
The White Demon



The two children went with the White Lady.

They returned to their home.

But things were no longer the same.

Lumina dug while a funeral was held for the dead son.

It was raining that day. Kaito and Riko stood in front of their brother's grave, beneath an umbrella.

—Kaito... will things stay like this? —Riko asked.

Kaito remained silent for several seconds.

—...There is no going back.

Lumina began training them.

—Kids, I'm going to teach you everything you'll need to survive. I won't be staying for very long, so I want you to cooperate with me, okay?

Kaito looked at her.

—What are you?

Lumina smiled slightly.

—You'll understand in time.

Meanwhile, the government general arrived at the orphanage.

—Tell me the situation.

—Two children escaped. We were unable to stop them.

—What do you mean you couldn't stop two children?

—They evaded the machines, cameras, and guards. They manipulated their route so that none of them could intercept them.

The general remained silent for a few seconds.

—Deploy the temporal alterers.

The agents distributed small generators throughout the building.

—What do you need them for?

—I want to reconstruct exactly what happened during the escape. If we can't interrogate them, we'll observe their actions.

—Their names?

—Kaito and Riko.

—Understood.

The generators activated. The sensors began reconstructing the state of the orphanage from the previous night.

—Go back exactly one day.

The agents entered the temporal coordinates and activated the system.

The scene appeared.

The two children moved through the corridors. They avoided the cameras, calculated the guards' routes, and stayed away from surveillance points. They used clothing to protect themselves from temperature changes and minimized their movements as much as possible.

The recording was sped up ten times, but even accounting for that, the precision of their movements was obvious.

—Were they really that fast?

—No. The acceleration is only visual. The system displays events at ten times their actual speed. In real time, it took them approximately twelve minutes. Here, we only see one minute and twelve seconds.

The general watched the scene.

—And why didn't any of the other children react?

—We have a hypothesis. The girl, Riko, had been building a trading network inside the orphanage for some time. She probably managed to get several children and even some guards to cooperate with them. It's possible that she used that network during the escape.

The general frowned.

—So they didn't simply escape the system. They managed to turn part of the system into an advantage.

—That's what it appears to be.

—This changes the level of the problem. I'll inform the governors.

The agents left.

Meanwhile, Lumina continued training the children.

She taught them combat, basic sciences, practical medicine, survival, environmental awareness, and the procedures they would need to stay alive without depending on anyone else.

One night, Lumina told them something that would once again change their perception of the situation.

—Kids, your parents are alive.

Kaito raised his head.

—What?

—Your parents are alive. And perhaps one day you'll be able to see them again.

Kaito remained motionless.

—In years?

—I can't tell you anything more.

—I want to understand it now.

—That's not possible.

Lumina began storing resources. She gathered food, tools, medicine, and other supplies, gradually building a stockpile for the children.

Several months passed.

One afternoon, Kaito approached Lumina.

—I... I'm forgetting Saiko.

Lumina stopped what she was doing.

—What do you mean?

—I remember less and less of his voice. I know he existed. I know I loved him, but when I try to remember how he spoke... I can't.

Lumina approached him and hugged him.

—It's normal. A person's memories can deteriorate when you don't have enough new experiences connected to them. It doesn't mean you've stopped loving him.

—But I don't want to forget him.

—You won't necessarily forget him. You may lose details, like his voice or certain specific moments, but that doesn't mean everything you experienced with him will disappear.

Kaito lowered his gaze.

—...Thank you.

—You don't have to thank me. I won't be able to stay with you forever, but while I'm here, I'll do everything I can to help you.

Kaito remained silent.

—Even so... I don't think our parents are coming back. That's the truth.

Lumina watched him for several seconds.

—Do you really want to know more about them?

Kaito looked up.

—Yes.

Lumina gave him an address.

—Go there. When you arrive, you'll probably understand something you still can't comprehend from here.

Kaito followed the directions.

Lumina's energy surrounded him, concealing his presence from the detection systems.

He reached a cave.

Inside, he found a tape.

He played it.

The recording contained information related to Kim's government, internal movements, names, operations, and data that should never have reached that location.

Kaito remained motionless as he processed the information.

Something had happened shortly after he and Riko arrived at the orphanage. Some of the information regarding Kim had been leaked.

But that information could not have moved there on its own.

Someone had to have delivered it.

Kaito only knew one person who had demonstrated enough knowledge of his father's movements.

Lumina.

The address could not have been a coincidence either.

The tape had been placed there for him to find.

Kaito realized that even this had been part of a chain of events prepared in advance.

—I understand, Father...

He looked at the tape.

—I will destroy everything. But not now.

Meanwhile, Lumina remained primarily with Riko.

—Lumina, what is your past?

Lumina smiled.

—That happened a long time ago.

Riko watched her carefully.

—You're a spirit, aren't you?

Lumina tilted her head slightly.

—Why do you think that?

—Your appearance. What you know. You suddenly appeared in a place where the information should have been restricted. You speak like someone who has lived for decades. And when you talk about our parents, it seems like you know things you shouldn't know.

Lumina remained silent for several seconds.

—It's obvious that the two of you are your parents' children.

Riko frowned.

—What kind of people are they?

—People beyond the conclusions you can currently reach.

Eight months passed.

The energy Lumina used to conceal the children began to deteriorate her.

One night, Riko found her weakened.

—Lumina... what's happening to you?

—Nothing, kids. I think my time here is coming to an end.

—What?

Kaito immediately stood up.

—Wait.

—No.

—No, no, no!

Lumina tried to remain calm.

—You'll be fine. I trained you for this. Take care of each other and you'll be able to thrive.

Her body began to fragment.

Riko ran toward her and tried to gather the fragments.

—I can fix it!

—Stop.

—No!

—That won't work.

The fragments separated again.

Riko held them in her hands.

—No... no...

Lumina disappeared.

Once again, they had lost someone.

Their resources began to run out.

Months later, Kaito checked the storage room.

There was very little left.

—...Now we have to leave. We can't hide here anymore.

Riko thought for a few seconds.

—What if we sell things online?

—They'd track us through the signals. I need to go outside first and study the environment.

—Understood. Be careful.

—I will.

Kaito went outside wearing a wig, different clothes, and carefully modified behavior. He didn't just alter his appearance. He changed his posture, walking speed, the way he looked at people, and the way he interacted with them.

Cameras were everywhere.

There didn't appear to be a public alert.

The police carried out their duties normally.

However, Kaito began noticing something strange.

They weren't watching faces.

They were watching heights.

The agents were paying particular attention to people whose height was approximately 1.70 meters.

Kaito was that height.

He stopped.

They're not looking for a specific face.

They're looking for a physical variable.

He looked around.

There were no wanted posters.

If they wanted the public to identify us, they would have distributed photographs. They didn't.

Then the search is discreet.

He put on a hat to alter his silhouette even further.

He remembered something.

The agents who had searched his house when his parents disappeared had behaved in a very similar way.

They weren't ordinary police officers.

They're agents.

And if they're here looking for us, then the government already knows we survived.

Kaito slowly approached a group of agents, pretending to be lost.

He listened to their conversations.

They spoke different languages with a fluency that was too natural to be a coincidence.

Kaito approached three different agents and asked them for directions.

The first answered using general references.

The second gave him the exact name of a street and a specific location.

The third did the same.

Kaito walked away.

They're not locals.

And there are too many of them.

The linguistic diversity, coordinated behavior, and number of agents didn't fit an ordinary police operation.

If they were foreign agents working on normal operations, they wouldn't need to be concentrated like this.

They're here because of us.

Kaito immediately returned home.

Meanwhile, inside a government facility:

—We have every available agency active. They possess the physical and documentary information on both children, but we haven't found a single lead in ten months.

—The governor continues demanding results.

—The energy that prevented our detection disappeared several months ago. We should have found something by now.

—We haven't found anything because we're looking for individuals when we should probably be looking for patterns.

—What do you propose?

—We'll share the information among all the agencies. Each one will analyze the problem from a different specialization.

—And if that doesn't work either?

—Then we'll expand the scope.

Meanwhile, Kaito began preparing his next move.

He didn't simply create disguises.

He created identities.

Thirty potential identities.

But he decided to use only eleven.

The rest would remain as reserves and would never be directly connected to the active ones.

Riko watched him.

—Okay. Now ask me.

—What's your name?

—Daniel Torres.

—Your story?

—I was born in a neighboring country. My parents died during a war, and I came here looking for a new life. I have little formal education, but I'm hardworking.

—Your documents?

—Here.

Kaito showed identity documents, residency papers, criminal records, certificates, and falsified employment records.

—How do you behave?

—Shy at first. Responsible. A little awkward, but willing to help when necessary.

—Your posture?

—Slightly hunched.

—Your values?

—Respect, patience, and tranquility.

—Your way of speaking?

—A slight Zerimovian accent, with certain variations in intonation.

—Your appearance?

—Cap. Black hair underneath it. Glasses. Formal shirt. Backpack.

—What do you own?

—A collection of old pencils.

—Social class?

—Low.

—Important memories?

Kaito remained silent for several seconds.

—I remember my father's last words: "Daniel, take care of yourself, okay?" It still affects me when I remember it.

Riko watched him.

—And what will you do if someone tries to discover who you are?

Kaito answered immediately:

—I won't try to convince them that I'm Daniel.

Riko blinked.

—Then?

—I'll make sure finding me doesn't produce a clear answer. An identity that's too perfect is suspicious. A completely incoherent identity is suspicious too. Daniel needs to seem like a real person, with normal contradictions, small mistakes, and a history that can stand on its own.

Riko smiled.

—Then it's solid.

Kaito nodded.

—But there's a more important problem.

—What?

—We still don't know exactly what the government knows about us.

Kaito looked at the thirty identities.

—And before deciding how to hide from them, we need to determine what information they have about us. But for now, we know several things: they don't know where we are, they've been searching for us for ten months, the number of deployed agents is far too large for an ordinary investigation, and several agencies are probably involved. They know our physical and documentary data, they can use cameras, sensors, and traces to locate us, and they're probably building profiles on us. That means I can't go outside too often.

—Then let me do something.

Riko took one of the mandatory wrist identifiers and began examining it.

—This is a problem.

—What?

—If every citizen has to wear one, falsifying documents isn't enough. The identifier could link one identity to another.

—Then modify it.

Riko worked on the device for hours. She didn't simply try to erase the records. That would have been too obvious. Instead, she created a structure that allowed Kaito to use different identities without the device immediately revealing that they belonged to the same person.

She also prepared social records, activity histories, and small differences between each profile.

Kaito examined the data.

—Something's missing.

—What?

—The identities can't exist in isolation. If they all appear out of nowhere, the government will detect the anomaly.

Riko thought for a few seconds.

—Hmm...

—Daniel works for Héctor. Héctor is Juan's father. Juan knows Alejandro. Alejandro, meanwhile, has a business relationship with Daniel. Some connections will be real and others will be false. But all of them must appear to have existed before we arrived.

—That way, if they investigate one identity, they'll find other people who already existed before we appeared.

—Exactly. I don't want a perfect network. I want an imperfect network, with relationships that make sense independently.

Riko finished entering the data.

—Done?

—Done.

—Perfect. Now go.

Kaito gave her a thumbs-up.

—Understood.

Over the following days, he began looking for work.

Using the identity of Daniel Tores, he went to an interview.

—How do you see yourself working at this company?

Kaito lowered his gaze slightly.

—I'd like to find stability... and, if I get the opportunity, become one of your best employees.

The interviewer watched him for several seconds.

—Hmm. We'll call you.

Kaito left.

He didn't try to get a particularly good position. Nor did he choose one requiring extraordinary skills. He needed Daniel to appear ordinary.

Little by little, he found small jobs. Because of his age, the pay was low, but it was enough to keep them alive.

Meanwhile, the government had changed its strategy.

—I'm sure those two have already started moving.

—What do we do?

—Don't look only for Kaito. Divide the problem.

The general pointed at a screen.

—I want teams dedicated to every need they might have: food, water, shelter, transportation, communications, documentation, money, medical care, contacts, hideouts, and places where they can acquire resources.

The agents began organizing themselves.

—Each team will study a different need. If we find one, we can infer the others.

—Understood.

The government stopped looking only for two children.

It began looking for the survival system that two children would need in order to remain hidden.

Meanwhile, Kaito acquired different activities through his identities.

Daniel worked as an assistant.

Another identity occasionally appeared as a gambler.

Juan sold paintings.

Héctor periodically purchased large quantities of food.

Each identity had a different personality, routine, and set of needs.

But none of them was completely perfect.

That was deliberate.

An identity that was too perfect would attract more attention than a mediocre one.

At the government:

—Review the cameras.

—All of them?

—All that we can.

—It's impossible to analyze every person.

—We don't need to analyze everyone immediately. Filter them first.

The agents began using filters.

Compatible age.

Compatible height.

Movement patterns.

Purchases.

Schedules.

Behavior.

Relationships.

And, above all, signs that a person was taking care of someone else.

—If a person matches several factors, flag the profile.

Kaito began studying the everyday conversations of the people he encountered.

He was not looking for important information.

He was looking for normality.

Questions about the weather.

Comments about work.

Complaints about transportation.

Brief conversations.

Small social habits.

Riko watched him for a while.

—What are you doing?

—I’m learning how people talk when they aren’t trying to get anything.

—Why?

—If I want to portray a normal person, I first need to know what a normal person considers normal.

While Kaito learned how to appear ordinary, the government began constructing predictive models.

Thousands of them.

They were not trying to discover a single personality for Kaito.

They were trying to generate possible versions.

What would he do if he were hungry?

What would he do if he lost money?

What places would he avoid?

What risks would he accept?

What resources would he consider essential?

What mistakes would he make under pressure?

What would he protect first?

The search began to turn into a war of models.

But the money began to run out.

One night, Kaito looked at his plate.

Then he looked at Riko’s.

Both portions were small.

Without saying anything, he placed part of his food onto her plate.

Riko looked up.

—What are you doing?

—I’m not hungry.

—Kaito.

—I’ll eat later.

Riko watched him for a few seconds.

She knew he was lying.

But she also knew that arguing with him would only make him find another way to do it.

Over the following weeks, Kaito began progressively reducing his food intake.

Until he found another alternative.

He entered a small store.

—Excuse me.

—Yes, kid?

—How much do the pills cost?

The shopkeeper frowned.

—Pills? What for? If regenerators exist, a treatment costs around two thousand.

—Pills.

—Well... which ones?

—All the ones you have. Different types.

The man took out several boxes.

—Five thousand.

Kaito placed the money on the counter.

—Thank you.

He left.

He had decided to replace part of his food intake with medicine and tablets because he could control the quantities more easily.

Riko, however, began replacing some of those pills with nutritional supplements.

Kaito did not notice.

His attention was focused on keeping the identities functioning.

But the strategy had a limit.

The lack of food began to affect him.

Headaches.

Migraines.

Weakness.

Weight loss.

Tremors.

Bleeding.

His ability to concentrate began to deteriorate.

One night, while Riko was sleeping, Kaito got up and walked to the mirror.

He stood there, staring at his reflection.

A tear ran down his cheek.

But it was not transparent.

It was red.

Kaito blinked.

—Hemolacria...

He wiped his face.

—Tch.

Meanwhile, at the government facility:

—That’s enough.

—Sir?

—Those children need basic resources. Food, water, transportation, medicine. Increase security at stores, stations, and distribution points.

—For what purpose?

—We won’t necessarily catch them there. I want to reduce their options.

The agent understood.

—If every resource begins to be monitored, they'll have to choose between exposing themselves or going without it.

—Exactly.

The general paused.

—And bring the agencies together.

Hours later, representatives from different institutions were gathered in the same room.

Each one presented their hypotheses.

—One believes Kaito is highly analytical.

—Another believes he relies on extreme observation.

—Another thinks he may display antisocial traits.

—And another believes we are simply overestimating him.

The general listened.

Then shook his head.

—It doesn't matter.

Everyone looked at him.

—We can execute all the hypotheses simultaneously. We don’t have to choose one. Generate scenarios for every possibility.

—Even if there are hundreds of thousands?

—Even if there are a million.

An agent raised his hand.

—Sir, do we really need to maintain so many resources dedicated to two children?

The general looked at him.

—Those children possess classified information capable of compromising power structures. If that information reaches the outside world, we will have a much bigger problem than this search.

The room fell silent.

—Focus.

Meanwhile, Kaito went out again using Daniel’s identity.

He immediately noticed something.

More security.

Monitored stores.

Document checks.

A greater police presence.

But something was strange.

It did not appear to be a public operation.

Kaito returned home.

Riko was waiting for him.

—What happened?

—They increased security.

—Where?

—Food, water, transportation, documentation. They aren’t just looking for people. They’re restricting the resources we would need to remain hidden.

Riko frowned.

—Then they know we’re alive.

—Yes.

—And what are you going to do?

Kaito removed the wig.

—They aren’t trying to catch me directly.

—Then?

—They’re trying to make me react.

Riko understood.

—Behavioral profiling.

—Exactly.

Kaito sat down.

—If they really have this many agencies working on this, they won’t be building a single profile. They’ll be building hundreds or thousands.

—Then you’ll have to find which ones match you.

Kaito nodded.

—Exactly.

Riko sat beside him.

—Can I help?

Kaito looked at her.

—Yes.

They both began reconstructing what had happened.

—If they reacted so quickly after we appeared, they probably used the temporal alterers.

—Why?

—Because they already know exactly how we escaped.

Kaito began listing the details.

—We know the camera positions. We evaded sensors. We calculated routes. We anticipated the guards. We used clothing to reduce our thermal signature.

Riko added:

—And we didn’t react to danger like normal children.

—Then the government already knows we’re observant.

—And analytical.

—And they probably know we can control our expressions.

Riko raised an eyebrow.

—Do you think they believe we’re psychopaths?

Kaito smiled slightly.

—That would be funny.

—It wouldn’t be if they were right.

—They aren’t.

Kaito returned to the data.

—The person directing the profiling is periodically increasing the pressure. That means they’re obtaining information through experimentation.

—Impulsive?

—Not exactly.

Kaito thought for a few seconds.

—If he were desperate, he would increase the pressure indiscriminately. If he were completely overwhelmed, he would probably make coordination errors. But this is different.

—Then...

—He’s experimenting.

Kaito began writing.

—Our initial profile probably contains these variables: we’re analytical, observant, capable of controlling our behavior, unconventional, and difficult to classify.

Riko looked at the screen.

—Then give them something to classify.

Kaito smiled.

—I was thinking the same thing.

He began contaminating the variables the government could observe.

He did not merely falsify information.

He introduced ambiguity.

One identity would have authentic habits.

Another would have false habits.

Another would have a mixture of both.

Some relationships would be real.

Others would be fabricated.

Some decisions would appear rational.

Others would appear absurd.

The intention was not to construct a perfect lie.

It was to prevent an isolated observation from having enough value to produce a conclusion.

Kaito began visiting the library.

He would return with books.

Riko looked up.

—Books?

—A variety.

—What kind?

—Whatever you want.

Riko picked one up.

—Good.

The next day:

—Kaito.

—Yes?

—Bring me more.

—More?

—I already finished these.

Kaito looked at her.

—I brought you one hundred and twenty.

—Yes.

—How long did that take?

—Four days.

Kaito remained silent.

Riko picked up another book.

—I want more.

—...

—What?

—Nothing.

Kaito went out again.

While he gathered resources, Riko began thinking of another way to generate money.

They designed an extremely simple application.

They were not trying to make it flashy.

They wanted it to solve a specific problem, be easy to use, and spread quickly.

Riko handled its distribution through communities where she could acquire users.

The application began spreading.

But there was a second hidden function.

It used the computational resources of the devices on which it was installed to execute processes and generate small amounts of income.

When the government detected the pattern and attempted to trace its origin, they discovered something unexpected.

Thousands of devices were involved.

The activity did not point directly toward Riko.

The infrastructure was distributed.

The money was not immediately concentrated in a single account either.

Riko had built a system that allowed her to wait before gathering the funds.

At the government facility:

—We haven’t caught him.

The general looked at the reports.

—Hm.

—What do we do?

—Change methods.

—How?

—I don’t want us to keep forcing him to react. I want our actions to adapt to him.

The surveillance began to decrease.

Kaito noticed it.

And precisely because of that, he became suspicious.

—If they removed the pressure, then they no longer need it.

Riko looked at him.

—What does that mean?

Kaito wrote down several categories.

Identity.

Location.

Activity.

Resources.

Relationships.

History.

—If they found another way to obtain information without modifying the environment, then any information connecting two categories can become a vulnerability.

—Then...

—We can’t allow one identity to reveal a location. A purchase cannot reveal activity. A relationship cannot reveal another identity.

Riko understood.

—You have to break the connections.

—Yes.

The government detected the change.

—Why has the information become so useless?

—It doesn’t seem accidental.

—Then he’s figured it out.

An analyst enlarged a screen.

—He’s trying to break the relationships between the data.

—How?

—If one identity buys the same resources as another, has similar habits, and interacts with the same people, we can link them.

—Then do that.

The systems began searching for correlations.

And Kaito soon noticed.

Some identities were being monitored far more than others.

—What happened?

Riko approached.

—The most heavily monitored identities have something in common.

—They buy similar resources.

—They have similar habits.

—And some interact with related people.

Kaito understood.

—They found the architecture.

—And now?

Kaito smiled.

—Now we give them a false architecture.

He began creating deliberate connections.

One identity would buy certain products.

Another would have a relationship with a merchant.

A third would appear to be connected to both.

But those connections led to incorrect conclusions.

At the government facility:

—These relationships are strange.

—Why?

—Because when we follow the connections, we don’t reach Kaito.

—Then what are we following?

The analyst remained silent.

—A fabricated structure.

—How do you know?

—If every conclusion ends in secondary information, but none produces a location, an identity, or a critical relationship, then we are probably following exactly what someone wants us to follow.

Kaito increased the amount of information even further.

True information.

False information.

Incomplete information.

Old information.

Hypothetical information.

Contradictory information.

He was not trying to make the government believe a specific lie.

He was trying to increase the cost of determining which information was reliable.

At the government facility:

—Tch. Too much information.

—Do we filter it?

—No.

—Then?

—Divide the analysis.

The teams were separated.

Each one received different datasets and different hypotheses.

Kaito observed the change.

—I knew they would do this.

Riko looked at him.

—And now?

—The same action can be interpreted in different ways depending on which set of information each group receives.

Kaito began deliberately modifying the behavior of his identities.

One appeared naive.

Another appeared brilliant.

Another was excessively cheerful.

Another appeared depressed.

Another acted impulsively.

Another was extremely cautious.

He was not trying to make all of them look like Kaito.

He was trying to prevent any single interpretation from monopolizing the hypothesis.

The reports began to diverge.

—Sir.

—What?

—Some agencies believe Kaito is innocent.

—Why?

—They believe his actions do not show a pattern consistent with severe antisocial disorder.

—And Special Group A?

—They believe he may display sociopathic traits.

The general frowned.

—And the others?

—One agency considers him an extremely intelligent teenager who is emotionally dependent. Another thinks he is being manipulated by someone. Another believes the anomalies are the result of extreme stress. Another considers all the identities to be part of a deliberate operation.

—They all have different conclusions?

—Yes.

The general stared at the screen.

—Then Kaito achieved exactly what he wanted.

—What do we do?

The man closed the file.

—We still don’t know who he is.

And, for the first time in months, the problem was no longer finding Kaito.

It was determining which of all the versions of Kaito they had constructed actually existed.

In an abandoned bar, two people stood facing each other.

—All right... I’ll need your services, Igor.

—Kim? Ah, I didn’t recognize you. You were wearing your general’s uniform. Why do you even do that?

Igor spoke while smoking a cigar, completely relaxed.

—Catch these children. Kill them, and I’ll give you five million.

—Ten million.

—Seven point five.

—Kim, we can't make a deal with budgets that low.

Kim looked at him for a few seconds.

—Fine. Ten million.

—Perfect. Want some dessert?

Igor took a piece of cake and offered it to him.

—No. Just take care of it. He's dodging everything we've put in front of him. I'll continue increasing the pressure from within the government while you will be the real attack. Don't let any agency connect you to me.

—All right, all right, all right. And the information?

Kim handed him the file.

—Here you go.

Igor opened it and began reviewing the photographs and documents.

—Relax. I know how to do my job. You'll have that albino in a box.

—Perfect.

Igor left the bar.

Over the following days, he began using the rooftops of buildings as observation points. He wasn't watching Kaito directly. He was watching those who were watching Kaito.

With binoculars, he observed several agents scattered throughout the city.

—Let's see... what have they found?

The agents were analyzing hundreds of people. However, one individual was receiving slightly more attention than the others.

Igor observed his movements.

One behavior seemed intelligent.

Another seemed completely ordinary.

Another could be interpreted as a sign of paranoia.

Another seemed to be nothing more than a coincidence.

Igor narrowed his eyes.

—Multiple interpretations... You're doing this on purpose, kid.

He continued observing.

—The information is contaminated. If I use a single behavior as evidence, I could end up constructing a conclusion based on a cause that never existed.

He smiled slightly.

—Well thought out.

Meanwhile, inside the government:

—Increase the pressure.

—Why?

—Do it.

The restrictions suddenly began increasing. Controls were reinforced, certain economic opportunities were limited, and surveillance over the resources Kaito could use was intensified.

Kaito noticed it.

But something was strange.

The government was increasing the pressure, but it wasn't making a decisive move.

Kaito began analyzing it.

Why did they suddenly increase the pressure?

If they were really trying to catch me directly, they would use their resources to close one of my escape routes.

But they're not doing that.

They're altering the environment, not attacking me directly.

He remained deep in thought.

That means they want to provoke a reaction.

But then... what are they expecting to observe?

Kaito began comparing the government's current actions with its previous behavior.

For months, they've been using surveillance, predictive profiles, economic controls, and pattern analysis.

If they continue doing that, then their objective isn't simply to locate me. They want to learn how I react when my resources are taken away.

Kaito stopped.

But there's something else.

The pressure increased without the agencies significantly changing their operational behavior.

If the government is using its usual method to observe me, then I don't need to assume there is a third party.

First, I should consider a simpler explanation.

Kaito mentally reviewed the possibilities.

They could have changed the operation's priority.

They could be preparing a capture.

They could be using agents I don't know about.

And there could also be a third party.

He did not immediately choose a hypothesis.

Instead, he decided to design a test.

If there really is someone outside the government system observing me, a sufficiently specific alteration should produce a different reaction.

Kaito began introducing information deliberately designed to be interpreted in different ways.

Some identities appeared suspicious.

Others seemed completely innocent.

One appeared to possess analytical abilities.

Another seemed impulsive.

Another appeared to function as an intermediary.

Another contained enough similarities to Kaito to be considered suspicious, but enough differences to prevent direct identification.

He wasn't trying to deceive everyone with a single lie.

He was trying to create a system in which every observer reached a different interpretation.

Meanwhile, Igor began monitoring one of the identities.

—Let's see...

Kaito suspected that the supposed third party might be watching one of his identities.

That was why he made a small modification to all of them.

He did not expect Igor to react immediately.

He expected him to react only if one of the identities he was monitoring contained a specific characteristic.

Igor then conducted a test.

He created a situation using the excuse that it was a government operation.

Kaito observed the procedure.

The government is currently reducing its visible activity.

If this were a normal government action, there should be some correlation with the previous controls.

There isn't.

Then someone is trying to make me believe this comes from the government.

Kaito identified the identity involved.

I found you.

However, Igor had also obtained something.

He had confirmed that one of his manipulations had produced a specific reaction.

—Interesting.

Meanwhile, the government agencies continued accumulating enormous amounts of information.

But the information did not produce an identification.

Thousands of variables.

Thousands of profiles.

Thousands of connections.

And no definitive conclusion.

Kaito then began constructing a provisional profile of Igor.

He's far too competent to be an ordinary private investigator.

He observes before acting.

He hasn't attempted to approach directly.

He's operating outside government procedures.

Therefore, he probably works outside the official structure.

Kaito connected this with what he already knew.

Kim has used assassins before.

He also has criminal connections.

If Kim needed to eliminate me without directly compromising the government, using a third party would be a logical solution.

But I still don't know who he is.

He could be an assassin.

He could be an investigator.

He could be someone belonging to a criminal organization.

I shouldn't choose a single hypothesis yet.

At the same time, Igor was building his own model.

Somehow, he discovered that I was watching him.

He's perceptive.

He's young.

He's managed to evade the government for too long.

And now he knows there's someone outside the official operation.

Igor put away the binoculars.

—Then I'd better stop watching him from a distance.

Kaito's physical problems began to worsen.

The prolonged lack of food caused headaches, concentration difficulties, and perceptual disturbances.

At times, he began seeing movements that weren't there.

Even so, he continued working.

Kaito deliberately created a new identity and placed it in a position where Igor could detect it.

Igor found it.

He followed it.

But after a few minutes, he stopped.

—No.

He observed it again.

—It's too easy.

He realized there were two possibilities.

The identity could be a decoy.

But it could also be a decoy specifically designed to make him believe it was a decoy.

Igor smiled.

—Then we'll play it that way.

Meanwhile, Kaito tried to reconstruct Igor's method.

He considers high intelligence to be strong evidence.

Physical similarities are weak evidence.

When an identity accumulates too many inconsistencies, he abandons it.

But he tolerates small deviations.

He also verifies identities that don't completely fit any hypothesis.

Kaito had found several patterns.

But Igor began modifying them.

He introduced contradictory information.

He made seemingly absurd decisions.

He generated false data.

He even created situations where his own actions appeared to make no sense.

Kaito stopped.

I don't know what he's doing.

And, for the first time in a long while, he did not try to solve it immediately.

Instead, he began working with confidence levels.

Sixty percent probability that he's trying to provoke a reaction.

Twenty percent probability that it's a deception within a deception.

The rest remains undetermined.

Kaito changed his hypothesis.

If Kim used someone outside the government, he probably doesn't need to hand us over to the authorities.

And if his objective were simply to capture us for the government, there would be a more direct method.

Kim already tried to eliminate us before.

Therefore, the most likely objective remains our elimination.

Kaito began considering an extreme option.

Faking his own death.

But Igor was already observing something different.

The actions of one of the identities were beginning to lose precision.

The movements were slower.

Response times were longer.

Errors were increasing.

Igor watched for a few seconds.

—I know he's a kid, but his efficiency has dropped too much.

He observed his posture.

—His physical condition too.

His expression changed.

—Oh.

Igor smiled.

—His stomach is empty.

Meanwhile, the government began studying another variable.

—What does Kaito absolutely need?

—Food. Water. Money. Shelter.

—No.

The agent placed several photographs on the table.

—Riko.

Everyone fell silent.

—Have you observed how his behavior changes when she's involved?

—Yes.

—Then don't attack his resources alone. Attack the conditions that allow him to protect her.

Igor began using another method.

He wasn't trying to force Kaito to react immediately.

He wanted to keep him occupied.

Small problems.

Small interruptions.

Small decisions.

One identity had to move.

Another had to correct documents.

Another had to acquire resources.

Another had to avoid surveillance.

No single action was decisive.

Together, they consumed time.

The government reviewed the identities Kaito had abandoned.

—Look at them.

The agent pointed to several files.

—They all share a recurring characteristic.

—What is it?

—Kaito appears to be taking care of someone.

—Riko.

—Exactly.

Riko also began noticing that certain variables related to her were receiving increased surveillance.

So she decided to withdraw the money generated by her application.

The agents detected the movement.

They followed the trail.

They reached a computer placed next to an ATM.

But the money was no longer there.

Riko had already withdrawn it.

Ten million pesos.

It was now hidden inside a safe.

Riko returned home.

—Kaito... they're identifying me as your weakness.

—I know.

—We have ten million. We can leave.

Kaito shook his head.

—They won't let us escape simply by crossing a border. If all those agencies really are involved, changing countries won't solve the problem.

—Then what do we do?

—Continue.

Riko lowered her gaze.

—I wanted to use the money to build my organization.

Kaito looked at her.

—And now?

—Now I just want us to be able to live peacefully.

Kaito remained silent.

—I have an idea. But I don't know if it will work yet.

—Then develop it.

The government began modifying the economic environment.

The known identities began losing job opportunities.

Some prices increased.

Certain markets became less accessible.

But Kaito did not react as expected.

He had the ten million hidden.

He used only a limited amount.

He reduced his expenses.

He distributed his resources.

And avoided creating unnecessary patterns.

Until his body finally gave out.

Kaito collapsed unconscious.

Riko carried him to the bed.

—Rest.

She covered him.

—I’ll handle it.

Over the following days, Riko began pretending to be Kaito.

It wasn't a superficial imitation.

She knew his routines.

His way of speaking.

His pauses.

His methods.

His criteria for choosing an identity.

His work habits.

She even knew how he would react to certain types of pressure.

The government began comparing the identities again.

But there was a problem.

Riko could execute Kaito's method without sharing one of his main constraints.

She didn't need to protect Riko.

She was Riko.

For the first time, a fundamental variable in the model had disappeared.

The agents began losing confidence in their previous patterns.

—How is Kaito supposed to be handling this?

—I don't know.

Riko continued working.

However, her social behavior began to differ slightly.

Not enough to reveal her identity.

But enough to generate noise.

Igor decided to intervene.

He created false information suggesting that the government would reduce its search in a certain region.

Riko observed the information.

She didn't know whether it was true.

Therefore, she did not react directly.

She sent a decoy.

Igor observed the decoy.

Riko observed Igor observing it.

Igor realized he was being watched.

And decided not to react too strongly.

The information therefore became a chain of observations.

Neither of them could know for certain which part had been placed by the other.

Meanwhile, the government began establishing rules for evaluating every lead.

—Who produced this information?

—Who could manipulate it?

—Who benefits from us believing it?

—What hypothesis does it support?

—What hypothesis is it trying to destroy?

—Is it actually independent?

—Could it have been deliberately planted?

Riko continued pretending to be Kaito.

She maintained his jobs.

Maintained his identities.

Continued developing her application.

Took care of Kaito.

Even reproduced some of his habits.

But the government began searching for an even more specific variable.

—When does Kaito need Riko?

—When he needs to feed her.

—When he needs to take care of her?

—Yes.

—When he needs to give her water?

—Also.

—When he needs to teach her?

—Probably.

—Then those are the moments we need to pressure.

Igor reached the same variable through another route.

—Kaito appears to depend on someone.

He continued observing the patterns.

—The girl.

Igor had found the connection.

Meanwhile, Riko was constructing her own model of Igor.

According to Kaito, he's someone hired by Kim.

He's outside official procedures.

He's competent.

He's investigating us.

But he isn't acting with the speed I'd expect from someone whose only objective is to kill us.

Riko continued.

Then there are two possibilities.

He's enjoying the process.

Or he considers us useful.

If he were simply an assassin, he would have attempted an elimination much earlier.

But he's been studying us for a long time.

That means our survival could have value to him.

Riko connected the information with her father's letter.

Kim had connections with criminal organizations.

Then Igor could belong to an organization connected to Kim.

But if he were simply a subordinate, that wouldn't explain his autonomy.

Therefore, he could hold a high-ranking position.

Riko did not reach an absolute conclusion.

She turned it into a working hypothesis.

If he really wants to recruit us, we could use that.

The government began constructing artificial pressure scenarios.

The objective was no longer to catch them.

It was to discover which variables Kaito considered non-negotiable.

Riko noticed the change.

—They're attacking.

She stared at the data.

—They're not trying to destroy us. They're trying to provoke a reaction.

The scenario directly affected her relationship with Kaito.

Riko understood the objective.

—They want to discover what you're willing to sacrifice to protect me.

So she began making deliberate sacrifices.

Some decisions appeared irrational.

Others appeared excessively costly.

Some even seemed to contradict Kaito's interests.

The intention was simple.

If the agents attempted to infer a utility function from their decisions, they would obtain incompatible data.

Eventually, Kaito woke up.

—Gh... how much time has passed?

Riko immediately approached him and hugged him.

—A few days. Relax.

Kaito looked at her.

—Did you handle everything?

—Yes.

—The government?

—Yes.

—The jobs?

—Yes.

—The identities?

—Those too.

Kaito sighed.

—You're an idiot.

Riko frowned.

—What?

—You should have rested.

—And you need to eat. Seriously. You can't keep destroying yourself like this.

Kaito gently patted her head.

—I’ll be fine.

—You always say that.

—Now tell me everything that happened.

Meanwhile, the government was analyzing the data again.

—Kaito can sacrifice certain things.

—But not everything.

—Then build a utility model.

Another agent reviewed the records.

—Wait.

—What?

—There's something strange.

He placed several versions of Kaito's patterns side by side.

—Previously, his executions were extremely precise. Then they began showing errors. Then his precision recovered. And afterward, it degraded again.

The superior examined the data.

—What does that mean?

—His physical performance isn't constant.

Another agent intervened.

—And it coincides with the progressive reduction of his resources.

—Is he suffering from deprivation?

—It's possible.

—What if he's giving part of his food to Riko?

The superior remained silent.

—That would explain everything.

However, that information had not originally come from the government's analysis.

It had been introduced beforehand by Igor.

Igor had provided the hypothesis and allowed it to appear as an independent conclusion.

—Then reduce his temporal margin even further.

—Understood.

Kaito began preparing a plan to protect Riko.

Riko, meanwhile, was preparing another.

She didn't tell him.

She needed Kaito to remain unaware of her objective until the very last moment.

Igor observed Kaito's return.

—Hum...

He had detected an anomaly.

The efficiency had followed a strange sequence.

High.

Then slightly lower.

Then high again.

And then lower again.

Igor separated the records into four models.

He compared the physical details.

The posture.

Reaction times.

Errors.

The way they moved.

The level of precision.

One of the four models showed a deviation that was too large.

Igor stared at the data.

—No.

He compared them again.

—The third one wasn't Kaito.

He remembered Riko.

—It was her.

Igor had identified a substitution.

Now he needed to confirm which identity led back to them.

He selected one of the most compromised identities and began monitoring it continuously.

He waited.

Observed.

Followed its movements.

Until it finally reached a house.

Kaito knew that identity was being watched.

But he did not attempt to escape.

It was part of the plan.

Igor walked to the door and rang the bell.

—Who's there?

—Open the door, Mr. Daniel. I want to talk about your work.

Kaito opened it.

Igor was standing there.

A gun was pointed directly at him.

Kaito stepped backward.

Igor smiled.

—Well... you've probably already figured out that I'm not your boss.

Kaito remained silent.

—But you're not Daniel either.

Kaito looked at the gun.

Then at Igor.

—I surrender.

Igor raised an eyebrow.

—What?

—You can do whatever you want.

Riko appeared behind him.

—No.

Igor looked at her.

—Can you ask your little sister not to interfere?

Riko did not back down.

—I know you don't want to kill us.

Igor remained silent.

—You wouldn't have studied us for this long if you only wanted to shoot us.

—Continue.

—You want to recruit us.

Kaito turned his head.

—Riko?

Igor finally smiled.

—Correct.

He lowered the gun slightly.

—You're the one who replaced the boy during those days.

Riko did not answer.

—I don't want to kill you. I was ordered to, but now I have better plans.

Igor put the gun away.

—You've managed to evade the government for almost a year. That makes you far too useful to waste.

Kaito looked at him.

—So you want to keep us with you.

—I want you to work for me.

—We don't have a choice, do we?

—No.

Kaito looked at Riko.

Then back at Igor.

—Then fine.

Igor smiled.

—That easy?

—No.

Kaito slightly raised his gaze.

—Only if you cover for us.

Igor understood the condition.

—If you two are discovered, I'll have problems too.

—Then we have a common interest.

Igor extended his hand.

—Deal.

The two children were taken from the location.

Igor contacted some of his subordinates.

Then he returned to Kim.

He placed several suitcases in front of him.

Inside were bloody remains and enough material to construct a scene that appeared to prove Kaito and Riko had been eliminated.

Kim examined the contents.

—Good work.

He handed Igor the suitcases containing the money.

—Here's your payment.

Igor took the money.

—It's a pleasure doing business with you, Kim.

—Yes, yes. Now get out.

Igor returned to his organization.

The next scene showed several gang members transporting containers filled with blood and fabricated remains, while Kaito and Riko remained alive in another facility.

Igor entered his office.

—What does he do now?

One of his subordinates replied:

—Mr. Igor has a protocol.

—What protocol?

—He erases the cases he handles from his memory.

Igor remained silent.

—Remember that he works illegally. If any authority interrogates him, he won't be able to reveal information he genuinely doesn't remember.

—And why does he do that?

—Because he considers memory a vulnerability.

Igor sat down in front of the machine.

The procedure began.

His memory of the Kaito and Riko case was erased.

The last image that remained in his mind was that of an albino boy staring at him without fear.

Then it disappeared.

End of the government arch.