

Our new base is practically right next door to Suzu's City Hall.
Less than five minutes after we left the base, I hear loud voices from Suzu's City Hall.
I bring my 【Megaphone】 in front of my mouth with 2,000 subordinates at my back.

"Nice to meet you. Hmm, is that the right way to phrase it? My name is Demon King Shion. I'd like to make a proposal to the humans hiding within Suzu's City Hall. May I proceed?"

I toss these words at the humans, and wait for a reply.

『...What is it?』

After around a minute, I hear a reply coming through a speaker. The feedback is terrible.

"Excuse me, but is it alright to assume that you're the leader?"

『That's right! ...I'm Tayama, the prefectural governor of Ishikawa Prefecture!』

I hadn't expected the prefectural governor to be the voice in the speaker.
So, their leader isn't 『Sword King』, huh...?
My plans have fallen apart all of a sudden.
I think this will be impossible... My plan to arrange a place to speak with 『Sword King』 won't work out, even before getting to the stage of Rina's persuasion and so on.

『What is it? Something wrong?』

As I stay silent due to the unexpected event, the governor's voice reverberates through the hissing speaker.
I suppose I'll weather this by ad-libbing... If it proves impossible, we'll use force...

"Tell me, Sir Governor! Don't you want to put a stop to this futile struggle? I think it's pretty clear who's going to come out victorious."

『Demon King Shion! Are you asking us to surrender!?!』

"You could say that. In fact, all the humans that have come under my rule are living safely inside my Domain. I don't think there's any need for you to pointlessly throw away your lives, but what's your take?"

『Living safely, you say...? Proof! Where the proof!?!』

Proof, eh...? My 『Residents』 cannot independently leave my Domain. If they wanted to do so, they have to either become my bloodkin, or leave as subordinates of my bloodkin.
However, if I honestly tell them that truth...it's also possible that they will interpret it as confinement.

"Proof, you say? The humans under my rule are...precious 『Residents』 under my personal protection! You're saying I should shove them in front of you people!?! Proof! Where's the proof that you won't attack my precious 『Residents』!?"

Giving an explanation after constructing a theory is the most ideal, but if you can't do that...it's more effective to return the other party's words just like that.

『Hmm...proof, you say... I-I'm also human...! You're say I'd hurt my cherished citizens!?!』

"Talk is cheap, empty promises are easily given. If you're telling me to believe those words, how about you believe my words as well?"

『Don't screw around! I don't have the slightest intention to play word games with a bastard like you!』

"I think it's rude to call it word games. Should I show you the proof then? I'll invite you into my Domain. If you can see the lives of my 『Residents』 with your own eyes, you'll see that there's no lie in my——"

『——Shut up!』

Interrupting my speech, the voice of an elderly man, different from the governor, resounds through the speaker.

『All of you shitty Demon Kings are evil through and through! We will let our steel do the talking when it comes to bastards like you!』

The old man's voice, driven by rage, echoes over the field.
That voice's owner must be——
I look at Rina who's standing next to me.

"It's Grandfather —— the 『Sword King』."

Rina tells me the identity behind that voice in a whisper.

"You're 『Sword King』 — Sayama Kotetsu, correct?"

I address the owner of the angry voice, using my 【Megaphone】.

『Shut up! A tainted being like you has no right to speak my name!』

I guess he wouldn't accept any ohagi, even if I brought it over as a present. I feel stumped by the hatred towards Demon Kings displayed by Sayama Kotetsu.
Having said that, now's the crucial moment.

"I'm 【Chaos】, and you people are 【Law】. According to Mastermind...the goddess as you call her, we have a hostile relationship."

First I'm going to affirm the other party's ideology.

"That's why we won't understand each other even if we exchange words."

『Shut it! Something like your shrewd cajolery won't——』

"You shut up! Oops, sorry. I got slightly upset there. Let me continue. That's why I won't try to persuade you with words — Sayama Kotetsu, but instead show you proof."

『...Proof, you say?』

Finally Sayama Kotetsu is lending an ear to my words.

"Humans of Suzu! And, Sayama Kotetsu — renown as 『Sword King』 and hero of Suzu! I have a proposal for you!"

『Speak.』

"Won't you negotiate with us?"

『Never!』

I ignore his words, and continue, "The one sitting at the negotiation table won't be me."

『What nonsensical bullshit...』

"The one sitting at the negotiation table will be Sayama Kotetsu — 『Sword King』, as representative of Suzu's residents, and as my representative, your granddaughter — Rina!"

At last I've managed to guide the conversation towards the planned track.

Chapter 155 - Invasion into Suzu's City Hall ⑫

"...Rina, you say?"

"Correct. Your granddaughter Rina — Sayama Rina is going to represent our side in the negotiations."

I reply to Sayama Kotetsu's trembling voice.

"I-Impossible!! Rina has...Rina, by all of you Demon Kings——"

"Don't arbitrarily decide what's impossible! Also, "all of you Demon Kings"...don't lump us all together!"

I rattle on, interrupting Sayama Kotetsu's words.

"Impossible! All of you Demon Kings are pure evil!"

"Come on, that's quite a claim to make here... You humans have individuality as well, don't you? There are good and bad people. If criminals exist, there will also be people who abide by the law. Or am I wrong?"

"However, you have in fact...murdered humans — my friends!"

"It was legitimate self-defense."

"What a bad joke!"

"You're right. Even if we talk with each other, our views won't mesh...it's a bad joke. Thus, confirm the truth not through me, but Rina — your own granddaughter. You've got 60 minutes. If you accept the negotiations, come here! Once the 60 minutes pass, I'll be forced to assume that you are unwilling to negotiate, and start my offensive."

I one-sidedly made my demands, and cut off the dialog through the **【Megaphone】**. Even afterwards, the people of Suzu's City hall call out to me through their speaker, but I ignore all of it.

"Shion...you think the other side will agree to negotiations?"

"Who knows?"

I answer Rina, who worriedly calls out to me, with a shrug.

"Well, even if they agree...your granddad is quite the bonehead, so the negotiations will probably be quite tough. Are you confident that you'll be able to persuade him?"

"...I shall do my very best."

I recall my previous conversation with Sayama Kotetsu as I question Rina. I feel a bit stumped myself. Rina nods with a look that makes me feel her strong resolve.



50 minutes later.

There's ten minutes left until the promised time runs out.

——All hands, get ready for combat!

I pledged to the humans of Suzu's City Hall that I'd start my attack after 60 minutes.

I proposed the idea of negotiations unbidden, and suddenly for that matter. Therefore, it would be foolish to refrain from attacking after the time limit has passed.

An overly weak disposition lowers the morale of your allies, and boosts that of your enemies, during diplomacy.

Hence, it's necessary for me to abide by my earlier pledge.

Hearing my order, tension and bloodlust begin to swell between my subordinates.

The building of simple barricades using the materials we have taken out of my Domain has been finished as well. The preparations for battle are in order.

Five minutes left.

It'd be great if things could be wrapped up without blood being shed between us, but...in the end

Demon Kings and humans are contrary life-forms, I guess...

Just as I am about to completely give up on the negotiations, a group of humans, easily surpassing a thousand in number, with a battle surcoat clad Sayama Kotetsu at the lead, appear from within Suzu's City Hall.



The humans slowly approach our position.

Even from this distance it's obvious that they're armed. I hear the sounds of my subordinates readying their weapons behind me, and a turbulent atmosphere descends on the area.

—All hands, you're absolutely forbidden to strike first!

My words act as an absolute order, restraining my subordinates. This will prevent any reckless charges from our side.

Sayama Kotetsu, who is walking at the head of the humans, gradually makes his way to me.

I plant my personal weapon, Gáelbolg, in the ground, raise both hands, and show my peaceful intent clearly.

When Sayama Kotetsu lightly raises his right hand, the humans following him from behind stop on the spot, and only Sayama Kotetsu continues to slowly walk this way.

I also proceed to walk slowly towards him.

Once both sides have shortened the distance to approximately ten meters...

"Nice to meet you. Is this fine? I'm Demon King Shion."

I introduce myself to Sayama Kotetsu.

"Sayama. ...Where's Rina?"

Sayama Kotetsu replies with his own name, and throws a stabbing glare in my direction.

"Rina!"

Once I call Rina's name, she approaches me.

"I leave it to you."

"...You have my thanks."

Betting everything on Rina, who's lined up next to me, I take one step back.

"Rina...are you really Rina...?"

Sayama Kotetsu calls out to his granddaughter with a trembling voice.

"...Yes, Grandfather. It's been a long time."

Rina replies with nervousness dyeing her voice, and slowly removes the 『Mask of Devilishness』 covering her face.

"...Rina! ...It's really you, Rina!"

"Yes, Grandfather."

"Are you healthy...?"

"Yes, Grandfather."

"Rina...did you really become a Demon King's underling...?"

"...Yes, Grandfather. I'm not Rina Sayama any longer. I'm Shion's...Demon King Shion's subordinate, Rina Shion."

"——!"

Sayama Kotetsu's expression freezes upon Rina's powerful, resolved declaration.

"R-R-Rina...S-S-Shion, you say..."

"Indeed. Right now I'm Shion's subordinate —— Rina Shion."

Sayama Kotetsu ruminates over the name Rina gave him while tremors ripple across his whole body.

"...You silly girl! You were tricked by a bad guy after leaving for the big city."

"N-No! Shion is...what you're imagining is——"

"Shut up! Shion, you say...! There's no need for you to say any more, you were deceived by a Demon King, weren't you!?" Sayama Kotetsu shouts in rage.

Hmm? Isn't that old guy misunderstanding something?

Clearing my throat, "I'm very sorry to intrude upon your discussion, but 『Shion』 is my name, but...at the same time it's no different from what you humans call a surname, you know?"

"Shut up! I don't want to hear anything from you!"

Sayama Kotetsu's rage spreads to me as well.

"No, wait and calm down! The name Rina Shion is proof that she's become my bloodkin. By no means does it signify us being m-married or g-going out with each other...that's not the type of relation we share."

"...Bloodkin, you say?"

"Please confirm the details...with the person in question."

I turn my eyes towards Rina, and return to my position of spectating again.

"In the past I had the title of 『Hero』, and I invaded Shion's Domain, along with other 『Heroes』 that used to be my friends." Rina begins to speak with a quiet voice. "There I was betrayed by those friends called 『Heroes』...abandoned...and had my life spared by Shion."

"——!?! What does that mean!?"

Sayama Kotetsu becomes shaken by the truth he hears from Rina.

"It means just that. We, who had invaded Shion's Domain, were completely and utterly defeated. I fell to an attack by a 『Hero』, who was my friend, was insulted by a 『Hero』, who was my friend, and got left behind by all of them. ——And then Shion spared my life, and I became his bloodkin."

"W-Why...in such circumstances..."

"I don't know anything about that either. However, what I can say is...that I have not once felt ashamed of myself after becoming Shion's subordinate!"

"But, that guy...Shion is—— a Demon King! And! The ones you're working with right now are monsters! Archenemies who have taken many human lives, becoming a nemesis to humanity! Am I wrong!?"

"Yes, you're wrong! Shion is...the Demon Kings are former humans! Right now he's fighting to defend his own life...and at the same time, the lives of his many subordinates! He's fighting for the sake of survival! Moreover, even they, who you scorn as monsters...have their own lives! They also give birth to children, chat happily with their friends...they're frantically striving to live!"

"Monsters are also striving to live...? Still, for the sake of living, they kill us humans! Isn't that so!?"

"Grandfather...! Why don't you understand!? We...don't wish to kill humans at all! In fact...the humans who submitted to Shion are happily living inside Shion's Domain! There is...there is another path besides slaughtering each other!"

"A path other than slaughter, eh...? Rina! Are you truly telling me that such a path exists!?"

"Yes!"

"Very well... Then show it to me! With your sword!"

"Eh?"

"Rina...no, Rina Shion! In the past you were a member of the Sayama family! Draw your sword! Show me your resolve through your own sword!!"

Sayama Kotetsu draws the katana he wears, and challenges Rina to a duel.