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Colorful

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Colorful, By Eto Mori

Pages 5-68

Prologue

As I expected when I died my soul began to very slowly flow to somewhere dark, when all of a sudden a strange angel blocked my way with their hand and said “congratulations, you have won the lottery!” as they duly smiled at me. This angel’s point was this; “you committed a severe crime before you died, so you are a sinful soul. Usually, you would be disqualified from this place, and would be removed from the cycle of death and rebirth. In short, you would not be able to be born a second time. However, there is a voice greater than this destruction of life and from time to time our boss challenges souls who win the lottery to a second chance. You have won this special lottery. You are a lucky soul!” This was said so abruptly I was worried. If I had had eyes, they would have been very wide, if I had had a mouth it would have been hanging open. But I was too intangible for this, how I understood the angel’s form and voice was mysterious. The angel’s beautiful form was of a man of delicate features. Judging from appearances he looked like a typical person, except that on his tall thin frame he wore a white cloth. On his back were wings, and over his head I could not see a halo. In any case, I spoke to the angel.

“That’s generous, but I can’t accept.”

“Why is that?”

“Well, you know, because.”

At this point, I had already lost recollection of my past life. I think I was a man, what in the world kind of man, what kind of life did I lead, I completely could not recall. Regardless, when it came to going back to earth, a vague tired sense of fleeting life remained.

“For whatever reason, I don’t want to. Right now, to me, it feels like when one wanders aimlessly into a department store and an ornamental confetti ball breaks, someone says “congratulations you are the millionth customer in this store”, and everyone makes a racket, and you feel pressured to immediately take a trip to Hawaii. But all I want to do is go home and sleep.”

The angel clearly caught my complaint. “I understand what you mean. Regarding this, we also harbor some doubts about the method of this lottery. However, I’m afraid to say that our boss’ decisions are absolute. Neither you nor me nor anyone can disobey him. At any rate, he is the father of all creation”, to this I had no response. The angel was too terrible. I sunk into despondent silence, and the angels’ eyes shone an eerie bright blue, and he added “moreover, the world is not like the paradise of Hawaii you are expecting.”

The angel’s name was Purapura. His official position was a guide, and at this time he was responsible for me. He said he would be the subordinate tasked with leading me through my second chance. But anyway, what on earth is this second chance? Because I wasn’t completely understanding the state of affairs, before our departure from the border between earth and heaven, Purapura gave me a rough explanation. The summary of his main points is this:

1. As he said just now, I was a soul that had committed a large sin in my past life. By all rights this was the place where I would not be able to be born again but I had the good luck of winning the lottery, and I had earned an attempt at a second chance.
2. For this challenge, I would have to go to Earth where I had failed in my past existence, and once again acquire knowledge.

3. This practice would involve my soul, for a fixed period of time, borrowing and taking care of someone's body on earth. Purapura's boss had already prepared the house and made the decision of the person I would borrow.
4. In Purapura's world, this practice was called "homestay".
5. Of course, before your "homestay" it was unavoidable that it could be hit or miss. There are some great families, there are also terrible families. There are tragic families and also comedic families. Violent families were also not excluded. But the family was determined by the size of my crime in my past life. So he said not to complain about it. (But that's...)
6. During my homestay, when I'm confused Purapura will come help me. However, how much he would help me was dependent on his mood.
7. When I am making good progress, at that point I will naturally regain memory of my past existence. Once I have realized the size of my sin in my past existence, my homestay will end. My soul will lose connection with the body I borrow and I will die, and return to the peace of the cycle of life and death. This process is wonderful. (Is it really?)

"This is why, Makoto"

After wrapping up his rough lecture, Purapura was eager to begin using his wings.

"Makoto?"

"From now on you will be known as Makoto Kobayashi. Makoto Kobayashi is a young boy who attempted suicide by overdosing on medicine. Even now he is unconscious, and is on the verge of death. Between you and me, he is about to die. When he dies, his soul will be released, and that is the opportunity for you to slip in."

"So basically," I said, "I'm going to steal his body?"

“That is unlucky” Purapura replied. “Please just think about it as borrowing his body for a little while. Let’s go with positive intentions”

“What kind of guy is Makoto Kobayashi?”

“You’ll see.”

Just as I wanted more background knowledge, Purapura was already opening his wings fully, and with a mood of being bored of explaining things, he grabbed my arm and took off. Suddenly, the floor fell out from under us with a crash, and we descended at what felt like the blinding speed of light. This manner made it seem as though Purapura’s wings were not helpful. Was he really an angel, or was he a demon? Rapidly I became anxious, but before I knew it I was distracted as I was engulfed by a swirling richly colored vortex.

Chapter 1

When I came to, I was Makoto Kobayashi.

As it happened, I had the real sensation of having a body. Up until now I was a naked soul, but now it felt like I was wearing a heavy coat of flesh. It seemed like this flesh was laying on a futon. No, on a bed. There was a smell of medicine, so perhaps this was a hospital bed. Come to think of it, Makoto tried to commit suicide and was on the verge of death, right? I could hear someone sobbing.

Who?

I unfortunately carelessly opened my eyes without preparing my mind first. I met the eyes of an older woman that were soaked with tears.

“Makoto?” the woman muttered faintly.

“Makoto!?” she subsequently shouted.

The figures of people surrounding me simultaneously turned their heads towards me. As expected, this was a hospital room, next to my bed there were serious medical instruments, and past the apparatus I could see the white robes of the nurses coming and going. Someone whispered quietly “no way”, and this white silhouette shuddered and squirmed.

“Makoto!”

This time, the woman was stopped mid-sentence as an older man shouted “Makoto has come back to life!”

Yep. This was something I learned later, but, ten minutes before this, it had just been decided that Makoto Kobayashi was on his deathbed. Makoto’s soul was climbing to heaven and created a space in his body which I entered, and with a snap opened my eyes. I surprised everyone.

“Heartbeat... blood pressure... I can't believe this!”

At the end the doctor let out a shout. The man and woman were overjoyed at the confirmation of Makoto's resurrection. Without questioning it, these two, as Makoto's mother and father, could not help but be ecstatic at their dead son's resurrection. While they raised their voices more and more, they stroked my cheek, patted my arm, and both respectively held my body close. It didn't feel strange to be touched like this by complete strangers. Against my own mind, at that point I was accepting Makoto's body. Besides his parents there was someone else there. For a while now, at the foot of the bed was a boy in a school uniform squaring up his shoulders and glaring at me with bloodshot eyes. From his parents, to the doctor, to the nurses, everybody there was becoming greatly excited, but among them there was only one boy who seemed like he did not terribly care- Makoto's older brother, Mitsuru Kobayashi, I later learned. However, at this time I did not even know Makoto's age, much less Mitsuru, and because of that I simply considered that they might be siblings.

“Makoto, you slept for so long, you slept for so long!” his father called his name repeatedly in a crazed manner.

His mother was clinging to my body and would not be separated.

His brother was determinedly silent.

It was difficult to make a careful observation about the state of affairs, although for the time being I was meeting my future homestay family.

They did not seem to be particularly rich, or a famous family, which was too bad, but from the malicious looking angels' eyes he was not expecting more than that, even though from one look they seemed like ordinary people he must have found them acceptable so I quietly accepted them. When I next opened my eyes, eight crying macho men wearing striped red and

yellow leotards were surrounding me, no matter how impossible that seems. Even so, they were human, ordinary above all else.

My mood became more relaxed, and swiftly drowsiness overtook me.

Makoto's body, which had just died, did not feel like it was in its normal state yet, it was extremely languid and could not move skillfully. In the end, I was not able to say even a few words, and I suddenly fell asleep.

My debut as Makoto Kobayashi was like this.

My sleepiness and sluggishness continued after this. Although Makoto's body was cooed over by his personal doctor at the sight of his recovery, three times a day he received medicine and he was very tired. While I was hospitalized, there was nothing to do, so I took advantage of this and slept. It seemed like I spent three fourths of every day sleeping, sometimes I would suddenly open my eyes as if I remembered something, Makoto's mothers' face would be there, his father's face would be there, and Mitsuru's back would be there.

When I woke up, if it was light outside, my mom would invariably be at my side. The young woman, who was of short stature and had sharp facial features was always sitting on a stool next to my bed, and it seemed like she strained her eyes to count how many times I blinked. When our eyes met, she would address me briefly with "How are you feeling?" or "Should I turn on the tv?". Excepting this, usually, in a shy manner, she would tend to and touch my injuries without speaking. At first I got the feeling that she was cold and distant, but once I thought about how Makoto was a young boy who committed suicide, her behavior suited the occasion, as it was without a doubt a difficult experience to bear, and it seemed like she was paying meticulous attention to my care.

His older brother Mitsuru would appear every night, and take over attending me for a few hours, so that during this time his mother could take a break. No matter how much time passed, he would stay taciturn, after dinner was finished and disposed of in silence, the rest of the time he would turn his back to me and spread out textbooks and reference books. From the textbooks, I knew that he was in his third year of high school. The next day, I made up my mind to try to say “exams, that’s rough”. Immediately, Mitsuru glared at me, roughly closed his books with a bang, and went out into the hallway. Maybe he is having a nervous breakdown from exams?

My evening visitor was from five until seven. Makoto’s father was always there between these times. With an overworked face Makoto’s dad smiled steadily when he came to the room, and to me the extreme emptiness of my room disappeared and became cheerful. His father was different from his mother, when he saw the color of my face he said, without choosing his words, “Makoto came back to life I am so happy”, “I cannot thank the gods enough for this”, and things like that, every night, very heartfelt and homey. He was also popular with the nurses, “He’s a really good father” they would frequently say. For example, other fathers did not feel like this for their sons.

Ultimately, even though my impression of them respectively was different, it was possible to say that what they had in common was that they both seemed to care, from the bottom of their hearts, about Makoto. As for his sullen older brother, it seemed he did not have any love for coming to the hospital every day.

As for me, they were only my host family, but as far as they were concerned, they were Makoto’s real family, and during my hospitalization little by little I began to really feel as if they were my family. During every day of sleepy, sluggish, haziness, this is the only thing that I am able to say I learned.

My time in the hospital ended after one week. Really, I was completely healthy, but because my case was so special, (It seemed that it is not normal that after ten minutes of cardiac arrest one would come back to life so completely), so the hospital staff gathered information while monitoring the situation. Again, I was praised as a miracle boy.

“You certainly did die”, before I was discharged from the hospital, the doctor pinched my cheek while saying this to me, “You’ve done enough, never die again, okay?”

The day I left the hospital, it was Sunday.

There was a fresh autumnal breeze, and I got in the car with my family who had come to pick me up, and we arrived at the Kobayashi house in a quiet residential area. The western style living room had vases with flowers and the table had sushi and steak and other treats waiting on it. When I arrived, I looked around at the Kobayashi’s very ordinary house “The possibility they are rich just disappeared”, I thought, but I forgot my disappointment because of the family’s generosity. On behalf of Makoto I said “Wow, thank you so much everyone!”. So as not to reveal the truth, I usually did not speak in the hospital, so this made Makoto’s parent’s eyes water. (Certainly, our familial love grew.)

Purapura had said that the environment of the homestay is determined by the size of the mistake that was committed in one’s previous life, so at this time I assumed that my mistake must have been a tiny thing. Maybe I was an unruly drunk, maybe I was reckless with my money, maybe I was a gigolo who made women cry.

The thing that I did not understand was, if he had been blessed with this good family, why did Makoto decide to commit suicide? It seemed like the word suicide had become taboo in this house, and as no one said it, I sometimes did not understand why Makoto, as a young boy, had chosen to commit suicide.

“For dinner I will also make your favorite dishes. But right now Makoto, wouldn’t it be good to give your body a rest? Maybe you should go take a nap until dinner?”

When almost all of the things on the table had been emptied, Makoto’s mother said this in a worried manner. I had started to feel tired during the familial conversation, so I was grateful for the suggestion.

“Yes, I will go rest for a little bit.”

I stood up from my seat quickly, and just as quickly stood stock still.

I was going to go to Makoto’s room, but I did not know where in this house his room was.

What should I do?

“What’s wrong, Makoto?”

“Are you feeling sick again?”

This time, my lack of movement made them begin to have doubts.

As if this moment was the guide’s cue, Purapura showed up suddenly near the entrance to the living room.

I saw Purapura, who was wearing a formal suit for some reason, gesture towards me in a manner that suggested I should “Come!”. I nodded, and swallowed my words. I realized that everyone besides me could not see Purapura. Keeping quiet, I accompanied Purapura as he began to soundlessly climb the stairs. Makoto’s room was on the second floor in the farthest corner, a western-style room with at least six tatami mats. Underneath the simple black furniture was a sky-blue rug. Since there were lots of windows, everything was very bright, and this abundance of light was caught by light green curtains.

Purapura walked over and stopped in front of these curtains, and I sat on the edge of the bed.

“It’s been a while since I saw you”, I said in a sarcastic tone.

“It’s not clear what a guide is, so I think you’re supposed to teach me more about this situation.”

“This is my policy”, Without hesitation, Purapura said this.

“It is good that you do not have preconceptions. Before I do anything to guide you, you must feel it out.”

Once again, I took a look at Purapura. That’s strange.

“Well, you feel different from when we were above?”

Purapura laughed sarcastically at my point.

“Well, when in Rome do as the Romans do, right. To be honest, in this world when I am pretending to be an angel, sometimes I feel stupid. Even though people cannot see me.”

“The way you were talking, above, it wasn’t this casual?”

“They say that disorder of clothing indicates disorder of the mind. That’s a joke, but I’m closer to earth like this. You might say this is my relaxed state.”

“Huh.”

This was an awfully prepared angel.

Facing a taken aback me, Purapura suddenly threw this out in a business tone.

“Well, how about you. How is your homestay.”

I answered “It’s going well”, with my chest puffed up with pride.

“So far I’ve been handling it well. The host family seem like nice people, and the mother is really good at cooking, but this room is only so-so. It is much better than I expected. I wonder why Makoto Kobayashi committed suicide when he came from this household, it’s really strange.”

“If you really want to know”, Purapura said, while raising an eyebrow. “It is like this because you do not know your host family’s true identity yet.”

“What?”

“You do not know anything.”

He consistently spoke in a low voice, with an expressionless face.

“What do you mean?”

“Makoto’s father is not like you saw him, on his own he is a selfish person. His mother was recently having an affair with the Flamenco teacher. This is what I mean.”

I resisted the urge to burp. The steak I had just eaten too much of was now making my stomach turn. Thinking about it, the sushi and steak were amazing.

...But, what did Purapura just say?

“Do not turn your eyes away from the problem”, Purapura glared at me angrily, “Ok, if that’s the case, I will undertake to teach you more details. Here is the truth you cannot escape from, fix your eyes on the strange and mysterious cause of Makoto Kobayashi’s suicide. You are not just Makoto’s body; you also must also take his struggles.”

Purapura asserted this without forgiveness, while I was on the verge of heaven and hell. He then sat down gracefully on the bay window, and retrieved a thick book from his pocket, which he began to flip through.

“What is this.”

“It is the handbook for guides. Makoto Kobayashi’s life is recorded in it.”

Purapura came to some page and stopped turning the pages.

“Here it is. This is the record of the few days before Makoto Kobayashi committed suicide.”

I swallowed a glob of spit.

I did not want to know, but I wanted to know.

“This was a person whose life was continual bad luck, and this day was especially bad. There were many reasons that made him think about suicide, but this was the day that made him pull the trigger.”

After this preliminary introduction, Purapura began to speak frankly. This was the record of the day that was worthy of being called the worst day ever.

“The 10th of September was a Thursday. That night, Makoto Kobayashi, while returning home from cram school, saw Hiroka Kuwabara walking arm-in-arm with a middle-aged man”

“Hiroka Kuwabara?”

“She was Makoto’s junior in middle school, and, incidentally, also his first love.”

“Huh”

“Since she was flirting with a middle-aged man, he was understandably worried. Makoto decided to follow the two of them there. The two of them went into a love hotel.”

“Oohh”

“Makoto was really even more shocked. For a moment, he could not move. Thereupon, another tragedy fell upon him there. From the same hotel entrance, this time Makoto’s mother and the Flamenco teacher came out shoulder to shoulder.”

“His mother?”

His kind mother was so good at being attentive. I could not believe that she would do something like this. Not to mention, that in the case of her actual son, how startling would this have been, I wonder.

“This horrible evening may seem like one big joke. And yet, the tragedies did not come to an end.”

Purapura took a deep breath, and prepared to speak. I also took a deep breath to calm myself down.

“When Makoto got home, his older brother Mitsuru was in front of the tv, and had turned very pale. Just then, his father’s company had been on the news, he said. Under suspicion of fraudulent practices, the company president and several other top people had been placed under investigation by the police.”

“You’re not saying his father too!?”

“No, Makoto’s father is just a low-level employee, identical to most of the other workers, who would not participate in fraudulent practices. It seems that the very tricky company president created secret development teams.”

“What kind of fraudulent practices?”

“Now that you bring that up, it was a mail-order store called ‘Easy diet pork buns’. It was sold with the bold promise that if you eat one you will lose a kilo, if you eat two you will lose two kilos. However, in reality they were nothing but ordinary hot spring pork buns.”

“Besides that, they did various other nasty things it seems. Still, they are an innovative company, in order to sell a new product called “Octagon rice crackers”, they spread the rumor that the world was eight-sided. They took water from neighborhood supermarkets’ water supply, called it “Super Water” and sold it for a higher price. More than rash people, they were bad people.”

Purapura shrugged his shoulders with a resigned face.

“But, however, Makoto’s fathers boss was still an important person. There was a serious amount of obligation and responsibility. Therefore, the bosses were arrested simultaneously, and the remaining directors took responsibility and resigned. Makoto’s good father felt bad for the people who had to resign and was depressed, and it was this on the news that made Mitsuru worry. Of course, when Makoto heard the news he was also worried. That’s that!”

“...Is there something more?”

“Before long, his father when returning home, between the entryway and the living room, did a summersault on the floor. When he saw Makoto and Mitsuru’s faces, he immediately clung to and kissed them. Then, they all began to dance a samba and burst out into noise.”

“Was he drunk?”

“Yes. But this wasn’t drowning his cares in drink, this was good drinking. All of the company’s top executives had resigned, and the positions were being reorganized. His father, who had just been a standard employee, had been promoted to section chief. In one move, he had

moved up three positions. His father was really soaring. The bosses had been arrested and fired, and he felt like he had already won. Because he was promoted, he was thankful.”

Purapura spit all of this out.

“But regarding people like his father, in extreme situations it’s understandable that he was in this kind of shape, but I wouldn’t want to see it. When he was sober, even though he was conspicuous, Makoto unfailingly respected his father. Because of this, his feelings were hurt.”

Even though Purapura’s speech was over, my stomach was still heaving. Because the sun was going down, what had until just now been dazzling inside became extremely dark, and the room appeared melancholy. To avoid Purapura’s pointed gaze, I absentmindedly looked up at the ceiling and around at the walls.

There was a mirror on the walls.

I was...the reflecting image of Makoto.

His eyes were narrow. His nose was short. His lips were thin. Really, his outward looks were unobtrusive and thin-looking.

In the hospital, when I saw this face and features for the first time, I was entirely disappointed. From then on, for this face and so-called life, I resented Purapura and his boss. Regardless of the details, it was because there was no bright expression on his face. A smile did not suit his face. There was no strength in his eyes. Every single day, I wondered why did this family come to visit, but now I understood.

His first love went into a love hotel with a middle-aged man.

His mother committed adultery, and his father was ok only if he was doing well.

“This seems like a good time, so let me ask you...”- I said this while scowling at the mirror- “This older brother Mitsuru, what kind of person is he?”

“In this case, I would say that he is really a thick-skinned and unkind person. When he sees Makoto’s face he says something disagreeable. Especially about height. He pays a lot of attention to the fact that Makoto is short. He knows about this and makes fun of him on purpose.”

“But, he did not say anything to me”

“He is ignoring you. He’s angry you committed suicide because it will give a bad public image. Hey, try putting your hand under the bed”

I did as I was told, and my finger touched something hard and angular. I took it out and it was a pair of very garish...boots?

“They are secret boots”

Purapura explained to me.

“They have a large heel on them, so when you wear them you appear noticeably taller. Well, they are not usually worn. Makoto bought them through mail order, but because he was a shy person he was afraid of his secret getting out, so he hid it all. Mitsuru discovered this a few days before Makoto committed suicide. Mitsuru made fun of Makoto, and finally said this: You should give up, no matter what because your feet are too small, and you’ll be short for the rest of your life. It was the most Makoto could take.”

I tossed the secret boots onto the rug. Then I lay down on the bed and looked up at the ceiling. It felt like all the energy had left my body, up till now I had been stupidly excited thinking that this was a good family who loved each other. What on earth was this family?

“Now isn’t it strange how Makoto has stayed alive so far” I turned towards Purapura with a bitter smile. “If you are making me do my homestay in a place like this, in my previous life I must have done something extremely bad.”

“Oh, I forgot one thing”

Purapura spoke like he hadn't heard what I'd said.

“Makoto Kobayashi is presently a third year middle school student”

“What?”

From his height, I thought he was at the most a first year middle school student.

Hm? Wait a minute, a third year student...

With a feeling of shock, Purapura announced to me: “In other words, in half a year it will be time to prepare for middle school examinations.”

Chapter 2

I may have thought that this was an average, genial family, but it really seemed like a den of demons, where the loving and kind family that I expected all carried their real nature in secret. This was a family of actors wearing masks. Without knowing that the real Makoto had died, this family would continue to act like this, and so I thought I should do what I wanted.

Wearing a light purple apron, this mother standing in the kitchen really looked refined and fashionable. Without showing even the slightest hint of her adultery, she acted like a good wife and wise mother. However, I was not ready for the role of a good son. I swiftly began to see her cooking as unclean, and I began to leave a lot behind.

His father seemed like even on crowded trains, with a big smile, he would instantly give up his seat to elderly people. How does it feel to sit in the boss' chair because of the misfortune of the managers? I guess he can live with a hypocritical smile and dance for joy as long as he is being promoted. However, I did not want this directed at me. When my dad said "I'm leaving" or "I'm home", I did not respond.

Mitsuru's real personality began to show quickly. The morning of the second day after being released from the hospital, we bumped into each other in front of the bathroom. In a flash, Mitsuru grabbed the doorknob, clicked his tongue and said this. "You should have died". He is a malicious and rude guy. He was certainly as Purapura said he was. Mitsuru seemed to be ignoring me, so I would ignore Mitsuru.

Thus, I began to distance myself from the family, diligently secluding myself in nature and Makoto's room. Alone, I listened to CDs and the radio, read Makoto's manga, and played

cards with Purapura at night. I only wove my way down the stairs for meals, eating little and then going back to my room. Because I did not do much, I was not very hungry.

My family did not find this attitude of mine weird.

That is to say that Makoto, before he committed suicide, was like this.

Although, some days I was tired of keeping up with this every day.

On the fourth, I threw in the towel, and on Friday, the fifth day, I tentatively went to Makoto's middle school. So far, it had been a break from taking care of anything.

My mother did not say anything, but she really seemed to be worrying about this delay in my studies, as the day before when I said "tomorrow, I'm going to go back to school", her eyes seemed to sparkle.

The next morning, for the first time in a while, I got up early and ate an egg and a tuna sandwich for breakfast. I brushed my teeth, washed my face carefully, and arranged my flattened hair with a brush. While staring in the mirror in the bathroom, I thought about how Makoto's hairstyle and fashion could be a little better...among other things. In short, it was an important thing. However, for the time being even the school uniform did not make him good-looking.

After everything was prepared and put in order, I turned back to Makoto's room, taking his class schedule in my hand and checked his textbooks. After waking up too early with excitement, there was unfortunately time left over. Checking everything over was over quickly. It was around this point that I started feeling depressed.

I walked near the window and looked down at the morning light shining on the street. Other middle school students in the same uniform as Makoto joined in walking in groups.

Girls who were good friends held hands in pairs.

Groups of boys came together to screw around.

Grown-up couples.

Their laughter echoed up to me.

I closed the curtains and moved away from the window, sitting down on the edge of the bed. Gradually, it was time to go, but I did not move. Mother called out to me, but I did not reply, still sitting there obstinately, and eventually Purapura appeared out of the shadows of the bookcases.

“What are you doing. You’re going to be late.”

“I’m waiting.”

“For what”

“For somebody to pick me up”

Just as I said that, my excessive emptiness became worse. I confessed this thought to Purapura.

“Is everything good? Makoto committed suicide, was miraculously saved, and was hospitalized for a week, right? He’s been discharged from the hospital and on break from school for four days. Nevertheless, no one has expressed concern, what is this? No phone calls, no letters have come. No one has delivered class notes, either. Right now, that is the question that is rising up inside me.”

“You’ve noticed that something is wrong”

Purapura said this with a disturbing face.

“You know, for your information, Makoto’s suicide was not made public. Makoto’s teachers were the only ones who knew, so the students assumed he was suffering from a common cold that had gotten worse and become pneumonia.”

“Even just for pneumonia, there should still have been an expression of concern or sympathy though.”

I stared motionlessly at Purapura’s shining bright blue pupils. They looked like the empty sky immediately after sunset, and the bluish purple color got more perfect every time I looked.

“Really, I won’t be surprised anymore, so I want you to be honest, does Makoto have no friends? Meaning he is isolated even at school?”

Purapura’s pupils stopped looking like the night sky.

With only this, I saw that this was the answer to my question.

“As for if Makoto was isolated, like that, I do not know. It is certain that he was always alone, and he always seemed to be carrying his own personal world.”

Sitting next to me, Purapura said all of this in an uncharacteristically serious voice.

“So, was he an oddball?”

“There were students who thought this as well. Makoto was an introvert and was too naïve, so he almost never spoke to his classmates. He told himself that he was an introvert, so he cut himself off from the others. He did not get along with everyone, so these barriers kept everyone away.”

“Nobody got close to Makoto?”

“No, there was one. There was only one person who he could start to speak to without hesitation.”

“Who?”

“Hiroka Kuwabara”

The girl he liked...

“She was the only one who knew how to deal with Makoto, who didn’t treat him like he was from another world, and she would always call out to him in a friendly voice. It may have been normal for anyone else, but it was special to Makoto. Do you understand? Each word from this girl was special.”

“That girl went into a love hotel with a middle aged man”

I collapsed onto the futon with a bang.

“Okay, that’s it”

Really, up until now this guy was unusually unlucky. Incidentally, I was stuck with being his substitute, just as unlucky as Makoto was. I was becoming more and more depressed about this second chance.

“Blame yourself for your past life. Apart from that, it’s time for school. If you go carelessly you are going to be late.”

Purapura hauled me up.

“I don’t want to go do school, really.”

“If you don’t, Makoto Kobayashi will be suspended from school”

“That’s good, let’s get suspended”

“You will not return to the cycle of rebirth a second time”

“Good, let’s not return”

“I will not play cards with you tonight”

“That’s...!”

Cruel! I jumped to my feet. In the middle of every tedious day, cards were my one amusement.

“You can’t die when you’ve lost five times in a row!”

“Ha”

In this world, there was not god or Buddha.

There was simply this questionable angel.

It was 20 minutes by foot to the school. While doing his job as my guide, Purapura continued talking about Makoto’s life. The conversation ended quickly, and we jogged under the school gate, getting to Makoto’s classroom just before homeroom started.

Opening the door, the classmates had already all sat down. Then, they all looked over their shoulders at me with a weird expression.

The classroom silence seemed to be throwing out exclamation points and question marks.

At least, it was not a warm mood for a classmate who had been absent from being sick. In an instant, I understood that what Purapura had said was not a lie.

“Okay, let’s start”

A few minutes after I had taken my seat, the homeroom teacher came in.

“Today, there are a lot of handouts, so I’ll pass them out and go over them quickly. But, first, attendance.”

The homeroom teacher Sawada was approximately 30 years old and a bachelor. He was proud of his gorilla-like body and was the gym teacher, and his superhuman strength was referred to as also like a gorilla. While I was hospitalized, he had come to visit once or twice, while I was sleeping. I knew this from Purapura’s guiding.

“Kobayashi, not here”

I let out a sound, out of surprise.

Seeing me, I felt everyone’s eyes on me again. From behind the teacher’s desk was Mr. Sawada’s scary face. I didn’t realize he had called my name.

“If you’re here, then answer”

“Yes, I’m here”, I replied.

Then, the classroom roared brightly.

Mr. Sawada’s eyes seemed to widen with surprise. “Oh, Kobayashi you sound really cheerful today”.

...You're crazy, this is my usual voice.

It popped into my head that I should gauge everyone's reactions so I spoke again in another voice.

"Yes. Fortunately, I'm already completely healthy."

The commotion in the classroom doubled.

Was it so unusual for Makoto to be cheerful and good? That whole day, all of the students looked at me like there was an alien giving birth. Everyone surrounded me at a distance behaving weirdly towards me, and I suspected that they were observing me.

But of course, although everyone said "Makoto has changed" and were surprised, no one suspected that "Makoto's soul has been changed". Therefore, no matter how surprised they were or how suspicious, I planned on acting like I did not care. No matter how much of my behavior was odd, because my appearance was Makoto Kobayashi, that alone was enough to make me Makoto Kobayashi.

This was my basic plan, however, there were some people among them who were more perceptive.

During the break for lunch, the first frightening incident happened. After taking a nap in the shade of a tree in the back yard, it happened as I retraced my steps back to the classroom.

All of a sudden, from behind me in the corridor came a clattering of footsteps, and looking over my shoulder there was a small girl with short hair giving me a stare. From Makoto's perspective, she was certainly quite small.

"Seminar?"

With her awfully bright staring eyes, the tiny girl said this.

“Did you go to the seminar? You’ve changed a lot!”

”What?”

“Don’t avoid the question. I know. Today, you’ve been all weird Mr. Kobayashi. You’re not acting like the usual Kobayashi.”

“What do you mean by that”

I took a step back in surprise.

“I knew it”

The tiny girl, with a “you did that” face, said “As expected. I saw it before. In a news report about the seminar. You pay a lot of money and get brainwashed. You get reborn into a new self. That’s what you did, Kobayashi. You went through the seminar when you were on leave from school. Before long, people are reborn into positive and cheerful people. But, I don’t think it’ll be the same for you, Kobayashi.”

“That’s mean”

This injured my mood.

“For your information, I didn’t go to that seminar”

“Well then, what? What else did you do?”

“I didn’t do anything”

“You’re lying, I don’t believe you.”

“Ok, don’t believe me.”

Who the heck was this woman? What part of me was she saying was positive and cheerful? Although all of my questions weren't answered, I walked away leaving the tiny woman behind. It seemed best to not get involved with these sort of people.

"I definitely don't believe you!", the tiny girl called out persistently, just before I turned the corner. "I know what you did. You definitely did something. You may fool everyone else but you're not fooling me!"

What a strange girl. However, she was oddly perceptive.

In my mind I was shocked, immediately, I ran into a stall in the boy's bathroom and called for Purapura.

"Who was that just now?"

"Hm..."

When he showed up, Purapura had already taken out his guidebook. However, it did not seem like he was as confident as usual, and he turned the pages with what seemed like impatience.

"Nope"

Finally, he gave up and closed his guidebook.

"That girl isn't mentioned."

"What do you mean?"

"There is no description of her in the guidebook. That is to say, there is no recollection of her in Makoto's memory."

“So basically,” I said, “he didn’t notice her.”

“Yes,” Purapura said as he nodded in agreement, “in a nutshell.”

“Hmm”

I gave the not to be trusted guidebook a sideways glance, and I started to have mixed feelings.

This tiny strange girl was also not in Makoto Kobayashi’s memory.

It was only that one girl, that caught the thought that Makoto was not me.

This first day attending school was endlessly long. In the classroom everyone’s questioning stare swept over me, in the hallway I got entangled with that tiny girl, and on my way back to homeroom I was exhausted. But, there was still one more place I wanted to check as a gauge of Makoto’s actions.

The art room after school.

This morning, Purapura, for the first time, talked about how Makoto had been a passionate art club member. Makoto seemed to not have anything good about him, but It seemed that he was very good at drawing, and he only went to school because of art club activities.

In spite of that, extracurricular activities are generally limited to one semester in third year, regardless Makoto continued to face the art group the second semester. There were other

third year students who did this. His teacher who was his advisor, far from being silent, on the contrary encouraged Makoto's enthusiasm.

However, his enthusiasm seemed to not only be present on canvas.

After school, I went to the third floor of the art room, and started looking for Makoto's canvas on the shelves at the back. I found one unfinished oil painting, hung up like I pictured. Then, I took paintbrushes and spread them around and set Makoto's canvas on an easel.

Although I had been fine with posing like this, I actually wanted to paint, like it looked like I was.

I sat on a folding chair opposite Makoto's canvas for ten-odd minutes. Before long, I lined up the oil paints on a wooden pallet, and began to continue painting the incomplete painting. In the beginning, I learned through imitating the parts that were completed, but gradually the brush began to slip, and before I noticed I was only thinking about playing around in the world of painting.

The brick-red setting sun shone into the warm classroom.

The odor of strangely pleasant oil paints.

In this complete tranquility, I could understand Makoto's emotions naturally. There were ten-odd club members in the room but everyone was staring at their canvas with feverish expressions. It wasn't like the third year A class, no one was staring at me. Sometimes, hearing casual conversations or laughter, it all the more relaxed the atmosphere.

Here, Makoto breathed a sigh of relief.

It was only here that he could relax.

Just as I got confident in front of the canvas, there was a catch in my chest for some reason.

“Makoto, it’s been a while”

At that moment, from behind me came a voice like a sweet and sour fruit.

Before I turned my head, I knew who the voice belonged to.

Hiroka Kuwabara. I came here because I wanted to see her.

What the heck kind of woman was this? From the hurried look over my shoulder, there was a small chubby girl with dyed brown hair peeking at Makoto’s canvas.

“Makoto, what were you doing? You didn’t come at all. I wonder if this painting was like this already, I’ve been worried about it. It’s my favorite painting. I always come here because of this painting. Of course, this is a lie.”

Purapura was also listening to this lie. Hiroka Kuwabara was not a member of any club, but because her friend was a member of the art club she felt comfortable stopping by sometimes for fun. Therefore, Makoto would always hold his breath in anticipation of hearing Hiroka’s voice.

“But that’s okay, you’re better now Makoto. Keep painting diligently, and keep painting for me. Makoto’s paintings have all been gloomy recently. It’s been a while since your paintings used beautiful colors, but I am really looking forward to you giving it to me.

This girl who bent down to put her cheek right next to mine in order to talk was very different from how I had imagined Hiroka Kuwabara to be. I had thought she would be more adult, but she had a childish manner of speaking. Despite that, she had a strange seductiveness.

Every time her long hair touched my cheek, I felt my heart thumping, and it felt like it would explode. Perhaps Makoto's body was reacting involuntarily.

“Makoto, it's not good to procrastinate. Promise me. You'll regularly use my favorite pretty colors to finish your painting. Ok? Even this horse, is in the middle of looking pitiable.”

Hiroka was a second year student, Makoto's junior but in spite of this instead of calling him “senpai”, she called him “Makoto”. Even in such a miserable state, this would make Makoto's heart beat faster without a doubt.

“Hm, this horse, I think he is done very well. But, he isn't even finished yet, you can make him even more alive. He is jumping into the empty sky. Isn't that smart”

She was not a beautiful woman, but she was romantic. I trembled, touching her soft milky white skin. The lower half of my body went numb as I thought about reaching out to touch her thick lips. Well, of course Makoto's lower half reacted because of the memory of the incident at the love hotel...

“The blue in the back is also really pretty. You didn't use that blue a lot. It is so transparent it looks like a tranquil sky. I've never seen a sky like this, but I like it.”

And then above all the best part of Hiroka Kuwabara was that, without Makoto having to say a single word, she would chat arbitrarily. As far as the tongue-tied Makoto was concerned, this act saved him.

But, in all of Hiroka's topics of conversation there was one that I did not agree with.

The amount of blue paint necessary to cover the canvas. In the upper right hand corner, the horse did not leave a strong impression and was unfinished, and right now the painting

looked like blue was the leading actor. Hiroka said the blue looked like the sky. But, I thought that instead...

“I think it’s the ocean.”

Suddenly, from behind me came a voice I remembered, and since I had been thinking the same thing I was shocked.

“A horse soaring through the sky would also be nice, but for me I see it as a horse swimming in the ocean. He is at the bottom of a completely silent ocean. He is slowly looking towards the surface. So see, isn’t the part above this a brighter blue?”

“That’s right!”

I turned to look at the owner of the excited voice.

Just as I did, all of the excitement faded.

“Yea, that’s what I said.”

The tiny girl smiled and laughed in satisfaction.

“My eyes cannot be deceived; you know”.

Chapter 3:

The tiny girls' name was Shiyoko Sano. She was in the same third year A class as Makoto, and turned out to also be an art club member. Even so, this girl was a mystery who had not entered into Makoto's awareness of existence. It seemed that Hiroka Kuwabara was the only one who had entered into Makoto's awareness.

In any case, after this Shiyoko Sano is going to cause trouble.

Shiyoko obstinately seemed to be under the impression that "Makoto, you're not the previous Makoto" (Wow, I mean she's hit the nail on the head), as if she tore off my disguise, following me around with tenacity.

"It's not the seminar, perhaps it was hypnotherapy?"

"Hm...but I don't think that is possible, if it was that you would be honest about it. Maybe you went to Sri Lanka and got cured of an evil spirit?"

"You went swimming with dolphins?"

"When my father's acquaintance had a baby, he really changed, but Kobayashi there's no way you had a baby at your age..."

I don't know where the heck she was getting these ideas, but she threw one after another at me.

"I didn't get hypnotherapy either"

"Getting a spirit exorcized? If that was the case I'd have to ask an angel"

"I'm not good at swimming"

“I don’t know about that, but if I did I would have used protection”

At the beginning, I rebutted each of these one by one but they became more annoying and absurd, and by the end no sooner would I feel Shiyoko’s presence than I would run away.

The last safe place to escape to had been the art club room. When I was supposed to be able to just paint my picture, Shiyoko showed up but didn’t act like this. There is a certain distance one should not stand within around another person, and she watched my canvas quietly from behind me. For artistically inclined people, the art room is a sacred space.

Hm. After this somewhat embarrassing experience, I still went to the art club.

At any rate, I had a lot of free time on my hands, even if I didn’t go home directly after school. Rather than having to face this family, which I was getting nervous about, I figured it was a hundred times better to stay at school later.

What had happened with Hiroka Kuwabara was also on my mind. In short, I felt the same as Makoto, as if I was waiting holding my breath when she called out to me.

Even though Makoto liked her, it was clear that he didn’t have good taste, even though she was one of the girls who suffered Makoto, nevertheless Hiroko had some irresistible appeal. I want her to keep talking in that strange way of hers, and I wish I were just like a middle-aged man.

But as expected, the main reason I visited the art room frequently was simply to work on the painting which I realized I was looking forward to.

I planned on taking the time carefully to finish Makoto's blue painting. As expected, because I was in Makoto's body I quickly progressed at getting used to doing it. That is, rather than acquiring the technique, it was closer to recovering it bit by bit through intuition.

I brought my brush timidly to the canvas.

Thereupon there was something that had not been there a while before.

Many times gradually the small thing changed into something big.

Before long, it began to seem faintly like a representation of the world.

Our world.

Makoto and my world...

Like that, it was only when I gave myself over to this painting world that I forgot about Makoto's unlucky situation, his isolation, his sadness, how short he was. The oil painting was attracting me day by day. Since second semester exams were coming up, after school the art room became empty, so I went there alone diligently.

When the exam was over, I got called by Mr. Sawada my homeroom teacher, with the results.

"Are you okay, Kobayashi? It seemed that you took such a long break from school, you know. This time must also be emotionally difficult. However, even with that..."

Mr. Sawada shook his table of results while he spoke.

"This is too horrible"

I was completely in agreement.

The staff room was gloomy after school. Now, Mr. Sawada and I were concerned with serious questions about Makoto. It was concerning his almost out-of-this-world bad results; on three sections of the midterm, he got an average of 35 points, and on the other five sections he reached 31 points.

“Huh, first semester and second semester, your points are almost the same, but usually students will be worried about it and do better the second semester. You are a senior preparing for entrance exams, so you can’t be doing things at your own pace.”

Mr. Sawada’s eyebrows frequently hung together in a concerned manner.

I was also worried.

Because this was Makoto Kobayashi’s exam, I figured that since up until now his preparation had been effective, even though I didn’t go to enough things like classes, once I flipped the exam paper over Makoto’s brain cells would take over. In reality, the second I flipped the sheet over I got a vague negative premonition, and Makoto’s brain cells disappointedly did not come like this.

“In this case, you have really toasted high school”

In times like these, the conversation naturally turned towards entrance examinations.

According to Mr. Sawada the thing that would affect my report card was not just the results of this second semester midterm, or about the high school entrance exams, but pointed towards his report on things like my class behavior and attendance and my rate of turning in reports. Makoto’s first semester report card was the worst. Mr. Sawada did not say it directly but that in this worst case scenario, he had a hunch that I was the worst student in the class.

Okay, at all costs I had to recover in the second semester.

“That is it”

Mr. Sawada also seemed to be at a loss.

“What will you do, Kobayashi? Since it is like this, I would apply to one private school.”

“Applying to one school?”

“From now on, even if you are determined to study diligently, and you have a good result, with this report card you may not even pass. If you go steadily, you will end up with a single application or recommendation. Recently public schools have their recommendation policies, but the safest single application is a private institution.”

“Will I be accepted to a private school with a single application?”

“If you don’t care which school you go to”

A single application.

I did not really understand, but I decided to do it.

“Okay, I’ll do a single application”

“What?”

“I’ve decided to do a single application to a private school”

“You decided on a single application...”

“The high school can be anywhere”

“But, at your level right now...”

I told Mr. Sawada, who had a confused look on his face, "It's fine".

"I am good at my level"

I thought that the conversation was over, so I half rose from my chair. Nothing about it bothered me.

"I see, you're that type"

Mr. Sawada tilted his head in thought, muttering in a low voice that did not reach the other teachers around the room.

"These days, there are a lot. Students who do not have any competitive consciousness. Well, that's fine but there is still time so try to think it over again. Discuss it with your family too."

Then, Mr. Sawada put his rough hand on my shoulder and pressed me back down to the chair.

"How are you feeling?"

"How am I?"

"I mean, that is to say, that's it, for instance..."

Mr. Sawada said this while hemming and hawing,

"No the thing is, your mother asked me to touch on the subject but...I'm a little nervous"

"Oh", I thought. "About my suicide?"

"Oh, jeez, stupid, don't say that, obviously about that."

“Well if that’s the case, I’m fine. I just lost my mind for a bit. I won’t do it again.”

I really displayed a composed smile, and Mr. Sawada sniffled,

“Really?”

“Really”

“Want to bet on it?”

“I’m not betting on it”

“Stingy”

“For sure, Mr. Sawada”

“Okay, certainly right now seeing you, my doubts are gone”

At the end of this conversation, Mr. Sawada had a grim look on his strong gorilla face while he said this.

“However, if you have any problems in class, please tell me. I will be dependable. I have a lot of power.”

This remark did not seem to be a lie.

According to Purapura’s guide, Mr. Sawada seems to continue to protect students with that awesome power of his. “If he happens to see bullying, they will be half killed. That is the story I heard”, and it could be believed that having Mr. Sawada as his homeroom teacher was one of his few pieces of good luck.

While drowning in emotions, I gently bowed to Mr. Sawada and left the staff room.

That evening, I tentatively told Makoto's mom "I am going to apply to one private school", and gave her the report card.

In this case, I wanted to settle the problem of having slacked off going to cram school since Makoto's suicide. Since we didn't have great ambitions, we could manage at present academic ability and stop with the cram school.

"Oh, really? You've already decided?"

Since this information was sudden, mom looked like she was surprised.

"Did you talk this through with your teacher?"

"Yep"

"Does the teacher think so too?"

"Yep"

"I see"

For some reason, there was a lot of deep thinking about this. I was also distracted by myself and other things besides my mother's reaction at that time.

That evening at 7 o'clock. This was the usual time for dinner. However, tonight it was just mom and I sitting across from each other at the dining room table.

What is this silence?

It was the first time since being discharged from the hospital that of course Mitsuru did not come home from prep school, but that father was not sitting there like a statue.

"It seems like your dad will start doing overtime again starting today"

As if guessing my question, mother's eyes turned towards father's empty seat.

“I think you understand, Makoto, that right now your father's company is having a very hard time, right? Everyone desperately needs to trust them again after such corruption had been discovered. But Makoto you know your father thinks you are more important, and up until now he had been asking for a huge favor in order to be able to come home early. However, it has been getting harder gradually...Makoto you have been getting much more stable recently, so he must also go back to being a company man.”

“Hm”

I let a small sniff out through my nose.

“Being a section chief is really serious”

“Right, there's a lot of new and various jobs”

There was no recognition of my sarcasm.

After this, we will have dinner like this more often. In my head this made me feel dejected. Nobody likes eating dinner with just their mother, but in my case it was someone else's mom.

She was an unfamiliar lady.

A married woman who had an affair.

An apparently dirty middle-aged woman.

Although I personally thought this was irrelevant, the discomfort that I felt in my core sometimes made me be cruel.

“We are eating together”

Yes, for example like this. I stared at my mom’s cowering eyes as I said this.

“That’s already making me want to be sick”

With that, I put my chopsticks down and walked quickly back to my room,

After that, I passed her on the way back from the bathroom, and when I saw that her eyes were red, although even that didn’t affect my conscience, but this woman was bad from the start, so why should it affect my conscience? Instantly, I got twice as mad, seeing these tearful eyes which had become odious. While I knew that this was a normal host family, and a temporary home, I couldn’t help but be irritated living with the Kobayashi family.

At times like this, it seems it was only Hiroka Kuwabara who calmed my foul mood.

That plump face, that gentle voice, somehow had the strange power to soften my mood. I do not know if it was love, but the time I spent thinking about Hiroka got longer and longer every day. On nights where I could not sleep, I kept Makoto’s body satisfied thinking about Hiroka. It was a burning care.

In the meantime, I slowly began to question Makoto’s memories that were in Purapura’s guidebook.

Early in the conversation, I thought that it was just a misunderstanding.

In my opinion, the middle-aged man who was with Hiroka must have just been her father. It was the same as was frequently the case in dramas and comics, of jumping to the wrong conclusion. Makoto had fallen into the common trap. Yes, that’s what I decided...but, then why did they go into a love hotel?

Her father collapsed! Yes, Hiroka must have been walking with him when suddenly his condition took a turn for the worse. There was nowhere in the area that looked like somewhere to rest. It was inevitable that Hiroka would have to take a break in the love hotel for two hours at least. It's a common story. Actually, I see a lot of parents and children like this. Although I want to say this is a fine everyday occurrence...I can't say that.

There's no such thing.

“Well, I'd like to ask one thing”

That night, I couldn't help but ask Purapura about something I was thinking.

“I am in Makoto Kobayashi's body now, but I'm really just a soul. The soul is said to be light and transparent, so it can fly wherever it wants, right?”

“If”, said Purapura shortly, “If, right now, you are thinking of flying to Hiroka Kuwabara's room and peeping on her changing clothes, you should stop those thoughts right now.”

“What?”

I was taken aback.

“How did you know?”

“All boys ask about that.”

He seemed fed up with this question, and his voice was cold.

“Everybody mixes up spirits, ghosts, and being invisible. But I’m sorry to say that you don’t have the freedom of a ghost, or the skill of being invisible. You are only a humble spirit, and moreover right now because you are tied to Makoto Kobayashi’s body, it is impossible to move about easily. If you really want to see Hiroka Kuwabara change clothes, go to the foyer.”

“Oh”

I collapsed on top of my bed, dejected. Purapura’s cold voice hung over me.

“Hey, you didn’t just call on me for this reason”

I got up and saw Purapura standing by the window. He had his poker face on, and voice and look were both similarly cold. Somehow or other it seemed like he had gotten angry, so I left my bed and pulled the deck of cards out from my study desk.

“How about our seventh game today?”

I grinned.

Purapura did not smile, instead pointed at the study desk chair.

“Actually, sit”

“What”

“It’s okay, sit”

“Okay”

I sat down helplessly.

Then, since there was nowhere for me to run, Purapura began to scold me with terrific force.

“Well, I wanted to hear from you, what do you think about your self-conscious in this second chance? Do you understand that this is a place for practice? I can keep quiet and watch forever, but you aren’t acting like you should...”

It had been a month since the start of my homestay, and it seemed like Purapura wasn’t pleased with my behavior as Makoto Kobayashi.

In unusually intense speech, Purapura said that since this was supposed to be a second chance, I still needed a challenge. After my mistake in my previous life, I had somehow managed to get a second chance to be born again and retrain my soul. Spirit! Guts! Nevertheless, I did not have a single one of these qualities. Besides acting like I had enthusiasm for oil painting, all I did besides that was think about Hiroka Kuwabara. Because I had indifferently chosen the easiest path for the high school exams, there would be no way to fix it unless I did things like practice every day. If I did not apply myself, my soul would not improve. In order for the level of my soul to improve, I would naturally need to recall what sin I had committed in my past life, although it did not seem like I was planning on starting my journey to this point either.

“Isn’t it true that you have not been thinking about what you did wrong in your past life? Have you forgotten why you are here? I do not usually say such things, but I guess in this case there is no use in guiding you. I am envious of guides who have motivated and engaged souls.”

With this concluding muttered complaint, Purapura took a short break and sat down on the edge of the bed.

“Is that it?” I asked, but there was no answer. I guess that was it.

Accordingly, I started a fierce counterattack.

“Well, then let me tell you, I think I am thinking about things like my past life. Since I am staying in a gloomy place like this, I must be guilty of something very bad. Maybe I killed someone. Maybe I cheated my way into stealing a large amount of money. Maybe due to my carelessness in reporting a fire several tens of people were hurt. Because I’m thinking about these things, do you think it’s fun? It’s becoming depressing, and that’s how I feel.”

I crossed my legs and made my vision pointed, glaring at Purapura in resentment.

“Firstly; if I remember my past life’s mistake, I will have to say goodbye to Makoto Kobayashi’s body...for example I could be reborn as Komori Jyun or Koyama Shin, and there is no reason they would be better than Makoto Kobayashi. I don’t believe that a fun life would be waiting for me this time.”

“What about Yuko Koike for example, or Youko Ogawa”, Purapura said, with a serious face. “You aren’t limited to being reincarnated as a man.”

“The problem is, when I am reborn I am changed, but the world I am reborn into will not change. The bad thing that I did in my past life I might do again in my new life. The things that happen as Makoto Kobayashi might happen as Komori Jyun or Koyama Shin.”

“That is to say, everyone has the same requirements. No one is born with a guarantee.”

“It’s like homestay. It is hit or miss, when you take the lid of the box you don’t know what you’re going to get.”

I gave a dry smile.

“Your boss is really overbearing”

It started as just a comeback, but I got really sad as I was talking.

I realized I was scared and anxious to be born into another strange family I did not know and have to build relationships from the beginning again.

Really, what kind of previous life had I come from...?

I eventually noticed Purapura had put his hand on my shoulder. When I turned around with a bitter smile, Purapura had a similar smile, and had his other hand on the desk. His finger was pointing to the deck of cards.

“Let’s play a seventh game”

If it’s a game, it’s easy to redo.