3rd Program Plan

By SoundStorm



Context:

Every participant possesses a special ability. Akira Shiroyanagi's ability becomes whatever the other person believes it to be (within a variety of constraints that prevent him from having insane powers). Consequently, his effectiveness depends on his capacity to manipulate others' perceptions of what he can do. However, at this point, he has told no one except Yuri about the truth of his ability.

The plan takes place during the Third Program, in which participants inhabit a large natural landscape containing forests, mountains, and settlements established by the participants themselves.

Three major factions have emerged:

- **Green Team:** A generally benevolent faction that accepts anyone wishing to join. This is Akira's team.
- **Blue Team:** A neutral faction that avoids participating in the principal conflict.
- **Red Team:** A hostile faction that accepts only the strongest participants and enslaves others. Its members include Akira's enemies, such as Kuro and Oogami.

During the program, the observer Mion introduces a war game called King Hunting, pitting the Green Team against the Red Team.

The game revolves around capturing opposing terminals and occupying five towers to accumulate MP (Mion Points). These points can be exchanged for advantages such as locating opponents, sealing their abilities, or reviving eliminated terminals.

When a participant's terminal is eliminated, their ability is sealed by their handcuffs. The ultimate objective is to eliminate the opposing team's King's terminal, immediately securing victory. Everyone on the losing team dies.

Phase 1: Pre-War Prep


MION GAVE US SEVEN DAYS' GRACE.
RATTLE
KONPEITO
STOMP
WHAT I DO IN THESE SEVEN DAYS
WILL DECIDE THIS GAME.

Akira began constructing his plan a week before King Hunting commenced. His preparations involved intelligence gathering, deliberate manipulation of other participants, battlefield reconnaissance, and the creation of several contingencies.

1. Intelligence gathering and preserving an enemy spy

Akira first met with Ringo, whose ability allowed her to identify other participants' abilities. Having previously visited the Red Team's base, Ringo provided Akira with information about its members' abilities. She also investigated the Green Team, although Akira specifically exempted certain veteran members from her examination.

This was because Akira had already identified Momoko as a Red Team spy within the Green Team, but rather than exposing her, he wanted her to remain undetected so that the Red Team would continue relying on her intelligence. This decision would later allow him to manipulate Kuro's entire battle strategy.

Ringo's intelligence also provided Akira with information about Kuro's personal ambition to establish a kingdom, along with the abilities of opponents he would eventually confront.

2. Testing his shapeshifting ability

While travelling through the forest with Yuri to negotiate with the Blue Team, Akira tested his ability to shapeshift. This was preparation for infiltrating the Red Team under a stolen identity and planting leading information about his own ability.

3. Manipulating Kirisaki into joining the war

Akira also reasoned that Kirisaki was probably with the Blue Team. Kirisaki had not appeared among the Green Team, and Ringo had not identified anyone resembling him among the Red Team. This gave Akira an additional reason to seek out the Blue Team.

When he encountered Kirisaki, Akira deliberately irritated him by ignoring and dismissing him. Knowing Kirisaki's desire for a rematch, Akira intended to provoke him into participating in King Hunting, thereby creating an opportunity to exploit that desire later.

4. Identifying the battlefield in advance

Akira narrowed the possible King Hunting battlefields down to three locations based on their suitability. During the Green Team's daily resource-gathering expeditions, he visited each location until he discovered that the density of cameras at one of the locations was significantly greater, allowing him to deduce the intended battlefield before the game began. He then made sure to visualise the fastest paths between the towers, as this information would be vital later on.

5. Preparing Yuri to fight Oogami

Akira anticipated that Yuri would eventually confront Oogami, one of the Red Team's most formidable fighters. He therefore taught her a specific hit-and-run fighting technique designed to improve her performance against him. This preparation would later become important when the Green Team attempted to eliminate the Red King.

6. Preparing the tenfold punch

Akira also trained to improve his punching technique. Alongside this, he established a nonverbal signal with Yuri that would instruct her to perceive his ability as a punch with ten times the normal power. Together, the physical training and the signal would allow him to execute a decisive attack at a carefully selected moment.

7. Infiltrating the Red Team and manufacturing a false theory

After a Red Team member was discovered, Akira used his previously tested shapeshifting ability to impersonate him and infiltrate the enemy faction. His objective was not simply to collect information, but also to control what the Red Team believed about his ability.

While disguised, he relayed purported intelligence from the Red Team's spy, Momoko. The report concerned an earlier encounter in which Akira had seemingly survived a ghoul's attack that should have struck him, before immediately retaliating with a cannon blast.

Earlier, Akira had deliberately lured a ghoul into a blind spot where Kuro could not observe what happened before attacking it, which caused suspicion that Kuro had not yet forgotten. By now emphasising both the apparent impossibility of Akira dodging the attack and his subsequent use of the cannon, Akira encouraged the Red Team to conclude that he possessed multiple abilities.

Kuro went further, hypothesising that Akira had used teleportation to evade the ghoul. This was precisely the sort of idea Akira wanted to establish, as it created a foundation upon which he could later convince different enemies that he possessed whichever ability would be most advantageous in their particular confrontation.

8. Establishing an alliance with Rin

Around this period, Akira likely made contact with Rin, who was secretly double-crossing the Red Team. He arranged a clandestine meeting with her during King Hunting, at which they would negotiate how they could assist one another. This would later provide Akira with an alternative means of recruiting an ally if Yuri became unavailable.

9. Constructing a concealed protective vest

Akira secretly collected books, blood packs, and other materials from the Green Team's camp. Using these, he constructed a protective vest to wear beneath his clothing.

The vest would later serve two purposes: protecting him during a dangerous confrontation and producing a misleading visual impression that supported another deception.

10. Concealing the Green King's identity

Finally, Akira persuaded Shirisagi to appoint him as the Green King's terminal holder. This was remarkable because Shirisagi was the Green Team's leader and its most trusted member, making him the obvious candidate for King.

Akira also ensured that the change remained secret, even from the other Green Team members. Shirisagi continued to receive protection at the Green Team's base as though he were the King, meaning the Red Team would pursue a false win condition without knowing that the actual King was Akira himself.

Phase 2: Allowing Kuro's Plan to Succeed



11. Predicting the Oogami trap

When King Hunting began, the Green Team divided into groups to capture multiple towers. Akira anticipated that Oogami, despite being the Red King, would be deployed to attack Asuka's group at one of these towers.

He also predicted the consequences. Oogami's overwhelming assault would cause the other Green Team groups to abandon their original objectives and rush to save their comrades, hoping to defeat the Red King in the process. However, Akira recognised that this was itself a trap, as Kuro would position Red Team members along the routes the Green Team's reinforcements were likely to take, enabling them to ambush the rescuers.

Rather than warning his teammates, Akira deliberately allowed the entire sequence to unfold. His intention was to let Kuro's strategy appear successful, reinforcing Kuro's confidence in his own predictions and encouraging him to commit further resources to the trap.

12. Accounting for Yuri's likely disobedience

Akira also anticipated that Yuri would probably abandon his instructions and rush to assist Asuka's group. Rather than depending on her obedience, he incorporated this possibility into his strategy and had already prepared another means of recruiting an ally for the next stage.

This meant that Yuri's departure would not prevent his plan from progressing. Instead, it would place her on the battlefield against Oogami, for which Akira had specifically trained her using the hit-and-run technique.

Phase 3: Gaining Numbers Advantage



With Kuro's trap unfolding, Akira began removing the Red Team members who might interfere with his eventual confrontation with Kuro or the assault on Oogami.

13. Activating his alliance with Rin

Akira attended the secret meeting arranged with Rin. They reached an agreement under which Rin would:

- Contact her supposed teammate Rindou, informing him of Akira's location and claiming that Akira was already being attacked, making him an ideal target for an ambush.
- Attack and eliminate Renka.

In exchange, Akira promised that, should the Green Team win, he would inform Mion that Rin had been acting as a Green Team spy, allowing her to be counted as part of the winning team and survive.

This arrangement enabled Akira to manipulate Rindou's movements while arranging Renka's elimination.

14. Turning Kirisaki from an opponent into an ally

At approximately the same time, Akira contacted Kirisaki and offered him the one-on-one battle he had been seeking. Because of Akira's earlier provocations, Kirisaki eagerly accepted and rushed to his location.

Akira then defended himself and prolonged the confrontation until Rindou arrived, having been lured there through Rin's report. Akira predicted that Kirisaki would temporarily ally with him against this new threat, and had already prepared a tactic to defeat Rindou, which he quickly explained to Kirisaki.

The tactic involved three stages:

1. Kirisaki would launch three attacks against Rindou.
2. Akira would then fire his cannon from a blind spot. Rindou would interpret this as the culmination of their strategy and believe that countering it meant he had won.
3. However, the cannon blast would scatter wooden fragments from the surrounding trees. Kirisaki would use his ability to transform these falling shards into daggers, catching Rindou off guard and defeating him.

The tactic succeeded, after which Akira reasoned that Kirisaki could be persuaded to postpone their duel, since neither was in a suitable condition to continue fighting. This allowed Akira to convert Kirisaki into a temporary ally and direct him towards Oogami.

Akira also contacted Kumagiri through his terminal, instructing him to join Yuri and Kirisaki in confronting the Red King. Thus, his earlier manipulation of Kirisaki had ultimately produced an additional combatant against Oogami.

15. Redirecting Katsuya towards Asuka

After defeating Rindou, Akira collected his sword and travelled to the shortest route connecting Gold Tower with Asuka's position. He anticipated that Katsuya's group would encounter Kamui there and be defeated.

When Akira arrived, Katsuya was close to abandoning hope. Akira motivated him by dramatically entrusting him with the responsibility of saving Asuka and the Green Team.

He emphasised that Akira himself intended to progress beyond the Third Program, whereas Katsuya would remain there. Therefore, the Green Team needed Katsuya to become its saviour.

This appeal succeeded, and Katsuya departed to rescue Asuka's group, allowing Akira to confront Kamui alone. The decision also ensured that Katsuya could evacuate injured teammates, freeing Yuri to concentrate on fighting Oogami.

16. Manipulating Kamui into granting him Rindou's ability

Kamui had already received the misleading intelligence Akira planted during his infiltration of the Red Team. Consequently, he suspected that Akira possessed multiple abilities, which Akira now deliberately reinforced.

Firstly, his insistence that Katsuya leave appeared suspicious to Kamui. Kamui interpreted it as an attempt to prevent Katsuya from witnessing Akira use another ability.

Secondly, Akira threw a rock at Kamui rather than immediately firing his cannon. Although this allowed Akira to test Kamui's ability, it also encouraged Kamui to believe that Akira was uncertain whether his cannon would currently activate. To Kamui, this suggested that Akira's ability alternated between several different powers.

Finally, Akira revealed Rindou's distinctive sword, which he had collected after their earlier battle. Kamui immediately recognised it.

Having already accepted the premise that Akira possessed multiple abilities, Kamui now inferred that Akira's power must involve copying other participants' abilities. He therefore internally concluded that Akira currently possessed Rindou's ability.

Akira recognised exactly what Kamui was thinking and responded with a simple confirmation: **"Bullseye."**

Because Akira's true ability was determined by his opponent's perception, Kamui's belief enabled Akira to use Rindou's power. Akira launched an invisible slash, bypassing Kamui's ability to disintegrate nearby objects.

This was one of the few effective methods of defeating Kamui, and Akira had been aware of this vulnerability since receiving Ringo's intelligence.

Defeating Kamui also prevented him from reaching Gold Tower and allowing the Red Team to accumulate 30 MP. That restriction was essential, as Akira could not yet afford to let the Red Team purchase a terminal revival or an ability seal, either of which might disrupt the remaining stages of his plan.

Phase 4: Exploiting Kuro's False Victory



17. The assassination of the wrong King

Meanwhile, Momoko proceeded with Kuro's instructions to eliminate Shirisagi. Because Akira had deliberately refrained from exposing her during his initial intelligence gathering, Momoko remained an unsuspected spy.

Kuro therefore continued to rely on her and built his battle plan around the expectation that she would eliminate the Green King.

However, Shirisagi was not the King, as Akira had secretly assumed that position before the war began. Consequently, even when Momoko successfully eliminated Shirisagi's terminal, the Green Team did not lose, invalidating Kuro's core wincon.

More importantly, the apparent success of the Oogami trap, combined with Momoko's undetected infiltration, had convinced Kuro that his strategy was progressing as intended. Akira exploited this confidence to conceal two simultaneous operations.

18. The first concealed operation: Overwhelming Oogami

The first operation involved concentrating Green Team combatants against Oogami, the actual Red King. Akira had arranged this through several interconnected preparations:

- **Yuri:** Akira anticipated that she would disobey him and attempt to rescue Asuka. Because he had allowed Oogami's attack to occur, this naturally placed her against Oogami. Her earlier hit-and-run training made her particularly effective in this confrontation.
- **Katsuya:** Akira's intervention against Kamui and subsequent persuasion sent Katsuya to rescue Asuka's group. By evacuating the injured, Katsuya enabled Yuri to focus on fighting.
- **Kumagiri:** Akira had contacted him through his terminal and instructed him to join the battle.
- **Kirisaki:** Akira's earlier provocations, the arranged duel, and their temporary alliance against Rindou enabled him to redirect Kirisaki towards Oogami.

Together, these developments created substantial pressure on the Red King, as eliminating Oogami would immediately secure victory for the Green Team.

19. The second concealed operation: Isolating Kuro

The second operation involved Akira himself.

Kuro believed that Shirisagi was the Green King and that the remaining Green Team members were occupied by his Oogami trap. He therefore assumed that

Momoko could eliminate Shirisagi while the rest of the Green Team was distracted, securing victory regardless of Akira's movements.

This caused Kuro to loosen his surveillance of Akira and the other Green Team members. Akira exploited that opportunity by keeping one member of Katsuya's group inside Gold Tower, allowing the Green Team to accumulate enough MP to purchase the opponent-tracking service. He then used that service to locate Kuro.

At the same time, the reduced surveillance allowed Akira to facilitate the elimination of several Red Team members who might otherwise have interfered:

- **Renka**, through Rin's agreement.
- **Rindou**, through his coordinated tactic with Kirisaki.
- **Kamui**, through the carefully constructed ability-copying deception.

These eliminations reduced the number of opponents who could reinforce Kuro or Oogami, or capture towers to generate additional MP.

20. Allowing Kuro to discover the apparent plan

After locating Kuro, Akira revealed himself. By this point, Kuro had discovered that eliminating Shirisagi had not ended the game, and he could now reconstruct what appeared to be Akira's entire strategy.

Akira had deliberately allowed the Oogami trap to succeed, preserved Momoko's cover, and secretly replaced Shirisagi as the Green King. While Kuro committed himself to eliminating the wrong King, Akira had eliminated interfering Red Team members, concentrated reinforcements against Oogami, and tracked Kuro down.

The apparent objective was for Akira to personally confront Kuro and stall him long enough for the Green Team's reinforcements to eliminate Oogami.

Kuro believed that he had finally uncovered the full extent of Akira's intentions, but this apparent revelation was itself another layer of Akira's plan.

Phase 5: The Counter Counter Counterplan



21. Kuro's first countermeasure: The slave ambush

Kuro had made extensive preparations of his own. Having seemingly understood Akira's strategy, he was confident that he could defeat it.

Firstly, Kuro believed Akira had underestimated Oogami's combat capabilities. He was convinced that Oogami could withstand the reinforcements Akira had assembled.

Secondly, Kuro had constructed a multilayered trap specifically designed to defeat Akira during their confrontation.

The first layer consisted of enslaved participants concealed throughout the surrounding forest. As Akira approached, these participants ambushed him with their abilities. Akira responded by firing his cannon towards their feet, attempting to repel them without killing them, since they were innocent people being controlled against their will.

22. Kuro's second countermeasure: Exploiting Akira's stalling

Kuro predicted that Akira would attempt to stall for time through conversation, which Akira proceeded to do.

While defending himself against the enslaved participants, he began mocking Kuro's ambition to establish a kingdom, using private information originally obtained from Ringo. Akira suggested that Kuro's arrogance had caused him to overlook the spy within his own team.

He also emphasised two further points:

- Kuro still did not understand precisely how Akira could use multiple abilities.
- Kuro had remained unaware of the full extent of Shirisagi's ability until recently.

These remarks were important because they deliberately reintroduced information Akira would need Kuro to remember later. However, Kuro interpreted the conversation as an obvious attempt to waste time.

23. Kuro's third countermeasure: Weaponising teleportation

Upon hearing Akira mention his ambition to establish a kingdom, Kuro temporarily stopped attacking and appeared to consider his words. He then revealed that he had deliberately allowed Akira this respite.

Kuro knew Akira was stalling, and he was confident that Oogami would survive the ongoing battle. His apparent willingness to listen had served another purpose.

Kuro's ability, Loan Shark, allowed him to forcibly retrieve debts owed to him. By deliberately granting Akira a period of rest, Kuro had created a debt that he could reclaim.

He activated his ability, immobilising one of Akira's legs for an equivalent duration while directing the enslaved participants to attack.

This created the conditions for the final layer of Kuro's trap.

From the misleading intelligence planted during Akira's infiltration, Kuro believed Akira possessed teleportation. Akira had also reminded him of his supposed multiple abilities during their conversation.

Kuro therefore predicted that Akira, unable to escape normally, would teleport behind him to launch a counterattack. He had positioned additional enslaved participants in the bushes surrounding him, with instructions to seize Akira immediately upon his arrival.

24. The apparent defeat of Akira

The sequence unfolded exactly as Kuro predicted. Akira teleported behind him and was immediately restrained by the concealed participants.

Kuro then produced a knife he had prepared for this moment and stabbed Akira in the abdomen. Believing Akira to be defenceless, Kuro gloated over his apparent victory.

From Kuro's perspective, he had successfully countered every element of Akira's strategy. He had recognised the attempted stalling, exploited it through Loan Shark, anticipated the use of teleportation, and prepared an ambush at Akira's predicted destination. Kuro believed he had outsmarted Akira at every stage.

However, Akira remained unexpectedly composed despite the apparent injury. He questioned which of them had truly been controlling the confrontation, and Kuro questioned him back. Akira then declared:

"As I planned, here we are, face to face, negotiating."

As Kuro prepared to attack again, this statement immediately reminded him of Shirisagi's ability.

Shirisagi could initiate a peaceful negotiation in which neither participant could harm the other. Once the negotiation broke down, he could unleash the

accumulated power of attacks made during the negotiation against his opponent.

Several pieces of information now converged in Kuro's mind:

1. He had been led to believe that Akira possessed multiple abilities.
2. Akira had deliberately reminded him of this during their conversation.
3. Akira had also reminded him of Shirisagi's ability.
4. Akira had explicitly described their confrontation as a negotiation.
5. Akira appeared remarkably unaffected by what Kuro believed was a serious injury.

Kuro therefore concluded that Akira must currently be using Shirisagi's negotiation ability, which was exactly what Akira wanted.

25. Turning Kuro's certainty against him

Because Akira's true ability depended on what his opponent believed, Kuro's conclusion enabled Akira to use Shirisagi's power.

Akira extended his palm towards Kuro and activated the negotiation breakdown, inflicting the accumulated stabbing damage upon him and defeating him.

The explanation for Akira's apparent resistance to the earlier attack was not that he had already been using Shirisagi's ability. It was the protective vest containing blood packs that he had secretly constructed before King Hunting began.

The vest protected him and created the misleading impression of an injury he could inexplicably withstand. That impression, combined with Akira's earlier manipulation of Kuro's beliefs, induced Kuro to grant him precisely the ability necessary to win.

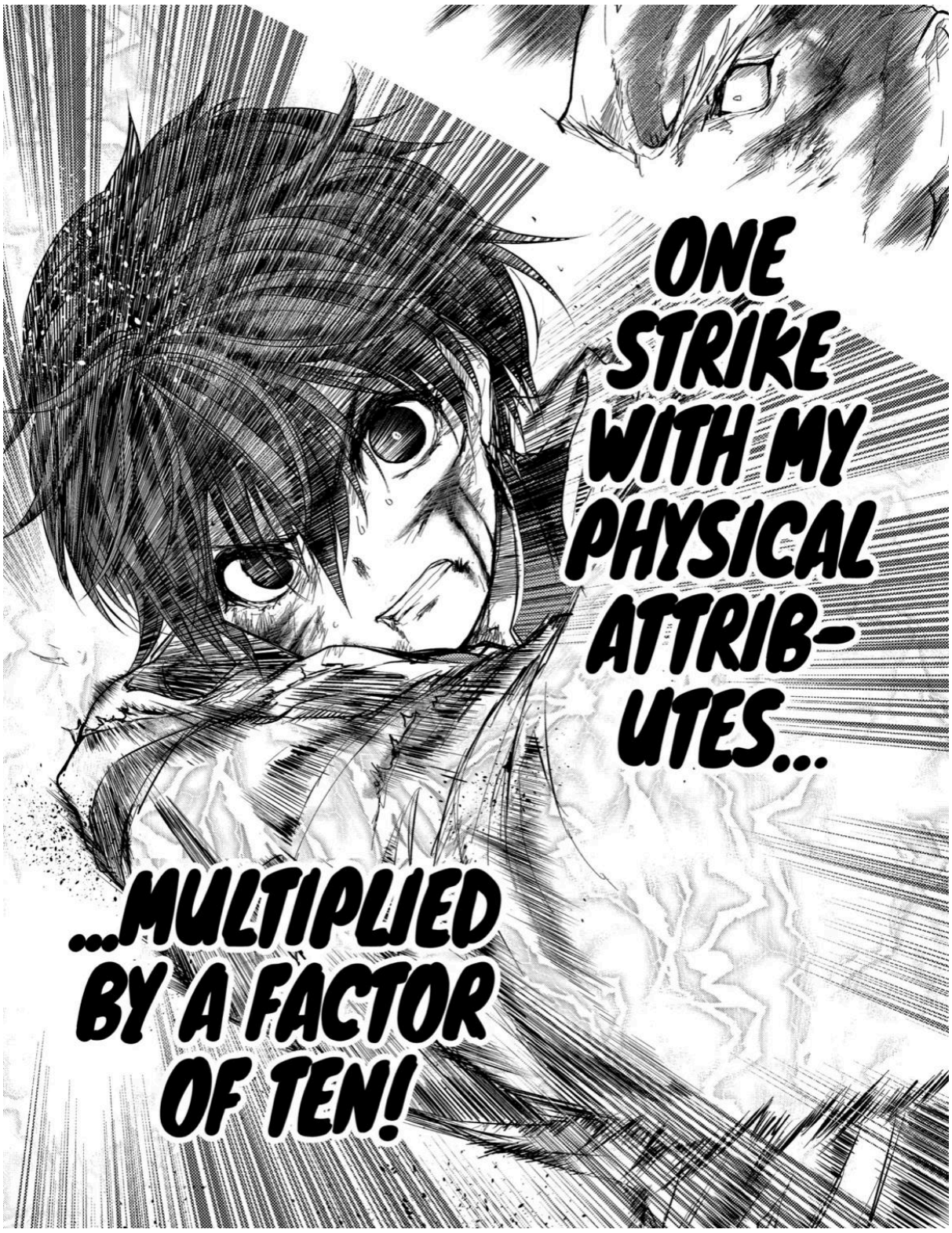
The most impressive aspect of this confrontation is the depth of the strategic interaction:

1. **Kuro's original plan:** Use Oogami's offensive to distract the Green Team while Momoko eliminates its King.
2. **Akira's counterplan:** Allow the offensive and assassination attempt to proceed, exploit the false King's identity, eliminate interfering opponents, concentrate forces against Oogami, and personally stall Kuro.

3. **Kuro's counter-counterplan:** Anticipate Akira's attempt to stall, exploit his apparent teleportation, and trap him using Loan Shark and concealed slaves.
4. **Akira's counter-counter-counterplan:** Anticipate Kuro's countermeasures and deliberately allow them to unfold, using the resulting confrontation to convince Kuro that he possesses Shirisagi's ability.

In other words, Akira's apparent failure was itself part of the mechanism through which he achieved victory. He had prepared not merely to overcome Kuro's initial strategy, but to exploit the countermeasures Kuro would develop after believing he had understood Akira's intentions.

Phase 6: The Final Contingency



26. Securing victory against Oogami

Despite defeating Kuro, Akira had not yet won King Hunting, as Oogami, the Red King, remained active. Akira also recognised that the numerical advantage of his

allies did not guarantee their victory against Oogami's overwhelming combat capabilities.

Furthermore, Kuro had one final contingency. Rather than being defeated as quickly as he appeared, Kuro had feigned his condition until Akira left.

He then used 50 MP, accumulated by enslaved participants he had dispatched to other towers, to seal Yuri's ability. This threatened to undermine the Green Team's offensive against Oogami.

However, Akira had also prepared for the possibility of such interference. He spent 1 MP to broadcast his voice throughout the forest, allowing him to negotiate directly with Oogami.

Akira offered to confront Oogami personally in a fair fight, rather than continuing to hide and attack him indirectly. He also exploited Kuro's defeat as leverage, arguing that if Oogami refused, Akira could simply continue exploiting his strategic advantage, rendering Kuro's defeat meaningless.

Oogami accepted the challenge and ceased attacking Yuri, giving Akira time to reach him. When Oogami moved to attack, Akira executed the final preparation he had established long before King Hunting began.

Using the nonverbal signal arranged with Yuri, he caused her to perceive his ability as a punch with ten times its normal power. Combined with his earlier physical training, this enabled him to deliver a perfectly executed tenfold punch.

The attack defeated Oogami in a single strike, eliminating the Red King and securing victory for the Green Team.