

Chapter 158 - Invasion into Suzu's City Hall ⑤

"Very well. I'll take you up on that."

Sayama Kotetsu mutters with a voice that seems to take all his power to squeeze out. Once Rina hears her grandfather's reply, she lowers her sword with relief dyeing her face.

"However...Demon King Shion! If your words prove to be empty promises...I'll immediately slay you!"

Kotetsu yells full of spirit while still sitting on the ground.

Lies in my words, eh...? I think back on what I've said to persuade Kotetsu. I haven't told any lies, have I? It'll be alright, no...? Or rather, I plan to turn Kotetsu into my bloodkin. Once that happens, it'll become impossible for him to slay me, but...it won't be a problem as long as I don't explicitly spell it out, correct?

"No problem. Sayama Kotetsu, I need to postpone dealing with you..."

I pick up the megaphone once again.

"To all humans hiding in Suzu's City Hall! Your hero — 『Sword King』 Sayama Kotetsu has indicated his will to surrender! I promise you that all those who wish to submit will be offered a place of rest and peace! To all those resisting, I will offer death! Let me ask you once more! —Are you going to submit, or not?"

Once again I recommend surrender to the humans while holding my megaphone.

"M-Master has..."

"S-Sayama-sama..."

"W-What should we do...?"

I can hear the confused voices of the nearby humans as they're carried over by the wind. The humans of Suzu have lost Kotetsu, their mental support...and their strongest comrade. It seems very likely that the recommendation for surrender will succeed if it's now, but——

『Demon King Shion! There's something I'd like to confirm before giving you an answer!』

The voice of the prefecture's governor echoes through the speaker from the city hall.

"What is it?"

I ask back.

『Demon King Shion...! Is there a woman called 『Saitou Ruriko』 among those under your bastard's...no, your protection?』

『Saitou Ruriko』...? Who's that?

"I don't know the names of all the humans under my rule."

I honestly answer the governor's question.

『It's Ruriko...! It's 『Saitou Ruriko』! I won't allow you to say that you don't know of her!』

Anger begins to blend into the governor's voice. Who's that? Is that 『Saitou Ruriko』...a famous person? But, I don't have any memories about a person called 『Saitou Ruriko』.

"I'm sorry, but I truly don't know. Though I'll investigate it, if you give me a bit of time...?"

『Don't play a fool! You bastard...You bastard...there's no way that you don't know after having turned Sayama-shi's granddaughter into your kin, is there!?!』

...Huh?

"Shion... Ruriko is...my former comrade."

Rina comes next to me, who's dumbfounded, and whispers into my ear.

...Rina's former comrade? That means, she was a member of that hero party?

"That girl is that woman who ran away, isn't she?"

"The one who ran away is...Saori. Ruriko...lost her life in the melee."

Rina answers my question.

That means, Yay lol-kun is the one who died after being shot by the Lunatic Arrow. The woman called Saori, and Glasses-kun succeeded in running away. The spear-using guy was chased down and killed by me. The archer guy died in the end, after attacking Rina thanks to having my Dark Induction cast on him. The final one was...a magician girl whom I killed from behind with my spear when I saw an opening in the melee.

That magician woman was...Saitou Ruriko?

In other words, the woman the governor is looking for isn't my subordinate.

Having said that, guessing from his words...it seems like Saitou Ruriko is an important person to the governor. Would it be smart to answer honestly here?

『What's wrong? Why are you remaining silent!?! Ruriko! Is Saitou Ruriko under your bastard's protection!?!』

As I'm at a loss how to answer, I can hear the angry voice of the governor through the speaker.

"Ah, umm...let's see... 『Saitou Ruriko』 isn't under my protection."

Even if I were to lie, it'd be exposed right away. Thus I simply answer the question I was asked.

『I see...she's not...?』

The dejected voice of the governor resounds from the speaker.

"Now then, I answered your question! Next is your turn! Are you going to surrender while being promised rest and peace...or are you to turn it down while being promised death...hurry up, and answer!"

I force the talk back to the main topic at hand, so as to avoid Saitou Ruriko coming up again.

『Did Ruriko die...? No, was she killed...?』

"I have no 『Saitou Ruriko』 among my subordinates! That's all I'm going to say! Putting that aside, give me your answer! Surrender...or not...which is it going to be?"

『I see...you won't answer, huh? No, you can't answer...? In other words, Ruriko has died, hasn't she...?』

The conversation with the governor isn't going anywhere.

"What's your reply?"

『Reply...? Let's see...my reply is — Kill them! Everyone, destroy the calamity plaguing this world!!』

The governor's angry yell reverberates through the speaker, cracking while covered by noise.

"E-Even if we're told to kill them...m-master has..."

"If Sayama-sama has surrendered...we will as well..."

"W-What should I do!?"

"What would be the best option here...?"

However, the humans at the front line look back and forth between Kotetsu and Suzu's City Hall, while unable to move due to confusion.

『What are you doing!? Kill them! Kill! You've got to kill them all!』

""""——Eh?""""

——!?

""""Uwaaaaaaa!""""

A large amount of arrows rain down without making a distinction between us and the humans at the front line from Suzu's City Hall.

The negotiations with the humans at Suzu's City Hall —— have broken down.

Chapter 159 - Invasion into Suzu's City Hall ⑩

A large amount of arrows pour down like rain from Suzu's City Hall.

At the front line, where the humans and us face off, the agonizing cries of the shaken humans resound.

The negotiations are dead... What should I do? The humans at the front line are in a state of panic because of the betrayal by their allies. If we launch an offensive now, it'll be simple to wipe out the front line.

However, once that happens...the deathmatch against more than 30,000 humans will be set in stone. Moreover, it'll become impossible to turn Sayama Kotetsu into my subordinate after I painstakingly succeeded in making him comply with a surrender.

There are two methods to turn Kotetsu into my subordinate.

First, he surrenders during a Reign.

Second, turning him into a bloodkin through 《Contract》.

There's two options —— attack or retreat.

What would be the best? I don't have any time to think it over. If I take my time, the humans will stop being panicked.

"——Retreat! Rina, pull back together with Sayama Kotetsu!"

——!

My subordinates reveal their surprise at the conclusion I've reached.

——All hands! Retreat! Withdraw into the Domain!

I pass an order, which has a compelling force, to all my subordinates once more.

This time we'll have to be satisfied with just Kotetsu...not! I pick up the megaphone.

"Humans! You have been abandoned and betrayed by those who you should protect...by those who should be your comrades! 『Sword King』 — Sayama Kotetsu has shown his allegiance to our side! What are you going to do!? Are you going to keep fighting for the sake of those who betrayed you!? Or...are you going to follow me together with Sayama Kotetsu? Decide!"

My words shake the hearts of the humans who are being shot by their allies' arrows.

"If you come with us — I'll welcome you! Humans who were forsaken by those you ought to protect...by your comrades! If you're going to walk the same path as Sayama Kotetsu — throw away your weapons, and run towards my Domain!"

...

""""Uwwaaaaaaaahh!""""

After a short moment, most of the humans, who were facing us at the front line, throw away their weapons on the spot, and begin to run towards my Domain.

——Living mails! Ready your shields, and line up! Block the downpour of arrows!

Hearing my order, the living mails, who have been retreating, turn around, and ready their shields.

——Yataro! Call me at once!

Right now, time's too precious to waste on handling the smartphone. I order Yataro to call me instead. Within five seconds, my smartphone begins to vibrate, informing me of an incoming call.

"Yataro! Immediately put into practice what I'm going to tell you from now on!"

『Roger.』

"Release the restriction of the numbers of humans in the sector that has become our base!"

『Hmm? That's fine?』

"Do it! A large number of humans is going to stream into the sector any time soon. Have Izayoi, Saburou, Setanta, and any subordinates you can spare stand by at the entrance area."

『Very well.』

"You're forbidden to attack the humans entering the sector, no matter what! However, any human that launches an attack unprovoked...is to be killed at once!"

『Mmh? What a complicated situation...for the time being, roger that.』

"Lastly...set up a **【Transfer Array】** connecting to a safe sector on the first floor of the base."

『As you wish.』

I quickly tell him what he has to do, and end the call with Yataro. Then I retreat to my Domain as well.



One hour after beginning the retreat.

"Are these all the people who submitted their surrender?"

"That's right. It's been 15 minutes since the last human entered the sector. I think that's all of them."

I confer with Yataro, who is standing next to me, as we survey the humans crowding into the sector.

"What're their numbers?"

"It's 876 people."

876, huh? Should I take this as 876 having offered their surrender, or as only 876 from among 30,000 people having done so? ...It's a number where I'm puzzled whether to describe it as few or many.

At present, there have been no problems or quarrels, fortunately.

However, if I leave them to their own devices like this...it's pretty obvious that problems will crop up. Humans and monsters share a perception of each other as truly irreconcilable enemies. Monsters unconditionally hate humans, and humans hate monsters in the same way.

Only Demon Kings are excluded from that logic, allowing them to take calculating actions, but...if I don't restrain my subordinates through orders, they'll likely attack the humans in front of them right away. The humans are merely restraining their urge to start attacking the monsters in front of them due to the far stronger survival instinct, and their mental trauma of having been betrayed by their own allies.

"Umm...to all humans gathered here: I will keep my word and shelter you people. However, I can't turn you into residents or bloodkin at once."

The humans start to stir after hearing my words.

"Oops, even if I tell you about residents or bloodkin all of a sudden, I suppose you won't comprehend... It's like this, you hate the monsters in front of you right now, correct? If you become my residents or bloodkin, those emotions will vanish. Having said that, immediately turning you into either is impossible. Accordingly, I have a suggestion for you guys."

I make a short pause, and survey the agitated humans.

"It's better if we aren't in the same space as you. That's why I'll have you move to another sector through the 【Transfer Array】 over there. A certain amount of food and livingware has been prepared at the transfer destination. I'll have you wait there until the capture of Suzu's City Hall finishes."

I throw those words at the humans while pointing at the 【Transfer Array】 Yataro set up in advance.

"Moreover, the transfer destination is the fifth floor of a certain area's sector. You're free to roam around the floor as much as you like, but you're forbidden to move to another floor. As long as you can keep to this, I'll guarantee your safety. On the other hand, the instant any of you moves to another floor, that person will be regarded as being hostile towards me...and I'll have them atone for that encroachment with death."

The humans attentively listen to my words quietly...with pale faces.

"Finally...well, it should be fine for you. If something happens, call me with this smartphone, using the speed dial. Never call me for some stupid reason, got it? Also, I can monitor all of the sector's interior. Let me repeat it once more: Don't act recklessly."

I toss a smartphone to the human closest to me. By the way, I have set the speed dial to connect to Yataro if pressed.

"Those of you who understand...please start moving through the 【Transfer Array】."

When I finish my explanation, the humans look at each other, and then...one person, another person, they start to move towards the 【Transfer Array】.

"E-Excuse me...Shion-san."

"Mmh? What's up?"

As I'm watching the humans move to the 【Transfer Array】, Kanon flies up to my ear, and whispers, "Shouldn't we check their...the humans' belongings?"

"Belongings? We have finished checking them for any kinds of weapons, haven't we?"

"That's taken care of, but...what about smartphones and similar?"

Kanon whispers to me with a worried voice.

"Smartphones, eh? I'm sure everyone has one, probably."

"Eh!? Then we have to confiscate them!"

Hearing my words, Kanon unintentionally yells out.

"It's no problem, is it?"

"It's a huge problem! If they have a smartphone, even staying in contact with the humans of Suzu's City Hall is..."

"They could, but what would they tell them?"

The humans will be in a lenient confinement in a sector of Hakui City — the 87th sector. Even if we can monitor them from our side, the humans have no means to learn of our situation.

"B-But..."

"Rather, if they keep in touch with them...it'll be convenient for us, no?"

"How so?"

"Look, we have prepared quite luxurious goods in the sector where we're restraining them. It's possible that the number open to surrender will increase if they learn of their reception, right?"

"——! O-Oh, I see!"

Kanon smiles after hearing my intentions.

"Oops, I almost forgot. 『Sword King』! Can I have you come over here?"

I call 『Sword King』 who quietly stands stock still next to Rina.