

Cast Party 2016



Told by Ryusui Seiryoin, Ryosuke Akizuki, Agent Kunugi, and Tanya

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The BBB website

<http://thebbb.net/>

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0. Cast Party 2016 with a Special Guest



Ryusui Seiryoin: Hello, everyone. I'm Ryusui Seiryoin, the chief editor of The BBB. We launched The BBB: Breakthrough Bandwagon Books in December 2012. Thanks to valuable supports from YOU, our dear readers, we have reached the 4th anniversary. At our 1st anniversary in 2013 and the 2nd anniversary in 2014, we held a real, offline gathering event named "Cast Party with YOU", in which our authors and readers mingled with each other. But, the number of people who can attend an offline Cast Party is disappointingly limited. So, last year we tentatively recorded "Cast Party 2015" as an eBook content and released it. It was a free eBook. Additionally, we uploaded the recording onto YouTube. As a result, more people read or listened to it than they attended the offline gathering events in the past. I think we accomplished our mission to a certain extent. At the end of "Cast Party 2015", I said, "Can we hold a real Cast Party in 2016?" Even so, since we have a lot of things to talk about this year, we have decided to record this gathering as an eBook content again, so that more people get to share this experience. Same as last year, this recording will be uploaded onto YouTube at a later date. And I have invited the familiar two Casts: Agent Kunugi as the chief proofreader, and Tanya as the chief designer.

Agent Kunugi: Hello, dear readers. We, at The BBB, have published so many eBooks in 2016. I have always been busy proofreading from the beginning of 2016 to the end.

Ryusui: I completely agree with you. Still, Mr. Kunugi, you are not the proofreader for the "Towerld" series but the agent, correct?

Kunugi: Correct. As for “Towerld”, all I do is just introduce the manuscripts of the mysterious author “Doctor Deicide”. And then, personally though, one of my important events in 2016 was shaving my head into skinhead.

Tanya: It matches you very well. Looks lovely.

Ryusui: Have you considered shaving your head completely for a long time? Or, was it related to this year’s activities of The BBB? I mean, we hit the crucial milestone when the “Towerld” series reached Level 0010 and its bind-up version was released as one voluminous eBook. Was it related to your skinhead?

Kunugi: Nothing in particular. I’m not the author, but just an agent.

Ryusui: Alright. Then, Tanya, can you introduce yourself?

Tanya: This year I had a good opportunity to directly observe lifestyles of young kids ranging from elementary school to high school and perspectives of the latest trends or something because I participated in volunteering for museums and worked as a private tutor. In addition, since I have Gardie (doglike monster), my partner in Pokémon Go, I have managed to deal with my homebody nature much better.

Ryusui: In addition to these three familiar members, we have invited a special guest this year. This is the author, Mr. Ryosuke Akizuki.

Ryosuke Akizuki: Hello, everyone. I’m Akizuki. At first, let me make this statement as a precaution. My pronunciation is very Japanesque, and I’m not confident about my ability to convey my messages in English. Please be tolerant of that. For The BBB, I wrote “The Gifted”, a mystery fiction series, and “The Sifted”, a series featuring restaurant guides and reviews. I’m an author incognito, whose identity is secret, so I cannot show my face to the public. But because this gathering will be released only via the recorded footage, I can join this without worrying about the identity revelation.

Ryusui: Although Mr. Akizuki is an author incognito, you joined the real Cast Parties in 2013 and 2014. What brought you to them?

Akizuki: Umm, I’m not sure. (Laughter)

Ryusui: I guess that it is alright for you, if there are not a large number of people in the party.

Akizuki: I cannot accept to be photographed, though. Because I don’t want to act in a flamboyant manner, but in a humble way. I could join the Cast Parties in 2013 and 2014 because it was not open to the public and the people who didn’t want to be photographed were left alone.

Ryusui: Did you think you wanted to try to mingle directly with the readers? Or, you had no choice but to join it because you were forced by the chief editor? (Laughter)

Akizuki: I wanted to mingle a little.

Ryusui: At Cast Party 2014, one enthusiastic female reader of Mr. Akizuki’s works attended the party. We were thinking about meeting and talking with her during the free mingling time in the party. However, we regret having to tell you that she left the party before we got a chance to greet her.

Akizuki: I’m truly sorry about that. The video footage was being recorded at the time during the talk show. I was one of the audiences of the show, and I couldn’t even look back at her ... I wanted to talk to her during the free mingling session that was scheduled to be conducted after that, but missed the opportunity.

Ryusui: Mr. Kunugi, you also attended Cast Party 2014. Do you remember that girl? She was the person who read Mr. Akizuki’s works very seriously. During the talk-show phase of the event, she inquired about his works and Mr. Akizuki answered. Both Mr. Akizuki and I thought we would talk with her at the free mingling time afterwards, but we didn’t know she left the party during halftime.

Akizuki: I remember she disappeared as if she vanished into the thin air.

Kunugi: Ah, that rings my bell. It was so sudden that someone said we felt as if we saw a ghost. It was like a story Mr. Akizuki writes.

Ryusui: It happened instantly, so we didn't have time to talk with her. We, the representatives of The BBB, ended up acting somewhat rudely to her. I would like to express my sincere apology here.

Akizuki: I would like to apologize to her. But ... to begin with, I wonder if she will read or listen to this talk.

Ryusui: We just hope she wasn't fed up with us. If she still checks out The BBB, we would like her to e-mail us. I will transfer the e-mail to Mr. Akizuki.

Tanya: Beside that, we should introduce Mr. Akizuki about his trying out various foods? Ramen, or something?

Akizuki: Yes, that is what I do, by doing the research through the Internet.

Tanya: What is your favorite food? Or, what type of food are you recently getting into?

Akizuki: I think I might eat anything. But, in my serialized "The Sifted" guide, the sequence of foods I handle is fixed. That is, ramen, Japanese cuisine, Western cuisine, Chinese cuisine, and curries, in this order. I'm careful not to run out of the list for the reviews.

Tanya: Do you have any other hobbies?

Ryusui: Mr. Akizuki, you might confess that you love to read spiritual books. If you say so honestly, readers might regard you as a weird guy. (Laughter)

Akizuki: I actually love spiritual books. (Laughter) But, if anything, I'm more interested in how the structure of the world works.

Ryusui: We would like to look into the writing style of Mr. Akizuki later. By the way, I'm still speculating that Agent Kunugi is actually "Doctor Deicide" himself. Isn't it the truth?

Kunugi: Not true ... In the first place, the person named "Doctor Deicide" doesn't exist. It is like a natural phenomenon. I mean, it's like a typhoon, an earthquake, or cosmic wind or something.

Akizuki: Doesn't exist? (Laughter) Then, from where has Mr. Kunugi gotten the manuscripts?

Ryusui: You said e-mails had been sent from somewhere, right?

Kunugi: Yeah, right. I get e-mails from somewhere like a spiritual world and just transfer it to the chief editor. That is "Towerld".

Akizuki: Oh, really ...

Kunugi: Let's regard it ... oops, I mean, that's the truth. Surely.

Akizuki: I haven't known that ...

Kunugi: That definitely is because I myself am saying so.

Ryusui: Since last year's gathering was the first Cast Party to be presented in the eBook format, we had to talk about all of our contents and all the authors from our launch in 2012 to the end of 2015, up to the time of the release of Cast Party 2015. As we did so, the recorded footage ended up being pretty long. This year we would like to talk only about the contents and authors in 2016. But if our talk expands to all sorts of directions, we might refer to and talk about some of the works in the past.

Kunugi: Understood.

Ryusui: We manage The BBB on a small scale like this. So, usually, we publish only one work per month. If the work is released only in English version, we publish one eBook in the month. If the work is available both in the English and Japanese versions, we publish two eBooks for the month. This is our basic rule. However, when we have a special project and publish two works in a month, we release four eBooks for the month at maximum. When publishing four eBooks a month, Mr. Kunugi and I have lots of works to do and need much time. Still, this year we have published more works than originally planned. In March 2016, at the peak, we published no less than 11 eBook titles in a month.

Tanya: We post the notifications for our new eBooks in the recent three months on our Home page of The BBB website. I remember that the notifications of about 15 eBooks were posted around the time because we published many works both in the previous month and the next month.

Ryusui: Right. The number of our works is now over 100, four years after the inception of The BBB. So, 11 eBooks a month was definitely not normal. It was five to ten times as much as our normal monthly workload. Both Mr. Kunugi and I were really screaming our guts out at the time. In the current system of The BBB, we reached our limit in terms of our optimal workload. Mr. Kunugi, that's true, correct?

Kunugi: Umm ... At the time ...

Ryusui: You remember that, don't you?

Kunugi: Honestly speaking, I seriously considered if I should have pulled a midnight vanishing act. A prison break of some sort, you know?

Ryusui: During the period between the end of 2015 and the spring of 2016, unbelievably wide variety of works came one after another. Before that, we had a really tough time when we were struggling with "Urban Legend Detectives Case 3: The Kunekune (Dancing white shadow)". At that time, Mr. Kunugi was almost suffering from a nervous breakdown. Mr. Kunugi, let me ask. Comparing the "Kunekune" and the hard time in 2016, which was more backbreaking to you?

Kunugi: Err, I think, probably, the first 10 months in 2016 ...

Ryusui: First 10 months?! Which means almost one year!! (Laughter)

Kunugi: Especially in the first half, though. Unbelievably so many things converged into a relatively short span of time until the first volume of "The Sky Crawlers" put an exclamation mark on the chaotic schedule. I was almost going mad and was driven insane. I am wondering if I came up with the idea of shaving my head at that particular time.

Ryusui: So, The BBB was the reason of your shaving your head!! You did not do a midnight vanishing act, but shaved your head ...

Akizuki: We've now found a causal relationship. (Laughter)

Tanya: Mr. Kunugi was spiritually awakened back then. Like becoming a priest or a monk.

Akizuki: That's a purification of his soul, I suppose.

Ryusui: Mr. Akizuki seems to want to talk about spiritual topics. (Laughter)

Kunugi: Oh, does Mr. Akizuki love spiritual topics like that?

Ryusui: Yeah. So, if you read "The Gifted" series carefully, you would find lots of spiritual factors. At a glance, it looks like a well-made mystery fiction. But in fact, a plenty of Mr. Akizuki's spiritual tastes are

incorporated into that. I think that he is writing a spiritual part more vigorously than a mystery part. In addition, he is good at describing dining scenes.

Akizuki: Oh, that's not what I wanted. (Laughter) Honestly, I write "The Gifted" while considering the hypothesis that the true phase of the world would have worked in certain particular ways.

Kunugi: I see your point. Now many things start linking with each other in my brain.

Ryusui: Looking back, the work we first published at the beginning of 2016 was "Towerld Level 0009". Originally, we had to publish it at the end of 2015. But we were late and published it in the middle of January 2016. The delay of the works of Mr. Kunugi and me was already obvious at that time. But apparently, Mr. Kunugi did not quite do everything regarding "Towerld" series, because he is not the author but the agent.

Kunugi: Oh, no, um, yes, I mean, err, you know, well ... Surely, I can do nothing as an agent about writing "Towerld".

Ryusui: Can we conclude that Doctor Deicide was behind the schedule in writing?

Kunugi: That cannot happen because Doctor Deicide is a natural phenomenon and the universal truth of cosmic all.

Akizuki: I think Mr. Kunugi might have forgotten to check the e-mail.

Kunugi: Oh, yes! YES! That has to be it.

Ryusui: That's it. Mr. Kunugi was too busy to check the e-mail on a constant basis.

Kunugi: Ah, yeah. I was getting a little bit overwhelmed.

Ryusui: Doctor Deicide didn't get angry at you, did it? I mean, the author might have sent you an e-mail, saying, "Why is it that my work has yet to be published?"

Kunugi: As I said, Doctor Deicide is a natural phenomenon and the universal truth of the cosmic all. Clearly speaking, the author is not interested in what happens to this universe. So, it doesn't matter if I die or I miss the deadline for submitting the work to you.

Ryusui: Do you mean, the author won't get angry if you miss the deadline? Because it is a natural phenomenon.

Kunugi: Once it gets angry, we cannot predict what happens to this universe. It is a being like that. I mean, my existence is like an ant in an anthill, from the point of view of Doctor Deicide. Like I, as a human, would destroy the anthill by interfering with it, Doctor Deicide would destroy this universe by interfering with it.

Ryusui: That sounds like God. The doctor to commit deicide is actually God ...?

Kunugi: Because it is God, it can also commit the act of deicide. Probably, I think so ... That's as much of the thing as I can say ... I suppose.

Ryusui: I understand that Doctor Deicide is not the type of being who would be worried about trivial matters like the deadline.

1. Ms. Ami Sakurai and Enjyo Kousai in Japan



Ryusui: Beside “Towerld Level 0009”, our first work in 2016 was “Girl recruits her God”, written by Ms. Ami Sakurai. In fact, I had been preparing for this work as a secret project for about two years. At the end of Cast Party 2015, I revealed we had our first visual project. In fact, I was referring to this work. Ms. Ami Sakurai made a debut as a novelist in 1996, just like Mr. MORI, Hiroshi and I did. So, the year of 2016 is her 20th anniversary. Ms. Sakurai’s debut work “Innocent Word” was translated into many languages and was made into a commercial movie. It was a much-discussed, huge best seller. Her second work “Girl” was translated into English and, at the same time, Ms. Sakurai herself made a film based on “Girl recruits her God” this time. We published the first half “Chapters 1-7” in January and the second half “Chapters 8-11” in April 2016. Additionally, when publishing the second volume, we published a free eBook named “God for Japanese Cool Girls”, in which I interviewed with Ms. Sakurai. Originally, this interview was recorded as a YouTube content. It has actually been uploaded onto YouTube. In it, I was listening to Ms. Sakurai’s opinion and was asking her questions. She said the movie “Girl recruits her God” was scheduled to be released in June 2016. At first, we were all adjusting The BBB schedules centering around that. Actually, the movie has already been completed long time ago. However, since she submitted the movie to several movie contests overseas, it appears that she cannot disclose it to the public until the contest results come out. Because of the situation, her movie will not be open to the public until 2017. It was one of the disappointing things that we experienced in 2016.

Tanya: The preview of the movie has also been uploaded onto YouTube, right?

Akizuki: I watched it. So, I want to know how the movie goes.

Kunugi: Since we already watched the preview, we want to watch the movie itself as soon as possible!

Ryusui: Here is our today’s newsflash. We are planning to publish the bind-up version of “Girl recruits her God” in January 2017. In fact, those who are purchasing this bind-up version will get to enjoy the reader’s unprecedented privilege, with which they can watch the movie version of this novel.

Akizuki: You mean, the readers can watch the movie before it is released to the public?

Ryusui: Right. They will be able to watch the movie by entering the password on the secret webpage. The password and the link to the page are written in the bind-up version of “Girl recruits her God”, which is to be released in January 2017.

Kunugi: In short, by purchasing the eBook, readers can watch the movie before it is available to the public.

Tanya: Buy a novel, get a movie. How gorgeous can that be!

Ryusui: Dear readers, don't miss this special opportunity! By the way, I was impressed by the fact that, when we published the first half of "Girl recruits her God", Mr. Kunugi said, "I feel the depth of The BBB lineup has just been improved thanks to this work." Mr. Kunugi, could you talk again about your impression on the work?

Kunugi: Okay. Before we published Ms. Sakurai's novel, works mainly featuring high school girl students could not be found within The BBB domain, correct? Simply speaking, to put it this way though. Her work also features drugs and so-called "enjoy kousai". I had an impression that the work has managed to reveal the dark side of Japanese society which Japanese people usually do not want to introduce to the whole world. If foreigners who don't know Japan quite well read it, they might think, "Is it the true nature of Japan? ... I'm shocked ..." While considering that nuance of the possible reaction into account, I feel that the range of The BBB lineup has just been expanded.

Ryusui: Surely, within The BBB, we haven't had a content which revealed the real Japanese society. For example, we have a work featuring a ninja character who lives in the modern Japanese society. But it doesn't describe the real, modern Japanese society.

Kunugi: To begin with, no one knows if ninja actually existed in the past.

Ryusui: Lady ninja is generally called 'kunoichi'. But the being of kunoichi is complete fiction created by late Futaro Yamada, a legendary novelist in Japan.

Tanya: I heard the story in which such kind of women existed in red-light district of Yoshiwara.

Ryusui: But no one knows if it is true. For example, some fictional episodes created by late Ryotaro Shiba, a legendary novelist, are mistakenly believed they were historic facts. Author's creations in historic novels are often believed by many people in general public as if they really happened in the history. Fictitious setting occasionally end up being accepted as historical facts.

Kunugi: For example, Ryoma Sakamoto is one of the most popular historic figures in Japan. But his life that people know seems to include a few fictional episodes. It seems that everything about ninja was kept secret by themselves. They thoroughly destroyed evidences of their existences, so nothing of them is left. So, in the first place, no one knows if ninja really existed.

Ryusui: I guess people like ninja existed in the past. But, at the same time, I doubt that sophisticated ninja in movies really existed. Because if they really existed like that, they would have appeared conspicuous. (Laughter) I mean, if they were wearing so-called ninja suits.

Kunugi: In reality, I think they might have hidden themselves among farmers, or something like that. Let's get back to what we are talking about. As we agree with this notion, "Girl recruits her God" has widened the range of genres for The BBB. If our genres were limited, we might end up limiting even our readers. Even so, if we expand the horizons of the genres that we handle by too much, then we will probably end up losing the clear focus of our activities and our mission would be too vague.

Ryusui: Actually, professional writers often send us e-mails, saying, "Could you please publish my work in English?" They are writers in various genres.

Kunugi: What type of genres?

Ryusui: The novels we receive from them really covers various types of categories. I think, their wish to publish their works in English is equally intense, whatever genres they belong to. They are not only novels but also works regarding societal issues. In fact, I received a book related to spiritual matters the other day. Speaking of the spiritual subject, Mr. Akizuki might be interested in that.

Akizuki: I'm interested in it. (Laughter)

Ryusui: We might collaborate with these new authors in the future. However, The BBB as of now is operated in a small scale, so the situation would get out of control if we expand our territories by too much. Because of that, I don't want to expand our activities aggressively. Widening the variation of genres we handle might generate some good results. But our lineup is already rich to a certain extent with more than 100 titles of works. I mean, there are many readers who may start off by reading "Towerld" series and "The Gifted" series for the first time, from now on.

Kunugi: Surely, we may no longer need to increase works similar to "Towerld" and "The Gifted".

Akizuki: I see. I haven't had an idea to see the balance of The BBB as a whole.

Ryusui: Mr. Akizuki, and Tanya, what are the impressions that you have on "Girl recruits her God"?

Akizuki: When I read Ms. Sakurai's interview, I was really interested in the notion that the last part of the novel is really surprising and shocking.

Ryusui: Oh, you mean the shocking truth of the story. To be sure, like a mystery fiction novel, the story has a great trick related to the trauma of the main character, so readers would enjoy its surprise. In this way, we can regard this work as a mystery fiction.

Tanya: I think it can be an opportunity for us, Japanese, to introduce our social problems to overseas. First of all, we have to tell foreigners about "enjoy kousai". In Japan, enjoy kousai done by individuals is not illegal. If someone does that systematically as a business, that is illegal. However, if some women over 20 do enjoy kousai, that would not be considered to be a crime. The problem is that minor girls do that sort of thing, and that there are that many such poor people. I think we might have to discuss such an important truth.

Ryusui: It is said the "enjoy kousai" can be found only in Japan. The phenomenon is paid attention to by the world. You can find the article of "enjoy kousai" in the English version of Wikipedia. Prostitution itself can be found in any countries, though.

Tanya: Usually, some women do the prostitution for their living in many countries. But, in Japan, not only poor girls but also wealthy girls get themselves involved in prostitution. That is the characteristic of enjoy kousai.

Ryusui: I think it is the problem that can be found only in Japan. The young girls are not in economic difficulty. Rather, they are wealthy, but they do enjoy kousai anyway.

Kunugi: In order to buy items of big-name brands.

Tanya: That's right.

Ryusui: That is just described in this Ms. Sakurai's work. "Girl recruits her God" is a story set in 1997 when enjoy kousai became a social problem. As of 2016, enjoy kousai is still found here and there, isn't it?

Tanya: In the past, rich girls did enjoy kousai. But now, we hear girls who are suffering from the slumping deflation economy participate in enjoy kousai to pay tuition of high school or to earn living expenses.

Ryusui: Their motives have been changed. Back in 1990s, when the residual afterglow of this country's bubble economy was still remaining, the girls were getting into enjoy kousai to boost their luxurious aspects of their lives.

Tanya: Not only that but also they did enjoy kousai to seek for elderly, father-like males, or father figures, because they did not feel that they were getting the love they wanted. Additionally, they resorted to such a weird method of pretending to be something bigger than what they actually were, to brag about themselves to their friends.

Ryusui: We also hear that not a few women work in sex industry to earn money to go to college.

Tanya: Even some female office workers do such jobs during the night to earn living expenses. They participate in such a wide variety of part-time jobs, such as lingerie pubs, night clubs, cabarets, and theme pubs in which only females serve as bartenders.

Ryusui: I heard that some women did such jobs because of the poverty after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. So, we might have to mention that the enjyo kousai described in “Girl recruits her God” took place in Japan of 20 years ago.

Akizuki: If we should talk about high school girl students, I should mention that “The Gifted” features high school girl and boy students.

Ryusui: Ah, yes. Surely, it does. But “The Gifted” has two adult main characters, so I have not had an impression that it is a novel featuring high school girl students.

Akizuki: You are right. In addition, in the case of “The Gifted”, the character symbolization by using signature items such as uniforms like those for Japanese high school girl students is not described.

Ryusui: High school girl student in “The Gifted” are pastoral, aren’t they? I cannot think they do enjyo kousai.

Akizuki: In the first place, the stage of the story is a fictional city named ‘City’.

Tanya: I have something to ask Mr. Akizuki. Do you imagine high school students as you describe in “The Gifted”? Or, do you have darker images of them, like Ms. Sakurai describes?

Akizuki: About that, I have both types of images about high school students. But I think I would not describe the darker one.

Ryusui: By the way, Mr. Akizuki, how were your school days? How were high school girl students around you?

Akizuki: There were delinquents. But they were relatively normal because I went to an academically competitive preparatory high school. I did not know what happened behind the scene, though. But it was in a regional suburban city, so it was not as intense as in Tokyo. I feel that it was normal.

Ryusui: Mr. Kunugi, did you spend high school life abroad? How were the students around you back then? There was no ‘enjyo kousai’, was there?

Kunugi: When in high school, I lived in a so-called rural town. Rural, and pastoral. Although it was a small high school which affluent children attended, the fashion of the clothes was frumpy. It was the high school life which I actually experienced. I moved to Detroit when I became a high school senior. Compared to the rural town, I felt a little bit of dangerous atmosphere there.

Ryusui: Then, Mr. Kunugi, after you lived in the dangerous environment, what impression did you have on “Girl recruits her God”, which describes the dark side of Japan. In case of Mr. Kunugi, I think you have the unique viewpoint of someone who has lived outside Japan.

Kunugi: Surely, in my case, it’s the viewpoint from countries outside Japan. I felt that the darkness differs significantly from the image foreigners have on Japanese society. They might be surprised by the fact that such dangerous things can happen in Japan, even though they think that there are not many crimes in Japan.

Ryusui: I see. It’s valuable information. Tanya’s nationality is secret, and Mr. Akizuki and I have grown up in Japan and have known the dark side like this through the news and tabloid TV programs. From the point of view of countries outside Japan, non-Japanese people living outside Japan tend to get the impression that there are not crimes in Japan.

Kunugi: I think foreigners may misunderstand Japan. I do not know if the United Nations functions properly like it is supposed to work like a legitimate organization anymore. I have heard that a U.N. official made a misleading remark about Japan despising women in general. She said 30 percent of Japanese women experience enryo kousai in their lifetimes. I also hear that a certain people misheard “13 percent” as “30 percent”. I do not know which data is correct, but either number seems to be unrealistically off the plausible mark.

Ryusui: That’s an inaccurate data. I would like to say that’s not true.

Kunugi: The people who talk about that are rather shady and suspicious. I think they are misunderstanding Japan in strange ways. If someone reads “Girl recruits her God”, after having been brainwashed with such misunderstanding ...

Ryusui: It will deepen the misunderstanding, will it?

Kunugi: I think so. Like “Japan, the land of the worst sexual harassment in the world”, or something like that. By the way, about sexual harassment, let me tell you what I think of that all the time. Sexism is bad enough in Japan already. However, I think it is even worse in other countries than it is in Japan. Umm, it is the impression I have had while living in the United States. By the way, I feel sexual discrimination is fiercer in the United States than in Japan. When I say so, people often show a surprised look, as if they want to say to me, “What are you talking about?”

Tanya: Can I speak out my opinion? Among us, I am the one who knows enryo kousai most closely. When in high school, I belonged to a student council in Japan. Girls in the school actually were doing enryo kousai, in real life. So, I know well what process they go through, what type of men they met, and from what starting point they joined the gangs. It was the first half of 1990s when the overall outlook of Japan was gloomy due to the post-bubble economic downturn. The social tendency was like a cloudy sky. I had an impression that each Japanese lost the hope for the future and was showing dismal looks. It is probably the reason why enryo kousai was widely spread. Actually, I knew, for example, who in what grade of what school was the leader in Shibuya. Or, as for Kabuki-cho in Shinjuku, that girl could introduce several companions. I actually knew such information and had the network. Still, I think the enryo kousai of 20 years ago was different from that in 2016. We should clearly explain that the social landscape of today in Japan differs from what it was 20 years ago. Comparing the difference between Japan and abroad, as Mr. Kunugi said earlier, Japanese people have the national and social cultures of characteristics to try to hide the negative aspects of our very beings. As a consequence, the laws end up being not tangible. Harassments and discriminations are done where they are not seen. Compared to the relatively transparent Western societies, I think those who live outside Japan feel that Japan, on the surface, is a mild society. Personally, there are harassments and discrimination in both Western countries and Japan. I think the difference is caused by the presence or the absence of the laws providing, with transparency, the security pertaining to the sexist issues.

Ryusui: Mr. Akizuki, what do you think about it?

Akizuki: I wonder if it has something to do with the difference between the ethnically homogeneous nation and other, heterogeneous nations.

Ryusui: I think that is surely likely to be the case, of course.

2. Mr. Yohei Hayakawa's Mysterious Breakthrough in India



Ryusui: We are now talking about social issues. It's like a TV debate or something. (Laughter)

Tanya: But I think we have made a meaningful discussion.

Ryusui: I think we have talked about Ms. Sakurai, to quite a bit of extent. We might have taken too much time on the first work, so I'd like to make the next topic a bit shorter. About the "Memories of War" series, we published just one work in 2016. I told Mr. Yohei Hayakawa, the author, that we'd like to publish the series regularly. Simply put, I have not had enough time on everything this year. This series, "Memories of War", can also be read on the website of KIQTUS, the company Mr. Hayakawa manages. And he has given us the opportunity to publish its eBook version through The BBB. This series is regularly downloaded abroad as well as in Japan. I surely felt the reaction. But today, in fact, I have a special topic regarding Mr. Hayakawa's another work. I would like everyone here to give me your feedback. It is not about the new eBook, but about the interview with Mr. Hayakawa that we published before. It is the first work of "The BBB Interview Selection" series, which is available only in English due to Mr. Hayakawa's request. Then, what I'd like to talk about with you is the fact that the interview with Mr. Hayakawa is currently making a breakthrough in India, of all countries out there.

Akizuki: Ah, you talked about it the other day.

Ryusui: Among the free English eBooks available from The BBB, the most frequently downloaded one has been "King In the Mirror Vol.1", followed by "The Gifted Vol.1". However, The interview article with Mr. Hayakawa has been downloaded at a fast pace that is rapidly increasing in recent months, and has gone up to the second place. It was at the fifth place a little before that. And then, the 95 percent of the downloads were from India. I wonder why the interview with Mr. Hayakawa is welcomed particularly in that region. My hypothesis is that the appearance of Mr. Hayakawa might be welcomed by and be appealing to the people in India. He is known as a good-looking guy in Japan. In India, he might look even better, I think. Everyone, do you have any opinion about that?

Kunugi: Well, to begin with, I wonder what type of male looks is popular in India. Is it like a superstar of Bollywood?

Ryusui: The handsome-looking male that we imagine to fit into the Indian style might differ from the appearance that Mr. Hayakawa displays.

Akizuki: I wonder if clear-cut features are more welcomed.

Ryusui: Probably, they love different types of good-looking males.

Kunugi: It is different from the Japanese tastes, eh? At the same time, it might be different from typical Indian people. Umm ... I cannot see the point. I'm not sure. Are you sure that his visual is the actual reason for the boost of the download count?

Ryusui: The interview itself is great, of course. But I doubt if the popularity centers on just one country only due to the reason. The fact that it is very popular only in one country is a little unique. I'd like to focus on it because it might give us a hint to making an ideal breakthrough of our sales.

Kunugi: I see your point. You are right. If we can understand the reason, that would be nice.

Ryusui: Even though it is limited to the certain locality, it surely makes no difference in a way that it is making some kind of breakthrough.

Akizuki: For example, should we publish an eBook in a different category with the cover featuring a photograph of Mr. Hayakawa ...?

Ryusui: The next covers of "The Gifted" or "Towerld" should feature Mr. Hayakawa? (Laughter) Will we see the positive reactions from India?

Tanya: Ah, I have just been browsing the Internet while listening to your story. This is what I have got ... There seems to be a person named Yohei Hayakawa as an executive of an IT company based in India.

Ryusui: Oh, really?

Tanya: There is a possibility that this has something to do with the boost in download count for the eBooks. This IT company executive of the same name seems to be working actively in India.

Ryusui: Got it. Now I know that there is a businessperson who happens to have the same name as Mr. Hayakawa.

Tanya: Isn't it the reason?

Ryusui: It seems to be more persuasive.

Kunugi: I think it probably is the reason. It has nothing to do with his appearance.

Akizuki: The mystery has been solved.

Tanya: By the way, this Mr. Hayakawa has the same name but with the different kanji characters.

Ryusui: The eBooks lists his name only in alphabets, so those two persons can be mistaken for one another without kanji characters to aid the differentiations. It is like the solution of the mystery.

Akizuki: I'm now convinced.

3. Are You a Dog Person? Or, a Cat Person?



Ryusui: The next topic is “Momo Meets the World Heritage Sites” series. Regarding Momo, I have something to tell you. We published the third and fourth installments of “Momo Meets the World Heritage Sites: On the Globe” this year. The series is now completed.

Akizuki: She has come back to Japan, right?

Ryusui: Right. On the Facebook page of The BBB, we continue the serialized article as the second Japan version. As I mentioned it in Cast Party 2015, we had better response from the readers when we release contents featuring Japan. We Japanese introducing the world ‘outside’ Japan to people living ‘outside’ Japan look kinda strange. Recently, the serialized articles featuring Japan on the Facebook page got better responses than the ending parts of the series featuring the world outside Japan. The observation is based on the numbers of the access count. Although the worldwide version might be suffering from getting into the rut before, we would like to continue the second Japan series and take it as far as possible. Tanya, do you have anything to say?

Tanya: I think focusing on the World Heritage Sites in Japan is a good idea as our strategy. Personally, I agree with it. As of now, in December 2016, there are 20 World Heritage Sites in Japan. It is representing the number of groupings of multiple locations, not necessary the individual locations. For example, in Kyoto alone, there are 23 properties to comprise one of the World Heritage Sites.

Akizuki: Surely, it is the case.

Tanya: Another case. The Horyu-ji temple in Nara Prefecture is listed in the World Heritage Sites as “The Horyu-ji temple and its area”. In fact, it indicates two temples: Horyu-ji and Hokki-ji. Although the number of World Heritage Sites in Japan is 20, I would like to introduce all structural properties of World Heritage Sites in Japan. In this way, the sequels of the Japan version of the series would be meaningful. If possible, I would like to put images of Google Map on it for each site.

Ryusui: Oh, that’s a great idea.

Tanya: By doing so, visitors from abroad could get to the same place while carrying Kindle, PDF, or something like that.

Ryusui: They can see the same scenery that Momo has visited.

Tanya: I would be happy if travelers who are interested in Japan can visit the places we have introduced.

Ryusui: Recently, the concept of “AR”, “Augmented Reality”, has been paid more attention to than before. I can say, “Pokémon GO”, one of the global phenomena in 2016, is a very good example. When “Pokémon GO” became popular, I felt it had the same factor as “Momo Meets the World Heritage Sites”. In “Pokémon GO”, pocket monsters appear in a real scenery that can be seen through the smartphone camera. Likewise, in the case of “Momo Meets the World Heritage Sites”, it looks as if Momo appears in a real scenery every time. So, visitors to a site in the stories can enjoy such a version of Augmented Reality of some sort, just like they can do so for the AR in “Pokémon GO”.

Tanya: If someone can create a system like AR, Momo’s icon will be displayed at the site in the screen. That would be fun if we got such an app. But we do not have a specialist who can create apps in The BBB. (Laughter) All I can do now is to put the maps on it.

Akizuki: I have one thing I want to know about Momo. Does she actually assume poses to suit the site in various ways every time?

Tanya: I sometimes take her pictures when I have time. I use the photographs. So, she does not strike poses particularly for the purpose.

Akizuki: Her poses were rich in variety. I’m impressed with that.

Tanya: But some photos are reused, though.

Akizuki: In addition, the skill of making composite photos is impressive.

Tanya: Really? Thank you for your compliment.

Ryusui: I remember Mr. Akizuki was giving high praises over the photo, in which Momo was becoming a part of a mural.

Akizuki: I was surprised like, “She has become the mural!” (Laughter)



Tanya: Oh, that one in Twyfelfontein in Namibia.

Akizuki: I'm impressed with the fact that even the photo like that can be made.

Ryusui: Mr. Kunugi, do you have anything to tell us about Momo? You are a cat person, though.

Kunugi: I have an impression that dog persons are the majority in The BBB ...

Tanya: I'm a dog person.

Kunugi: I guess I'm the only cat person among us.

Ryusui: I was a cat person in the past. But, I came to love dogs as well a while ago.

Tanya: By the way, Mr. Kunugi, I love cats as well.

Akizuki: I, too, love the visual aspects of cats.

Ryusui: Mr. K.G., the chief engineer of The BBB, is a dog person. Just like Mr. Akizuki, Ms. Maki Takeuchi, an illustrator and one of The BBB casts, says she loves the visual aspects of cats but she's a dog person. Additionally, Kai Chamberlain is a genuine cat person. Dr. MORI, Hiroshi always feeds dogs, but I remember he loves cats as much as Tanya does.

Tanya: I have not fed cats because I have an allergy to cats and it causes asthma. I used to have cats in my house when I was a child. I lived with a cat for about 10 years. And, with asthma.

Kunugi: Oh, you did? Which means you cannot simply be classified into a dog person or a cat person.

Tanya: If I want to feed an animal, I can only have a dog.

Ryusui: I know Tanya loves animals as a whole.

Tanya: Yes, that's right. I love all sorts of animals. Horses and cows as well.

Ryusui: I think there are many people who love both cats and dogs. I feel many people who click the 'like' buttons for The BBB in Facebook have icons of cats or dogs.

Kunugi: I guess that is the way for many people, generally speaking. I do not dislike dogs, of course. It is just that I prefer cats a little more.

Tanya: Mr. Akizuki, how about you?

Akizuki: I love the visual aspects of cats. A little while ago, when I saw cats at a pet shop, I felt that they were lovely. Dogs are lovely, too. But dogs are cooler than cats.

Ryusui: We do not know too much about such things as cool cats.

Akizuki: I feel cats are lovely.

Kunugi: If there are cats that are described as cool, then they might as well be tigers or lions.

Tanya: I want to feed tigers.

Ryusui: Oh, really? You have got to be kidding. By the way, I am occasionally asked, "Momo is a fictional being, right?" I am telling you that she is a real dog. Some people think of her as a CG-generated creation. Unlike the case of Doctor Deicide, Momo really is an actually existing dog. According to Mr. Kunugi, Doctor Deicide might be a natural phenomenon.

Kunugi: I myself want to meet Momo personally. I admit she's cute, definitely.

Akizuki: Her round eyes look lovely.

Tanya: She shows lovely eyes when facing food. (Laughter)

Ryusui: Mr. Kunugi, as a bilingual whose English is just as good as that spoken by the native speakers, how does your impression of Momo's series featuring the world differ from the series featuring Japan?

Kunugi: I think it depends on the purposes of the readers visiting The BBB. If they want to know more about Japan, the series featuring Japan would be better. When they read the series featuring the world, it might be the somewhat awkward situation like the one Japanese people experience when they visit kaiten-sushi or revolving sushi restaurants abroad outside Japan.

Ryusui: It might be strange that we Japanese introduce the world outside Japan to people living outside Japan. Even so, the series featuring the world was a good experience for us.

Kunugi: Sure. That was valuable to us.

Akizuki: I think it was a good content for the people who are interested in the whole world, because many World Heritage Sites are introduced with photographs.

Kunugi: We might be able to regard it as an introduction to the world. After that, we can release the more profound series featuring Japan.

Akizuki: We would like readers to expect the deeper insights into Japan.

Kunugi: We can take it to the extreme. Momo can introduce a ramen restaurant near my house.

Ryusui: Oh, no, no, no! (Laughter) You know, the series is introducing World Heritage Sites.

Kunugi: Ah, I forgot about that! I apologize.

Ryusui: Introducing ramen restaurants is a role of Mr. Akizuki's "The Sifted" series. Speaking of which, we might expect the collaboration between "The Sifted" and "Momo Meets the World Heritage Sites". For example, a ramen restaurant near a World Heritage Site. Momo might appear there.

Tanya: I think it's a great idea.

Ryusui: Momo might be in the photographs Mr. Akizuki shoots.

Tanya: Wow! Lovely!

Akizuki: I will consider it. (Laughter) If I find a good restaurant, I may be able to do something.

Kunugi: Sounds great. It might be impossible for Momo to appear in "Towerld".

Tanya: But she might have a dream of "Towerld" while sleeping in a parador, a castle hotel, of World Heritage Sites.

Kunugi: Oh, are you telling me that someone wakes up in the morning, and says "That wicked world of Towerld has been just a dream?"

4. Mr. Masa Kubo's "Business Skills Beyond Language Barrier"



Ryusui: Next, we would like to talk about Mr. Masa Kubo's "Business Skills Beyond Language Barrier" and the interview with Mr. Kubo. Currently, these works are available only in Japanese. It is the only such case for The BBB. Still, we would like to introduce them to those who read or listen to this talk in English because they are two of our very important works. Mr. Masa Kubo is a person who has been working in an international business scene, centered around UK. But since he came back to Japan a few years ago, he has been suffering from ALS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. I think many people have heard about the incurable disease because it became famous from the Ice Bucket Challenge. Mr. Kubo, who is struggling with the disease, makes his abundant business experiences into the work "Business Skills Beyond Language Barrier" in order to leave the legacy as the references for the younger generations. We published Vol.1, the first half of this work, for free and Vol.2 as a paid eBook title. We also published his interview record for free. And, as our first trial, we uploaded his interview onto YouTube at the same time and embedded it into the equivalent webpage in The BBB website. Thanks to many readers' supports, Vol.1 took the fifth place in the general category of Amazon.co.jp. This was our best record. Because of the achievement, the work was later published as paper-based physical books. This was the first such case for The BBB. Just like that, it was the first time ever for The BBB in some ways. We are so happy because we got substantial responses. Mr. Kubo was glad to know and hear about that during his struggle against the disease.

Tanya: We could see that the act of creating works while struggling with the disease was transferred to the energy in the author's real life. It was a really valuable experience for us. I think we have introduced not only Mr. Kubo's messages but also his way of living. It was the works like the treasure for us at The BBB. We felt that by publishing the eBooks, we have been able to support Mr. Kubo himself, his family, and those who are suffering from the same disease. It was the first such case for us to support someone by creating an eBook. I would like to try this again if we get a chance like this and support Mr. Kubo's works in the future if we have something to do for him.

Ryusui: By the way, the cover of "Business Skills Beyond Language Barrier" was chosen, based on the strong request from Mr. Kubo. Although it was designed by Tanya, the picture of the cover was the one which Mr. Kubo found in the Internet and wanted to be used as the cover art. We can apply the pictures that the author loves on the cover of what we publish, because The BBB is a flexible platform. As I told you earlier, these titles were later published as paper-based physical books. Pictures or photographs cannot just be pasted on covers of business paper-based physical books published in Japan, due to the fact that such publications have to conform to certain template designs. I have proven to the public the fact that The BBB is the platform where authors can do anything they want.

Tanya: I am glad that he loved the font design of the cover.

Akizuki: I had an experience to work abroad in the past. So, I empathized with Mr. Kubo about the business skills he wrote in the work. For example, even if you cannot speak English fluently, you can have conversation as long as you understand the others' feelings. I myself thought that I managed to handle the situation by considering the other's sense of values and making the good use of the things I was good at.

Ryusui: Mr. Akizuki, as a writer, what impression did you have on the factors that Mr. Kubo was writing in the work while struggling against the disease?

Akizuki: About ALS, if I remember correctly, I read about it in a comic named "Black Jack", drawn by the legendary manga artist named Osamu Tezuka, when I was a child. I was overwhelmed by the strong impression of the doom that comes from the heaviness of the gloom as an incurable disease. It is so severe to the extent that the muscular strength gradually gets weaker and weaker. So, it might be important for a patient to live positively. But I cannot say something like that carelessly. It is difficult. Because I do not have a sure thing inside me to say anything.

Kunugi: I used to live outside Japan for many years, and the experience was up until my life as a graduate school student. After that, I started living in Japan and I have been doing so since then. So, I did not quite experience the life outside Japan as a worker. Because of that, the tough business episodes Mr. Kubo wrote in those publications were filled with things I had not quite fully known. I learned a lot from his works. Since I do not have any confidence in my business skills, I feel that I would not have been able to survive in a business scene abroad, even if I can speak English and be on the par against those who speak English as first language. As Mr. Kubo wrote, even if someone can speak English fluently, the one would not have been able to have a good conversation without adequate business insight and professional skills for whatever jobs they do for their living. In conclusion, although high English competence would not hinder your profession, Japanese business persons first have to develop the high competency as professionals in Japan in the first place. I think people should go abroad after making the solid foundation as accomplished professionals. I guess those who can speak English well while being less-than-mediocre slaves would have tougher times than those who cannot speak English well and are well-developed professionals. I am glad that I got a chance to read Mr. Kubo's books, because I got quite a bit of virtual experience out of them. Are the English versions of these works already being planned?

Ryusui: As of now, I don't have such a request from the author and the readers. Mr. Kubo himself mainly wrote the works for Japanese business people as the main targets. If we get the request for publishing the English version from places outside Japan, we might consider doing something about it with Mr. Kubo.

Kunugi: The question is whether there are demand for those books in the English-speaking countries.

Ryusui: That is the point. The works were written for Japanese people to begin with.

Kunugi: If we switch the points of view, it might be similar to the case like this: An American coming to Japan from the headquarters of IBM writes a book about the method for them to conduct businesses in Japan, and Japanese read it. Actually, this may turn out to be quite interesting, from our point of view as Japanese living in Japan. Anyway, it depends on the author's request and the response from the readers in the English-speaking regions around the world.

Ryusui: Mr. Kubo's works were brought to The BBB after we recorded Cast Party 2015 last year. So, we could not talk about his works back then. Mr. Kunugi and I were busy with preparing for many works for the period between the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016. When we learned of what Mr. Kubo was already going through, I talked to Mr. Kunugi like, "We have to make our efforts even more because Mr. Kubo is now struggling. After learning of what he is dealing with, we cannot complain about anything."

Kunugi: Yeah, I remember that. The very presence of Mr. Kubo might have been the reason why I did not resort to committing a midnight vanishing act. I cannot thank Mr. Kubo enough.

Ryusui: Ms. Sakurai's movie was postponed to 2017, which put the delay on her work in 2016. On the other hand, we can say that Mr. Kubo's works are one of the symbolic projects among The BBB's activities in 2016.

Kunugi: We have published many works and titles in 2016. Among them, Mr. Kubo's works are one of the axial cores of the pillars for The BBB.

5. The Samejima Case, an extra installment of “Urban Legend Detectives”



Ryusui: Next, we would like to talk about “Urban Legend Detectives Case 4: The Samejima Case”.

Akizuki: I was surprised by this work because I did not get the chance to read that familiar conversation between Black Friend and White Friend in Chapter 0.5, its prologue.

Ryusui: Yeah, that surprised us. This time, the story takes off at full throttle from the start.

Akizuki: That’s right. I thought, “What? I can’t find that familiar conversation.”

Ryusui: It’s thrilling because things take place from the very beginning. The storytelling is very fast and it attracted my attention. This work is the extra installment of the “Urban Legend Detectives” series. This special episode features Ayano Shiozaki, who is a high school girl student and a supporting character of the series.

Kunugi: A high school girl student, again. In fact, the authors writing novels for The BBB seem to write about high school girl students quite often. (Laughter)

Tanya: It is interesting that each author describes them in different ways.

Ryusui: This story is actually about the case that takes place behind “Case 3: The Kunekune”, parallelly. In the story of “The Kunekune”, Detective Kobayashi contacts Ayano Shiozaki. This time, the fact that Ayano Shiozaki is being involved in this case of Samejima is revealed to the readers.

Kunugi: Indeed, the same exact scene as the one that took place in “The Kunekune” is described in this episode as well.

Ryusui: At the last year’s Cast Party, I and Mr. Kunugi talked about our working hard for preparing to publish “The Kunekune”, and mentioned that we almost died, figuratively, from the experience. Mr. Tsumiki apologized for that, but it was I who was really feeling apologetic about that. Honestly speaking, we would like Mr. Tsumiki to write the story as he likes. If the story is very long, that’s not a problem as long as we can separate it into two installments. Is that not right, Mr. Kunugi?

Kunugi: That’s right. We do not dislike a long story at all. However, since I’m afraid of ending up lowering the quality of my proofreading for the sake of keeping the story long, I think we should separate the long story into two short ones if it becomes too long.

Ryusui: I think each author has each unique style and characteristics. I feel Mr. Tsumiki would demonstrate his best ability when he writes the story as he likes. This time, it is an extra installment, so I think he might have hesitated to write freely because of that. Honestly, I feel sorry about that.

Kunugi: Still, I did not get the impression that some scenes are omitted just for the sake of keeping the story short.

Ryusui: I surely hope that it is not shortened. Before Mr. Tsumiki started this series, he said the “Urban Legend Detectives” series would be concluded in six stories in total. Its concept does not seem to have been changed. The series has already reached the fourth installment. So, the two stories are still left to go. Each installment is an independent story. Mr. Tsumiki seems to emphasize that the series needs six stories for completion. The next installment, “Case 5”, is projected to be long, so I expect that I might ask him to separate it into two pieces.

Kunugi: Considering our workload, it is ideal for the story to be separated into two, and we can publish the latter half at a later date.

Ryusui: In the case of “Towerld”, it is a science fiction novel ... Oh, by the way, is it okay if I refer to “Towerld” as a science fiction novel?

Kunugi: I wonder what genre it actually belongs to ...

Ryusui: It is difficult for us to limit it to a specific genre, because it is the genre named “Towerld”.

Kunugi: It might be the ideal interpretation. Of course, it is just my opinion as an agent.

Ryusui: Unlike the case for “Towerld”, “Urban Legend Detectives” and “The Gifted” series belong to the genre of mystery fiction. So, we can compare the two series with each other as original mystery fictions published from The BBB. Mr. Akizuki, one of the authors, what impressions do you have on the “Urban Legend Detectives” series and on the author Mr. Tsumiki. You see and talk with him every year at an annual gathering of Mephisto Prize winners, right?

Akizuki: When I first met Mr. Tsumiki, we talked about what type of stories we should write. Mr. Kenichi Sobu or Mr. Ryuoh Yano said to me, “We can freely use urban legends because nobody knows who made them.” So, at first, I read “Vanishing Hitchhiker”, one of the most standard urban legend research materials. Starting from that, I started making a story, while coming up with special abilities that are based on urban legends. In the end, Mr. Tsumiki also bases his stories on urban legends. I was surprised by the fact that we accidentally have chosen the same theme, to end up sharing a few overlaps of ideas.

Ryusui: That point worried me, too. The two series share the same theme in terms of dealing with urban legends.

Akizuki: I have been worried about whether it was okay for me to write “The Gifted” because Mr. Tsumiki has the deeper knowledge about urban legends than I do ...

Ryusui: You two have managed to differentiate your styles from each other. As for Mr. Tsumiki, he describes a really deep world of urban legends. As for Mr. Akizuki, you casually incorporate urban legends into your stories, I think.

Akizuki: In my case, I write about even urban legends which do not actually exist. I think it might be my own style. That can remain the way it has got to be.

Ryusui: Mr. Tsumiki might get angry at that point. He might think, “This guy makes light of urban legends!” (Laughter) Let me supplement what Mr. Akizuki said earlier. Before I met Mr. Kunugi, we had a pep rally to prepare for The BBB launch, aside from the annual Mephisto Prize gathering. Mr. Akizuki, Mr. Tsumiki, Mr. Sobu, Mr. Yano, and I got together to talk about what we should do at The BBB.

Akizuki: At the gathering, I said I was considering what to write. Then, I came up with the idea to write stories about urban legends. After that, when I was sleeping at a hotel in Taiwan, I had a dream of a ghost only seen through the video camera. It became the basis for “The Gifted Vol.1” of the series that we currently know as.

Ryusui: In the way, the gathering created both “The Gifted” and “Urban Legend Detectives”. I feel they are like brothers rather than rivals to each other. Mr. Akizuki, you became interested in urban legends. As a result of that, you write “The Gifted” series. As you are getting to feel the affection for urban legends, what impressions do you have on Mr. Tsumiki’s series?

Akizuki: Since I had not had much interest in urban legends before the gathering, I have become interested in his works only by reading the particular part related to urban legends. As for “The Samejima Case”, I was impressed by his writing style to make the story as a newly-born urban legend. I cannot refer to the tricks in minutest details here to end up spoiling the fun, though. The especially interesting point is that he writes the story that can be regarded either as a true urban legend or as a fabricated one. And, I wanted to read the episode of “Cow Head” introduced in the story. I mean the original one.

Ryusui: Late Mr. Sakyō Komatsu, one of the legendary novelists in Japan, wrote the story. I have read it in the past before.

Akizuki: About an urban legend “Merry’s Mail”, many authors adopt it and I think each one has each own style. Mr. Tsumiki writes to describe how someone can make urban legends become true events. I’m interested especially in the point.

Tanya: Like each author describes its own images of high school girl students, their styles to describe urban legends reveal their unique personalities.

Kunugi: I have been proofreading the “Urban Legend Detectives” series since “Case 2: Solitary Hide and Seek”. Personally speaking, I feel the series has tough and enough volumes to fulfill my appetite for reading stories. While proofreading, I’m reading the story carefully, of course. So, I’m curious about the rest of the series. In “The Samejima Case”, the character named White Friend ... Umm, is he Black Friend? Which is correct? I’m always confused about that.

Ryusui: Even Mr. Tsumiki, the author himself, is confused about that, too. (Laughter)

Kunugi: The one who is wearing a black parka and taking the action is White Friend, isn’t it? It seems that his real name is about to be revealed. He is involved in “The Samejima Case”. I feel we are about to learn of his true character and history little by little. And then, are there six cases in total in the entire series?

Ryusui: That is what I heard. But the next case might be separated into two volumes, so we have yet to know how many volumes there will be in the end.

Kunugi: I’m looking forward to reading the whole truth in the rest of the series. We don’t clearly know who is the mastermind. But I feel about 40 percent of the whole picture has been revealed.

Tanya: Why don’t we talk about the cover?

Ryusui: Let’s do it. The cover is drawn by Ms. Maki Takeuchi, as usual. I love her unique, artistic style. This cover is very impressive. Everyone, do you notice the letters “Jonah” is hidden in the cover?

Kunugi: Yeesss! I deeed notice that!

Akizuki: Oops ... I did not ...

Ryusui: A cow head and the letters “Jonah” are hidden in it. J-O-N-A-H. Jonah.

Tanya: The pronunciation is actually Yona, even though it is ‘Jonah’ in English.

Ryusui: We know “Jonah” in the Old Testament. The Jonah. In the story of “The Samejima Case”, the episode from the bible is told.

Akizuki: That’s right.

Tanya: Beautiful cover, isn’t it?

Ryusui: Such small tricks tend not to be noticed by the readers. So, we would like to emphasize it.

Kunugi: Right. If the visual trick is out there, we might as well mention it.

6. Story Collection “Seven Stories” and “The Sky Crawlers”



Ryusui: We would like to move on to the next topic about Dr. MORI, Hiroshi. Dr. MORI was selected as the “Hall of Fame Author” by Amazon.co.jp, so we can call him one of the most popular novelists in Japan. Also, he leads The BBB as the ace of the staff. Dr. MORI’s works dominate the sales rankings for our paid eBooks. We really appreciate his massive contribution. As planned since 2013 when we started publishing his works, we released his seventh short mystery fiction story named “Which Is the Witch?” in March 2016. At the same time, seven of his English works that had been released from The BBB were made into a story collection named “Seven Stories”. Although we have published his short stories individually up to that point, the story collection was boasting the volume that was as ample as that for typical paper-based physical books. So, I was overwhelmed with the deep emotion when I got to that point. At the end of the story collection, I wrote an interpretative article from the perspective of a translator and an editor. Also, as a privilege for readers who have bought it, we would offer the Japanese version of the interpretative article to them if they sent us the screenshots of the purchase page when they bought it. More people than expected e-mailed us, which made us really happy. We were so glad because, without such offers from us, we usually do not receive this much of response from our readers. Shortly after we published the story collection “Seven Stories”, on April 5, 2016, which was the 20th anniversary of Dr. MORI’s debut as a novelist, we announced the publication of the English version of his masterpiece “The Sky Crawlers”. The voices like “Amazing!” were sent to us directly and indirectly.



Akizuki: I, too, was really surprised because I had not heard it in advance. I did not think about the possibility that the English version of the existing masterpiece, currently available as paper-based physical books, would be published from The BBB as eBooks. I have the impression that it is not always easy for The BBB to get the rights to publish such titles ...

Ryusui: The dream project has come true thanks to the cooperation from Dr. MORI. I think we at The BBB have tried really new challenges for the projects of Ms. Ami Sakurai, Mr. Masa Kubo, and Dr. MORI's "The Sky Crawlers". We did not aim to simultaneously work on these projects on purpose. They just happen to run parallel to each other, completely by accident.

Kunugi: So many deeply major projects flooded into our schedule with so much density and intensity, to the level that the chief editor and I could not help but scream our guts out, to the extent that we seriously contemplated pulling off a midnight vanishing act of flying-by-night ...

Ryusui: We managed to publish Dr. MORI's works as planned. But the projects of Ms. Sakurai and Mr. Kubo were brought to us irregularly, and that affected us quite a lot. We had to publish Ms. Sakurai's works to correspond with her movie schedule, which had been planned for a long time. We also had to publish Mr. Kubo's works as early as possible because he was struggling against and suffering from the disease. So, we could not postpone any of the planned publishing dates.

Akizuki: The fact that they happened simultaneously means there must be some spiritual stream of destiny. Dr. MORI and Ms. Sakurai both have established the 20-year careers as the chief editor has done so. I am sensing the fate that is happening ...

Ryusui: I knew you would be the one to come up with the spiritual notion, Mr. Akizuki, for you are into the spiritual matters. (Laughter) We have veered off from the track. Let me get back to where we were. "The Sky Crawlers" is the only work that Dr. MORI himself admits it is THE masterpiece among nearly 300 book titles. In other words, it is the pinnacle of the 300 books from Dr. MORI, Hiroshi, one of the most popular novelists in Japan. This work was made into an animation movie by the world-class movie director, Mamoru Oshii, and the production boosted the novel into the status of the huge bestseller. The masterpiece, which has already made a huge success and been known to the world by Mr. Oshii's movie, is being published from The BBB. The meaning that this fact possesses is immeasurably immense.

Kunugi: It indeed has a really huge meaning in it. I think so, too.

Ryusui: Readers' reactions after the publication were also huge. We received e-mails, saying, "When will the sequel come out?", from abroad. It was the first time for us to get so many feedbacks from abroad.

Tanya: I am a designer. So, I was fascinated with the great cover arts. I think the covers of "Seven Stories" and "The Sky Crawlers" are especially wonderful.

Ryusui: The cover of "Seven Stories" was drawn by the illustrator Ms. SASAKI, Subaru, who is the wife of Dr. MORI. This cover is really eye-catching and I really love it, too. The cover of "The Sky Crawlers" is drawn by a mysterious illustrator named "mm". This illustrator usually works under another pseudonym. Thanks to Dr. MORI's recommendation, we got the opportunity to offer this illustrator a deal to draw the covers. It's a very artistic cover, which ideally matches the setting of the novel. A really great talent.

Tanya: Are the covers of "The Sky Crawlers" oil paintings? Or, watercolor paintings?

Ryusui: I was told that they are drawn by using computer graphics. I was shocked.

Tanya: What? Really?

Ryusui: I was really amazed. They definitely look like they are hand-drawn. But, I hear that they are CGs.

Tanya: The story itself is great, of course. We need not to mention that over and over.

Ryusui: Mr. Akizuki, you won the 20th Mephisto Prize, one of the most prestigious prizes for up-and-coming novelists in Japan. So, I guess you have a special attachment to Dr. MORI, Hiroshi, who won the 1st Mephisto Prize.

Akizuki: Indeed. In my case, I was really into the novels of Mr. Natsuhiko Kyogoku, who is told to be the major contributor to the launch of Mephisto Prize. After that, I read Dr. MORI's novels and the chief editor's books. Then, I read many novels of Mephisto Prize winners, and then submitted my works to the prize committee.

Kunugi: Oh, That is what you did.

Tanya: It's like a mysterious destiny.

Akizuki: About the Mephisto Prize, there are pages at the end of the magazine, and there is a section, in which editors discuss the submitted stories by the contestants. And we, each applicant or the contestant, can receive comments for the stories that we have written. Thanks to this system, we could know what points we should revise, the next time we write stories and submit them to the same prize contest. So, I first read the books of the authors who have already won the award and made the debut as professionals. After studying the tendency and what I can do to improve my stories, I applied the patterns to my next stories, and I eventually won the prize. There is no way for the entrants of other literary contests to know what has gone wrong, because there is no such opportunity for receiving the constructive criticism. The operators of the Mephisto Prize pointed out my weak points. That is what is so good about the Mephisto Prize.

Ryusui: I see. Dr. MORI is the 1st Mephisto Prize winner. Mr. Akizuki, do you have a special feeling about the fact that your stories and Dr. MORI's now belong to the same lineup for The BBB?

Akizuki: Of course, I do. I once had an opportunity to meet Dr. MORI at the Mephisto Prize gathering. He was friendly and mild-mannered. It differed from what I had thought he would be like.

Kunugi: About Dr. MORI, I have the impression of being the terrifying one. He scares me.

Ryusui: On that particular day, when Dr. MORI met Mr. Akizuki, he might have been in a good mood. (Laughter)

Akizuki: Is it true?

Ryusui: Dr. MORI usually has an aspect like a warlord in the Sengoku Period, or the age of the provincial wars in Japan. If you fail the mission, he will execute you by chopping your head off.

Kunugi: Scary!!

Ryusui: Dr. MORI is gentle. He is not just gentle, though. He is kind to people who can obey his rules and keep his precious promises. However, if someone makes a strange mistake, he is just downright merciless.

Tanya: Whatever happens to him, I think it is usually the editor's fault. It is just that basic social manners have to be minded.

Kunugi: I'm scared ... That makes me shudder with fear. I am telling you.

Ryusui: Beside that, Mr. Kunugi, what impression do you have on Dr. MORI?

Kunugi: Especially when I was proofreading "The Sky Crawlers", I felt that my academic background as a physics major at a university in the United States, which is quite strong in the field of science, had finally paid dividends.

Ryusui: Good point. That is also what I think.

Kunugi: If I had majored in literatures and had not studied science at all, the proofreading work would have been far more difficult for me.

Ryusui: Surely, the work includes lots of technical knowledge.

Kunugi: I bought books about aerodynamics and aviation, along with glossaries of technical terms. I put them beside me. I think my abilities other than English were tried and tested, even more than my English. Of course, my proofreading skills were thoroughly put to the test for each story in “Seven Stories”. Generally speaking, novelists are not good at science and technology. However, Dr. MORI is an exception. By the way, if I remember correctly, the chief editor once described the characters in Dr. MORI’s stories as cool, correct?

Ryusui: Correct. In this case, it means sophisticated. Or ... cold, in a way.

Tanya: You mean intellectual? Or, lacking emotions?

Ryusui: In a good way, the characters lack emotions.

Tanya: Are you saying that they have the philosophical viewpoints?

Kunugi: Just calling it ‘cool’ might cause a misunderstanding. The pieces created by Dr. MORI are novels, because they are so deep that the characters who appear in his novels cannot merely be described with just one word, ‘cool’.

Ryusui: The author dares to go beyond the limit that might be misunderstood. That is the very appeal of Dr. MORI’s works. In the way, his style is cool. Personally, I have the impression that he might see human beings as if they were dolls. Such a perspective of his is really cool, I think.

Tanya: I think it might be like artificial intelligence (AI). It is like the whole world is made from formulas. I have an impression on his works in which even the characters’ actions are systemized.

Kunugi: Ah, I got it. Now, I feel I am fully convinced.

Ryusui: I described his work as cool because of the author’s cool perspective. I think it is really great.

Kunugi: Sure, I agree with you.

Ryusui: When proofreading “The Sky Crawlers”, Mr. Kunugi sent me e-mails describing questions about the descriptions of the aircrafts. I asked Dr. MORI about them and he explained them to us unbelievably clearly. At the time, I was convinced that the world of the “The Sky Crawlers” is perfectly constructed in his brain. I personally learned a lot from the experience.

Kunugi: I had the same impression about that. We might have expected his answer to be something like, “I have forgotten about it completely, because I wrote it a long time ago.” However, in fact, we received his clear answers without any sign of hesitation.

Tanya: What kind of questions were they, by the way?

Ryusui: They were about the operations and the conditions of the aircrafts. They were questions, that were delving deep into minute details. For example, “When it says ‘taking a turn’ in this scene, does it mean a turn by 180 degrees or 360 degrees?” Or, “Does he raise or lower the elevator, to go up or down?” When I ask him such questions, his answers were completely clear. We received the answers that were definite and convincing. Is that not right, Mr. Kunugi?

Kunugi: Yeah, that’s right. We asked, for example, about whether the cockpit was facing up or down at what particular moment.

Ryusui: I remember that. I asked him whether the aircraft was supposed to be flipped upside-down at that scene. His explanation clearly provided the solutions to the parts we could not quite understand.

Kunugi: For example, about the description in which the enemy aircraft is attacking “from above”. The word ‘above’ does not necessarily mean the direction that is opposite of the ground, or the direction toward zenith. If the direction is ‘above’ from the point of view of the pilot, who is flying the aircraft that is flipped upside-down at that moment, then the enemy that is attacking from the ground can be described as attacking from ‘above’. I remember that I had the “Aha!” moment.

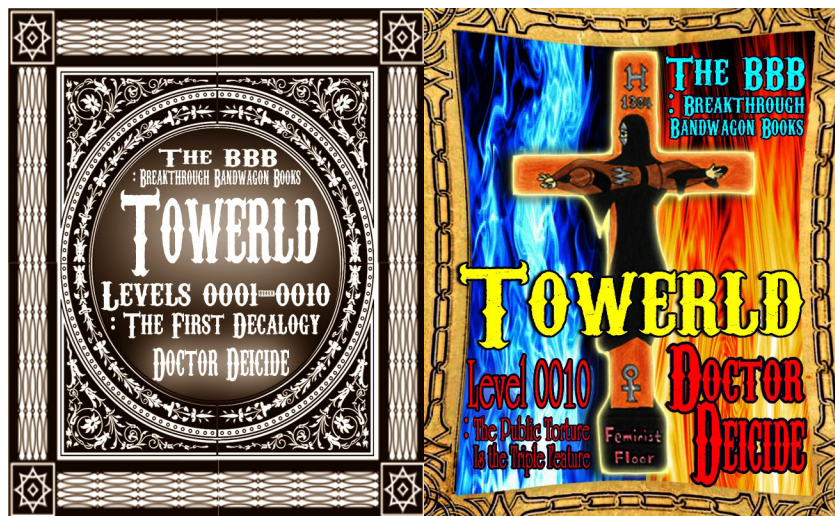
Ryusui: I understood well that the story was created in Dr. MORI’s brain, down to the minutest details. No contradiction whatsoever, all the way down to the finest details. As a novelist, I really learned a lot. That was the revelation.

Kunugi: I guess so. Although I’m not a writer, I still learned a lot.

Ryusui: And then, let me announce this. When we publish the third installment of “The Sky Crawlers”, we plan to publish the bind-up version of the work. At the end of the bind-up version, the interview with Dr. MORI will be included there. The interview has already been done.

Akizuki: I’m looking forward to it.

7. Unprecedented Feats Found in “Towerld”



Ryusui: This year’s Cast Party is getting closer to the final part, the climax. We have only two titles left to talk about. They are “Towerld” and “The Gifted”. Today, we have invited Mr. Akizuki as the special guest, so we will talk about “The Gifted” as the last, and not the least, topic.

Akizuki: Oh, my work is being saved for the last ... I’m thrilled ...

Ryusui: Let’s talk about “Towerld” first. We have finally reached “Towerld Level 0010”, a milestone of the series, in 2016. So, we published the bind-up version, which is called “The First Decalogy” by Doctor Deicide. By the way, “decalogy” is a coined word, right?

Kunugi: It seems to be a coined word, which was created decades ago by L. Ron Hubbard, a legendary science fiction novelist. I came to know it by searching through the Internet, because I’m not the author.

Ryusui: We have come this far to reach the point at which we finally released the tenth volume of the series. It is not the end of the story, and it still continues. When we publish this content, “Cast Party 2016”, “Towerld Level 0012” should also be available. As long as Mr. Kunugi keeps on checking the e-mail from Doctor Deicide more consistently ...

Kunugi: Ergh ... Oh, yes, right. I should check the e-mail regularly.

Ryusui: The notable feature of Level 0010 is that the singing and the musical performance by the Pluck Princess, the diva in the story, can be downloaded from The BBB website, for free. To begin with, Mr. Kunugi, how did you get the sound source? Did Doctor Deicide send it to you? It might mean that Doctor Deicide actually uses VOCALOID, though ...

Kunugi: Err, umm, it might be the Pluck Princess ...

Tanya: You got the e-mail from the Pluck Princess?!

Ryusui: Are you telling us that the character in the story sent you the e-mail?

Kunugi: Well, I do not know if the e-mail sender is legit, but the e-mail came with the signature signed by the Pluck Princess. So it seems.

Ryusui: You mean the Pluck Princess actually sent you the data of the sound source?

Kunugi: I myself do not know what identity the e-mail sender actually has.

Akuzuki: That sounds interesting. (Laughter)

Ryusui: Regardless of the details, (Laughter) I was really moved emotionally by the singing and the musical performance, because the lyrics include all the main scenes of the stories from Level 0001 to Level 0010. The singing and the musical performance, which can be downloaded by the readers, actually appear in the story as they are.

Kunugi: That is correct. The problem is that we do not know how many people have noticed that they can actually download the music all they want.

Ryusui: I make the announcement each time I have a chance. But, of course, we should emphasize it at this Cast Party, too.

Tanya: Hey, everyone! You can download the music for free from The BBB website!

Kunugi: Both English and Japanese versions are available.

Ryusui: Even if you are not willing to download it, you can listen to it only by clicking the button on the website. If you download it, the lyrics, included in the data, will be displayed on your hardware, such as iPhone, when you listen to it.

Kunugi: That's correct. Although I do not know who pasted the lyrics into the musical data, I'm impressed with the craftiness.

Tanya: It is made with a lot of care. I agree that it is user-friendly.

Ryusui: Maybe, readers who have yet to read the story would not be able to understand the lyrics too well. But, if you listen to it after reading the story, each scene would flash back in your memory, and it surely moves your heart and rocks your soul. Mr. Akizuki, how did you feel about that?

Akizuki: First of all, I was impressed by the fact that such a well-composed music was actually created. Of course, I understand that the one who created it is likely to be the Pluck Princess. I was also impressed by the fact that the lyrics cover all the impressive scenes in the stories that span 10 volumes.

Kunugi: Do you have any request? For example, "more musical instruments would be nice." In this particular case, the Pluck Princess is playing the various instruments by herself.

Ryusui: Yeah. It is the performance that is designed to recreate the descriptions in the story. At the scene in which the Pluck Princess switches her instrument to accordion, the instrumental part of the music also changes to the accordion. I think it is a very innovative way of letting the music and the story contextually synchronize with each other in parallel. This might be the first attempt at such collaboration in the world.

Akizuki: At first, I thought, "Oh, is there a song related to the novel? Who is singing?" I never thought the singer would be VOCALOID.

Kunugi: VOCALOID?

Akizuki: Umm, the Pluck Princess is singing the song, I suppose?

Ryusui: That is the Pluck Princess without any doubt. It cannot be VOCALOID.

Akuzuki: Oh, but you earlier said Doctor Deicide uses VOCALOID, didn't you? (Laughter)

Kunugi: Well, in my opinion, that is Pluck Princess.

Akizuki: Oh, is that so? Oops. I'm sorry about mentioning what we do not have to know ...

Kunugi: Well, I admit that the quality of the voice is surely similar to that.

Ryusui: Let me go through the overview. The first three volumes of “Towerld”, Level 0001 to 0003, can be downloaded for free. Even though there is no free offer for any of the volumes in the series after Level 0004, we made the bind-up version that includes 10 volumes and more reasonable. If you read the bind-up version, you can catch up with the latest volume with one bind-up volume. I earnestly wrote an interpretative article for the bind-up version.

Tanya: The bind-up version including 10 volumes sounds very gorgeous.

Ryusui: “Towerld Level 0012” should be published by the time this “Cast Part 2012” comes out. If you have yet to read “Towerld”, you might think, “I cannot read no less than 12 volumes.” But if you read the bind-up version, you can almost catch up with the latest storyline.

Kunugi: But those who want to catch up with it might want to read certain parts only. Maybe, they might need a summarized version, not a bind-up version.

Ryusui: I cannot deny the possibility. Among all The BBB works, “Towerld” is the only case in which three volumes of the fiction series are available for free. As I talked with Mr. Kunugi about that the other day, in fact, a fairly mysterious trend could be observed. The most frequently downloaded data of the three free “Towerld” titles is Level 0001, of course. But, actually, the second-most downloaded volume is Level 0003. In short, the order of the download counts goes like 0001, 0003, and 0002. As I exchanged opinions with Mr. Kunugi the other day regarding this issue, the readers might have trouble with reading 0002, after reading 0001. They may feel that it is too much work for them.

Akizuki: Oh, really?

Ryusui: I wonder if they thought they would understand 0002 by reading 0003 anyway. Or, 0003 may look attractive by itself in its own way. Mr. Akizuki, what do you think about that?

Akizuki: I wonder how anyone can skip just 0002.

Ryusui: I would not feel good if I skipped just 0002.

Akizuki: I would feel bad if I did so.

Tanya: I think it couldn't be that they didn't know the existence of 0002.

Akizuki: 0002 is very important because that adorable squirrel of the master appears ... I think readers should not skip it.

Ryusui: However, based on our data, not a few readers actually skip it.

Tanya: Is there not the possibility that an error occurred in the Amazon website?

Ryusui: No, I don't think so. Maybe, I think the title of 0003 looked attractive to the readers. In fact, I once gave a question to Doctor Decide through Mr. Kunugi, saying, “I think the words ‘theriocephalic thugs’ might be too difficult.” But, perhaps, on the other hand, I was also thinking that it might look attractive. I think so because there was once a case in which only “Towerld Level 0008” was sold suddenly. I think it is probably because the word “Barrier-free Brigade” in the title attracted the reader's attention. Maybe, the title “The Drug Lord, the Exotic Diva, and the Theriocephalic Thugs” is suggestive. That might be the reason why 0003 has been downloaded more than 0002.

Kunugi: I knew the title was important, after all.

Tanya: I think the word ‘drug’ in the title might be the factor.

Ryusui: Perhaps, the words ‘Drug Lord’ are attracting the attention of the readers?

Akizuki: I'm sure they are definitely strong words.

Ryusui: Surely, the title “The Drug Lord, the Exotic Diva, and the Theriocephalic Thugs” is provocative.

Tanya: Think about it. They are ‘drug’ and ‘diva’, right? They can definitely attract the attention of the readers.

Ryusui: As I know already, the title is the essential element ...

Tanya: Level 0002 features something ‘postal’.

Ryusui: “The Postal Princess” might not sound strongly impactful ... Personally, I love it, though. I think many people do not understand the meaning.

Tanya: Might some think it is the story about a pen pal?

Ryusui: Surely, compared to Drug Lord, it sounds pastoral. The gap of these images might be the cause of the differences in download counts.

Kunugi: It might be the reason.

Ryusui: Speaking of which, the title of Level 0001, “Escape from the Flooded Floor”, would stimulate the readers’ expectations. “Postal Princess” might sound a little too tender and rustic.

Tanya: It sounds like a pen pal.

Ryusui: Come to think of it, the title of Level 0010, “The Public Torture Is the Triple Feature”, is fairly stimulating.

Akizuki: Definitely, it is. I was astonished just by the impressive title and the cover of Level 0010 alone.

Ryusui: Although “Towerld” is not the only such case, our free contents are steadily spreading, whereas our paid contents are being downloaded at a very slow pace. Each series from The BBB shares the same problem. As we talk about it at Cast Party every year, the barrier between the free contents and the paid contents is so impenetrable. Of course, I understand it is the way it is.

Akizuki: I think so, too.

Ryusui: For example, many of us tend to prefer free apps and be hesitant about purchasing paid apps. Not preferring to pay for anything is a part of the human nature.

Tanya: Can we have the first half of each volume for free, and then buy the latter part by paying for it?

Ryusui: Or, we could publish a summarized version, which Mr. Kunugu mentioned earlier, for free. Not only “Towerld”, but also “The Gifted” and “Urban Legend Detectives” are getting more and more interesting as the volumes are piled up and the stories progress. But ... readers who stopped at the first volume would never know that.

Kunugi: How about attaching giveaways when selling eBooks? For example, even though readers download the music made by the Pluck Princess, they might not do the next action. I mean, purchasing an eBook. How about making the giveaways downloadable only after they buy the eBook?

Ryusui: But then, they might decide not to buy the novels.

Tanya: I doubt it. What do you think about, writing on the description webpage of the story that readers can receive giveaways, and listing the URL link in the downloadable eBook?

Ryusui: Actually, we already have done it for Ms. Sakurai’s works. We wrote a password in the eBooks. If readers enter it on the special webpage, they can watch the movies, in which high school female students show their appreciation to the readers/viewers by offering the greetings. However, it does not work well, at

least as of now. By the way, when Mr. Akizuki listened to last year's Cast Party, he gave me a feedback, saying, "Mr. Kunugi's voice sounds very good to me." Which made me come up with one idea. By the time we publish this "Cast Party 2016", the audiobook of "Towerld Level 0001" should be available as a downloadable content, for free.

You can watch
the special movies
of **high school girls**
by entering the secret password
found at the end of this ebook.



To Exclusive Page

One of the three girls
(Haya, Emery, and Hinako)
will be displayed **at random**.

* Purchasers can watch them
as many times as they like.



Akizuki: Wow! I'm really looking forward to that.

Ryusui: "Towerld" and "The Gifted" seem to share the common denominator of issues and topics. So, we might as well move on to talk about "The Gifted".

8. The Spreading Influence of “The Gifted” and “The Sifted”



Ryusui: About “The Gifted” and “The Sifted”, which Mr. Akizuki writes, their problems are exactly the same as that of “Towerld”. As I said earlier, “The Gifted” has the achievement to boast about. I mean, Vol.1 has taken the third place in The BBB free eBooks sales ranking. However, most of the readers have yet to proceed to Vol.2 because it is a paid piece. Then, I talked with Mr. Akizuki about the problem and asked him to write the restaurant review series, “The Sifted”. Since the series deals with good-looking dishes every time and it appears to be easier to get into, I am thinking that it might encourage the potential readers to start off with browsing “The Sifted”, rather than to tackle “The Gifted” right away. As a matter of fact, the download of “The Sifted” has been gradually increasing. As the author, Mr. Akizuki, what do you think about “The Gifted” and “The Sifted”?

Akizuki: What do I think? Umm, it might be difficult for me to say ...

Ryusui: By the way, in 2016 we published the bind-up version of “The Gifted”, which includes the first five volumes of the series. Mr. Makoto Sakuma, a painter, created a beautiful cover like a cherished collection of treasures. Actually, the cover of the bind-up version in English is designed as if the book is read from left to right, whereas the cover in Japanese looks like the book is read from right to left, a la Japanese style.

Tanya: How neat that is! Mr. Sakuma’s pictures always have wonderful tricks like that, don’t you think?

Ryusui: Oh, in addition, Mr. Sakuma is definitely a cat person. He holds a solo exhibition, which features cats, in Ginza every year.

Kunugi: I’m glad to hear that there are a few cat persons among The BBB casts ... Incidentally, Mr. Akizuki, what is your favorite food? As I read “The Sifted”, I make my guess that ramen is your favorite.

Akizuki: Originally, ramen was the favorite. But recently, I have been into sushi.

Kunugi: Is it because it is easy for us to enter ramen restaurants, with no dress codes or appointment required?

Akizuki: Before I started “The Sifted” series, ramen was almost the only choice when I tried out the food. I once ate at many restaurants when I was living in Germany. In Japan, I mainly chose ramen. I have eaten at 260 ramen restaurants to date.

Kunugi: Two hundred ... and sixty!

Ryusui: That’s so many. Probably, I entered about no more than 10 ramen restaurants in my whole life.

Akizuki: As for Japanese cuisine, I have entered only about 50 restaurants.

Kunugi: That is still a lot, I think.

Akizuki: For Italian, 32 restaurants.

Kunugi: You're impressive because you assertively said 32, not something like "approximately 30."

Akizuki: I keep a record of the restaurants I have eaten at.

Kunugi: One of the main characters of "The Gifted", Milo, also loves ramen, correct?

Akizuki: That is correct.

Ryusui: About "The Sifted", I think it is a very good idea to assign each main character to a different and distinctive style of food. Milo is in charge of ramen, Saya tries Japanese cuisine, Chloe goes for Western food, Riccardo is into Chinese dishes, and Yoma focuses on curries.

Akizuki: I think doing so makes it easier to write. Actually, each person's favorite food differs a little in "The Gifted". But I dare to assign each one each food in "The Sifted". As for Milo, he loves ramen in "The Gifted" and he has several favorite ramen restaurants in City.

Kunugi: Are there ramen restaurants in City?

Akizuki: Yes. At least two restaurants are there.

Kunugi: I knew you would keep the count under your control, too. (Laughter)

Akizuki: City is based on Munich, a real city. I jot down where a ramen restaurant is and where an Indian restaurant is in City. In the memorandum, I have various restaurants being placed and allocated.

Kunugi: I see. The world is solidly created in that way.

Ryusui: Like Dr. MORI's episode I mentioned earlier, the settings are perfectly created in each author's brain.

Akizuki: Not perfectly, in my case. But, roughly, I make it. (Laughter)

Tanya: I think it is important that it is based on Munich. After learning of the fact, we can imagine the world more easily than before.

Kunugi: About Dr. MORI's work. When I was playing a video game based on "The Sky Crawlers", I had an impression that the map was based on Europe. I wonder whether the author of any story should create the setting that is based on real places. I do not think that "Towerld" is based on any actual places in particular.

Akizuki: Is every single floor of "Towerld" planned from the beginning?

Kunugi: I don't know what Doctor Deicide does ...

Akizuki: Umm, I'm not sure, either. I just thought the author sets the goal from the beginning and the story goes there.

Kunugi: What if there is no such setting construction in advance ... For one thing, Doctor Deicide is like the natural phenomenon of the cosmic all that spans the dimensions, and blah, blah, blah.

Akizuki: If the story is created by the natural phenomenon, that might be the case. (Laughter) At first, I thought each of the numbers in the titles, Level 0001, 0002, corresponded to each floor. In other words, I thought each volume featured one distinct floor every time.

Ryusui: I guess the author might have planned to do so at least in the beginning. Of course, we cannot know the intention of Doctor Deicide.

Akizuki: I see. So, I was surprised in one volume, in which the characters did not go up to the next floor.

Kunugi: Conversely, in one occasion, they went down to the previously visited floor. Although I am just a mere agent, even I was surprised by the development of the story. I was like “What? Are they going down?” (Laughter)

Akizuki: I cannot say sure things. But I guess there are 1000 floors or 9999 floors in total, because the floor number in each title has four digits.

Ryusui: There is a great difference between 1000 and 9999. (Laughter)

Tanya: They are different by nearly 10 times.

Kunugi: We are talking about “Towerld”, again. By the way, I wonder if we will get the chance to see the crossover of “Towerld” and “The Gifted”? In “The Gifted”, there is an ability named “The Alien Elevator”. Sometimes I have a delusion. For example, when the elevator stops at a floor and the door opens, the scenery beyond the door is “Towerld”.

Akizuki: That could happen. The ability connects one world to a different universe.

Kunugi: Different universes can include “Towerld”, right?

Akizuki: Right.

Ryusui: If we can try such a special project, it will be definitely interesting.

Kunugi: In the first volume of “Towerld”, at the scene, which is also drawn as the cover art, the door, which Stairway Shieldian guards, might be “the Alien Elevator”. That is what I imagine.

Ryusui: Wow! That’s exciting!

Kunugi: But the floor might be submerged under water by now.

Akizuki: I wonder how fast the flooding is progressing. When I read it, I felt uneasy about those who were living in the floor.

Kunugi: They might be drowned by now. I’m curious about the possibility of someone living beneath the flooded floor.

Akizuki: I see your point. What would fisherpersons of the flooded floor do after refuging to the upper floors?

Tanya: I guess they will switch jobs.

Akizuki: I’m worried whether the supply of fish halts.

Kunugi: I guess such storylines would be gradually revealed in the future.

Ryusui: No one knows what Doctor Deicide thinks. Mr. Akizuki, do you have the goal of “The Gifted”?

Akizuki: Nothing. (Flat-out)

Kunugi: Is there a ringleader? Like White Friend and Black Friend in “Urban Legend Detectives”, is there a person who controls everything behind the scene ...?

Ryusui: As of now, we cannot find such a character.

Akizuki: No one is there. But if one character has an ability and desire to rule, he or she might employ subordinates. I take the style in which each episode is concluded in the episode, so I have yet to think about it.

Kunugi: The style which the episode is concluded every time, and the serially sequential stories both have strengths. Same for TV dramas. We cannot say that one is right and the other is wrong.

Ryusui: Readers can first read each episode of “The Gifted”. Some readers might think they have to read in the order, starting from Vol.1. Almost no one first reads Vol.5. Personally, I think “The Gifted Vol.5” is an amazingly great masterpiece, so I would like readers to read even just Vol.5.

Tanya: No, we would like readers to read Vol.2, 3, 4, as well. We recommend the bind-up version to the readers who have yet to read the series, because, that way, they can read all the works with just the single eBook.

Akizuki: Yes, because each volume introduces the previous episode a little. Time flows in the world, and their school grades will advance. They grow up, little by little.

Ryusui: One criminal case occurs per month, right?

Tanya: So, they experience the encounters with criminal cases every month. What a dense school life ... (Laughter)

Akizuki: If the intervals between the cases become too long, Milo and Saya might become a university student or get a job.

Tanya: I want to read such stories as well!

Ryusui: In short, something happens almost every day in their lives.

Akizuki: As one case is taking place, something else is already happening behind the scene. When one case actually happens at the point, it must have started and taken place before the previous case was solved.

Kunugi: Various things happen simultaneously. Things get even deeper and more involving ...

Akizuki: Recognizing cases takes time, because criminal cases cannot be noticed without the victims being discovered.

Ryusui: I see. By the way, this session has already been getting long. So, we will wrap it up, little by little.

9. About New Strategies of The BBB in 2017

Ryusui: I think not a few readers have proceeded to “The Gifted” after they read the restaurant review of “The Sifted”. Because “The Gifted Vol.1” is always downloaded after we publish the latest eBook of “The Sifted”. However, the readers who proceed to “The Gifted Vol.2” are still not many. We always want to break the stalemate. Mr. Akizuki, do you have anything in your mind about that?

Akizuki: Honestly, I’m worried that the ending of Vol.1 might not be good. I mean, it was a little too dark.

Ryusui: As of Vol.1, the appeals and the potential of “The Gifted” series were not known to the readers at all. This is similar to the readers of “Towerld” not being able to understand and appreciate the true appeals of the series just by reading up to Level 0003 and no more. I think it is such a waste if readers stop there because I know the series get more and more interesting beyond certain points. Since we publish the bind-up versions of both series, I would earnestly like the readers to be interested in them. We discuss this issue of trying to break the sales stalemate every year, so we want to find the breakthrough. It’s not productive for us not to take any measures.

Kunugi: I want to try to release sound tracks of The BBB.

Ryusui: Come to think of it, I remember Mr. Kunugi once said, “I wonder if Mr. Akizuki has thought of making the characters of “The Gifted” form a rock band.” If someone creates such music, it might become an interesting challenge. It’s like The Gifted Band. Cool name, isn’t it? I feel the band like that might exist somewhere.

Tanya: That sounds enjoyable! I want to join it by playing the piano.

Kunugi: Mr. Akizuki, have you thought about such an idea?

Akizuki: Umm ... I have no idea how I can form such a rock band.

Ryusui: For example, Mr. Akizuki will be singing enthusiastically. Imagine that. (Laughter)

Akizuki: Oh, no, no, no. (Laughter) If we try, the vocalist has to be Saya.

Ryusui: This year Mr. Pikotaro’s “PPAP”, “Pen-Pineapple-Apple-Pen”, made a huge breakthrough all around the world. I think we might have a content like that to start off the new trend. I mean, for example, there may a mysterious movie, which can make readers be interested in “The Gifted” and “Towerld”.

Kunugi: You mean it’s a highly addictive tune, right? Not just good music. It has to be catchy enough to make us sing before we know what we are doing.

Ryusui: Mr. Kunugi has just told us that he wants to create sound tracks of The BBB. If it is a highly addictive theme tune, it might be worth trying. It’s like a musical tune that makes readers want to read the sequels to the novel of the series. It might be quite demanding. (Laughter)

Kunugi: I can e-mail and ask the mystery person with the signature of the Pluck Princess. I’m not sure if the one would create it because I don’t know who the person is. By the way, I think there actually are highly addictive tunes. I find myself singing it although I might have only listened to it just once. I do not even have to like such tunes. I think that the common denominator of such addictive tunes is the key that lies in repeating the same words. Like the theme tunes of the movie “Ponyo”.

Ryusui: I remember that. It is just the repeating of “ponyo-ponyo”.

Kunugi: I remember the repeated phrase of “gimme gimme gimme gimme”, in a song of Baby Metal.

Ryusui: Then, we might create the phrase like tower-tower-tower-Towerld, or like gif-gif-gif-Gifted.

Akizuki: Gif-gif ...? (Laughter)

Kunugi: From the objective point of view, a highly addictive tune sounds a little bit silly because it repeats the same words ...

Tanya: Anyway, it's a win if it lingers in people's ears.

Kunugi: If it lingers in people's ears, gets embedded in their memories, and makes the listeners move their mouths, then the music can declare the victory.

Ryusui: I think it's a good strategy, if it is possible. If the mysterious Pluck Princess creates such music, that is.

Kunugi: At any rate, I can do nothing but e-mail and ask the person.

Ryusui: We talked earlier about the crossover of the series. If the Pluck Princess can create the theme tune of "The Gifted", that should be fun.

Kunugi: It's a kind of crossover as well. In "Towerld", the main character Hector is supposed to be a bookworm. For example, he might encounter a book, titled "The Gifted", supposedly written in the days of an ancient civilization. After reading it, the Pluck Princess may create the music, in the storyline of "Towerld" and then in this reality.

Ryusui: If we create soundtracks, we might be able to delve deeper into more various possibilities than before. The theme tune of "The Gifted". The theme tune of "Urban Legend Detectives". It might be difficult to make one for "The Sky Crawlers" because of the copyright matters ... But for "The Gifted", it is okay if Mr. Akizuki agrees with it and grants us permission.

Akizuki: Of course, I agree. I don't fully understand the issue too well, though.

Ryusui: Besides, about a new strategy of "The Gifted", we are planning to publish the interview with Mr. Makoto Sakuma, who draws the covers of the series. I would like Mr. Sakuma to talk about the secrets of his drawing covers that includes those for "The Gifted".

Tanya: I'm really looking forward to the inside stories of Mr. Sakuma's drawing works.

Ryusui: Moreover, I have a delusionary wish list, that includes the interview with Doctor Deicide some day in the future. I ask Mr. Kunugi to send questions to the author. I expect interesting answers in the replies. And I sometimes talk jokingly with Mr. Akizuki about the possibility that we might publish the spiritual interview. (Laughter)

Akizuki: But, no one may be able follow us ... (Laughter)

Ryusui: If you, our readers, have any opinions about that, please feel free to give us your feedbacks. Today, we have talked about various things and already spent much more time than we did last year ... I think we had dense talks of high intensity. At the end of this year's Cast Party, I would like each of the three of you to make a comment or the resolution of the sort.

Kunugi: Because I am an agent, what I can do might be limited.

Ryusui: You can make a resolution like, e-mailing more frequently with determination? But surely, even if Mr. Kunugi does the best, it may not have too much to do with Doctor Deicide.

Akizuki: In my case, I will do everything at my own pace. "The Gifted Vol.6" is going to be published in January 2017. But in fact, I have had a trouble in writing Vol.7. Because I have yet to find the solution to breaking the writer's block, I have been stuck in the middle for a long time.

Ryusui: As for "The Sifted", haven't you gotten into the slump?

Akizuki: I feel easy about that, because I already have the list of many restaurants to review.

Tanya: I hope to provide Cast Party through the Internet every month some day. I should call it “The BBB Radio” rather than Cast Party. When I was active as a costume player in the past, I once provided Internet Radio program regularly.

Kunugi: Oh, that’s great! Sounds like a lot of fun. We might invite a guest every month, might we?

Ryusui: Although scheduling might be difficult, I want to try it if we can make a good opportunity. We cannot correctly predict what our situations may turn out to be at the end of 2017. Anyway, dear our readers, we would like you to support The BBB in 2017. And thank you for reading or listening to this talk today. Mr. Akizuki, as a special guest, Mr. Kunugi, and Tanya, I would like to thank the three of you, too.

Akizuki, Kunugi, and Tanya: Thank you so much!!

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