

Chapter 225 – Strife over Ishikawa University ②

——We're going to start the Reign from now on. All hands, quickly move to your assigned positions!

After telling everyone the same order telepathically, I start the Reign.

『《Reign》 has been announced to the hostile entities within its effective range』

『Please remove all hostile entities in range within 180 minutes』

『Alert! Hostile forces confirmed within the effective range. Please eliminate them at once.』

『Display map of effective range? 【YES】 【NO】』

As soon as I tap 【YES】, a simple map displaying the area around me with a radius of 5 km is shown on my smartphone.

The red dots shown on that map number 118. It's a slightly bigger value than Kaede's preliminary investigations suggested, but it's within estimation.

"Chloe!"

"Yes, Master."

I call Chloe.

"Advance straight along this road, and make the humans living at the end of it submit."

"As you command, Master."

Once I point at the place with the biggest cluster of red dots, southwest, and tell Chloe to deal with them, she immediately begins to advance in that direction alongside her corps.

Now then, how are the humans going to move?

Considering it logically, the humans have two possible alternatives — coming here to defend the area, or abandon it. It'll take at least 30 minutes for me to know which they've chosen.

I keep watching the map on my smartphone.



15 minutes later.

The red dots at the location where I've sent Chloe vanish or turn into yellow dots. Hence I order

Chloe to move on to the next red dots.

30 minutes later.

The red dots at the location where I've sent Chloe vanish or turn into yellow dots. Hence I order Chloe to move on to the next red dots. At the frontline, I can't see any new enemies within the range displayed on my map.

60 minutes later.

All red dots within the range of the map shown on my smartphone have vanished.

Have they abandoned this area?

The 《Reign》 has been exposed to the humans as soon as I launched it. Seeing how humans lived within the range of my 《Reign》, my 《Reign》 has very likely been leaked to the 『Kanezawa Liberation Army』. And, the humans know very well about the three hours limit on a 《Reign》.

The key to grasp victory in a 《Reign》 is speed, for both humans and Demon Kings. Since the Demon Kings are no idiots either, they won't just wait for the humans, but...set up defense within the 3 km radius to hinder the humans from interfering with the 《Reign》. The humans, on the other hand, are going to try to invade the area of 《Reign》 within the short time of three hours.

If the humans feel like protecting an area, they should take immediate action, but...are they running on a strategy of secluding themselves within the city hall of Nonoichi?

Many large trade facilities exist in the vicinity of Nonoichi's city hall. At present, the humans are building a high wall surrounding those facilities, turning them into an extremely fortified defense complex.

Once I take a breath thinking that I've got no choice but to watch the situation while staying vigilant...

——～♪

A rhythmical melody plays on my smartphone, informing me of an incoming call. The caller displayed on my phone is Kaede.

『Milord, they moved』

"Did they launch a 《Reign》?"

『...Yep』

I've ordered Kaede to watch the area adjacent to Kaoru's Domain and the land of the Kanezawa Liberation Army.

"What's the state of the humans?"

『No sign of movement』

"Observe the situation for a little while longer."

『...Understood』

Kaoru moved, huh? If he moved after knowing that I launched a 《Reign》...it means that Kaoru has dispatched scouts towards this area.

Well, as long as he's no utter fool, it's only logical for him to send out scouts to check on us, I suppose.

Now then, how are the humans going to move after getting attacked simultaneously in the same way as last time? While speculating on all kinds of possibilities, I continue observing the map shown on my smartphone.



Three hours later.

The black vortex in front of me brightens up, and then vanishes alongside a convergence of its light. A silver-shining orb — a 【True Core】 has appeared in place of the black vortex.

『Reign finished』

That simple line is being displayed on the screen of my phone.

In the end, the humans have shown no resistance as if sneering at our preparations.

One hour later.

A message arrived from Kaede, telling me that Kaoru's 《Reign》 has likewise succeeded. Just like over here, there has been no significant resistance against his 《Reign》 either, allowing him to easily wrap it up.

As a result, it's turned into a total letdown. The corps I sent out all return to my Domain, and the battle maniac Takaharu gives me a long complaint about the lack of action.

Next day.

Having recovered my CP, I send out scouts to find the next area for launching a 《Reign》. As a result of the reconnaissance I've grasped that the Kanezawa Liberation Army has stationed many humans in the area southwest when looking from my Domain. There are 30,000 humans in the area 4 km to the southwest from the area where I launched my 《Reign》 yesterday. On the other hand, the area southeast is completely deserted.

■■■■■■■

■■■■■■■ ■ = Shion's sector

○○●○○ ● = Sector usurped yesterday

○○○○○ ◎ = Land where the human forces are concentrated

○☆○○○ ☆ = Nonoichi's city hall

○○○○○ ○ = Human land

▲▲▲○○ ▲ = Kaoru's sector

▲▲▲○○

▲▲▲▲○○

It's Nonoichi where 30,000 humans would await us. So, are the humans planning to hole themselves up in Nonoichi? In that case, what would happen if I launched a 《Reign》 southeast of Kanazawa which is far from Nonoichi? Are they going to discard it like the one yesterday?

Concentrating your forces in a single area for the sake of defending isn't a bad strategy in the short-term. But, if you consider it long-term...it's impossible to connect a lifeline for all humans under the protection of the Kanazawa Liberation Army in Nonoichi. Once they're surrounded by hostile forces, they'll obviously fall into a state where they'll lack food.

Did they become desperate?

Well, in this situation...the next important issue would be a game of "taking the base" against Kaoru. It's going to be about how much land either side can steal from the humans.

——We're going to begin an invasion for the sake of launching a 《Reign》!

I start acting at once.



One month later.

With there being no significant resistance by the humans, the majority of south Kanazawa and Hakusan have been split between Kaoru and me.

And just when there was little human land in Hakusan left, the humans' objective became clear.

Chapter 226 – Strife over Ishikawa University ③

"I see...so this is the aim of the humans, huh?"

I'm considering my future course of action as I gaze on the map of Ishikawa prefecture.

■■■■■■■
■■■■■■■ ■ = Aster Empire
○○○■■ ☆ = Nonoichi's city hall
○☆○■■ ○ = Human land
○○○■■ ▲ = Kaoru's sector
▲ ▲ ○■■
▲ ▲ ○■■■
▲ ▲ ▲ ○○○
▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲
▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

The aim of the Kanezawa Liberation Army is to throw chunks of meat in front of two starving tigers and have them fight over it. The starving tigers in this case are Kaoru and me. The chunks of meat are the defenseless plots of land.

Oddly, it's the same plan Kanon suggested a while ago.

The humans allowed us to go south, and Kaoru's forces to head north. Thus we went south while avoiding the west where many people are staying in order to carry out as many 《Reigns》 as possible. At the same time Kaoru moved north while also avoiding the west. The remaining land in Hakusan adjoins my and Kaoru's Domains. Likewise, Nonoichi, the base of the humans, is adjacent to my Domain and also to Kaoru's.

This has become troublesome...

The best solution would be to form an alliance with Kaoru. It'd be a strategy of first exterminating the Kanezawa Liberation Army and then dividing the land anew, but...that's probably impossible. Forming an alliance might be of merit for both of us, but there's no common ground.

Even if we exchanged a promise to halve the remaining land in Ishikawa prefecture for argument's sake...who's going to attack Nonoichi's city hall? Going by the rules of 《Reigns》, it won't succeed as long as you don't annihilate all hostile entities within the specified range, and that would include Kaoru's subordinates as well.

It's possible to attack Nonoichi's city hall, but it'll require lots of time and cause many losses. Moreover, even if we were to form an alliance, it'd only last until the destruction of the Kanezawa Liberation Army. As soon as that's done, we'd immediately become enemies again.

Assuming I were to try attacking Nonoichi's city hall, it'd likely require me to send in a great combat force. Is there any guarantee that Kaoru won't use that chance to attack my Domain? It

might lower his credibility as he'd have betrayed me and lied about the alliance, but...who would care about that? Even if I were to become unable to trust him henceforth, it wouldn't matter since we'd have fought each other several days later anyway. On the other hand, if Kaoru suggested that he'd attack the city hall, I'd likely attack his Domain in the meantime.

As a threat, Kaoru's forces are several times more dangerous than the Kanezawa Liberation Army which has secluded itself in Nonoichi.

In that case, should I form an alliance with the humans...no, urge them to surrender?

The probability for this to succeed is extremely low. The Kanezawa Liberation Army has preserved its entire military force. And in the end, the humans hate me by instinct in this broken world.

It's a really troublesome situation...

I have to tread carefully here... I guess I'll first look at how my enemies are going to move.

Hence I choose to not make a move for the moment. If Kaoru decides to launch a 《Reign》 on human land during that time, I'll leave him alone and wait until he starts an invasion on Nonoichi's city hall, if luck is on my side. Should he really start an attack on the city hall, I'll invade Kaoru's Domain at full force. If he doesn't move...I'll try to come up with a new strategy.

I decided to watch the state of affairs for a full day.



One day later.

Kaoru, who had resolutely executed 《Reigns》 until just yesterday, hasn't made any further moves, resulting in the Ishikawa prefecture having a day of peace for the first time in a long while.

Is Kaoru thinking the same as me? Is he waiting for me to make a move?

1. If Kaoru attacks Nonoichi's city hall, I'll attack Kaoru's Domain.
2. If I attack Nonoichi's city hall, Kaoru is going to invade my Domain.
3. What if I ignore Nonoichi and invade Kaoru's Domain instead...? Very likely the humans are going to invade Kaoru's and my Domains.

Option 1 would be the best, but Kaoru shows no signs of moving. In that case, I've got to choose between option 2 and 3.

...Hmm? Wait. The trigger for 1 and 2 is an invasion of Nonoichi's city hall. What would happen if I were to start 《Reigns》 on the remaining, empty land in Hakusan? The humans won't get in my way. Is Kaoru going to get in my way?

If he does, the humans will rejoice over seeing how their plan of pitting us two against each other has succeeded. Kaoru and I will expend our combat forces by fighting over the land.

However, I planned to watch the situation if Kaoru were to launch a 《Reign》 in Hakusan. Is Kaoru possibly intending to wait and see as well?

So, what's going to happen now?

I continue to run simulations in my mind while I move pieces imitating the three powers around on the map in various ways. And then I arrive at one possibility. It's not the best option, but I'd say it's one of the better ones among the options available to me.

The upholding of the status quo is the same for all powers involved in this. In that case, I'll take a month and carefully prepare myself. If one of the parties gets tired of waiting and starts moving, it'll just play into my cards.

I summon my leaders and start the preparations.



One month later.

In the end, none of the three powers moved, resulting in the war going into a lull. During that month, I had the leaders leave to earn experience in Domains located in areas of the Toyama prefecture such as Himi, and had them repeatedly practice maneuvers with their corps. The number of invaders also dropped significantly, allowing Yataro to get some spare time to run some tests for 《Domain Creation》 with me.

Now my preparations are perfectly in order.

"We're going to start a 《Reign》 in Hakusan from now on!"

I order the subordinates lined up in front of me.