

MUTUALITY

CHAPTER

VIII

ICHIRO OHKOUCHI × CLAMP

short story

NEWLY WRITTEN SHORT STORY

CODE GEASS LELOUCH OF THE REBELLION STORY DRAFT — A NEWLY WRITTEN SCENARIO
WOVEN TOGETHER BY OHKOUCHI ICHIRO AND INSPIRED BY CLAMP ILLUSTRATIONS

: C L A M P
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Baghdad.

A buffer zone, caught in the cracks of conflict between Britannia, the United Federation of Nations, and the E.U.

We have been hiding out in this city for three days since our return from the World of C.

“A scenario is indispensable.”

That’s how Lelouch put it.

Destroy the world, create the world.

To bring an end to the wars, we will need world governance according to the United Federation of Nations, a post-war leadership system, and the removal of those that would be obstacles, namely Schneizel and Damocles. We will also need to reform Britannia’s system of organization.

In tackling these problems one by one, or two at once...

A single slip of the finger would mean, in that instant, GAME OVER.

And so —

I enter a small café; the only people inside are the owner and two customers.

A fan on the ceiling gently circulates the room’s tepid air.

There is no light. Faint rays filter in from outside, illuminating floating particles of dust and casting a languid feel over the place.

“Do you know, Suzaku”

The customer seated at the counter — C.C. — had spoken.

“What the name of this city means?”

“I do not. But you’ll enlighten me, won’t you?”

“Mm. We’re comrades, after all.”

C.C. nibbles at her pizza and smiles faintly.

“It means ‘a gift from God’ in Persian ... quite fitting, don’t you think? The perfect place for the start of a legend.”

At the table in the back sits one more customer — Lelouch, fixated on a chessboard.

In his hand is the black king. He twirls it between his fingers.

Looks like the game’s outcome can’t be decided by the next move.

“Ah, Suzaku,” says Lelouch, still fixated on the chess board.

The black and white pieces on the board are mingled in a complex arrangement; it's not clear which side has the advantage.

It probably represents the world. How far along are we in Lelouch's scenario?

"It's almost as if we've gone back to the old days, when all we thought about was blotting out our presence, disguising ourselves, and freedom ... no, maybe even before those days."

Lelouch takes his eyes off the board and looks up at me.

"Nunnally isn't here."

As he says that, just for a moment, I see him as the stubborn prince I spent my days with in the storehouse of the Kururugi Shrine.

The three of us often played games together.

Listened to the radio.

Sang songs.

Laughed.

Fought.

We had such fun times.

Gentle times.

But we can never go back.

Clink.

A sound from behind me.

C.C., sitting at the counter, had tapped her faceted glass.

Her eyes seem to say — 'I'm here, aren't I?'

Right.

We did not only suffer loss.

We hold things now that we did not hold back then.

"Lelouch. You have your Geass now. You have much greater knowledge and experience than you did before ... people's lives now depend upon you."

I look into Lelouch's eyes.

There, I see Kururugi Suzaku being reflected back at me.

I am the same; many lives depend upon me as well.

The desire to help, to save; I held onto those feelings as I killed so many. I've stolen so many lives to get to this point.



“Lives ... it’s happening tomorrow, huh.”

“That’s right, Lelouch. We’ve stolen the tomorrows of many people, and that’s why...”

The rest of my words are cut off by Lelouch’s gesture — he touches his right hand to his left elbow.

It’s from a code we decided on back when we were children. It means “I understand.”

Lelouch slowly closes his eyes.

I wonder who he’s thinking about.

Nunnally, as she vanished in FLEIJA’s light?

Perhaps his parents, buried by his own hand.

Shirley. Euphie. Or maybe his elder brother...

“Ahh ... that’s right, Suzaku,” Lelouch mutters.

He twirls the black king around and places it on the board.

Ka-ching.

The sound of resolution.

“Zero Requiem ... that is the name of the final chapter.”

Zero Requiem.

As I explain the details to Suzaku, he looks at me for a moment, so I nod.

I wonder if he's prepared himself.

For his fate, and for mine.

I begin to change into the newly ordered emperor's clothes.

Arms through the sleeves, mantle draped on, body enveloped in white.

Not bad.

An appropriate costume for Britannia's last emperor, a name that will go down as the worst in history. This new white will soon glisten with fresh blood.

Next, the King's sword, custom-made.

Specifically designed to match these burial clothes.

I take the sword in hand and stride into the emperor's throne room.

There, changed into a knight's uniform — white, just like mine — stands Suzaku.

Knight of Zero ... Suzaku's new title, soon to become just Zero.

I pull the sword out of its scabbard so that I can show it to him. The blade glimmers; it seems to hold an icy chill.

“What do you think, Suzaku?”

That is all I ask. The proper question would be ‘Can you kill me with this sword?’ but there's no need for unnecessary words between us.

Suzaku does not speak. He just kneels and touches the sword.

“Suzaku. I am the Emperor and you are a Knight, but that's just for the sake of form. There's no need for you to kneel before me.”

“I am not on my knees because you are the Emperor. I am on my knees to pay respect to your resolve.”

I have made my choice — I know I did not err in choosing Suzaku as the new Zero, the one to kill me.

“Suzaku. You can kill me, right?”

“Yes. With this sword, I will kill both of you and me at the same time.”

“Yes. Lelouch vi Britannia and Kururugi Suzaku will vanish from the world in the same moment. They cannot be allowed to exist.”

“... Lelouch, is there no other way?”



“None,” I say instantly.

There may be other options.

I may have chosen a different method if I were more like Schneizel ... but for me, this is the only way. My heart and my justice will not allow me to accept any other plan.

Suzaku stands up and takes the sword from my hands.

“With this, we’ll become zero.”

“Yes, Suzaku. We’ll become nothing.”

“And because of that, things can start anew?”

“Exactly.” I sheathe the sword and hand it to Suzaku. “I’m counting on you, Suzaku.”

Suzaku meets my gaze as he takes hold of the sword.

“Yes, your majesty!”

The same words Britannian nationals use in front of their emperor; vexatious words that forcibly classify the people and extort respect.

Only, Suzaku wasn’t using them as words of honor.

As proof, he takes the sword with one hand — not respectfully with two hands as he should when being bestowed an object by a superior, but rather as an equal.

And so this ‘Yes, your majesty!’ held a completely different meaning for the two of us.

Do not forget the promise.

You will kill me.

You will live on and atone.

The words carried in them our unspoken vows, our confirmation of sin and punishment.

“Let’s go, Lelouch. C.C. is waiting.”

“Let her wait. Men need time to change their clothes.”

Suzaku grins a little at my joke. “You’ve always been the type that couldn’t settle down without folding the clothes you’ve just taken off.”

“It’s just a habit out of folding Nunnally’s clothes.”

“Using Nunnally as an excuse again? What a character.”

“Better than being crude and ill-mannered.”

We continue to crack jokes at each other as we leave the throne room.

It’s okay.

We can laugh with each other.

We were able to change.

We were able to understand each other.

Truly.

Deeply.

And that’s why.

That’s why I think Suzaku can do it.

Because he is my one, and only, friend.