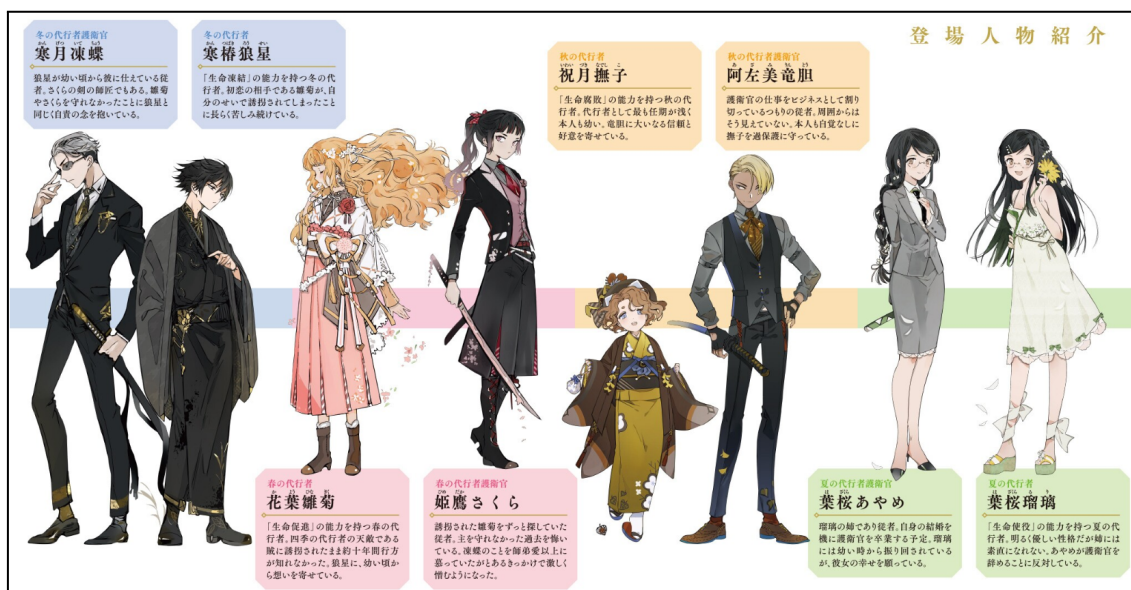


**Confidential**

KADOKAWA / Light novel  
**Agents of the Four Seasons: Spring Cometh**



By Kana Akatsuki  
Illustrations by Suou



Characters Who Appear in This Story from left to right

**Escort of the Agent of Winter**

Itecho Kangetsu

Servant under Rosei since he was a child. Also mentored Sakura's swordsmanship. Like Rosei, blames himself for failing to protect Hinagiku and Sakura.

**The Agent of Winter**

Rosei Kantsubaki

Agent of Winter who possesses the power to freeze life. Has suffered without end due to Hinagiku, his first love, being kidnapped because of him.

**The Agent of Spring**

Hinagiku Kayo

Agent of Spring who possesses the power to accelerate life. Her whereabouts were unknown for about ten years after being kidnapped by insurgents who are the sworn enemies of the Agents of the Four Seasons. Has been fond of Rosei since they were children.

**Escort of the Agent of Spring**

Sakura Himedaka

Hinagiku's servant who never stopped searching for her since she was kidnapped. Regrets her past failure for being unable to protect her master. Looked up to Itecho to a degree that went beyond the love between mentor and pupil, but started despising him after a certain occurrence.

**The Agent of Fall**

Nadeshiko Iwaizuki

Agent of Fall who possesses the power to decompose life. Has served as an Agent for the shortest time, a fact also reflected in her young age. Is highly trusting and fond of Rindo.

**Escort of the Agent of Fall**

Rindo Asami

Servant of the Agent of Fall whose role as her escort is just business to him. Those around him would say that it is more than that. Is overly protective of Nadeshiko without even realizing it.

### **Escort of the Agent of Summer**

Ayame Hazakura

Is Ruri's older sister as well as her servant. Planning to hang up her role as escort as soon as she gets married. Has been wrapped around Ruri's finger since a young age, but wishes for her happiness.

### **The Agent of Summer**

Ruri Hazakura

Agent of Summer who possesses the power to cause life. Has a cheerful and kind personality but is incapable of being honest with her older sister Ayame. Is against Ayame's plans to stop being her escort.

## **Chapter 1: Hinagiku Kayo, Agent of Spring**

In the beginning, there was Winter.

Winter was the only season in the world. Unable to deal with the solitude, Winter shortened its own life and created a different season, which it called Spring. Spring looked up to Winter as its mentor and would always follow it around.

To answer the love and respect that Spring showered on it, Winter instructed and guided Spring, and the two of them continued their seasonal cycle in harmony.

However, along the way, the earth strained under the weight, as if to say that it has practically no time to rest.

Animals cultivate love in Spring, only to hibernate in Winter. Trees are covered in green leaves in Spring, only to become frozen in Winter. The earth thought that if that was how things would be, a Winter world where everyone just stood still and endured things was enough.

The earth's logic was that the reason people can't endure the arrival of a Winter world is because they already know what Spring is like.

Winter was saddened by earth's feelings on the matter but listened to its request nonetheless, and parted with more of its life to create two more lives—Summer and Fall. Summer, with its grueling heat, was Winter's way of expressing grief to the earth for shunning it. Fall, which exhibits a gradual end of life, was a time for the earth to reconcile with it.

The earth accepted this new arrangement, and with that, its seasons entered a cycle of Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter.

The four seasons would circle the world, each following another. In doing so they brought about seasonal transitions.

Spring continued to follow Winter, followed by Summer then Fall. Winter would look behind it and still find Spring there, but it wasn't like before when it was just the two of them. The special relationship between the two of them was over.

Winter had loved Spring in the same way that animals join with a mate and live together. Spring, too, loved Winter, as if they were bound to be together.

Picking up on the secret passion between the two, Fall and Summer made a suggestion to them: Why not leave their role to beings who lived on the earth?

Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall then imparted some of their power to beings who would spend a year roaming the earth, called Agents of the Four Seasons.

In the beginning, the four seasons give their roles to cows, but they were too slow on foot, causing the year to end without Winter ever turning to Spring.

Next, the four seasons gave the role to rabbits, but in the course of the year, they would die, eaten up by wolves.

Birds managed to fill those shoes wonderfully, but would forget their roles once the new year started.

Just as the four seasons mulled over what they should do, humans finally appeared and offered to do the job. In return, they asked the seasons to bring peace and prosperity to the earth.

The four seasons imparted their power to certain humans, and Winter gained the time to love Spring forever.

Thus, Agents of the Four Seasons came into being.

The god of Spring, who looked like a little girl, was staring out a window.

Reflecting in her yellow crystal eyes, a rarity in the world, were the blue sky free of clouds and the white earth.

It was Winter. The soft light of the morning lit up the entirety of this land, called "Yamato."

The morning gently enveloped the mountains, which were covered in silver-colored snow.

"....."

The girl let out a long breath from her lips, impressed at what she saw.

This season, a gift from the god of Winter, may have lacked in color compared to Spring, but it was beautiful.

At the same time, this beauty visible to the eye was not the only thing that Winter brought to people.

Winter was the season of death. It left food scarce and sunlight limited, and the accompanying cold ate away at the body.

Still, without Winter, the earth could never rest, and would wither away before long.

Seasons are inevitable, and they color the lives of the people who dwell on the earth. However, they are not something that naturally occur. Rather, they are the work of living gods who inhabit the current times – four gods for four seasons.

It is not deeply known how days continuing without end are actually a gift born from a larger miracle and sacrifice. People, cruel as they are, make that good grace a part of their everyday life.

At the hands of people who have entered a pact with a greater existence back in the age of the gods, the four seasons fall upon everyone fairly, from people who want tomorrow to come to those who pray that it never does.

It has always been that way from the dawn of time.

“We’ll be arriving any minute now, Master Hinagiku.”

Yearning like someone in love, the young girl, Hinagiku, stared in fascination at the silver world.

The view from the train window was snow-fallen scenery that looked like it has lost its color. For the people who inhabited this world, it was ordinary, everyday scenery. For several months now, the world has been enveloped in the severe yet lonely season of Winter. From the perspective of people for whom this was their everyday existence, it may sound like there is nothing that they should take note of. For the girl, however, the scenery captivated her. Perhaps it was because the outside world was a rare sight for her, or perhaps it was because she liked snow, a symbol of the season of Winter.

While it was unclear which of these it was, both her eyes and her heart were smitten to the point that she was unable to respond to the voice calling out to her.

She let out another long breath.

“Master Hinagiku?”

The voice called out for her again, this time with an echo of reproach in how it sounded. Hinagiku finally pulled her conscious back into reality and turned her face to the person calling out to her.

Right at that moment, the train shook considerably. Hinagiku’s body jumped like a ball.

Almost immediately, her body was supported by a slender arm. A girl next to her who looked like her servant had saved her.

“Are you alright?”

Perhaps it was the suddenness of it all that left the servant surprised as well, but her pupils further opened up not unlike a cat. She had the beauty of a flower in every aspect. Her black hair, tied up in a knot behind her head with a check-pattern hair ornament, was like cherry blossoms blossoming in the night, dyed in a gradation that went from jet black to grayish pink and forming a spiral shape. After confirming that Hinagiku was not hurt, she said, “Pardon me” and removed her hand. With her suit jacket, shiny sappanwood-red necktie and peach blossom-colored vest paired with three quarter-length hakama pants and lace-up boots, one could say that she looked like a modern-day waiting maid. The katana hanging from her waist drew nearly as much attention as the dignified beauty of the girl.

“.....”

Hinagiku seized the hand of her servant as it was leaving her and stared intensely at the girl, her face pleading “Whatever happens, don’t leave me” without saying a word.

The long, peacock feather-like eyelashes of her servant fluttered as if she were surprised.

“The train is not done shaking. Please be careful.”

Her lips then formed a smile, and she squeezed Hinagiku’s hand back as if to return affection with affection.

Their body temperatures gradually mingled with each other’s.

The clickety-clack of the local train gently shook both girls as it ran along the coast.

Hinagiku turned her glance back towards outside the train, saying, “It’s...pretty...isn’t it? I...like...Winter.”

Her voice has a lisp, yet sounded as clear as sugar candy.

The unique, broken manner of her speech might cause some people who hear it to frown upon it.

“I’m not so sure. I myself think Spring is prettier.”

The voice that answered Hinagiku was clear-sounding and echoed beautifully.

“...that’s right...You...hate...Winter.”

“Yes. I despise it,” answered the servant girl, or Sakura as she was called, with an expression that looked like she was going to click her tongue in disapproval. She continued, “Winter is

something that I must detest," her words filled with an anger that she was unable to conceal. "Th...that's..."

Hinagiku frowned at what Sakura had said.

"It's...my...fault...that...you feel...like that..."

"No, it's Winter's fault. Not yours."

"No...it's...mine..."

With a complicated look on her face, Sakura whispered, "It's not your fault."

As if to change the subject, Hinagiku said, "...I'm back...on duty today...so, maybe...I can meet... a Winter official..."

"The Four Seasons Agency issued a proclamation that Spring was returning, so yes, I imagine you'll have contact with one eventually."

"When...will I go...apologize...to the Agent of Winter...to Rosei?"

"Why do you have to apologize? If the Agent of Winter was coming to apologize to you, I'd get it."

"It's just that...I'm...someone different...plus Rosei...he's...um..."

"You are Hinagiku Kayo, this land's Agent of Spring."

"I know...but...Rosei...I'm sure...he'll be...disappointed...I feel...so sorry...to make him feel...like that..."

"...that's in the past now. You are the one. Should say it a thousand times?" whispered Sakura as she squeezed back Hinagiku's hand even tighter, which Hinagiku responded to in kind. Their conversation, though incomprehensible to others, carried a dense air that no one else could penetrate. Perhaps out of some kind of anxiety, Hinagiku started to tap her small feet that peered out from under her hakama pants.

She then muttered in a whisper, "I wonder...if today's ritual...will go well...?"

Her words indicated a lack of confidence that was not lost on Sakura, who quietly declared, "It will. Without question. I promise" as she put a hand on her chest with an air of resolution about her. Hinagiku frowned at Sakura's reply.

"Even though...I'm the one...doing it...?"

Sakura flashed Hinagiku, whose tone was accusatory but also somewhat wheedling, a bright smile. "You..." she started, staring intently at Hinagiku's yellow crystal eyes visible in the gaps of her black hair. Hinagiku, too, returned the look.

"You will do anything to keep me, right? That's what you promised." Sakura's words almost sounded seductive in nature, to which Hinagiku replied straightforwardly and frankly without so much as batting an eyelash.

"That's right. For that...I would...do anything. Even...make flowers bloom...in Spring. Or even...melt snow."

Such was this exchange between the girl called the Agent of Spring and the girl who was her servant.

"You said it."

"Yes...I did..."

The relationship between these two girls of differing stature was one of master and servant.

"In that case, in order for you to fulfill your duty...I would gladly lay down my life."

"You...must do...no such thing..."

"If that is what you command, I shall certainly do my best."

"Please...do..."

"...as you wish."

As the local train arrived at the station, these two girls, both with Spring flowers in their name, stood up in unison and set foot onto the snow-laden earth.

Standing out in the center of the great plain that lay before them was "Yamato."

The land called Yamato could be found to the east on a world map, and was also known as

the “cherry blossom trees of the Orient” due to the rows of islands that make up Yamato resembling broken off-twigs of cherry blossom trees in full bloom. The Yamato Archipelago was largely made up of the following five islands from the north on down: Enishi, Teishu, Iyo, Tsukushi and Ryugu.

Enishi was rich in natural resources. Yamato’s self-sufficiency rate was almost completely accounted for by Enishi, which also hosted spacious land. If you asked the native people of Yamato where to find idyllic scenery on the peninsula, Enishi would come to mind.

Teishu hosted Teito, the capital of Yamato, and prospered as an international city. In turn, Teito was home to Yamato’s principal airport, and could be called the land’s gateway to the skies.

This richly-international land was also home to many foreigners in addition to the native people of Yamato.

The island of Iyo was famous for its hot spring resorts, and had prospered as a land of hot-spring curing since long ago. Even in modern times, its main source of revenue was tourism in its hot springs resort towns. Iyo was massively popular as a site of travel within Yamato.

Tsukushi was dotted with sacred mountains and volcanos that were particularly well-known in Yamato’s history, and also hosted large numbers of historical structures. While the island tended to be viewed as Yamato’s old capital, it was in fact a modern city that had struck a successful balance between tourism and industry.

The last of Yamato’s islands, Ryugu, was on the archipelago’s southernmost tip, and nurtured a habitat whose plant and animal life both differed from those on the other islands. Its seas were populated by coral; its mountains, trees called “protectors from the wind.” Ryugu was one of Yamato’s most renowned resort destinations, and in normal circumstances, would be warm year-round.

The place where the girl master and her girl servant set foot on was Ryugu on the southernmost tip of the archipelago.

“Wow...the town...the snow here...I thought Ryugu...only had an airport...”

At present, Ryugu had lost its unique look as a resort destination because of the snow. It was beyond recognition.

“It’s...supposed...to be a warm...tropical country...right...?” asked a puzzled Hinagiku. Sakura answered her with a wry smile.

“...right now, the four seasons are in disarray. Because of that, other seasons have become more powerful as a matter of course. Call it the disruption of balance, if you will. When there is only Summer, Fall and Winter, this was bound to happen...”

Hinagiku looked down, her expression suddenly turning to a pained one.

“I’m...sorry...”

“You don’ t have to be sorry. Besides...we’re here to find an answer to this phenomenon that has go on for so long, right?”

“...right...”

“...Master Hinagiku, we’ll be seeing a lot more of this scenery from here on out. Please don’t force yourself to look at it. It will burn your eyes. You really shouldn’t look at snow for long. If anything, just focus on me. Now that’s a good idea. Consider snow to be poison.”

There was some playfulness in Sakura’ s voice, but Hinagiku shook her head.

“...you shouldn’t...be soft on me...I’ll look at it...even if it burns my eyes...that’ s my job...”

“Are you sure?”

“...I’m sure...”

It was the tenth day of the month of February in the twentieth year of the Reimei Era. Almost immediately, the news that a god and her servant paid a visit to Ryugu spread across the island.

After Sakura had given a phone call to the largest town hall on the island, five minutes later, a private car driven by a town hall worker drifted coolly to a halt in front of the station to pick them up. The driver, who appeared noticeably pale, drove the two young girls to town hall, where the poor worker who tended to them seemed to be desperately preoccupied with whom he could blame in the event that something went wrong upon their visit.

He droned on, “An Agent of the Four Seasons! We...certainly weren’t expecting you today! We welcome Agents to our island every year but didn’t get a notice from the Four Seasons Agency this time, so we’re very surprised...I see...so Hinagiku, Agent of Spring, wants to keep her visit low profile...um, I mean, we have no problem with that. It’s just that since you arrived so suddenly today, we didn’t have a chance to prepare to welcome you...you don’t need our help? Understood...I will issue a mountain entrance permit right away...”

Sakura found the worker’s unspoken implications of who would take the blame to be unpleasant, and cut him off to end the conversation.

“Puny being,” she thought.

With a fed-up look on her face, she returned to the private room where Sakura was waiting. People who had originally come to town hall to submit some paperwork or consult over personal affairs had gathered en masse in front of the room to catch a glimpse of Hinagiku as if they had heard a rumor of her presence. While workers were handling the situation in front of the door, some people were forcefully trying to open it. Most of them were on in years, but other, younger individuals, could be seen with their cell phone in one hand ready to take a picture of Hinagiku whenever she appeared. Sakura hurriedly ran to the room.

“Master Hinagiku! Master Hinagiku!”

Sakura cut through the mob of people, but found it hard to get through.

“...don’t cluster together! She’s not on exhibition, you know!” she yelled.

This finally got the crowd to open up a pathway. Upon entering the private room, which looked like a simple waiting room on the inside, Sakura saw her Master, whom she had alarmedly rushed to protect, cowering in a corner of the room with her arms wrapped around her knees.

“Master Hinagiku! Are you alright!?”

Hinagiku, who looked just like a pill bug, finally raised her upper body once Sakura approached her and touched her shoulder.

“...Sakura...people I don’t know...tried to force their way in here...”

Her pale-white countenance and shaking hands spoke to how scared she must have been.



**KADOKAWA**

Contact:  
KADOKAWA CORPORATION  
Original Licensing Business Department  
(Ms.) Shiki SOMA  
[soma-sh@kadokawa.jp](mailto:soma-sh@kadokawa.jp)