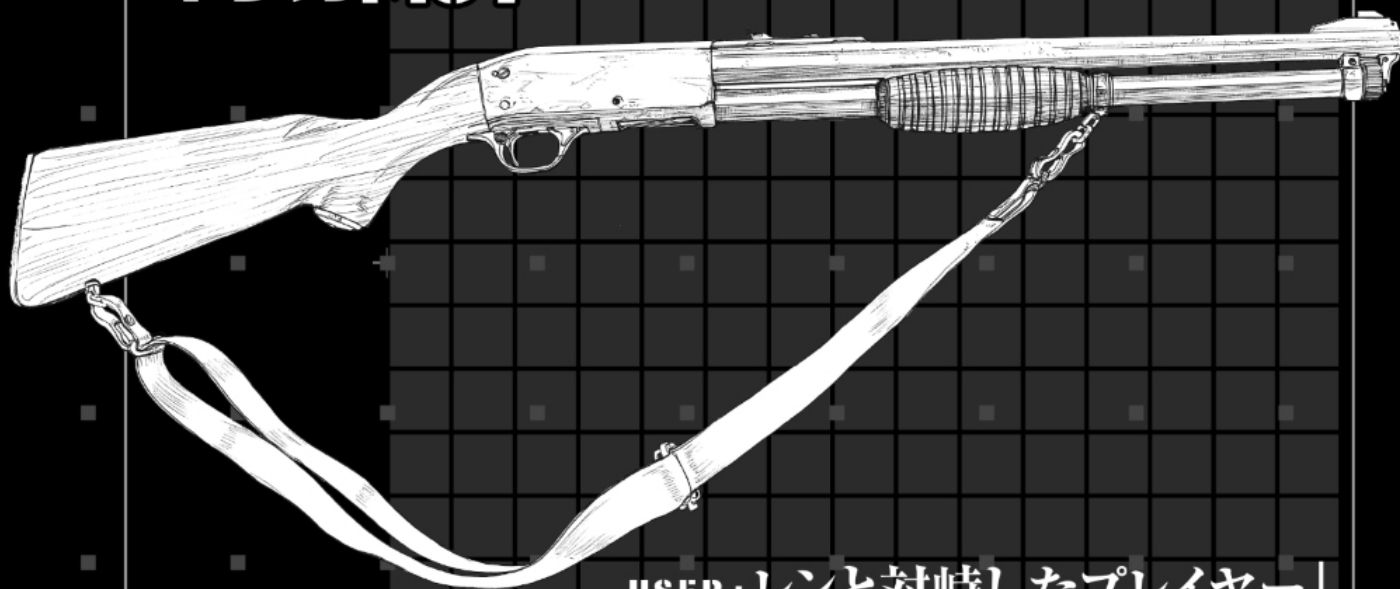


USER: シャーリー

ドイツ製の高性能狙撃銃。猟銃タイプと基本構造は一緒でも、狙撃に使うとなるとストックがこんなゴテゴテした形になる。グリップは縦になるし、肩や頬を当てる場所、全部調整が可能。これで鹿を撃ちに行ったら目立つ。



## イサカM37



USER: レンと対峙したプレイヤー

ショットガンとしてはとても優秀な1丁。イサカとはニューヨーク州にある町の名前で、日本人の井坂さんが造った訳ではないので間違えないように。ここテストに出ます。ちなみに上の筒が銃身で、下の筒がマガジン。

No Image

こんにちは！黒星紅白です  
今回もレンのハイスピードバトルに  
負けないう挿絵の方  
描かせて頂きました。  
なんだかGGO描いてる間は  
勢いつけて描いてるからか  
体調が良い気がします。  
四十肩になったけど……

YURO





## Credits

Translation:<sup>37</sup>

Gsimenas

Editing:

ZeHaffen<sup>38</sup>

Pryun

Illustrations

Mttblue2

<http://ruranobe.ru>

**Thanks!**

Compiled:

SAO Archive Team

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<sup>37</sup> Translation from <http://dreadfuldecoding.blogspot.de/p/gun-gale-online.html> on November 22, 2017

<sup>38</sup> SECT.10 – SECT.18