The Place Where We Belong

by Little Lady Otaku

Summary

Reborn’s opinion of Sawada Iemitsu is that the man is a complete fool. Everyone knows this. Reborn should have known better than to take Iemitsu’s words in face value. But he didn’t think he would fuck it up this bad.

In which Iemitsu’s child is not a dame middle schooler but an adult woman with a life of her own.

...They really, really need to check the inside of Iemitsu’s head.

Notes

I apologize for any grammar mistakes and typing errors in this story. English is not my first language.

If you dislike stories with original characters in it, please turn back now.

Enjoy!
See the end of the work for more notes.
Sawada Setsuna

Chapter Notes

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Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Tuna Fishy*

*Clumsy*

*Crybaby*

*Fluffy*

*Soft cheeks*

*Easily scared*

Those are the words scribbled on the yellow Post-It note Reborn found tucked in the manila folder. Baka Iemitsu didn’t even bother to use normal paper. You would think that at this point he would get used to the amount of paperwork that come in and out the office. Then again, this is *Iemitsu* we’re talking about. Reborn would not be surprised if Iemitsu’s kid is as bad as he described. Or worse. The kid is Iemitsu’s. That would explain everything.

But Reborn had worked on Dino. That boy was hopeless when Reborn first met him. Now? Dino is still *Dino* but he is more than fit to lead his Famiglia. Reborn will do the same to Sawada Setsuna. He is not training her to be a *Boss*. No. But the possibility didn’t escape them. After Enrico got killed in a gunfight and Massimo drowned, Vongola upper ranks are getting restless. The only candidate left is Federico. Xanxus, the youngest son, is not fit for candidacy for reasons only Nono
and his Guardians knew about. Iemitsu’s position in CEDEF means that he can’t inherit. The only one left is Sawada Setsuna, Iemitsu’s civilian daughter. Nono sent Reborn to Japan for observations.

*Just in case.*

There are three scenarios.

One, Federico become Decimo and live long enough to sire children.

Two, the situation have become more urgent but not to the point of emergency. To ensure that the Vongola bloodline won’t die out, Setsuna will be wed to Federico. And *maybe* to Xanxus if he ever get defrost.

Three, Federico is compromised, leaving Setsuna as the only candidate for the position of Decimo.

Scenario One is most preferable. Iemitsu has problems with the second scenario if Xanxus get involved. But he doesn’t seem to mind if Setsuna is to be wed to other Famiglias for the sake of making alliances. The girl won’t be married off anytime soon though. She is still in middle school after all. Plenty of time for Federico to take a wife. Still, if Setsuna is to be a mafia wife, she need to know how to protect herself and the basics.

That’s where Reborn come in, to teach Setsuna and prepare her for her upcoming involvement with the mafia. Basically grooming her.

*(There is the fourth scenario; where Setsuna get no involvement with the mafia at all. Slim chances that. Not after Reborn.)*

In any case, Reborn is given a mission and he intend to succeed. He never failed. Ot he is not the World’s Greatest Hitman.

Namimori is a small town. It won’t come under Vongola’s radar if it were not for Iemitsu’s wife and child living here. Not that it make much difference. The only one who can contact Iemitsu’s family is Iemitsu himself. The idiot believe that no one will be able to find his wife and daughter here. He didn’t even install agents to guard his family. Considering he never heard of a mafia related incident in Namimori, Reborn is inclined to believe. There are the yakuza groups, but they are either too small or don’t have much international presence. Either way, Sawada Setsuna about to get the surprise of
her life. And Reborn will be the one to break it to her.

Reborn stopped in front of a two story house, typical of Japanese suburbs. It’s school hours now so Setsuna is still at school. The flyers had been sent before he touched the ground. It will make his introduction much more smoothly. Reborn will use the opportunity to introduce himself to Nana and examine the house. Put a booby trap or two in Setsuna’s bedroom to give her a taste of what’s about to come.

He rang the doorbell with the Leon’s help. The lizard turned to a stick. There was the sound of shuffling footsteps from behind the door. It swings open, revealing a woman with short brown hair in her thirties. She blinked at the sight of Reborn. Sawada Nana smiled and crouched down.

“Hello, dear. Are you lost?” She cooed.

“Ciaossu,” Reborn greeted her. “My name is Reborn. I am a home tutor.”

Nana tilt her head. “Home tutor? Oh! The one from the flyers! Will raise your kid to be the leader of the next generation. Grade and subject doesn’t matter. Is that you, Reborn? But I didn’t contact you...”

“Yes, I am he,” He confirmed it to her. “Your husband is the one who arranged it. He saw the flyers and want me to tutor your daughter, Setsuna.”

Nana beamed at the mention of her husband. “Iemitsu did? How thoughtful of him!” And then her expression shifted. “But Tsu-chan don’t really need a tutor right now. Her grades are quite good, despite her being busy.”

Busy? Nana must meant after school clubs. Clubs are good, it help one’s growth. Reborn file the new information in his mind.

Nana continued, “I don’t know if Tsu-chan will take it nicely, considering we weren’t told about it. She will like it less if we told her that it was Iemitsu who contracted you.”

Oh? Does she know something about Iemitsu? Their last contact was when she was 5 years old. Did something happened?
“I’m sure your daughter will understand. She is a teenager after all. It’s a difficult age. Setsuna will eventually come around,” Reborn assure her.

“That’s what I thought at first,” Nana said sadly. “But Tsu-chan became bitter and eventually indifferent about her father, no matter what I said. She show no sign of her opinion changing at all.”

This could be a problem. If Setsuna couldn’t even trust her blood, it will be harder to trust the Famiglia. One more issue they need to work on.

“I understand, Sawada-san. I will talk to Setsuna about it,” Reborn promises her. Nana smiled sadly. “Well then, I will wait until Setsuna come home.”

Nana blinked. Her smile turned to a sad one. “I’m sorry, Reborn but Tsu-chan hasn’t been living here for years now. She moved out awhile ago.”

What

“Is that wise?” Reborn frowned. Civilian middle schoolers usually don’t move out of their homes unless their school have dormitories. “Isn’t she still a middle schooler?”

It’s Nana’s turn to frown. “I apologise, Reborn but you’re mistaken. Tsu-chan is not a middle schooler. She graduated high school already.”

Iemitsu is so dead

Graduated high school! That means she is either a university student or already working. “Sawada-san, how old is Setsuna this year?”

“She is turning twenty two this year.”

So very, very dead
In the course of his life, Reborn have met all kinds of people. The good, the bad, the ones like his lackey Skull. He encountered people not fit to be a parent but never in his wildest dreams he would experience this kind of situation. Iemitsu forgot his own daughter’s age. Inexcusable. Reborn never thought that his opinion of that idiota would get any lower. It’s understandable that Setsuna has misgivings about her father and Reborn haven’t even met her.

Reborn had wanted to call Iemitsu to tell him off but decided to put that off for now. He need to see Setsuna first. Children or teenagers, he can still handle, but adults are different matter entirely. They don’t change easily. They don’t respond to changes well. Depending on how bad the damage is, it could be too late for him to reverse it. This job have become much more complicated than Reborn initially thought.

Nana gave Reborn Setsuna’s current address. She is living in an apartment now. Her apartment building is located on the other side of town. Eventually, Reborn found himself standing in front of apartment 227. Leon changed to a stick once more and Reborn ring the doorbell.

The door swings open, revealing a young woman dressed in orange shirt and jeans. Her brown hair is tied to a ponytail with a scrunchie. She looked down at Reborn and blinked.

“Can I help you?” She asked.

“Ciaossu,” Reborn greeted her. “My name is Reborn and this is my partner Leon.” Leon crept up to his fedora. “You are Sawada Setsuna, yes?”

“I am her….,”

“Sawada Nana told me that you moved out here a few years ago. I was not aware of that,” Something he will hold against Iemitsu later.

Setsuna eyed him carefully. “Is there any reason why you’re here, Reborn?”

“Yes. Your father, Iemitsu, sent me here to tutor you.”
At the mention of her father, Setsuna’s face turned blank. It only lasts for a few seconds before a myriad of emotions flashed in her eyes. Shock, confusion, distaste, irritation.

Reborn could have sworn there was a flash of orange in those brown orbs.

“You… You’re in contact with my… Father,” The way she said it, Setsuna doesn’t seem to be fond with Iemitsu at all. “He… Iemitsu. Sent you here…. To tutor me?” She looked at him disbelievingly. “Why?”

“He is under the impression that your grade is suffering and want to help,” Reborn answered.

Setsuna let out a ‘Ha!’ “That’s bullshit if I ever hear one. That man don’t care enough for me to hire a tutor for me. Not after so long. No, he has a reason. You greeted me with ‘Ciao’ so you must be Italian. So that’s where Iemitsu is? Italy?”

Reborn nodded. “He is under the impression that you’re still in middle school.”

The young woman shakes her head. “Why am I not surprised?” She looked at Reborn. “You wouldn’t haul yourself and your pet all the way here from Italy just for giggles. There is more to the story isn’t it?”

“It is,” Reborn admitted. “Iemitsu didn’t sent me here just to raise your grades. He sent me here so I can observe you and teach you certain set of skills. It’s best if I start explaining from the beginning. May I come in?”

“Not so fast,” Setsuna said coldly. “State your true occupation first. Like I’m going to believe you’re just a regular tutor.”

He will tell her anyway so why not now? “I’m a hitman.”

“Iemitsu is related to crime? Italian mob?” Setsuna questions further. Reborn nodded. “I knew it,” She mutters. So she did suspect. Reborn wonder what else he’s missing here. “You’re going to explain everything to me?”

Setsuna stared at him long and hard. Reborn is careful not to move. Another flash of orange. Definitely Hyper Intuition in the works here. Whatever she found seems to satisfy her. Setsuna move aside to let Reborn in.

“Tea? Coffee?” Setsuna offered as she led him to the kitchen.

“Coffee please. Espresso, if you have it,” Reborn plopped down on the sofa. Setsuna give him a look before taking out the coffee pot. Reborn use the chance to look at his surroundings. The apartment is reasonably tidy. He noted a photo frame on the shelves. The photo shows Setsuna with two other girls her age. It seems to be taken during their graduation, judging from their middle school uniform and diplomas in their hands.

Setsuna returned with a cup of coffee. She follow his gaze and smiled. “The girl with auburn hair is Sasagawa Kyoko-chan. The black haired girl is Kurokawa Hana. We took the same ballet class when we were in kindergarten. We’ve been best friends ever since.” Her gaze turn sharp. “You’re not going to target them, are you?

“No,” Reborn answered. Setsuna set down the cup on the coffee table. Reborn take a sip. It’s good. “I should start from the beginning.” He said after Setsuna sit down on the armchair.

“As I introduced myself to you earlier, my name is Reborn. My occupation is a hitman, though I do accept jobs to groom future mafia dons. My client this time is Vongola, the Famiglia Iemitsu is part of.” He is careful not to address Iemitsu as father. “Vongola is the strongest mafia Famiglia in all of Italy. Vongola wield worldwide influence. No other Famiglias in present time can match them in terms of size, power, wealth and so on. Iemitsu is the head of Consulenza Esterna Della Famiglia . CEDEF for short. They act as the external advisor for Vongola. Normally, CEDEF is considered as independent, Vongola have no direct control over them. In time of crisis, the organisation will merge with the main group and the leader become second-in-command.”

Setsuna narrowed her eyes but didn’t say anything.

Reborn pull out files from his briefcase. “Sawada family is related to Vongola from the very beginning. The founder and first head of Vongola retired to Japan centuries ago,” He showed her the family tree. “So you’re related to the Vongola by blood.”
“I always wondered about my family,” Setsuna trace the name Sawada Ieyasu. “Kaa-san didn’t know anything. We only have a scroll and a few other papers in the attic. Not enough information to go by. I barely passed my assignment on fifth grade,” She sighed. “I know that my great grandfather married an Italian woman in the Showa period. That’s when my family branch got more involved with the main branch, isn't it?”

“Correct,” Reborn put away the files and pull out photos. “Currently, Vongola is hurting. The current head had three sons. The first son, Enrico, was killed in a gunfight. Massimo, the second in line after Enrico, was drowned.” Setsuna didn’t look away from the photos. “The only one left is Federico, the third son.” He showed her a picture of Federico.

Setsuna studied the picture. “You said my family is related by blood. Why isn’t Iemitsu eligible to be the next Don? He is older than this Federico.”

“When he took the role as head of CEDEF, Iemitsu had to forfeit his right to be next to inherit. Which leaves you to be the second in line after Federico.”

“I suppose they don’t take it too kindly if a girl is next to inherit a Famiglia like Vongola.”

“No, they don’t. Daniela, the eighth head, faced so many oppositions when she inherit because of her gender.”

“So they want to bring me in as backup?”

“That and if the situation get worse, get you married to Federico or a Don from allied Famiglia.”

Setsuna’s eyes narrowed dangerously. “So like a brood mare then. How convenient for them.”

“In the worst case scenario, you will be the Donna. Whatever the case, I am here to make sure you survive. The mafia is not a kind world. Of course, there’s a possibility that you won’t be needed. You can lead a peaceful life as a civilian.”

“Unless they decide to bring me in or my future children,” She said bitterly. “Why me? This Federico is old enough to have children. There’s probably a bastard or two somewhere in the family line. Sure, my ancestor is the founder but that can’t be just it.”
“Actually, it is. The right blood is needed in order to inherit. The Vongola blood has special attributes.” Hyper Intuition. Reborn need to ascertain how good Setsuna’s Intuition is. Enrico had it the strongest out of Timoteo’s children, followed by Federico and then Massimo.

Setsuna eyed him. “Tell me, Reborn. Are you part of Vongola? Truly one of them?”

“I do run a few hits for them but no, I’m a freelancer.”

“I see…,” Setsuna absorbed all these new information. “So a contract have most likely been officialized then. You can’t back out easily. I don’t exactly have much of a choice here.”

“No,” Reborn confirmed.

Setsuna sighed. “It’s pointless to tell you to go back to Italy then. Still, my schedule is already so packed as it is. I don’t know if we can fit mafia lessons in between. What about your living arrangement?”

“I was supposed to live with you and your mother in your childhood home. That won’t happen obviously. So I will live here with you.”

“You’re not sleeping in my bedroom,” She told him immediately. He nodded. “You pay for your own food. You do your own laundry. And whatever Leon needs.” The green lizard flicked his tongue. “You can stay at the second bedroom. We can work out the chores and more details later on. I know you’re not a baby so don’t try to shirk off. Do we have a deal?”

Reborn nodded. “We have a deal.”

“Okay,” Setsuna nodded. She glanced at the clock on the wall. “I need to go to my part time work.” She said, standing up.

Reborn hop off the couch. “What kind of job?”
“Ballet instructor,” Setsuna answered before she head to her bedroom. She returned with a duffle bag hanging on her shoulders.

“So you’re a ballerina?” Reborn questioned, trailing behind her.

The corner of Setsuna’s lips quirked upward. “Not quite.”

The letters ‘GENERATION Ballet Studio’ is neatly carved on the sign board. The place where Setsuna work at is a simple commercial building with four stories. School hours has ended now. It won’t be long until students start piling in. Reborn noticed right away a picture of Setsuna hanging on the wall. She is younger in the picture. Six or seven, give or take. There are also her friends Kyoko and Hana in the same picture. They most likely learnt ballet here.

When they enter the building, a little girl throw her arms around Setsuna’s legs. “Sensei!” She looked up to her in all of her chubby cheeks glory. Setsuna’s eyes softened at the sight of that.

“Hello, Miki-chan,” Setsuna bend down to hold her hands. “Are you ready to practice?”

“Oui, Madame!” Miki-chan answered back. Reborn noted that her pronounce and intonation are quite good.

Setsuna noticed it too. Her smile just got wider. “Magnifique!” Miki-chan preened at the compliment. “Go join the others at the studio. Sensei have to get change first.”

“Oui, Madame!” Miki-chan said before running off.

“I’m going now. Don’t start any trouble now, Reborn.” Setsuna give him a warning look before walking away.

Reborn is alone now. The receptionist looked at him curiously but didn’t say anything. An elderly woman, younger than Nono, emerged from the back. The receptionist whispered something to her. The elderly woman looked at him before approaching.
“Hello,” She smiled at Reborn.

“Ciaossu,” Reborn greet her.

She tilt her head at his unusual greeting. “You came here with Setsuna-chan?”

“Yes. My name is Reborn. I will stay with Setsuna for an indefinite period of time.”

“At Setsuna-chan’s…? Are you her relative? I was not aware that Setsuna-chan still has relatives. Nana-san is an only child and she never mention any cousins.”

This woman knew Nana personally. Unsurprising, since she’ve know Setsuna for years now. She didn’t mention Iemitsu though. She probably never even met the man. Let’s see how much these people know…

“I know her father, Sawada Iemitsu.”

The old woman’s eyes widened before narrowed. “Is that so?” There is surprise and a hint of edge in her voice. She quickly regain her composure. “Are you going to watch the lesson?”

“If that’s alright,” Reborn noted the change of subject.

“If Setsuna-chan doesn’t mind, I won’t mind either.”

“If I don’t mind about what, Masumi-sensei?”

They turn around to see Setsuna. She changed to a black leotard and white tights. “I see you’ve met other. Reborn, this is Masumi-sensei. She is the owner of this studio and my ballet instructor.”

“Is it okay with you if Reborn here watch you teaching, Setsuna-chan?”
“I don’t mind, as long as behaves.”

Masumi-sensei nodded. “I’ll leave it to you then.”

Setsuna turn to Reborn. “Come on. My students are waiting.”

Reborn followed her. When he looked behind his shoulder, Masumi-sensei is watching him with critical eye.

- 

“Good afternoon, everyone~”

“Good afternoon~” The children greets back.

“Alright! Everyone’s here! Let’s start by warming up first! Remember, you have to stretch properly!” Setsuna start to stretch. The little girls and boys mimic her movements. “Don’t forget to count too. One, two, three…”

“One, two, three…”

After they finished stretching, everyone stand next to the barre.


Reborn watches from the ceiling. During the plie, Setsuna looked up to the ceiling. Has she figured out his hiding spot? He can feel a trickle of her Locked Sky Flame, curling protectively around the children. Reborn blinked at the intensity of her Flame. Even though it's Locked, he can already feel how much power she has. Once it is Unlocked, who knows what will happen? Reborn can’t help but wonder how much chaos will unfold once Setsuna reach her full potential.
He look forward to it.

Reborn waited at the reception as Setsuna get changed. The lesson just ended a few minutes ago. Setsuna waited for the studio to clear out before she head to the locker room. Parents drop in one by one to pick up their children. Masumi-sensei is not here. Reborn use the time to study the photos on the wall.

There is a few pictures of the same young woman in black and white. Most likely Masumi-sensei when she was younger. There are a number of pictures of Setsuna and her friends. They looked really young in one picture. On the next picture, they look older. This picture was likely taken when they were on fifth or sixth grade. Kurokawa Hana’s face didn’t appear anywhere else after that. One of the biggest photos shows a girl with auburn hair as Odette. That is definitely Sasagawa Kyoko, albeit older.

“Thank you for waiting for me, Reborn,” He hear Setsuna’s footsteps behind him. “What are you looking at?” She followed his gaze. When her eyes fell upon the picture of her frame, Setsuna smiles. “That’s Kyoko-chan. On our second year of high school, she won the Prix de Lausanne competition. She’s in New York now.”


“Oh, Hana-chan? After we entered middle school, she switched to ballroom dancing. She’s in Tokyo now. She’s also in a university. Hana-chan is aiming for the World Championships as well.”

World Championships? Setsuna’s friends sure aim high. “It must be tough to grow up with such accomplished friends.” Envy or maybe even resentment is expected when someone your age already achieved so much. Reborn need to know what drives Setsuna. He’ll use any sort of emotions to push her.

Setsuna glanced at him. “I’m proud of them, Reborn. There is no room for envy between of us.” She gaze upon of the picture of them as kids. “Come on. I don’t want to be late for my next appointment.” She head to the exit.

“Where are we going?”
“Oh, you’ll see.”

Their next stop is Maeda Ice Rink, the only ice rink in Namimori.

“You have another part time work here?” Reborn questioned her.

Setsuna hummed. “You can say that.”

People inside greets Setsuna when they entered. One of them is a dark haired girl wearing purple jacket. “Good afternoon, senpai,” She greet her softly.

“Good afternoon, Nagi-chan,” Setsuna greeted the younger girl warmly. “How was school today?”

“I-It went fine, senpai,” Nagi glanced down at Reborn.

“Ciaossu,” Reborn greets her. “My name is Reborn. I’m a hitman.” Nagi blinked at the odd introduction.

Setsuna give him a weary look. “You will be seeing him a lot in the near future. Is Coach in?”

“Ah, yes. Coach is in his office.”

“Okay. Thank you, Nagi-chan. See you in a bit,” Setsuna nodded at her. Nagi nodded back before going somewhere else, presumably the rink. “Let’s go, Reborn. We need to see Coach first. If you’re going to train me in mafia stuff, Coach need to know.”

Setsuna led him to an office. She knocked on the door. A male voice called out from inside. “Come in.”

An elderly man (older than Masumi-sensei) is seated behind a desk. At the sight of Reborn, he narrowed his eyes.
“Good afternoon, Coach Maeda,” Setsuna settle down on a chair and put down her bag on the floor. Reborn jumped onto the seat next to her. “This is Reborn. He will be staying with me from now on. Reborn, this is Coach Maeda Kazuki. He is also the owner of this place.”

“I know about him already. Masumi-san called earlier and told me about it,” His steely grey eyes locked with Reborn’s black ones. “She said that you knew Iemitsu?” He has the same hint of edge in his voice.

“Iemitsu hired Reborn to tutor me,” Setsuna told him. “Apparently he’s under the impression I’m still in middle school.”

Hearing that, Maeda narrowed his eyes. “That foolish man. He thought you’re still in middle school? He forgot his own daughter’s age?” He said in disbelief. Reborn can relate. Setsuna frowned. Was it because the age issue or because Maeda called her Iemitsu’s daughter? Probably both. Maeda quickly shake off his shock. “So after years of no contact, Iemitsu sent you here to tutor Setsuna. What exactly are you going to teach her?”

“Mafia,” Setsuna grimaced at her own answer.

Maeda let out a tired sigh. “Mafia. That explain everything. But how in the world Iemitsu become involved with the mafia?”

“I’ll explain,” So Reborn told Maeda what he told Setsuna a few hours ago.

“There’s no way out of this?” Maeda asked after the Arcobaleno finished his story. Reborn noted that he didn’t look all that surprised. Just weary.

“No, unfortunately.”

“I see,” Maeda said. “It will make things complicated but if we are about to schedule accordingly to Reborn’s lessons, there shouldn’t be any problems. Don’t forget to tell Masumi-san about this, Setsuna.”

Reborn glanced at Setsuna. “You’re going to tell her?”
“Of course,” Setsuna answered. “Coach Maeda and Masumi-sensei are family. They have been the parents Iemitsu never been to me.” Maeda’s eyes softened at Setsuna’s admission.

Reborn didn’t say anything. It’s clear the two elderly care for their protege a great deal. They don’t like Iemitsu. Not at all. It will be highly amusing to see these two tear Iemitsu apart over his treatment of Setsuna.

“Will you be bringing more mafioso to this town?” Maeda asked him. Setsuna turn to him. She like to know that too.

“Yes,” Reborn nodded. “A former student of mine. A couple colleagues. Possibly some enemies. Mine and Vongola’s.” He has to contact the Smoking Bomb after this. Since Setsuna is not in middle school, there is no need for him to transfer.

“I don’t want them anywhere near my athletes and staffs,” Maeda said right away. “If I see one of your kind anywhere near the rink…” The look in his eyes promise bloodshed. A Cloud? Never a good idea to mess with a Cloud’s territory.

They discussed a few more minor details before Setsuna excused herself to the locker room.

“Try not to get her injured when you train her,” Maeda said to Reborn once Setsuna is out of the room. “I don’t want her to suffer any injuries. Masumi-san will throw a fit if there is so much as a cut on her face.”

“Is Setsuna an athlete?”

“Yes, she’s a competitive figure skater.”

“Is she good?”

Maeda looked at him. “See and judge for yourself.”
Reborn is perched on the barrier. Maeda is talking to the staff. Skaters in varying ages gathered at the rink. Curiously there are no adults athletes here. All of the skaters gathered ranges from children in kindergarten to high schoolers. They give him curious glance once in awhile. Maeda told them to ignore him and focus.

“You know, you look a bit like a doll there,” A voice came up from behind him. Setsuna. She is dressed in black. Turtleneck top with long sleeves, skirt and tights. Her skates are white. Setsuna piled her hair to a chignon bun. “Are you cold? Will Leon be all right?” Setsuna put on a pair of black gloves.

“Leon and I are fine.” The green lizard crawled to the top of his hat. She give Leon a few pets.

“They serve hot tea if you want to warm up,” She told him. “I’m going now.”

Reborn watch Setsuna enter the rink. She skate to the center. Setsuna stood there for a few moments before she raise her arms-

Oh

He knows that figure skaters have to be graceful. Must look graceful all the time. The way Setsuna move… There is a certain charm to it. Something that draw eyes to her. It made her stand out from the rest. It’s only a few laps around the rink. A spin here and there but each movement is mesmerising. Reborn look at the other athletes. The younger ones have stopped practising and now watching Setsuna instead. The Nagi girl looked awestruck.

Suddenly, Setsuna leap. Reborn counted three spins before she landed. Triple Axel.

“You can’t help but notice.”

Reborn turn his head to see Maeda standing next to him, eyes trained upon Setsuna’s gaze.

“Yes,” He return his gaze to the ice. Setsuna is lifting her foot for a Bielmann Spin. “I am not an expert but I can tell that she’s good.”
“Good is not enough to describe her,” Maeda said. “It take a lot more than just ‘good’ to be a champion.”

“She won competitions before?”

“Two times Grand Prix gold medalist, one silver and gold at Four Continents, one gold at Worlds and Olympic gold medalist.”

He’s right. Good is not the right word.

And how in the world did Vongola missed this? Setsuna competed in the Olympics! And she won! The Winter Olympics took place last year in Italy! Gross oversight is putting it mildly here.

Those thoughts were pushed to the back of his mind when Setsuna look at their direction. Reborn held his breath.

*Her eyes is exactly like Primo’s.*

Her eyes were like Nana’s before, brown and doe eyed. Here on ice, they turned sharp and somewhat melancholic. Her eyes flashed orange as they look at each other.


She would never fit in the mafia.

The ice is where Setsuna belongs.

Chapter End Notes
This fanfic is partially inspired by Unmistakeable by AutumnsFey and Road to Family by Kagami_Sorako. And yes, Yuri!!! on Ice

There are also stories where Tsuna is able to Unseal his Flame as a child and thus not turning to a Dame growing up. Or the plot begins when the characters are in high school. I want to try my hands on the scenario where Tsuna and a couple others are already adults from the beginning.

Also this is KHR we're talking about. Logic is not exactly their strong suit.

In this verse, Timoteo never went to Japan, so Setsuna was never sealed.

This chapter takes place in 2007. So the Daily Life Arc will span from mid 2007 to 2008.

Yes, Nagi/Chrome is a figure skater here. Kyouko and Hana are also aged up along with Setsuna. Setsuna and Hana are currently in university. Kyouko is abroad. They will appear in future chapters.

Thank you for reading

Please leave a comment below!

NO FLAME
Reborn is woken up by the sound of footsteps outside the door. It’s still dark outside. He glanced at the clock. It’s five in the morning. Setsuna is probably going to the bathroom. He about to drift back to sleep when she knocked on his door.

“Reborn?” She called out.

“Come in,” Reborn sit up. Setsuna entered his bedroom. She is wearing a tracksuit. “I’m going for my daily morning run. Do you want to come?”

“Give me a minute,” He hop off the bed. Setsuna nodded and closed the door. When Reborn is ready, he found her tying her shoelaces.

They quietly slip out from the apartment and to the streets. Setsuna keep a steady pace. Reborn switch between running alongside her or hop on fences from time to time.

Reborn remember the days when he would wake up Baka Dino with gunshots so they can start training right away. He don’t have to do that with Setsuna. His newest student had squint at his collection of weapons when he took them out for maintenance the previous evening. She told him to keep the noises to the minimum to avoid disturbing the neighbours. If things had happened according to his original plans, Reborn would have installed low risk explosions all over the place. They are loud and would leave some cracks, but no lasting damage. The fact that the repair cost would be taken out from Iemitsu’s paychecks make it even sweeter. But he’s living with Setsuna instead of the Sawada household. Setsuna will be the one to pay for any damages. It will raise questions if gunshots and explosions are being heard from Sawada Setsuna’s apartment. It will be hard to explain if the press caught wind of this. Reborn have to settle with joke items and crackers for now. He also put on silencer on his gun. He made sure to aim to spots that can easily be hidden under clothes, just in case of bruising. Setsuna was able to avoid all his bullets so far. She fell victim to the whoopee cushion and the tiny electrocution device.
Setsuna lay down the rules to him last night after dinner. Reborn is responsible to keep his bedroom clean. There must absolutely no traps or attacks in the bathrooms. Reborn is not to pull any stunts during off/on ice training and ballet practice. He will pay for board and his own food, because Setsuna eats a lot (she need all those carbs and calories) and she’s on a tight budget. Under no circumstances should he touch everything Setsuna owned that is ice skating related, which includes gifts from fans.

(There is a jumbo sized stuffed duck in Setsuna’s bedroom. A couple music boxes, watercolour paintings, more stuffed duck wearing custom made outfits, preserved flowers, teddy bears, Donald and Daisy Duck plushies, etc. All from her fans. Setsuna has a special shelves where she put all those gifts for display.)

Last night Setsuna show him her planner. Her schedule is packed. Putting aside training hours and university, Setsuna is scheduled to attend various events. Guest starring at local radio talk show, meetings with sponsors, photoshoot for magazines, shooting for P*cari commercial, exhibitions and so on. Talk about busy.

They run past a billboard with Setsuna’s face on it. It’s a toothpaste ad. Setsuna is holding a toothpaste tube and smiling. Last night, while Setsuna is in the showers, he browsed the internet from his phone. There are videos of Setsuna skating in previous competitions. There’s commercials too. Sweets, air conditioning, pain relieving cream and amusingly, detergent. Those are the most famous ones. Reborn wonder how many more ads or commercial Setsuna had starred in.

How in the world did Vongola missed this?

Iemitsu is one thing, but Setsuna competed in the Olympics. Someone must have watched her and noticed her surname. There are innocents killed because they share the same name as the intended target. With how much exposure Setsuna put herself into with her accomplishment, it’s a downright miracle that nothing happened so far.

...Right?

Another thing to be added to his list for further research.

Reborn have gathered that Setsuna is a local celebrity when he found a package of Namimori Special Senbei with her face on it. They went to the convenience store last night on their way home from the rink. Setsuna and a couple other skaters stayed behind to help smooth the ice after practise, so they
reached home a bit late.

Setsuna’s face suddenly lit up and she waved at someone. On the opposite direction, someone dressed in white and yellow is running towards them. They waved back. When the figure got near, Reborn found himself looking at First Sun Guardian Knuckle lookalike.

“Good morning, Ryohei-kun,” She greets the teenager warmly.

“EXTREME good morning to you too, Setsuna-nee!” This boy is practically brimming with Sun Flame. Ryohei look at Reborn. “EXTREME good morning!”

“Ciaossu.” This boy is a good candidate for the Sun Guardian position.

“Reborn, this is Sasagawa Ryohei-kun, Kyouko-chan’s younger brother. Ryohei-kun, this is Reborn and his partner Leon. They will be staying with me for awhile.”

“EXTREMELY nice to meet you two!” Ryohei said excitedly. “Setsuna-nee, I have to EXTREME finish my EXTREME run and go back home.”

Setsuna nodded. “We have to go back too. See you tomorrow, Ryohei-kun.”

“EXTREME! Again, it’s EXTREME nice to meet you, Reborn-san and Leon! See you tomorrow!” The boy waved at them before running off.

“He sure is an energetic one,” Reborn commented as they watched his white-and-yellow figure disappear around the corner.

“He has been like that since he’s a baby. Not many people can keep up with him, even though Ryohei-kun is a very sweet boy. Everyone was so relieved when he channeled all those energy to sport. Ryohei-kun is the captain of his school’s boxing club.”

The boy already know how to fight. Good to know.
“Let’s go back, Reborn,” Setsuna told him, already turning around.

He nodded and follow her lead.

- 

After they finished their morning run, Setsuna head straight to the bathroom. Reborn brew a pot of coffee for them both. Reborn went to take a shower while Setsuna prepare breakfast from them both. Her cooking is good, though according to her, Nana is so much better. Reborn had heard Iemitsu lamenting that he missed his wife’s cooking so it must be true. She has morning class scheduled today so Setsuna took off after breakfast. Reborn followed her.

Setsuna is a third year student at Midori University, one of the universities in the area. She majored in Communication. According to his research, Midori University is the toughest one to get into in the area. Setsuna is able to keep up decent grades, despite how busy she is. When he checked her bedroom, Reborn found dictionaries of English, French, Chinese and Russian amongst the books Setsuna owned.

“I am confident in my English. Kyouko-chan and Masumi-sensei roped me into learning French. Coach Maeda is a fluent Chinese speaker. Russian is a bit harder than the rest but many great skaters come from Russia so it will be easier to hold conversations with them if I know how to speak their language,” Setsuna said to him when Reborn asked her.

Reborn added Italian to Setsuna’s learning material.

His student is seated on the front row, books laid open in front of her. She also brought a recorder so she can listen to her lecturer’s explanation again later. The look of focus on Setsuna’s face cause Reborn to pause. It’s a different look of focus compared to when she was on ice. It’s still nice to see though. If only Dino is as focused as her when he was still Reborn’s student.

He waited for Setsuna outside the cafeteria once class ended. Setsuna sit down on one of the benches and take out her bento. Reborn plopped next to her. “Ciaossu.”

“Hello, Reborn,” She greets him casually. “Were you observing me during class? I thought I sensed someone staring at me.”
“I was.”

“Thank goodness. I thought it was another admirer,” She sighed before taking a bite of her sausage.

“Ran into trouble with fans before?”

“There were a couple of… Overenthusiastic ones, shall we say. I got weird gifts sometimes. Coach Maeda and Hibari-kun took care of them.”

“Hibari-kun?” She couldn’t possibly mean Hibari Kyouya, couldn’t she? The sole son of the Hibari Clan. Fon’s great nephew.

“Yes. Hibari Kyouka-kun. He formed the Disciplinary Committee a couple years ago. When I won my first Grand Prix, the press won’t leave me alone for weeks. Coach Maeda was pissed when they crowded the front entrance. They even waited at the emergency exits. Hibari-kun and his Disciplinary Committee swoop in to maintain order. After that we never had any trouble with the press, much less paparazzis. They knew better than to disturb peace in Namimori unless they want to be ‘bitten to death’. That’s Hibari-kun’s catchphrase.”

Hibari Kyouya fit the definition of a Cloud to a T.

“He was annoyed with all the trouble that came along with me winning the Grand Prix at first. But I agreed to promote Namimori special products in exchange. That’s how my face ended up all over town,” Setsuna laughed.

After Setsuna finished lunch, they head home. She has another ballet lesson after this and they will head to the rink afterward.

“We need to see Masumi-sensei first,” Setsuna said to him after she locked her apartment. “To tell her what we told Coach Maeda yesterday.”

“She won’t be pleased I take it.”

“No, she won’t,” Setsuna admitted. “But if you don’t give her any reason to hate you, she will warm
up to you eventually.”

“Luckily for me, I do ballet as well.”

Setsuna looked at him curiously. “You do ballet?”

Reborn smirked. “A hitman has many skills.”

- 

As they predicted, Masumi-sensei is not amused at all. They are in their office. Masumi-sensei looking at Reborn in disapproval. Reborn’s face blank. Setsuna keep looking at the other two with worry. She asked the same questions Coach Maeda asked them yesterday. Is there no way out of this? What will Reborn teach her? Will there be more mafioso coming to Namimori in the future? Did Iemitsu really forgot his own daughter’s age?

Each answer cause her frown to deepen.

“You won’t get in the way of Setsuna-chan’s training?” Masumi-sensei asked, eyeing Reborn like a hawk.

“I won’t,” Reborn promises her. “While we can’t do anything about the situation, I understand that Setsuna take her training and career seriously. Nothing I say or do will change her mind. I respect that. I assure you, I won’t get in the way.”

And now to hit the nail.

“Figure skaters and ballet dancers put so much effort in their work. I admire that about them, considering I do ballet as well.”

There. Masumi-sensei looked interested now.

“You do ballet as well?” She asked. Thankfully, she didn’t ask how is it possible with his infant
“Yes,” Reborn nodded. “I can show you now if you want.”

It’s too good to pass up. Masumi-sensei looked at Setsuna. The younger woman nodded. She return her gaze to Reborn. “Very well. Show me that you do understand.”

In the locker room, Reborn changed to a pink ballerina outfit and pointe shoes. He put on a wig to perfect his appearance. Neither women blinked when he came out looking like that. They went to an empty studio.

“What would you like me to do?” Reborn asked the senior dancer.

“What can you do?” She asked him.

“I can do everything fairly well.”

They raised an eyebrow at his answer.

Masumi-sensei considered it for a moment before lifting her chin high. “Let’s settle this with a fouette face off.”

Eyes widening, Setsuna turn to her ballet instructor. “Masumi-sensei?”

“Maeda-san and I have been watching over Setsuna-chan for years. We watch her smile, cry, stumble, grow up. We might as well be her parents,” Masumi-sensei give Reborn a sharp look. “I want to see how serious you are. Are you worthy to be Setsuna-chan’s teacher, Reborn?”

He couldn’t lose now could he? Not when his credence as a teacher is being staked here.

“I accept,” Reborn nodded.
They have ten minutes to warm up. Setsuna and a bewildered ballet instructor (her class finished just now) will be the judges. Setsuna is holding up her phone, recording the whole thing.


They started at the same time.

Reborn knows his body well, even if he’s trapped in a form he never asked for. It was a pain in the ass to relearn everything after he was turned to a baby, but it pays to keep trying. He can do this.

It’s starting to get difficult after the twentieth spin. But Reborn keep his cool. It’s nothing to fret about.

Come the thirtieth spin. Just two more. One-

His body screamed in protest and Reborn had to stop. He almost had it!

He looked at his left. Masumi-sensei is still spinning. She passed the 32th mark! How much more spinning does she want?!

After forty spins, Masumi-sensei finally stopped.

Setsuna and the ballet instructor have their jaws hanging. Was it because Reborn managed to do thirty-one spins??? Despite his baby bod??? Or was it because Masumi-sensei pulled off not the standard thirty-two but forty spins???

Reborn looked up and meet Masumi-sensei’s gaze. “I lost. You are a terrific dancer.”

Setsuna (who is still recording) and the ballet instructor (who still have that ‘WTF is this but I will go along the ride for now’ face) turn to see how Masumi-sensei react.

The senior dancer looked at Reborn long and hard before nodding. “You’re not bad yourself.”
Reborn smiled.

Setsuna let out the breath she’ve been holding this whole time.

They have off ice training today. Cardio and fitness training. They look into core strength, stability stamina, balance, and flexibility. Some of the skaters have gathered in the training room, where various sports equipment have been prepared for them. Trainers and physicians are nearby to guide and help. Nagi and a few of the younger skaters greeted Reborn when they see him. Coach Maeda is present in the room. Reborn think it’s because he didn’t quite trust him yet.

Reborn is content to just watch though. With the physical training she has right now, he can scratch ‘core training’ from his training plan. Setsuna already has good foundation. She will be able to withstand Flame training. Combat shouldn’t be a problem as well. They just need to find the style that suits her. Kicking would come easy to her. She already has such strong legs. Too bad they are needed for skating. Reborn has seen the state of her feet last night when she took of her socks. They are covered in blistered. He don’t want to add more pressure to them. The thighs though. Setsuna’s thighs are so well muscled, she could kill a man by squeezing his head between them. That or death by suffocation. Reborn want to see if she really can do that. He need to buy a cantaloupe or watermelon to test this theory.

Another thing that catch his interest is Nagi. Setsuna is Courting her without realising it. Both girls’ Flames are Locked but that doesn’t stop the partial bond from forming. Setsuna seems to be closer to Nagi out of every athlete present in the room. She is friendly and kind to everyone, especially the kids but she tend to talk more to Nagi. It’s obvious to see that the younger girl look up to Setsuna. She listens to her attentively and her eyes light up when Setsuna turn her attention to her. Maybe the blue haired girl has a crush on her as well. Nagi feels like a Mist. Reborn don’t know her well enough to to see if she is fit for the Mist Guardian position. This is only the second day. They still have time.

They move the training to the ice. Coach Maeda is giving his attention to the younger skaters. The Junior Grand Prix will start on August. The younger skaters, Nagi included, show off their new routines one by one. Nagi will turn 13 this December, so she is not qualified to compete in the Grand Prix. At least they still have the Novice and inter-club competitions. While it is not exactly the same as Grand Prix or Worlds, it’s still good for the younger skaters to have experience in competing internationally.

Reborn noted that Setsuna is the older skater here. The second oldest is a first year in high school and
she haven’t debuted in Senior yet. There are around twenty children under 10 in this place. It makes sense if so many parents signed up their children at the same club as a skater with Setsuna’s caliber. They are hoping that she will rub off on them. It’s cute to see them follow Setsuna around like ducklings.

Nagi is skating to the *Dance of the Willis* by Adolphe Adam. She, Reborn noted, did well to emulate spectres. Her movements have certain delicacy in them.

Coach Maeda regard Nagi carefully. “You need to work on your jumps. Your timing is still a bit behind. Otherwise, you did good.”

The elderly man must have not give out compliments often, judging from the way Nagi’s eyes shine.

Next to Reborn, Setsuna smiled. “Fantasy and fairytales are Nagi-chan’s specialty after all.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes, Nagi-chan skated to Sleeping Beauty’s *Miettes qui Tombent* two years ago. There’s also the *La Sylphide* from last year. Nagi-chan told us she want to use *Rise of the Valkyrie* and Schubert’s String Quartet in D Minor in the future.”

“The last one is also known as *Death and the Maiden.*” What a unique child. And she’s almost 13?

“Nagi-chan is whimsical in her own way,” Setsuna chuckled. “Her playlist did made us worried but that’s just how she is.” They watch Nagi skated towards her peers. They congratulate her for getting Coach Maeda’s approval. Nagi give them a shy smile in return.

Now that the teenagers are finished, the little ones can return to the ice.

“Maybe I should join them,” Reborn said.

“Reborn, no. You’ll crush those kids’ hopes and dreams.”
Setsuna

unreal.vid

Hana

Wtf

Is that a baby???

Kyouko

40 Fouette! That's our Masumi-sensei <3

Hana

KYOUKO

WE KNOW MASUMI-SENSEI IS AWESOME

BUT

IT'S A BABY DOING FOUETTE

31 SPINS

WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS KID

Setsuna

This is Reborn. He is sent here from Italy to 'tutor' me

Iemitsu sent him

Hana

Say what now

Kyouko

THAT Iemitsu?
Setsuna

Yes. My No Good sperm donor

Turns out he’s been living in Italy this whole time

He’s part of the mafia

Hana

I FUCKING KNEW IT

Does this means that baby is mafia

What

Idk anymore

EXPLAIN

Setsuna

We need a video call for this

Kyouko

Calling!

The green call button pop up on her screen. Setsuna clicked it. The faces of her best friends pop up. Judging from the backgrounds, they are in their bedrooms.

“Sawada,” Hana’s eyes is fixed on her. “Start from the beginning.”

So Setsuna told them what happened yesterday and today. From Reborn visiting her childhood home first, her family’s history, Coach Maeda’s and Masumi-sensei’s reactions. She didn’t left out anything, which of course include the fact that Iemitsu forgot her actual age.

“That’s not nice,” Kyouko said after Setsuna finished her story. “No kids should ever go through something like that.”
“We’ve established from a long time ago that Iemitsu is shit,” Hana said flatly. “But you’re right. No kids, no matter how bratty they are, deserved what Iemitsu did to you. Hell, does he have selective memory or something?”

Setsuna shrugged.

“So what are you going to do if you two meet?” Hana asked her. “If he’s going to drag you into this mess, you two will eventually cross path. I for one, would want to see you give him the beating he deserves. It’s long overdue.”

“To be honest, it slipped my mind until you remind me again,” Setsuna admitted. “I rather focus on my studies and skating you know? And to survive whatever Reborn throws at me. He didn’t use real bullets but it still hurt.” She rubbed the spot where Reborn shot her last night. “This whole thing is crazy… Reborn is a baby… Dwarf… I’m sure there’s a medical term for it. But he’s been reasonable so far.”

“He better stay that way, or I’ll stomp on him with my brand new pumps,” Hana said grimly. She show the other two girls the shoes in questions. They spend the next few minutes admiring it. Then Hana remember something. “Where is that baby anyways?”

“He’s out in the balcony. I don’t know what he’s doing,” The brunette shrugged. “Enough about me. How are you two?” Setsuna asked, leaning back to the coach. She is wrapped in her favourite blanket. She is drinking warm tea. She is talking with her best friends. This is cozy. This is relaxing.

“I’m doing well!” Kyouko smiled. “The Nightingale and the Rose is a huge success! I have so much fun! So many guests attended Dance With The Dancers! This year’s theme is Lost in Translation: Tokyo-oke is well received as well! It’s tough here but I have so much fun!”

Setsuna and Hana grinned hearing that.

“I’m doing okay,” Hana starts. “Classes went fine. My partner and I got a into a small argument earlier today but we’re used to it now. I can handle him. We’ll fix this before the competition.”

“That’s our Hana-chan. Always so assertive.” Kyouko chuckled. “What about your skating, Setsuna-chan? Have you thought of this year’s theme yet?”
“Nope. I have nothing yet.”

“You’ll think of something,” Kyouko said to her kindly.

“We’re here if you need anything,” Hana continued.

Setsuna smiled. “You two are the best. What’s a girl going to do without her best friends?”

“Let’s be real. Life would suck.”

The three young women share a laugh. Setsuna’s smile widen.

“Something in your mind, Setsuna-chan?” Kyouko asked.

“This whole mafia mess made me think of the past. We’ve gone through so much. And here we are,” Setsuna motioned to the screen. “Hana-chan is in Tokyo and competing overseas. Kyouko-chan is with the NYC Ballet company. And there’s me. Who would’ve thought that little girl who come dead last in her first competition would win the Grand Prix.”

Hana shakes her head. “Setsuna. You were nine. Stop beating yourself over that.”

“We did gone through a lot,” Kyouko acknowledged. “But those things made us who we are today. And now? Now we’re living our dreams,” Kyouko said.

Sunday is Setsuna’s resting day. On Sundays, Setsuna visit Nana at her childhood home for brunch and spending time with her. Reborn look forward for this. He want to see if there’s any blackmail materials he can use against his new student. Nana’s cooking is apparently to die for, another thing Reborn is looking forward to.

“Tsu-chan! Reborn!” Nana beamed at the sight of them at the front door. “You’re right on time! Help me serve the food?”
The amount of food Nana prepared could feed five people. But it’s so delicious Reborn asked for third helpings. Reborn have learned that Setsuna eat a lot, thanks to her training, but apparently she inherit Iemitsu’s big appetite. Of all things she take after her father…

Reborn slipped out the kitchen while mother and daughter do the dishes together. He never had the chance to explore the house due to the revelation of Setsuna’s real age. Sawada home is normal enough, a typical civilian home.

He went upstairs.

The first room he found is Nana’s so Reborn closes the door and move onto the next room. It’s Setsuna’s. Her room is also typical for a civilian. There are no giant stuffed duck though. Reborn found medals and certificates in her closet. Must be from her Novice and Junior days. There’s also a few garment bags. Most likely her costumes when she was a child. There are a few shoe boxes in the back. They are ballet shoes and skates. When there is nothing else left, Reborn put them back where he found them and shut the closet.

He checked the shelves next. There are cassette tapes, CD cases, old magazines and books. When he searched the lower levels, he found the photo albums. Reborn smirked. Bingo.

The first album he opened was from around the time Setsuna was in kindergarten. She is wearing a pink uniform and her hair is tied to pigtails. Setsuna and Nana at the theme park. Setsuna in the bathtub playing with her rubber ducky. Setsuna playing with her dolls. Reborn noted that Setsuna is alone in most of these pictures. Nana must be the one behind the camera.

When he flip to the next page, it is filled with photos of Setsuna doing the ballet. The one that catch Reborn’s eye is the photo of Setsuna together with Kyouko and Hana. They are dressed in the same pink leotards and their hair tied to a bun. There’s Masumi-sensei correcting Setsuna’s posture. The girls watching cartoon together (the screen shows a ballerina dancing). The girls dancing at their very first recital. The girls admiring an older ballerina standing on her toes. The three girls playing at the playground. Setsuna and Nana at what seems to be a sushi restaurant.

And then there is the photo of Setsuna entering elementary school. Nana is standing next to her. The girls having a sleepover. Masumi-sensei fixing Setsuna’s hair at the dressing room. Must be another recital. Setsuna, Kyouko and Hana at the summer festival, wearing yukatas.

Setsuna at the ice rink. She looks so happy. This must be her first time ice skating. There are a few
more shots of her skating. Even her first fall.

A picture of Kyouko holding a baby. Hana and Setsuna sitting her sides. That baby must be Ryohei.

Another baby picture. It’s not Ryohei. They’re back at the sushi restaurant again. Setsuna is holding the baby’s tiny fist. The baby’s mother is a dark haired mother. She and Nana exchanged a look of amusement.

Setsuna at her 7th birthday. She is blowing the candles. Kyouko and Hana giving Setsuna her presents. Setsuna crying tears of joy when she received her first skates. (Who was it from, Reborn wonders.)

Setsuna at the ice rink with her brand new skates.

Setsuna with Coach Maeda. Oh, so this is when she start training under Coach Maeda’s tutelage. She looked so serious here.

Setsuna at her first competition. She is dressed in an orange dress. A fairy maybe?

Reborn flipped through the pages.

The girls in front of Namimori Middle School. Hana teaching her friends the waltz. Kyouko dancing the Nutcracker as the Sugar Plum Fairy. Setsuna at the National Japan Junior 1998. Coach Maeda and Setsuna at Osaka. Coach Maeda lifting Setsuna. Setsuna showing Masumi-sensei her choreography. Masumi-sensei putting showing the girls how to use an eyeliner.

Coach Maeda and Setsuna at the airport. They are at the gift shop buying presents. Canada, judging from the flag magnet Setsuna is holding.

Setsuna playing catch with a black haired boy at a field somewhere.

Setsuna and Coach Maeda at the London Bridge. Setsuna standing next to a Palace Guard.
The girls baking a cake at the kitchen. Ryouhei is there too. His face is completely covered with flour.

The girls at their middle school graduation. The girls playing DDR at the arcade. Another sleepover. Setsuna receiving brand new pair of skates. Hana dressed to the nines as she about to compete. The girls posing like Charlie’s Angels.

Setsuna and Coach Maeda with new students at the ice rink. Coach Maeda carrying around a large stuffed duck with Setsuna giggling at the background. Coach Maeda hugging Setsuna at the Kiss and Cry. Ryohei, Setsuna and Hana hugging a teary Kyouko. It must be when she received the news that she won the Prix de Lausanne.

Masumi-sensei and Setsuna at the Kiss and Cry. When is this picture taken? Where is Coach Maeda?

Setsuna together with skaters with different nationalities. Reborn recognised a few them. Evgeni Plushenko, Sasha Cohen, Stephane Lambiel, Johnny Weir, Kevin van der Perren.

Setsuna at the podium, holding up her silver medal.

*Iemitsu has absolutely no idea what he’s been missing.*

“Reborn?” Setsuna stood at the doorway. “Are you in there?”

“I’m here,” Reborn look up to her. “I’m just looking at your childhood albums.”

“It’s been awhile since I last saw these,” Setsuna take a seat next to Reborn. “Brings me back.”

“There are no pictures of Iemitsu,” Reborn observed. “When was the last time you saw him?”

The brunette frowned. “When I was- Before?- five, I guess. I remember around that time a strange man coming to our house. Kaa-san called him ‘Anata’. He was loud. He spent most of his time sleeping, sprawling on the floor or couch. I prefer him sleeping, because when he’s awake, he kept bothering me. Spinning me around and around until I’m sick. I was so relieved when he left. I never missed him. I wondered about him when I was older. But I never really missed him.” Setsuna
Five years old. Seventeen years ago. Reborn wonder when exactly Iemitsu married Nana. He heard about it second hand. Lal Mirch was the one who told him. One day, Iemitsu bellowed that he missed his wife and child. Lal Mirch asked what the hell is he talking about. That was when Iemitsu told her that he has a family in Japan. If he didn’t tell anyone years after his wedding, what else could he be hiding? Reborn has a nasty suspicion that he didn’t even tell Nono until a few years passed.

“Penny for your thoughts, Reborn?”

“Setsuna,” Reborn regard her seriously. “What are you going to do about Iemitsu? You two will meet sooner or later…”

She thought for a moment. “Everyone is under the impression that I’m a middle schooler?”

“Yes. That’s what Iemitsu told everyone. He is the head of CEDEF. People won’t doubt his words.”

“Then let him be,” Setsuna said. “His delusions will catch up to him. The mafia will discover my true age eventually. Iemitsu will have to deal with the mess that he started. To be perfectly honest with you, I would love to see the look on his face when he realised just how wrong he is about me. About everything,” She smirked.

Reborn try to picture it in his head and smirked. Serve that idiot right.

“So does this mean you’re the only one from the mafia who knows my true age?” Setsuna asked, curious. Reborn nodded. “Then Vongola is in for a huge surprise.”

He pictured the look of outrage on Lal Mirch’s face when she discover just how much they missed. How Iemitsu’s idiocy crossed the boundaries of madness. And they live in a world of magical flames and time travelling weapons.

“All those chaos,” Reborn murmured.

“They deserve it,” Setsuna shrugged her shoulders. “The Vongola is not as great as they claim to be
if they can’t even keep track of one Olympic athlete.”

Chapter End Notes

1000+ hits? 100+ kudos? YOU GUYS

THANK YOU VERY MUCH I'VE BEEN BLESSED

Of course Reborn can do ballet. He wouldn’t be Reborn otherwise.

I am neither a dancer or a skater, so if there are any technical mistakes in this fanfic, I apologise. The scoring will be a nightmare to breakdown.

The timeline in KHR is weird. I'm relying on the internet to guide me through this. Same goes to figure skating seasons. Wikipedia is not the best source to go but it'll do for now.

Yes, the figure skaters mentioned above are real skaters. The figure skating world is a small one, so it's not impossible that Setsuna met them. This is a fanfic though so don't yell at me. There will be more mentions of real life people in the future.
It was odd when Reborn contacted him and told him to cancel his enrollment to Namimori Middle School. His papers are already processed before he even step a foot on Japan’s soil. Doesn’t matter. He can take care of it after he finish off his target. This is what he’s been waiting for. An opportunity. A real mission, instead of just putting bombs together.

Gokudera put another cigarette on his lips and search his pockets for his lighter.

He can’t fuck this up. This is Vongola. Chances like this don’t come twice. Not to someone like him. A mixed bastard. No one wanted him until now. Not until Reborn contacted him. *Vongola* want him. *He can’t fuck this up.*

Reborn told him something came up. Instead of infiltrating the school and then challenging the target, Reborn will set up another spot for them. Somewhere far from public eyes. He also set up their meeting today, instead of letting Gokudera to do some recon. The sudden change of plan confuses him but it doesn’t really matter. At least Gokudera don’t have to deal with school. Ugh.

Gokudera think over what he knows about his target. Sawada Setsuna is a girl his age. A distant relative to Vongola but her blood is pure enough to be considered as candidate. On top of it all, she’s a *civilian*.

This is going to be like taking a candy from a baby.

Gokudera never target civilians before but a mission is a mission.

He can’t complain. The opportunity is too good to pass up. He used his emergency money to book a
ticket to Japan and rent out a small studio apartment as his base while in Namimori. He never thought of coming to his mother’s homeland before this. He abandoned his father’s surname when he ran away, and took up her name… But never in million years he would have imagined to come here. Gokudera immediately push the thoughts of his mother. It always pained him, to think about her.

Enough with the sad thoughts. He has to focus. He has one mission. It’s all for nothing.

Sawada Setsuna has to die.

He drop his cigarette to the ground and stomp his foot over it.

-

Setsuna is in the middle of mopping the floor when Reborn showed up. She take off her earbuds (Setsuna listens to lecture recordings or music when she’s cleaning). Her instinct told her that something is going on. The baby is staring at her with those vacant eyes on her. How in the world his eyes are never dry when he never blinks? Setsuna doubt he has eyelids to be honest. “Reborn?”

“Are you finished yet?” He asked.

“Just about,” Setsuna rest a hand on her hip. “What is it?”

“After you finished, come with me. There’s something you need to see.”

Something is definitely amiss.

She eyed him warily. “Is this going to get me hurt?”

“There is a very real chance that you will get hurt,” Reborn answered. That’s a yes then. At least he’s upfront about it.

“So this is mafia related then,” She let out a sigh. So far Reborn has been shooting rubber bullets and set firecrackers on her. A few practical jokes here and there. He has been really careful not to give
her serious injuries. Reborn made sure that Setsuna is in the room when he clean his weapons. She suspect it’s so she will recognise the weapon by the mere sound of it. Isn’t that only possible in movies? Then again, Reborn is an adult man in a baby’s body.

(It must be some extreme form of hypoplasia. Setsuna checked the internet.)

He hasn’t teach her anything outside of that. If shooting your student counts as ‘tutoring’. Setsuna knows that they will study Italian soon, judging from the sudden appearance of Italian books and dictionary in her bookshelf. Vongola is based in Italy. It make sense that Reborn want her to be fluent in Italian.

“Okay,” She said finally. She doubt Reborn would let her off easily. “Give me five more minutes.”

Reborn nodded and head to his bedroom. Setsuna put on her earbuds and resume her mopping.

Five minutes later, Setsuna is ready. She considered bringing her skates but decide not to. Her skates are strictly for the ice and her main weapon in case of home invasion. Setsuna run through the defense classes Coach Maeda and Hana signed her up for. In her mind, she visualises the enemy mafioso lunging at her. She can handle knives she supposed. Running might not be a good option in the long run. Still, she watched Ryohei’s matches before. Setsuna can lift a man twice her size (as Coach Maeda will testify). She will be all right.

Setsuna hope this won’t take long, whatever Reborn has in plan. She don’t want to show up at the ballet studio dirty.

Reborn led her to an empty lot not far from her apartment. There are a few piles of garbage lying around. Could this be a trap? Is Reborn bringing her here to teach her something? Start teaching her how to fight?

“You came,” A gruff voice said.

Setsuna turn around to see a teenager standing a few feet away from them. The boy has silver hair and green eyes. He wear so many accessories. She get a ‘delinquent’ vibes from him. He is glaring at her.

Gokudera Hayato studies Reborn. “So you’re the assassin that the Ninth trusts so much. Reborn.”

Setsuna throw the baby a questioning look. “I called him over from Italy. This is my first time seeing meeting him though,” Reborn told her.

She looked at the boy again. He’s so young! Probably around Nagi’s age. And a member of the mafia already? Do mafiosos really start this young? Reborn doesn’t count. He’s not a real baby from the start.

“You’re not joking about me being a candidate for the successor position if I kill this girl, right?” Gokudera asked Reborn.

Setsuna narrowed her eyes. They hired this boy to carry out assassination? Is this count as assassination? And Reborn is the one who hired him? He went so far to lie about the candidacy? “Reborn?” She looked at the baby.

“That’s right,” Reborn ignored her. “You may start the killing.”

You lying piece of-

Gokudera whip out a handful of dynamites out of nowhere. The amount of cigarettes in his mouth seems to have multiplied at the same time.

Dynamites?! Explosives?!

Setsuna took off.

“Die!” Gokudera throw the dynamites at her. She managed to dodge them all, distancing herself from the blast radius. Her ears are ringing from the loud noises though.

Somehow, she can still make out Reborn’s voice. “It is known that Gokudera Hayato is a human shaped explosive that conceal dynamites all over his body. His nickname is Smokin Bomb Hayato.”
Now she understand why he had them fight here in an empty lot. More space, less prying eyes, far from the populace. That doesn’t matter if she don’t finish this soon. She has to keep her distance from the boy. The smoke is a problem too. Can she afford to take refuge in the neighborhood? No, she can’t risk it. Someone will get hurt in the crossfire. Setsuna have to defeat Gokudera Hayato. Here. Quickly.

Reborn said he hid dynamites all over his person. How many dynamites does he carry? Is it even safe?! If he carelessly lit his cigarette, it might trigger an explosion! Ugh!

“Stay! Still!” Gokudera pull out even more dynamites. “Double Bomb!”

That’s it! Gokudera has so many explosions on his body, he has to keep his distance from his own attack! Otherwise he will get caught in the explosion as well. So if she want to stop him from using dynamites, she has to get close. Setsuna need to incapacitate him somehow. Taking away his lighter would be a start. She dash towards the boy.

His eyes widened. It appears he didn’t expect her to come after him. Not after running away so much. Setsuna thought he would pull away to maintain distance… But instead of doing that, Gokudera pull out even more dynamites. So much of those things that he can’t hold them all.

“Triple Bomb-” He started. What is it with guys and saying his attacks out loud?

One of the dynamites fell.

Green eyes widened. In shock, he drop the rest of the dynamites in his arms.

No!

Setsuna tackled the boy. She carried him on her shoulder like a potato sack and run for it. They need to get away! Fast!

They managed to avoid the blast but the shock wave resulted from it knock her off her feet, sending them to the ground. Setsuna immediately throw her body over Gokudera’s to shield him.
They stayed like that until there are no more booming sounds. When the smoke and dust cleared. Setsuna slowly lift up her head. Once she’s sure they are not in immediate danger, she pull away from the boy. “Are you okay?” She scanned his form for injuries.

The boy is gaping at her. Before Setsuna can say more, the boy throw himself to the ground, essentially prostrating before her. “I was mistaken!” Gokudera said loudly. “You are fit to be Boss after all!”

...What?

Gokudera looked up. His eyes shining with adoration. “Setsuna-hime! I’ll follow you anywhere! Command me!”

What?

“The loser have to serve the winner. That’s the family rule,” Reborn said, suddenly standing over them.

“Where did you- Ugh, nevermind. What do you mean the loser have to serve the winner?” Setsuna try to ignore the look on Gokudera’s face.

“Gokudera is your subordinate now, Setsuna. Good job,” Reborn smiled at her. That smile did nothing to make her feel better.

“Truthfully, I don’t have any ambition to be a candidate,” Gokudera looked at the ground bashfully. “When I heard the other candidate is a Japanese girl my age. I feel like I have to test her strength.”

His age? Oh, right. Vongola don’t know her true age. Still, Gokudera thinks she is the same age as him. That flatters her a bit.

Gokudera is not done yet, “But you are much more than I expected! For putting yourself in the line to save a guy like me… I’ll place my life in your hands!”
“Gokudera-kun…,” Setsuna started. “Can I call you that?” The boy nodded enthusiastically. “Gokudera-kun, I don’t need a subordinate. I’m not in the mafia. I am related to one, it doesn’t mean I’m a member of Vongola. I’m not initiated or anything.”

“But you’re a candidate! You could become a Boss!”

“I am a candidate,” She acknowledges it. “But I don’t want it. The other candidate is still alive anyway. I don’t want to be involved with the mafia. If you wish to be part of the mafia, you shouldn’t follow me.”

*I’d rather you don’t get involved with the mafia at all.*

“But it’s Vongola!”

“They mean nothing to me,” Setsuna said flatly. Whatever Vongola had done for her? Nothing.

Her words clearly shocked the boy. He looked at her like she’ve grown two heads. He pull himself together fairly quickly though. “A-All right… It’s alright. Even if you did not become Decimo, I’ll still follow you. I’ll follow you anywhere.”

That look in his eyes.

The look of single-minded devotion. As if she is the only thing that matter. That he will do anything for her. That he will lay down his life for her if she say as much as one word.

*It scares her.*

It must have shown on her face, because the boy winced. “Hime? Is something wrong? Are you injured? I’m so sorry!”

“I’m fine, Gokudera-kun,” She assures him. “Look, I don’t need a subordinate.” He looked crestfallen. “But…” She took a deep breath. “You’re free to do anything you want. If you want to go back to Italy, that’s fine by me. If you want to stay here in Namimori, I won’t stop you either.” Setsuna put a hand on his shoulder. “We can be friends instead. How does that sound?”
“M-Me? As your friend? You want- Someone like me- To be your friend?” He whispered in disbelief. The way he said it… It bothers her so much.

Setsuna nodded. “I want to be your friend, Gokudera-kun, if you allow me to.”

Being a subordinate and a friend is two different things. Gokudera put himself as lesser than her. She don’t want that.

“Friends…,” Gokudera tested the word. It give him a warm feeling. Setsuna-hime want him as her friend. He never had any friends before. He still has his blood family but it’s different. This is the first time someone ever wanted him. She asked him if he want to be friends with her. She asked him if he’s okay being friends with her. “I-I’d like that. I’d like that v-very m-much. If you’re willing to h-h-have me- Ugh!” And the dam is broken.

Setsuna wrapped her arms around him. She didn’t say anything. She just stroke his back in reassuring pattern. It took him from a moment before Gokudera hug her back.

Reborn watched those two from the distance. He has no place in this tender moment. Let them have this. They need it. He can feel Setsuna’s Sky Flame trying to reach out for the boy, wanting to protect him. Reborn saw her eyes flashed orange earlier during the fight. He had hoped that the fight would awaken her Flame. It appears she’s not quite there yet. Too bad Reborn can’t use the Dying Will Bullet. It will cause a huge uproar if Japan’s prized athlete is seen running around town in her underwear. Setsuna might get suspended by the JSF and ISU. Worse, it might cost her her career. Coach Maeda and Masumi-sensei will be after his throat. If Setsuna didn’t get him first.

Today has been a success though. Still, it didn’t escape Reborn the look of discomfort on Setsuna’s face when Gokudera declare his loyalty to her. It’s more of horror than discomfort to be precise.

What is he missing here?

-

When Setsuna offered to take him to the hospital to check for injuries, Gokudera is touched but graciously turn her down. Then he in turn ask her if she want to go to the hospital. Miraculously, Setsuna didn’t have a scratch on her. So Reborn lives another day.
When they realised they are heading to the same direction home, Gokudera is delighted.

When they found out that Gokudera’s apartment is just a couple blocks away from Setsuna’s, Gokudera is positively beaming.

Setsuna returned to her apartment covered in dirt and smell like smoke. She is so tired. And it’s not even past lunch hour yet. She sniffed at herself. A shower is in order. When she returned from the bathroom, Reborn is waiting for her in her room. He is sitting on his chair, looking smug.

“You’re a lying piece of shit, you know that?” Setsuna glared at him. “You lied to Gokudera-kun about the candidacy. You told me that blood is needed. Is Gokudera a bastard or something? The hell did you do that for? He’s just a boy!”

“I know,” Reborn didn’t deny that he’s a bastard. “It won’t do if someone at your caliber don’t have any subordinate. Gokudera is a candidate to be one for you. Was. He’s yours now. Loser serves the winner, remember?”

“Ugh!” Setsuna throw her arms up. “And the blood thing?”

“Gokudera is a bastard child but he has no relation at all with Vongola.”

Setsuna blinked. “Gokudera-kun is a bastard child?” That would explain some of his attitude. Half blood are not viewed favourably. Of course, time has changed now. But who knows what mafia’s attitude towards them is like?

“Yes, he is a son of a mafia Don and a Japanese woman.”

“I see….,” She can only imagine what sort of hardships he go through before coming to Japan. Setsuna collect herself. “Are you sure there are no candidates left? Blood related candidates?”

“The Ninth has a fourth son. He is a bastard but he is definitely Vongola. For reasons even I don’t know about, he is removed from the succession line. His name is Xanxus.”
“Xanxus…” What an odd name. “No one else is left?”

“Unless Enrico or Massimo left behind a bastard that we don’t know about, then no, there is no one else.”

Setsuna think about it for a moment. “With someone like Iemitsu being so high on Vongola’s food chain, I can’t help but be sceptical.”

Reborn can’t refute her.

Gokudera is already waiting for her at her doorstep when Setsuna about to head out to the ballet studio. “Setsuna-hime!”

Setsuna inwardly cringed. “Gokudera-kun, you don’t have to call me ‘Hime’ You can call me with just my name. Or with ‘-san’ or ‘-nee’.”

“But I want to address you as Setsuna-hime!” Gokudera replied.

She hold back a sigh. She will have to try again in the future.

“Where are we going, himesama? Gokudera asked her as they go down the stairs.

Setsuna didn’t miss the ‘we’. So Gokudera really intend to follow her around. “I’m heading to my part time work.”

“I’m coming with you!”

She knew that there is no chance of her of convincing him otherwise. “Give me your cigarettes.” She said to him. Gokudera blinked but did as he was told. Setsuna put the cigarette pack in her bag. “Where I’m working at, there are a lot of children. If you wish to stay close, you can’t smell like cigarettes. You can have them back after the day is over.” His eyes widened and he nodded
Gokudera acted like a guard dog throughout the journey. He glared at anyone who got too close to her. He made sure to move her out of the way of any upcoming vehicles (this includes bicycles). The boy even glared at dogs on their walks, which results them barking at him. Reborn’s presence didn’t help. Setsuna is worried that he will pull another scheme in broad daylight.

Setsuna count it as a small blessing when they reached their destination without any accident.

Masumi-sensei squinted at Gokudera when Setsuna brought him to her office.

“Masumi-sensei, this is Gokudera Hayato-kun. Gokudera-kun, this is Hajime Masumi-sensei. My ballet instructor and owner of this studio.”

Setsuna mentally give herself a pat in the back, for having the hindsight to inform Coach Maeda and Masumi-sensei about Gokudera before she left her apartment.

“I expected someone older,” Masumi-sensei give Gokudera a look over. “So a mafioso starts pretty much this early?”

“Most of the time,” Gokudera’s answer is not very reassuring. The two women exchanged a glance and then looked at Reborn. They know that he’s not a normal baby but it’s still discomforting.

Masumi-sensei turn her attention back to Gokudera again. “And… You’re here because…”

“I need to by Setsuna-hime’s side at all time. That is my duty as her right hand man,” He said solemnly.

He already styled himself as her right hand man?

“Regardless, you’re not allowed to attend the lesson,” Masumi-sensei told him. When Gokudera about to raise his hackles, she raise a hand. “Pray tell, what would it look like if an adolescent boy who has no business being here at all is watching little girls who are clearly not related to him?” Gokudera shut his mouth. He is under no illusion that his fashion sense warrant disapproval from
adults, especially parents. Masumi-sensei is not done yet. “It will reflect on Setsuna-chan badly if she allows a male stranger to be around the students during lesson time.”

“You can wait at the lounge area if you want to, Gokudera-kun,” Setsuna said to the adolescent kindly. “Have you eaten lunch yet?”

“I’m fine, himesama! Don’t worry about me!”

As if on cue, his stomach let out a loud growl. Gokudera’s cheeks turn red.

“Go eat something, Gokudera-kun. There are plenty of cafes and restaurants around here. There’s a convenient store about 50 meters from here,” Setsuna told him.

Gokudera hung his head, defeated. “Then, I will excuse myself for a bit…”

“He looks like a scolded puppy,” Masumi-sensei commented after Gokudera leave the room. “Himesama? You got yourself a troublesome one there, Setsuna-chan.”

“It’s not even a day yet,” Setsuna massaged her temple. Reborn had the nerve to snicker.

“By the way,” Masumi-sensei turn to face her disciple. “Does that boy knows about your true age?” When Setsuna avert her gaze, her eyes widened. “You didn’t.”

Reborn continue to snicker.

- 

Gokudera is waiting for her outside the studio. Having none of his cigarettes with him, he keep his mouth busy by chewing gums. Reborn is with him, holding a cup of espresso. When he noticed her, Gokudera hastily throw away the gum and stand up straight.

“Setsuna-hime! Good job today!” He smiled encouragingly at her.
“Gokudera-kun, Reborn. I hope you were not bored waiting for me,” Setsuna hoisted her duffle bag.

“No! I was guarding the entrance for you, Setsuna-hime! And to watch for enemies!” Gokudera told her enthusiastically.

“Gokudera-kun…,” Setsuna studies him carefully. “Please tell me you didn’t pick up a fight while I was inside?”

He smiled sheepishly. “There were suspicious individuals but they turned out to be parents picking up their kids.”

Setsuna resist the urge to pinch the bridge of her nose. “Gokudera-kun, if you keep intimidating the parents, Masumi-sensei will be very cross with you. She didn’t even approve of Reborn until he passed her test. And he lost by the way.”

Reborn nodded. “It was a close call. Masumi-sensei is strong.”

Gokudera’s eyes widened. “That old hag- I mean- old woman!” He quickly corrected himself when Setsuna frowns. “That woman was able to beat Reborn-san?!?” He looked at them in disbelief.

It was a fouette off instead of a brawl though. Still just as brutal. “Yes,” Setsuna nodded. “Masumi-sensei approved of his fighting spirit, so she made an exception for Reborn. But she is still weary of mafia in general.”

The silver haired boy is now looking towards the studio with newfound respect in his eyes. “As expected from someone who trained Setsuna-hime! I have to prove myself as well!”

Masumi-sensei is *that* awesome, so Setsuna don’t say anything else. “You can go home if you want to, Gokudera-kun.”

“No! The day is not over yet!” Gokudera frowned.
“The place where I’m heading next… It’s less forgiving than the studio,” Technically, the ice rink is still open for public. Gokudera can get inside if he pay the fee. But Coach Maeda made it clear that he will not tolerate any mafia presence at the rink bar Reborn. It won’t be odd if Coach Maeda a poster with Gokudera’s face on it on the notification board after this.

Gokudera’s eyes narrowed. “Less forgiving? What do you mean? Is it that dangerous, Setsuna-hime? You mean there’s someone stronger than Masumi-san? Then all the more reason I should come with you!” His expression and body language shows no signs of backing down.

“Gokudera-kun, don’t. You might get banned from the premises if you keep pushing it.”

“I have to see it with my own eyes if you’re safe, Setsuna-hime!”

Setsuna sighed. There’s nothing she say that would change his mind now. With Gokudera’s insistent personality, he will clash with Coach Maeda. She has this feeling that Gokudera will try to follow her anyway. The meeting between him and her coach is inevitable. “Don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

- 

True enough, Coach Maeda is waiting for them outside of the rink. His grey eyes narrowed at the sight of Gokudera. The moment the three of them arrived in front of the entrance, Coach Maeda grabbed Setsuna. But not roughly. He pulled her inside. Reborn followed quickly.

Gokudera snarled when he saw this strange man manhandled his boss. He pulled out his dynamites (The last ones he have. He need to restock soon). He hissed in pain when something hit his hand, causing him to drop his dynamites. Gokudera looked up to see the old man brandishing a retractable baton. The kind for self defence. This man… He’s not an ordinary geezer! Gokudera can feel it!

“Your kind are not welcomed here,” Coach Maeda said coldly. “Leave.” Gokudera glared at him. His hand is throbbing painfully.

“Coach, please,” Setsuna tugged his free arm. Her eyes pleading. “Gokudera-kun means well.”

Coach Maeda is not budging. “Setsuna, get inside. You, boy, leave before I hurt you more.”
“I’m not going anywhere you old fuc-”

“Gokudera-kun!” Setsuna frowned at him. “Don’t push it. I don’t want you to get banned. Please, go home. We can talk about it later.”

“But Hime-”

“Gokudera-kun”

Setsuna narrowed her eyes at him. Gokudera gulped. “I—I’m going. See you later, Setsuna-hime. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you need anything.” He gathered his fallen dynamites with one hand. The boy walk backwards. Slowly at that, while still keeping eye contact with Coach Maeda.

Once Gokudera disappear behind the bushes, did the elderly man turn to his pupil. “Hime?” He mouthed.

The female skater sighed. “This is only the first day, Coach. This is only the first day.”

- 

And thus Gokudera Hayato went home, nursing his injured hand and pride.

...
Or did he?

Little did the adults know, the teenager hung back until he’s positive that everyone have get inside. As if Gokudera is going to leave Setsuna-hime alone with that old geezer. It’s reassuring that the World’s Strongest Hitman Reborn is with his boss, but Gokudera is her right hand man. And her friend. He was supposed to be by her side!

Setsuna-hime called the old geezer ‘Coach Maeda.’ They are at Maeda Ice Rink. The owner of this place? By coach, does she mean as trainer? So his boss is an athlete? That’s incredible! All the more reason to get inside. He has to support her!

‘If the entrance is no go, then the emergency exit!’

With renewed determination, Gokudera stepped out from his hiding spot…

....Only to come face to face with a girl. The girl blinked owlishly at him. She is wearing a different uniform than Namimori Middle School.

Gokudera glared at her. “What are you looking at?!”

The girl shrinks a bit but didn’t step away. “You were hiding behind the bushes for a long time… Are you a fan?”
“A what?”

“A fan. For Setsuna-senpai.”

“Setsuna-hime?” Gokudera’s eyes widened. She has fans? Not that Gokudera is surprised. His boss is so kind.

“Oh, so you’re definitely a fan then,” The girl nodded. She mistakenly believe that he is Setsuna-hime’s fan because he used the title ‘Princess’ to address her. “Setsuna-senpai is kind to her fans but Coach Maeda is very protective to his skaters. Please leave before you-” She glanced at his injured hand “Get hurt even more. Or worse. The Disciplinary Committee.”

“The hell is the Disciplinary Committee?”

The girl blinked. “Oh- I thought you knew. You must be new in town. The press used to follow Setsuna-senpai around you see. Eventually the paparazzi tried to mess with her. The Disciplinary Committee took care of it. They also go after overzealous fans.”

Gokudera’s mind in racing. Fans? The press? Paparazzi? They didn’t say anything about paparazzi in the report!

“...You are a fan of Setsuna-senpai are you?” The girl inquired.

“I’m her friend and right hand man,” Gokudera answered right away. “I don’t understand. What do you mean by fans?”

The girl stared at him for a moment before opening the zipper of her bag. She pull out a magazine. On the cover, plain as day, is his boss. Gokudera’s eyes widened. Setsuna-hime is featured in magazines. The girl wordlessly hand it to him. Gokudera read one of the headlines.

From Small Town Girl To Olympic Gold Medalist

SAWADA SETSUNA

Japan’s Best Female Figure Skater
Gokudera’s jaw dropped. “Setsuna-hime is a gold medalist in the Olympics?” He can’t tear his eyes away from the cover page. Setsuna-hime is wearing a sparkly dress, posing on the ice-

“She represented Japan on the last Winter Olympics,” The girl told him.

Gokudera barely hear her, flipping the pages until he found the article about his boss. One line catch his eye.

Sawada Setsuna was born on October 14th 1985.

“Anoo…. Stranger-san? Are you okay?” Nagi poked the boy who seems to have turned to statue. He is not moving at all. “Okay… You can have the magazine. I don’t want to be late for practise. Goodbye, Stranger-san.” Nagi left the boy to stand there all alone clutching a magazine. She still has another copy.

“You need to get rid of that boy, Setsuna,” Coach Maeda said to her.

Setsuna just finished changing and barely take one step away from the door when her coach jumped on her.

“I don’t think Gokudera-kun will listen, Coach. He is very insistent to be around me.”

“That boy tried to kill you just earlier today,” He pointed out. “And now he’s following you around. I don’t care if he’s your subordinate or whatnot. The boy will only trouble you. At first people would think of him as another fan. But if he continue to follow you around, they will mistake him as a stalker or your boyfriend.”

Setsuna give him an unamused look. “I’m not into teenagers.”

“Does that ever stop the media?” Coach Maeda said blithely. “If he hang around you all the time,
even the skaters will notice something is up. The baby said it himself. More mafia are coming. I’m not risking everyone’s safety. And you,” He turn to Reborn. "I'm blaming you."

"It needs to be done," Reborn told him. Coach Maeda glared at him.

Setsuna think of the desperation in those grey eyes during the fight. The way he clung to her as he sobbed on her shoulder. The look of happiness when he saw her stepping out from the studio. “I won’t get rid of him.” She said finally.

Coach Maeda scoffed. “You’re already that fond of him?”

“It’s not that,” Setsuna shake her head. “Gokudera-kun reminds me of Kaa-san.”

Reborn stared at her. Nana? Sweet, oblivious housewife Nana? She and Gokudera couldn’t be any different.

“He has no one but me. He don’t want anyone but me. I need to do this gently. Gokudera-kun… He still has hope yet. He needs help. Right now, I’m the only one who can help him.”

“Setsuna,” Coach Maeda step closer to her.

“He’s barely older than Nagi-chan, Coach,” Setsuna said to him. “Like you said earlier. He tried to kill me today. Now, he’s looking at me like I’m a goddess or something. Says a lot about his psyche, doesn’t it?”

Coach Maeda stares at her. “You don’t have to do this you know.”

“Every child deserve a chance, Coach. Let me be the one to give it to Gokudera-kun. Just like you did to me.”

A silent conversation seems to pass between the two. Finally, Coach Maeda nodded. “I still don’t trust that boy.”
“It’s fine, Coach Maeda,” Setsuna smiled. “He will be well mannered enough by the time you allow him to come to the rink. Who knows? Maybe you’ll warm up to him.”

Coach Maeda scoffed at that. “I find that highly unlikely.”

“You decided to adopt me after I came to your rink every week for 2 years.”

“I only asked you if you want to be a figure skater and when you answered yes, I offered to be your coach.”

Setsuna playfully bumped her shoulder to his. “I’m glad you did.”

“Just go to the ice already.”

“Yes, Tou-san,” Setsuna saluted him before she went to join the others at the ice.

No one noticed the corner of Coach Maeda’s mouth quirked upward.

Except for Reborn. Of course Reborn would notice.

Chapter End Notes

I actually wanted to write more but the flow is just too good.

Papa Maeda is protective to his skaters children. Do not cross Papa Maeda

The next chapter will be longer so the next update will take more time. Please be patient!
“You know you don’t have to do this every night, right?” Reborn commented, sitting on the barrier as he watch Setsuna. The brunette is helping the staff repair the ice. Everyone else have gone home.

Setsuna looked up from her bucket. “It’s the least I can do. This ice rink have been my second home throughout all my life.”

She loves the ice. Everyone can see that. They can tell how much she love figure skating by the way she moves. It’s a huge part of her life. The ice gave her Coach Maeda, taught her how to overcome the challenges in life, brought her to many places, and led her to meet wonderful people.

“What will you do when you retire from competition?” The Sun Arcobaleno asked. He knows that competitive figure skaters retire before they turn thirty.

“I’m still not sure. I took Communication as my major in case I ended up working in the media. You know, as a commentator or journalist. I would like it if I can still work at the ice. Assist Coach Maeda to train the younger skaters. Or do choreographies. I would love to do an ice show with Disney.” She grinned. Setsuna loves Disney. She used Go The Distance from Hercules for her FS in 1998. On the summer of their first year in high school, she and Kyouko and Hana went to Tokyo. They stayed at Disney Resort and visited both Disneyland and Disney Sea. Setsuna still have the souvenirs.

“You would do well as a coach,” Reborn said. Setsuna is good with children. She doesn’t mind when a little girl interrupt her mid practice to show her her clumsy spiral. (Setsuna almost fell over from the sheer force of cuteness.) Setsuna demonstrate the jumps to the older kids. She held a fallen kid and soothe him as he cried.

Shame she wouldn’t be able to do any of those things if the mafia got her.

The figure skater beamed. “Thank you, Reborn.”

After they finished repairing the ice, Setsuna packed up and bid everyone goodbye. Coach Maeda threw Reborn one last glare before he go back inside.
“Does Coach Maeda know martial arts?” Reborn asked her. The old man uses his retractable weapon like an expert.

“Yes. Coach Maeda’s family takes martial arts seriously. Everyone in his family can fight. Coach Maeda is a bit of an anomaly because he used to compete when he was younger. But he handled himself well. It came in handy when dealing with fans who crossed the line.”

Reborn highly doubt that Coach Maeda would make an effective Guardian, considering his age, but he did well to protect Setsuna so far. “These fans who crossed the line. What did they do?”

Setsuna shifted in discomfort. “I have lingerie with phone numbers attached on it thrown at me once or twice. Other female figure skaters experienced the same.” It had been very embarrassing for her and the sweater girl who picked up those gifts. Coach Maeda take the phone numbers away every time. Setsuna is not sure what he do with them. They would apologise together to the poor sweater girls who picked those up. “One time a creep got my phone number. He would send me messages and voicemails. When I didn’t respond to him, he posted my number and address online. We were shocked when we found the crowd in front of our gates one morning. Instead of contacting the police, Kaa-san invite them in instead. She made them tea and everything. When we run out of tea and cups and glasses, she went out to buy some more. Left me alone to fend for myself. It was a mess, to say the least.” She sighed.

Reborn frowned. An assassin could easily blend in the crowd. The leak should have alerted Iemitsu but no. Did it ever reached Iemitsu? It will be so damn easy for the enemies of Vongola to find them. And Nana. What makes her think inviting ravenous wolves into their home is such a good idea?

“I never seen Coach Maeda that angry before. In the end, I have to stay at Kyouko-chan’s place for a week and then at Hana-chan’s until the mess is sorted. The adults pitched in to buy me a brand new phone. It happened on my last year in high school. The perp did got caught. This accident is what convinced me to move out and live on my own.”

Reborn is glad that she did. He need to observe Nana more. What she did was stupid. What if it was an assassin instead. They could just waltz in without warning and Nana will offer them drink and snacks instead. When Iemitsu told him that his wife wouldn’t mind, Reborn never thought it would be like this. Sawada Nana is a trusting woman. A little too trusting. It backfired horribly on her daughter.

“Did something else happened?” He inquired further.
“When I was in high school, I got propositioned to be someone’s sugar baby. It still happens now and then.”

The hitman can only imagine how Coach Maeda reacted to that. Definitely not pleasant. “Do you have similar experience with your apartment?”

Setsuna shake her head. “Thankfully, no. Gifts and letters from fans are mailed to the ice rink.”

Reborn nodded in approval. It give Masumi-sensei’s words about her and Coach Maeda being Setsuna’s parents a whole new light. Who knows what Nana had done in the past that put her daughter in risk. She must have did something that led Setsuna to say that Gokudera reminds her of her mother.

Speaking of Gokudera, Setsuna and Reborn find him waiting in front of Setsuna’s apartment. He is looking at his phone.

“Setsuna-hime!” He stand up straighter at the sight of them. “Reborn-san!”

“Gokudera-kun, were you waiting for me? How long have you been here?” Setsuna asked, frowning.

“Since sundown?” He sneaked a glance at his phone. “Yes, since sundown.”

Her eyes widened. “Gokudera-kun! You don’t have to!”

“But- I want to apologise-”

“For what?”

“For not knowing the truth! About you and your career!” Gokudera hold up a magazine with her on the cover spread. “I could have seriously injured you today! You could lose your chance to participate in this season! I can’t never forgive myself if-”
“Gokudera-kun,” Setsuna cut him off, placing her hand on his shoulder. “It’s okay. I forgive you already.” At her words, he looks like he about to cry. “Come on in. You must be starving. Have dinner with us.” She gently pull him along.

Gokudera acts like a new pet wary of his new home when they get inside. He sits on the couch, being really still. You could tell that he’s actually happy, the way he took in his surroundings with barely concealed excitement. Reborn sit next to the adolescent, reading the magazine he brought. Setsuna fussed over Gokudera’s injured hand. He already treated and bandaged it when he made a short stop at his apartment earlier.

Since they have an unexpected guest over, Setsuna cooked omelet rice for dinner. It’s simpler and quicker. Gokudera clasped his hands as he muttered a prayer to thank God for this experience. He was speaking in Italian but she get the gist. He chewed slowly, savouring every bite. It was the most delicious thing he tasted in a long time.

Gokudera insisted to make them tea and do the dishes after dinner. The tea was runny but Setsuna didn’t say anything. The silver haired boy would whip up a new batch if she said anything. Reborn said it though, so Gokudera made another pot of tea.

After the boy sit back down again did Setsuna open her mouth. “I’m sure you have a lot of questions.”

The boy blushed. “Yes, Setsuna-hime.” He mumbled. “Uh… The article says that you’re twenty one… The report said you’re turning 14 this year. How…?”

“That was on Iemitsu. My sperm donor,” Setsuna answered blasely. “For years he had no contact with me. I have no idea about his involvement with the mafia until Reborn came along. He was under the same impression that I was still a middle schooler. Iemitsu actually forgot my actual age.”

Gokudera’s jaw dropped. So even Reborn was mistaken. But for her own father to forgot his own daughter’s age. That’s… Gokudera don’t know what to think.

Setsuna smiled at him grimly. “Says a lot about Iemitsu, isn’t it? Naturally, he didn’t know about me being a figure skater either. It’s safe to say that the majority of the Vongola didn’t.”

“I…,” Gokudera don’t know what to say. Setsuna-hime is an Olympic athlete and Vongola didn’t know. “So that’s why you told me to call you with ‘-nee’”
“Yes. After all, I am older than you. I am flattered that you think I was your age though,” Setsuna smiled at him teasingly.

Gokudera blushed. At least she didn’t hold it against him. “It won’t be surprising if you’re busy. Fear not, Setsuna-hime, I will be sure to be by your side to ensure your safety.” He gave her a reassuring smile.

Setsuna frowned though. “You don’t have to do that, Gokudera-kun. What about school?”

He waved it off. “I already know the materials. They are so easy. I don’t need to go to school.” Which reminds him. He still need to withdraw from Namimori Middle School.

It send him to a panic when Setsuna frowned more. “You need to finish your education, Gokudera-kun. You can’t hang around me all the time.”

“But, himesama!” Gokudera protested.

“Gokudera-kun,” She reach out for his hand across the table. “You can’t make someone else the centre of your world. It’s unhealthy… For both sides.” Gokudera closed his mouth. Setsuna take this cue to go on. “My involvement with the mafia is not something I can control. I did not seek them. I intend to live a civilian’s life. What will you do then, Gokudera-kun? I understand that you grew up in the mafia. I won’t stop you if you want to go back… But can you honestly say that you can lead a civilian life as you are now?” He didn’t answer. “If you still intend to follow me… You will have to put down your weapons and properly retire from the business. You might miss the lifestyle. You might grow to resent me for taking you away.”

“I would never!” How could she think that? Gokudera would never hate her even if he try. Couldn’t.

“Gokudera-kun, you need to grow. Expand your world. So when you grow up to become a proper adult, you can go wherever you want, instead of staying in one place and stagnate.” She squeezed his hand. “I don’t want you to suffocate. Do you understand?”

He wanted to say something to refute her words, but he nodded instead.
“It’s fine if you don’t understand now, Gokudera-kun,” Setsuna said softly. “But I want you to know that you don’t have to prove so much to me. I won’t abandon you just because you make mistakes.”

“But I want to be worthy of you!” Gokudera said. “I want you to know that you could count on me! I don’t want to embarrass you! As a right hand man, everything I do reflect back on you! If I fail to do that, my life has no meaning—”

Thwack

Setsuna flicked Gokudera’s forehead with so much force it echoes. The teen’s eyes widened in shock. Leon changed to a video camera to film all of this. This is so juicy!

The brunette have stood up from her seat. No one said anything for a moment. Gokudera is still in shock. Setsuna is staring at him. Reborn fight down the urge to smile when he feel Setsuna’s Sky Flame surged up in protest of Gokudera’s words.

The adolescent winced when Setsuna go around the table and to him. Did he think she’s going to hit him? The mafia sure did put a number of him. Slowly, she wrap her arms around him. Gokudera stiffens. Only when he reciprocate her hug Setsuna tightened her hold.

“It breaks my heart to hear you say that,” She murmured against his hair. “You matter, Gokudera-kun. Please, don’t even think for a second that you have no worth. You are priceless. I will say it to you every day. Until you believe it yourself.”

Gokudera rests his head on her shoulder. She feel the fabric on her shoulder get wet. Setsuna stroke his back in reassuring pattern.

Reborn feels her Sky Flame reaching out for Gokudera’s Storm, and it reaching out to her as well. It won’t take long before a proper bond to be forged between them.

He need to Unlock Setsuna’s flame ASAP.
Setsuna walked Gokudera to the corner. The adolescent promises her that he won’t withdraw from school and attend class. It give her such a relief to hear that. That boy may not fully understand it yet, but he still listens. When she returned to the apartment, she found Reborn sitting on the couch looking satisfied.

“You knew this would happen, didn’t you?” Setsuna asked. “You knew that I would win and Gokudera-kun will become my subordinate. You were hoping I would save him. Why? Why Gokudera-kun? I understand if they would send a teenager because they thought I was one. But why?”

“Yes, I knew. It was planned. You did remarkably well, by the way.” Reborn told her. “I’m supposed to tell this in the future but I guess now is a good time as any. Sit down,” He motioned to the couch. Setsuna frowned but sits down anyway. “In our world, there is a system called the Guardians. An individual, usually a Boss, would attract potential candidates and have them on their side. A bond would form between these people, strengthening the group, stabilise them. Most of the time, the Boss would draw potential Guardians without realising it.”

“Is that what it is? Is that what I’ve been doing? The warm feeling?” She noticed it when she’s interacting with Nagi and Gokudera. It’s different from the warm feeling of love and friendship she have to her teachers and friends. She can tell that much.

Reborn nodded. Thank goodness for her Hyper Intuition. It makes his explanation easier. “Yes, you’ve been doing exactly that. It’s even possible that you have been drawing in people for years. Now, the true cause behind this Guardian system is a big part of the mafia. Let me show you.” He hold out his hand. Reborn willed his Sun Flames forward, coating his hand with yellow flames.

Setsuna’s eyes widened. “What in the world-”

“This is called Dying Will Flames. The symbol of the mafia world. It is an energy derived from one’s life force. You could compare it to chi or chakra. Everyone on Earth has them. The only difference is the mafia populace are able to Unlock it and use it. You’ve been using it unconsciously.”

She blinked. “I have?”

“You did. We’ll get to that part. The Dying Will Flames have seven different kinds. Orange for Sky. Red for Storm. Blue for Rain. Green for Lightning. Purple for Cloud. Indigo for Mist. Yellow for Sun. As you can see, I’m a Sun. The Sky Flame is known to be the rarest. Its property is Harmony. It draws in the other types. Mafia bosses tend to have this Flame. Sky Flame is essential to attract strong individuals to aid your cause. And you can’t not attract Guardians. It’s a natural process. You
can decide not to Harmonize with them but they will still be drawn to you nonetheless.”

Setsuna’s eyebrows furrowed. “...Those flashes of heat I felt sometimes... Was that my Flame?”

“Yes. Yours is Sky. The Vongola line tend to produce the purest and strongest Sky Flame. All Bosses in the pasts are Skies. Federico and Xanxus are Skies. The dead sons too. Iemitsu as well.” Reborn turn off his Flame. “I will teach you how to use Flames. We need to Unlock it first before we can begin.”

She nodded. “And Gokudera-kun? Nagi-chan?”

“Storm and Mist. Gokudera was chosen because we thought you two will hit it off since you are of the same age... We were wrong about that part but it’s still a success.”

Setsuna groaned and buried her face in her hands. “I don’t know what to think about any of these.”

“It’s happening so get used to it. Now, more about what makes Vongola so special.” She perked up with new interest. “Those in the Vongola line have a special ability called Hyper Intuition. As the name suggests, they have really good intuition, bordering omniscient. No other Famiglia has it. It’s a biological trait passed down from one generation to another. It also determine the eligibility of a successor. Those who become head has the strongest Intuition.”

She tilt her head. “So Iemitsu has it? Hyper Intuition?”

“He has it but it’s weak. Part of the reason why he was not fit to be a successor.”

Hyper Intuition. She can still swallow that. Explains why her instinct is so good. “How does one Unlock their Flame?”

“Three methods. Training, life threatening situations, and this,” Reborn hold up a bullet. “This is the Dying Will Bullet. When shot with this, it will draw out one’s Flame momentarily.”

“I am not getting shot,” Setsuna said immediately.
“I wanted to shoot you with it at the beginning, but then the situation changed,” Reborn pocketed it. “So we’ll go with normal methods. We will start once your schedule is free.”

Setsuna bit her lower lip. “We still need to discuss this with Coach Maeda and Masumi-sensei.”

Reborn nodded. “I understand.”

“What are their Flames, by the way?” She is curious about this.

“Coach Maeda is Cloud. Masumi-sensei is Sun.”

“Huh.”

“That’s enough for now,” Reborn get off the armchair. “You had a long day. Get some rest.”

Yeah, she will do exactly that.

- 

Meanwhile, back at his apartment, Gokudera didn’t go to bed. He is still too high strung from today’s events. From trying to kill his Boss, to learn Setsuna-hime’s true age and status, to cry and be comforted by her twice. Yes, Gokudera is tired but he can’t bring himself to rest.

After the girl left him with the magazine, Gokudera had browsed the internet from his phone to learn more about his Boss. Reading her history, he felt like an idiot. She is one of the best skaters in the world! She competed last year in Italy! She won the Olympics! How could Vongola not know? Oh wait, it’s Iemitsu’s fault. What kind of father forgot his child’s age? Gokudera’s relationship with his father is very strained but this is extreme.

This at least explain why the coach and old ballerina are so protective of Setsuna-hime. To the point of challenging World’s Greatest Hitman and actually won.
In any case, he still has some jobs to do. Gokudera turn on his laptop. He typed ‘Sawada Setsuna’ in the search bar and clicked. He scrolled through articles and videos. Setsuna-hime assures him that she would still care about him no matter what happens, but Gokudera still need to familiarise himself with her work or else he won’t be able to keep up.

The oldest video featuring Setsuna-hime dated back from 2002. According to the magazine article, this was her last year in Junior…

He clicked it.

- 

Setsuna do not feel rested at all. It feels like she’s having a jet lag. But she did get some sleep. Yesterday have been hectic. Setsuna have class today. Ugh. At least she already finished her assignment on the weekend. She get out of her bed to go to the bathroom.

Reborn is up and ready by the time she about to enter her bedroom. “Buongiorno, Setsuna.”

That’s ‘good morning’ in Italian if she’s not mistaken. “Buongiorno,” She greets him back. Reborn nodded in approval before he head to the entrance first. A few moments later, Setsuna joined him.

The cool morning air always calms her down. Setsuna and Reborn is running past the toothpaste ad when they hear footsteps coming towards them. They turn around to see Gokudera chasing after them.

“Setsuna-hime!” The boy waved at them. Once he caught up with them, he rested his hands on his knees and pant. “Good- *huff* morning- *gasp* to you *cough* two.”

Setsuna’s eyes scanned the boy. His eyes are red. There are bags under his eyes. His hair is messy. His clothes… Kind of mismatched? “Gokudera-kun… Did you get any sleep last night?”

“Um…,” Gokudera blushed. He couldn’t tell her that he spent all night surfing the internet now, could he? Especially when the subject is his Boss. Her and figure skating. He already signed up in so many websites and forums. He wanted his username to be sawadasetsunasnumberonefan but it’s already taken. Setsuna4life is taken as well. The username SetsunaIsMyPrincess is no longer available. Gokudera finally settled with SetsuHime4ever. After the username issue have been laid to rest, he devoured 20+ pages worth of Setsuna-hime content online. It’s a blur. Interviews, Behind-The-Scenes, analysis, fanarts, fan videos, and so on.
He didn’t realize how late (or early, depend on how you look at it) it was until he looked at the clock. He opened the window to let fresh air in when he saw Setsuna-hime and Reborn running on the street. Gokudera sprinted to the bathroom, splash water to his face and brush his teeth. Face still wet, he changed his clothing in record time. Gokudera just grabbed whatever on top of the pile. He is wearing a Hawaiian shirt and shorts. Definitely not the kind you wear for a morning run.

“Are you sure you want to join us? Don’t you have school today?”

“I can handle it!” Gokudera straightened up.

Setsuna stared him down until Gokudera squirmed. “Okay,” She said finally.

“Yes!” Gokudera internally pumped his fist.

The run was going well at first, until Gokudera feel his chest tightened up. Damn, the lack of sleep is affecting him. Maybe he should cut down smoking… IS THAT SETSUNA-HIME ON THE BILLBOARD?!

While Gokudera is distracted by the toothpaste ad, Setsuna saw Ryohei coming towards them.

“EXTREME GOOD MORNING!”

Gokudera winced at the volume. ‘The hell?!’

Setsuna smiled. “Good morning, Ryohei-kun.”

“Ciaossu,” Reborn greets the older teen.

“Gokudera-kun, this is Sasagawa Ryohei-kun. I basically watched him grow up. He is a third year in Namimori Middle School, making him your senior,” Setsuna gestured to the teen. “Ryohei-kun, this Gokudera Hayato-kun. He’s new in town.”
“EXTREME nice to meet you!”

Now, Gokudera is sleep deprived, muscles sore and barely eat anything last night. Mix them together, you got yourself a very disgruntled teen. “Shut up, you Turf-Top!”

Ryohei’s eyes twitched. “What did you just call me, you Octopus Head?!”

“Okay! Break it up!” Setsuna positioned herself between the two boys and push them away. “Ryohei-kun, you go. Gokudera-kun, we’re going back!”

“If you say so, Setsuna-nee,” Ryohei said. “EXTREME see you later!” And with done, he’s gone.

Setsuna turned to Gokudera. “All right, Gokudera-kun. The lecture can wait till later. I’m taking you home.” Before Gokudera can process it, Setsuna hoisted him up on her back.

“S-S-S-Setsuna-hime!” He blushed. He’s being carried! By his Boss! Piggy back style! Now that he think about it, Setsuna-hime carried him yesterday on her shoulder. His Boss is so strong! Wait… If she’s taking him home….

‘Setsuna-hime is going to be in my apartment!’ Gokudera gasped in horror. His apartment is a mess! “No need! I can go back on my own!”

“Gokudera-kun, please, let me take care of you,” Setsuna said to him. “At times like this, it’s okay to rely to others.”

“Yes, it’s a Boss’ duty to take care of her men,” Reborn quipped. She shot him an annoyed look.

‘Setsuna-hime…,’ Gokudera can feel his eyes begin to water. ‘But wait! My apartment! Nooo!’

He may have let out an undignified screech of horror when Setsuna unlocked the door to his apartment. Maybe. It’s a bit of a blur. His bed is unmade. The trash is not taken out yet. A few dynamites are on the floor. His desk is a mess.
Setsuna looked at the white grand piano in the room. “Oh? You play the piano, Gokudera-kun?”

The adolescent didn’t answer, already passed out from the shock. Setsuna put him to bed.

“All right then,” Setsuna rolled up her sleeves. “Let’s get started.”

She start by inspecting the kitchen. Gokudera only has instant noodles and fast food stocked. Setsuna frowned. She need to teach him how to cook simple recipes after this. Dirty dishes are places in the sink. She gathered the trash and take them out.

“Okay. We need to go back so I can make breakfast for Gokudera-kun. I don’t want him to be late on his first day.”

Reborn, who has been watching from the chair, hop off. “You’re not going to clean his apartment? Gather his laundry?”

“No,” Setsuna shakes her head. “Someone’s house is supposed to be their sanctuary. I shouldn’t intrude anymore than this. Gokudera-kun was horrified enough.” They looked at the snoozing boy. “He really is a teenage boy after all.”

RING RING RING RING RING

“Bwah!”

THUMP

“Ouch… That freaking hurts…,” Gokudera clutched the back of his head. The alarm is still blaring. He scrambled to his feet. Where did that come from? Oh- It’s his phone.

Click
He let out a sigh and then frowned. “I don’t remember setting the alarm…” He remember running with Setsuna-hime, getting a piggyback ride from her- “OH NO! Setsuna-hime was here!” She saw his apartment! So embarrassing! He wouldn’t be able to look at her in the face after this ever again!

“That boy is not waiting for you today?” Masumi-sensei asked when Setsuna entered the reception area.

“No, Sensei. He has school.” At Masumi-sensei’s raised eyebrow, she chuckled. “He originally
planned to infiltrate Namimori Middle School to get closer to me, his target. After- ah- yesterday happened, Gokudera-kun decided to pull out. I talked him out of it.”

“Well, anything to keep him out of your hair for a few hours.”

“I’m working on him, Masumi-sensei. He will be a lot more well mannered when I’m done with him.”

The senior ballerina looked skeptical, but decide not to contradict her. “If you say so, Setsuna-chan.” She looked down at Reborn. “And you. What should we do to get you to stop follow Setsuna-chan all the time?”

“I don’t follow my students all the time. I didn’t follow her to university this morning.”

“That’s right. He didn’t.” Setsuna supported him. “By the way, we need to tell you something.”

“This can’t possibly be good.”

They move the conversation to her office. As one would expect, a civilian like Masumi-sensei freaked out when Reborn show her his Sun Flame. There were a slew of curse words in Japanese and French coming out of her mouth. It wasn’t until Reborn explain to her the specifics did Masumi-sensei calm down. Setsuna made her a strong cup of tea to calm down her nerves.

“How did this become your life, Setsuna-chan?” Masumi-sensei bemoaned. “I blame Iemitsu for this.”

“I know,” Setsuna massaged her shoulders. “I blame him too.”

Today’s ballet lesson thankfully went well. It’s a pre-ballet class and all of her students are below 6 years old. Aside from occasional crying when someone fell over, Setsuna managed. It doesn’t hurt that all of her students are so well behaved. Masumi-sensei offered this job to her after her high school graduation. Setsuna just moved into her apartment recently and struggling to pay rent. She tried to turn it down but Masumi-sensei insisted. So they agreed to give her half the full time wage and Setsuna can use an empty studio if available. With this, Setsuna can kiss her part time job at the McDonald’s goodbye.
(It doesn’t hurt that both Kyouko’s and Setsuna’s accomplishments garnered attention to GENERATION ballet studio. Many parents signed up their kids to learn ballet from the woman whom Sasagawa Kyouko and Sawada Setsuna studied under.)

With the increase of students, Masumi-sensei is able to hire more instructors, pianists and management. The new revenue allow them to renovate the place. Masumi-sensei no longer have to struggle to pay the rent.

Soft piano music filled the room as Setsuna and her students form a small circle on the floor. They stretch out their legs and pressed them together. They go through a number of exercise to improve their flexibility. From touching toes, bend foot, stretch your backs to table pose. Setsuna make sure to keep it fun as well.

“Spider fingers up your legs!” Setsuna ‘run’ her fingers from her lap to her toes. The students giggled and follow her examples.

“Toe kissing! Bye toes!”

“Flap your legs! Like butterfly wings! Flap, flap flap~”

“Make a table! Table to put your cookies!”

“Can we have cake?”

“Of course, Miki-chan. Table for your cookies and cake! Oh no! It’s spilling!”

After they finished their exercise on the floor. Setsuna playfully race her students to the barre. “Arabesque ~! Let me see your arabesque ~”

The sight of her students jumping about in their pink tutu always make her melt. She was once like this. With Kyouko-chan and Hana-chan. Masumi-sensei was the one who teach their beginner ballet class. Teaching this class always remind Setsuna where she first started.

When class ended, her students just wander about until their parents pick them up. Setsuna is packing
the CD when she feel someone tugging her leotard. She look down to find Miki-chan looking up to her. The brunette smiled and crouch down to the little girl’s leve. “What is it, Miki-chan?”

“Sensei, are you really friends with Sas’gawa Kyouko?” The little girl asked her seriously.

Setsuna smiled wider. “Yes, we had the same class together. She and Hana-chan are my best friends.”

“Is it true that she’s dancing in America?”

“Yes, and before that she danced with the Royal Ballet Academy in London.”

Miki’s eyes brightened. “Looondooooon.” She said in awe. “So does that mean she’s a prima ballerina?”

“Now, now, prima ballerina is a very big title,” Setsuna told her seriously. “They only give that title to the best in the world.”

“So… She’s not?”

“Kyouko-chan is not a prima ballerina,” Setsuna said. “…For now.”

Miki blinked. “Huh?”

“Kyouko-chan is a great dancer. I have no doubt that she will take that title in the future. I don’t know when, but I know she will. Right now, Kyouko-chan want to dance more. As Odette. As Giselle. As Sleeping Beauty. As Juliet. You know, her dream is to dance as Odette in France.”

“Paris?”

“Yes, Paris.” Setsuna nodded. “Everyone believe that she will dance that role someday. With the Paris Opera Ballet.”
“Wow…,” Miki-chan looked down. She is silent for a moment before looking up to her. “Sensei? Do you think I can become just like Sasagawa Kyouko? Be a great dancer like her?”

“I think,” Setsuna hold her hands, “If you truly love ballet, you will become one. If you practise hard and don’t give up, you will be a great ballerina.”

“Better than Sas’gawa Kyouko?”

“No.”

Miki’s face went crestfallen. “W-Why?”

“Because there is no one else that can dance the way Kyouko-chan dance. Just like there is no one that can dance the same way Miki-chan can. Even I can’t. Kyouko-chan can’t. As long as you believe in yourself and love ballet, Miki-chan will be a ballerina that none can compare to.”

“Even a prima ballerina?”

Setsuna nodded. “Even a prima ballerina assoluta.”

Miki-chan smiled widely. “Then it’s decided! Miki-chan’s dream is to become a ballerina better than any prima ballerinas out there! A Miki ballerina!”

Setsuna chuckled. “I look forward to it.”

“And you have to watch!” The little girl pointed at her. “Setsuna-sensei, Madame Masumi, Mama and Papa, Granny, Madoka-chan, Homura-chan, Kyosuke-kun…” She start to list off names with her fingers. “You all must come watch Miki-chan! Having you all to watch Miki-chan is Miki-chan’s dream too!”

Setsuna smiled. “I promise.” She show her her pinky. “Pinky swear.”

The two linked their pinkies together. Miki-chan throw herself to her, wrapping her arms around her
neck. Setsuna returned the hug.

The other girls saw the hug and now they all come running. Setsuna laugh out loud as they tackled her to the floor, each eager to give her a hug.

“Hug time!” Setsune scooped as much children as she can.

The kids giggled. “Hug time!”

Setsuna joined in their giggling.

- Setsuna

You wouldn’t believe what happened yesterday.

- Kyouko

What happened?

- Hana

If this related to the mafia, I wouldn’t be surprised.

- Setsuna

They sent a kid to assassinate me in hope I was able to defeat him so he can become my subordinate. Guess how that went.

- Hana

They sent a freaking kid to kill you?? And he became your underling??

- Kyouko
That’s so cruel!

Setsuna

Reborn was the one who set it all up. Loser serve the winner he says.

Hana

See, this is why you can’t trust anyone under 10.

Setsuna

I strongly suspect that Reborn has an extreme form of underdevelopment but that’s beside the point. The boy, Gokudera Hayato-kun, was so hostile to everyone. He already styled himself as my right hand man. Coach Maeda whacked his hand and told him to not come near the ice rink.

Kyouko

Gokudera-kun? My brother told me earlier in the DM that a kid called him Turf Top this morning. Then he showed up at school and apologise. His name is Gokudera-kun?

Setsuna

The very same one. I told him to apologise to Ryohei-kun.

Hana

Have you tried to give the brat the boot?? You don’t need any underling.

Setsuna

I can’t

Gokudera-kun is too much like my mother

I have to do this right or it will get much worse

Kyouko

Oh
Hana

Shit

*If you say it like that, it must be bad*

*Keeu us in the loop, okay?*

Setsuna

*I will*

*Wish me luck*

Kyouko

*Good luck <3*

While Setsuna is at university today, Reborn went to Namimori Middle School to scout potential candidates.

The first thing he witnessed is Hibari Kyouya punishing delinquents for ‘crowding’. His fighting skills are top notch. The Discipline Committee under his rule work like a well oiled machine. As expected from the scion of the Hibari family.

Sasagawa Ryohei is the captain of the boxing club. That boy dedicate himself to boxing, to the point of actively inviting (read: dragging) people to join. Reborn heard an interesting tidbit from unaware Discipline Committee members who talked about how Ryohei would go to Hibari’s house to issue challenge. This had happened several times and each time, Ryohei was kicked out by Hibari himself. His connection with Setsuna didn’t hurt either.

After school, Gokudera went to the boxing club to apologise. The boxer misunderstood and thought he want to join. The incessant invitation grated Gokudera’s nerves and the bomber ended up insulting him again. Ryohei insulted him back and it turned to a shouting match until Gokudera huffs and leave.
In Gokudera’s class, there’s Yamamoto Takeshi, son of Yamamoto Tsuyoshi. Former assassin turned sushi chef. Reborn is not sure what Flame Tsuyoshi’s deceased wife possessed, but chances are Takeshi is a Rain just like his father. Reborn double checked his facts while he checked Maeda’s. Nana and Setsuna frequented TakeSushi for years now. Like Ryohei, Setsuna watched the boy grow up. There is definitely a connection there. Reborn has to see those two interact to see if Setsuna Court him or not. Hopefully yes.

Kudou Nagi was born and raised in Tokyo. Grand Prix Final on 2005 was held in Tokyo. Nagi was one of the sweeper girls on the site. Seeing Setsuna’s performance up close is a life changing experience for her. She moved all the way from Tokyo to small town Namimori just to be Setsuna’s rinkmate. There’s actually a video online where Nagi handed Setsuna her gifts shortly after her FS ended. Coach Maeda will be an obstacle. Having another one of his skaters dragged into the mafia will cause his Cloud territorial trait to emerge.

So far, there are no Lightning close to Setsuna. Iemitsu told him in their last correspondence that the Bovino brat will make a good Lighting Guardian candidate for his ‘Tuna Fishy’. After the whole age revelation, Reborn wonder if Iemitsu smoke something first before making a decision. Knowing Setsuna, she will flat out refuse to take Lambo if she’s aware of what being a Guardian entails.

None of the candidates are around Setsuna’s age. This will be a problem. Setsuna is protective of kids and if her interaction with Gokudera is any indication, is not keen of those under age being in the mafia. She might refuse to fully Harmonize with the teenagers because of this.

The only adults who knows of Setsuna’s relation with Vongola are her teachers and best friends. Kurokawa Hana is still reachable, for she still lives in Japan. Sasagawa Kyouko is harder. Setsuna would absolutely refuse to have them involved with the mafia.

This situation might force him to contact adults who Reborn think would make good Guardians for Setsuna. No one comes to mind at the moment.

The Sky in question is oblivious of the Arcobaleno’s dilemma. Setsuna is currently training on the ice. She hasn’t found her theme for this season yet. Grand Prix will start in 3 months. Setsuna has until the second week of July to figure out what she wants.

Before practice, they told Coach Maeda about the latest development. Like his colleague, Coach Maeda was less than thrilled than Masumi-sensei when Setsuna and Reborn told him about Dying Will Flame. Oddly, his reaction is more to exasperated than shocked. Dying Will Flame doesn’t seem all that impressive to him. Hmmm. Reborn, being the World’s Greatest Hitman, did his homework. What he found is fascinating, to say the least.
Reborn plan to start Flame training this upcoming summer. Once Setsuna get a good grip of her Flame, he will contact Dino to come to Namimori to help. Reborn briefly imagine Dino’s reaction when he discover the truth. No doubt he will be shocked.

Of course, it had come to Reborn’s mind to correct the information Vongola have about Setsuna… But if they are to be so blind to missed an Olympic skater, Reborn wonder if it’s really worth it. He will give them time until the Grand Prix Final. If by then Vongola still haven’t caught on… Well… A long overdue reality check is in order.

For Iemitsu… Reborn can’t wait to shoot him. One bullet is not enough. Oh no. That idiot deserves so much more. Reborn will start by sending him the video of Compilation of Japan’s Figure Skater Setsuna Sawada Calling Her Coach Dad. It was such a treat to watch that video. Setsuna has a very dedicated fanbase. And Setsuna return their love.

She ought to take advantage of her fanbase more. Imagine the chaos they can plant and sow. If she know exactly what to do, Setsuna would have an army in her disposal. Her followers on Twitter easily eclipsed the number of men in service of Dino’s Famiglia. Setsuna is too kind to order her fanbase to do anything, but Reborn have no doubt that her tweet alone can break people. She is the darling of Japan’s figure skating community after all. They won’t deny her anything.

If Setsuna won’t take advantage of her fanbase, Reborn will. All he need to do is to groom Gokudera and Nagi as the ‘leaders’ of the fanbase. Gokudera will join the fandom base sooner or later. Nagi is already a member. Setsuna’s fanbase is a treasure. So much material readily prepared by them. Reborn can’t wait to poke fun at his pupil for the shipping videos and Real Person fanfictions written about her.

(Reborn stay away from the M rated ones. Those are too weird even for him.)

- See, the thing about figure skating is that it’s expensive. Setsuna spent two years restraining herself not to buy the toys she wanted to be able to go to the ice rink every Sunday. After Maeda become Coach Maeda, she helped out her mother with housework in exchange for Nana to buy her costumes and later on new skates. Her first phone was bought from second hand electronic store. Setsuna resisted buying snacks, mangas or whatnots so she can use her allowance to buy sports magazine instead. When they enter high school, Setsuna, Kyouko and Hana start doing part time work. Masumi-sensei, bless her heart, gave her and Kyouko discounts since they are her oldest students. Setsuna was tempted to accept the offer to become a sugar baby for a man old enough to be her father just to pay the fees. She was young, shortsighted and desperate. Coach Maeda found out before it’s too late. He and Masumi-sensei went to see this man and she never hear from him again. The prize money she won from competitions was spent to pay Coach Maeda and Masumi-sensei,
cover the costume fees and travelling expenses. Whatever left of it goes to her savings. The JSF only pitched in after she made her senior debut.

After the press fiasco at her childhood home, Setsuna start looking for a place to stay. Even though the Sasagawas and Kurokawas say it’s fine for her to stay longer, she can’t bear the thought of imposing them further. It’s like breathing fresh air when Setsuna signed the lease for her apartment. This place has been her home for more than three years now. When her career takes off, she received more endorsement. Setsuna can breathe a little better now but old habits die hard.

On his first night here, Reborn found a hoard of perfume/makeup/skincare samples in the bathroom. It’s easier to figure out which items in Setsuna’s possession that didn’t come from DAISO or 100 Yen stores. She brought home vouchers, coupons and sale flyers from supermarket like cats bringing home kills for their human. Her clothes are bought from bargain sales. Setsuna actually hissed when she saw Reborn touch her Dior mini perfume she bought at Duty Free store three years previously.

So when Setsuna invite Reborn to eat outside, the Sun Arcobaleno stared at her.

“What’s the occasion?” He asked after a moment of silence.

“Nothing. You can consider this treating myself, I guess,” She replied. “I’m thinking sushi.”

Reborn instantly jumped on that. “Sushi sounds nice.”

Setsuna looked at Reborn for a moment before nodding. “Sushi it is then. Come on.”

As Reborn predicted, they went to TakeSushi. Yamamoto Tsuyoshi immediately recognised Reborn as an Arcobaleno the moment they enter the premises. But his surprise of having an Arcobaleno on his doorstep is eclipsed by the joy of seeing Setsuna.

“Setsuna-chan! My favourite customer!” He grinned at her from behind the counter. “Long time no see!”

“We last saw each other two weeks ago, Tsuyoshi-jiichan,” Setsuna chuckled.

“And who’s your little friend?” Tsuyoshi eyed Reborn.
“This is Reborn. He will be staying with me for a while.”

“Ciaossu,” The Sun Arcobaleno greets him.

From what Reborn unearthed, Yamamoto Tsuyoshi and his new wife moved to Namimori shortly after Iemitsu’s last visit. He never met the Young Lion. That was 17 years ago. Reborn has many questions to ask the retired swordsman.

“What can I get you today?” Tsuyoshi asked once his two customers are seated at the counter and served with ocha.

“Sake sushi for me please,” Reborn ordered.

“Ikura for me,” Setsuna told him.

“One sake and ikura coming right up!”

Setsuna and Reborn content themselves in watching Tsuyoshi’s expert knife skills.

“How long have you been coming here?” Reborn asked. He already know the answer but he still want to doublecheck.

Setsuna and Tsuyoshi smiled. “Kaa-san and I were here for the grand opening,” She said, grinning. “We’ve been coming here since every other month or so.”

“Even though she’s busy with figure skating, Setsuna-chan never fail to show her face here,” Tsuyoshi said. “She basically watched my son grow up. Taught him how to skate even.”

“Takeshi-kun prefer baseball,” Setsuna told Reborn. “He made it to the first string on his first year in middle school.”
“Is that so?”

“Yes, they call him the ace of the team,” Tsuyoshi said proudly. “Here you go! One *ikura* and one *sake!*” He placed two plates of sushi in front of them.

“Thank you, jii-chan. Itadakimasu~”

The sushi is delicious. Throughout the meal Setsuna and Tsuyoshi exchanged stories and reminiscences about the past. Reborn learnt that Tsuyoshi distrusted a great deal of Western cuisine. He didn’t let his son have any until he was older. Setsuna told Reborn that Tsuyoshi always brought sushi or at least Japanese food whenever he visit someone in the hospital.

They all looked up when someone slide open the front door. A black haired boy in Namimori Middle School uniform stood at the entrance. It is none other than Yamamoto Takeshi.

“Takeshi-kun!” Setsuna smiled at him.

The boy blinked once before grinning wildly. “Setsuna-nee! Long time no see!”

“It’s only two weeks, you silly!” She looked at him up and down. “Did you get taller?”

Takeshi laughed. “You always say that every time we meet.”

“I can’t help it! I’ve known you since you were this small,” Setsuna showed them her thumb and index finger, barely touching. “I used to carry you around. Now look at how big you are! I don’t know if I can lift you.”

“Everyone in this room knows you can lift me, Setsuna-nee,” Takeshi said, causing Tsuyoshi to laugh. The boy finally noticed Reborn’s presence. “Who’s this little guy?”

“Ciaossu,” Reborn greeted him. “My name is Reborn. I’m a hitman.”

Setsuna almost rolled her eyes at his introduction. “Reborn is staying with me for a while.”
“Ah… I see. It must be hard to be a hitman at such a young age,” Takeshi said.

“Not really,” Reborn replied casually. “Takeshi, do you want to work for Setsuna?”

“Huh?”

“Reborn!” Setsuna turn to him. “Don’t listen to a word of what he said. It’s either a lie or just outrageous. Once you listen to him, you won’t be able to get out.”

Takeshi laughed. “It’s fine, Nee-chan! It’s just kid’s play. We used to play cops and robbers when we were younger. Don’t you remember?”

“I remember. But this one is real,” Setsuna said miserably. Takeshi laughed again.

Reborn ignored her. “Setsuna is the boss. So that makes you her underling.”

“Reborn, I’m not taking kids,” Setsuna narrowed her eyes. If looks can kill, Reborn would have died on the spot. “Besides, Takeshi-kun is busy with baseball.”

“Setsuna-nee as the Boss? Cool! I’m in!”

“Excellent. You are officially in once you pass the entrance test. I will contact you about it later.”

“Don’t just decide by yourself!”

Takeshi just laughed. Tsuyoshi is smiling genially. Reborn smirked. Setsuna pinched the bridge of her nose.

Later…

“Can you not?” Setsuna started as they walk away from TakeSushi. “Are you going you try to drag
civilians into this? It’s bad enough that I’m related to Iemitsu. I don’t want anyone else to be involved with this messed up drama.”

“Yamamoto Takeshi has both athleticism and popularity. He will be a great asset for you in the future,” Reborn told her calmly.

“It will be a problem if all my Guardians are adolescent boys,” Setsuna fired back.

“Nagi is not a boy.”

“You understand full well what I mean.”

“It doesn’t matter to the Famiglia. It’s best for you to gather a full set of Guardian as soon as possible.” You will never know what sort of enemy lurking around these parts, waiting for a chance to strike you down.

Setsuna frowned “This Guardian thing again… Does Federico has it too?”

“All candidates are required to have a full set. In the occasion of choosing the next Don, a battle royale can be arranged. The candidates and their Guardians will battle each other.”

“You think that Federico will try to prove himself as the rightful heir by fighting me? Or Xanxus?” This is bad. Setsuna has no experience in fighting, unless you want to count self defence lessons she and the girls signed up for in high school. Coach Maeda insisted that she bring pepper spray with her everywhere. She don’t know how to handle weapons (though Reborn will remedy that soon enough).

“Federico won’t push for that, but Xanxus might,” If he ever get free that is.

“What about marriage?” Setsuna asked apprehensively.

Ah, so she does worry about that. “When Federico take the Decimo mantle, you will automatically become his heir, until he sire one.” Reborn told her in a matter-of-factly tone. “He is much more reasonable than his brothers. If you don’t want to marry him or another Don, he won’t get mad at
you. He won’t force you either. Nono and Iemitsu on the other hand, will have no such qualms.”

Setsuna scowled. “I don’t think I would make a good mafia wife. To just sit still and look pretty is not my style.” To disappear to obscurity. To become a Stepford Wife after all her accomplishments. To live under her ‘husband’ thumb. Setsuna can’t stomach that.

“Good thing I’m not here to teach you how to ‘sit still and look pretty’,” The Sun Arcobaleno smile. “I’m your tutor. I will make you stronger.”

“...By throwing children and civilians into the process,” Setsuna said coldly. “Is that how the mafia does it?”

“Yes,” Come the unabashed answer from the hitman.

The two stare at each other for a moment before Setsuna break off eye contact. “I won’t be able to get used to this after all.”

“Maybe not,” Reborn agreed. “But you will survive it. That’s why I’m here.”

“...Hm.”

Setsuna and Reborn is almost out from the street when a voice call for them. “Setsuna-nee!”

The figure skater turn around to see Yamamoto running towards them. “Takeshi-kun?” She blinked. “Is there something wrong?” She asked once he caught up with them.

Takeshi looked bashful for a moment there. “I need your advice.” He told her. “I don’t want to trouble Pops… I hope you don’t mind. I don’t know who else to turn to.”

Setsuna’s gaze softened. “Alright, Takeshi-kun. I’m all ears.”

The teen smiled. Then his smile dropped slightly. “Nee-chan, you’re doing amazing in these past few years. The Grand Prix, World, Olympics… You are able to withstand the pressure and bring in good results… You made everyone proud. Compared to me, I’m…,” He paused. “Baseball is like the only
thing I know of. I’m good at it but… I’m not doing that good lately. Lately my performance is dropping, no matter how much I practice. At this rate, I will be removed from the first string.”

‘A slump?’ Setsuna tilt her head. Every athlete experience slumps in their careers. Takeshi is an adolescent boy. This must be his first time having a slump. He must be getting pressured from everyone around him as well. From his teammates, classmates, coaches. Setsuna is quiet for a moment before she speak up. “I suggest that you take a break from baseball for a period of time.” Hearing that, Takeshi tensed. Setsuna beat him to it before he can say anything. “Just a short period of time. Use that time to rest, decompress, have fun.”

“Have fun?” Takeshi looked at her confused.

Setsuna nodded. “Baseball is fun for you, isn’t it?” Takeshi nodded. “Then… When you’re doing better than average, everyone start to pressure you. To be better, to win, to get higher and higher… Suddenly, what you love to do become less fun and more forced.” The boy frowned. It seems she hit the mark. “I experienced the same thing when I was younger. Sometimes… Sometimes I feel like quitting for good.”

Takeshi’s eyes widened. “To quit figure skating?! But you love it! You’re really good at it!”

“I love it, yes, but I was not the best at the time. Everyone else have better rankings than me. They won more medals. They had more opportunities to compete internationally. It sucks. I tried so hard to catch up with them. Longer training time, stricter diet, I tried everything. But the end result is not what I was expected, which made me feel worse,” Setsuna paused. “Do you know why we need to rest? It’s not just to make sure we don’t strain ourselves and get injured… It’s also to reevaluate ourselves. Don’t think of ‘why do I messed up’, think ‘I need to step back and see where it goes wrong.’ You will confront yourself. You will listen to yourself.”

“Listen to myself…,” Takeshi muttered.

“You need to step back and spend your time doing something else. It will help you decompress and… Notice things you haven’t notice before. Maybe you’ll learn more about yourself. Will it fix the problem? I don’t know. But forcing yourself is hardly any better.”

“…I don’t know what I should do. All I know is baseball. It feels weird not to think about baseball.”

“It’s okay to have more than just baseball in your life, Takeshi-kun,” Setsuna said. “Your identity do
not depend on one thing and one thing only. As you grow older, you learn and experience new things. These experiences shape you. It can be repetitive. But life is a never ending process. Even when you’re old, you find something new about yourself. That’s how you figure out who you are. That’s what growing up means.”

“...So it’s okay if I ended up not liking baseball anymore?” Takeshi’s eyes widened as soon as those words slip out of his mouth.

“Yes,” Setsuna said. “It’s okay if you feel like running away from baseball. Really, it’s okay. Your beloved baseball is not going anywhere.” She move closer towards the teen. Setsuna place a hand on his shoulder. “Don’t hesitate to call me if you need anything. Okay, Takeshi-kun? I’m really glad that you trust me with this. It must be a hard thing to admit.”

Takeshi smiled at her. “It’s Setsuna-nee after all. I knew I could count on you.”

She playfully punch his shoulder. “Flattery won’t get you anywhere,” She said. “How do you feel now?”

“I’m… Still confused….” Takeshi admitted. “But your advice really helps, Nee-chan. It appears I have some thinking to do.”

“You should talk to your father about it,” Setsuna said. “It’s a good thing to have a parent you can turn to when you have trouble.”

Takeshi’s eyes softened. “I’ll do just that,” He nodded. “Thank you, Setsuna-nee.”

They bid each other farewell, heading back to their home. There is a noticeable lightness in Takeshi’s footsteps.

“You take good care of the young ones,” Reborn observed. “That’s a good trait to have in a leader. You won’t have any problem attracting Guardians.” In fact, there is a partial Bond between Setsuna and Takeshi, like her and Nagi.

“I wish I don’t need to gather them in the first place,” Setsuna said bitterly.
Come Sunday, Reborn found himself at Sawada residence once again. This time, Reborn is determined to keep a better eye on Nana. The Sawada Matriarch greeted them like last week. Cheerful and unassuming. She prepared another large spread. The hitman keep quiet as mother and daughter chatted.

Reborn noticed that Nana never once asked about Setsuna. She talked about her neighbours, their children, the weather, the new store that replace the old sake shop but never Setsuna. She didn’t ask about university. Or her part time jobs. Didn’t ask about the people in her child’s life. Her daughter have to talk about herself. Nana just smiles and listen but change the topic as soon as Setsuna is done. Reborn wonder if anything Setsuna said ever truly registered in her mind.

While the women do the dishes, Reborn is off to explore the house. The first thing he noticed is the lack of picture. No picture of Setsuna in her childhood. No picture of Nana or Iemitsu. Not even a painting. In fact, there are no evidence at all that Iemitsu ever live in this house. If it weren’t for Setsuna’s childhood bedroom upstairs, Reborn would go as far as think that Setsuna never live here in the first place. It’s disturbing.

Reborn is relieved when Setsuna called him so they can go home. They say their goodbye to Nana. He wonder what is it like to live all alone in that house, with your daughter only visit once a week and your husband haven’t been seen for almost two decades.

“Setsuna,” Reborn started. “Your mother…”

He didn’t finish, but Setsuna catch what he meant to ask.

“Kaa-san is not interested in me,” Setsuna said. “Sure, she clothed me and fed me. Made sure I look clean and everything but beyond that, she didn’t put much attention in me. Or anything else for that matter. Kaa-san lives according to a routine. She cook, clean, buy groceries. She never do anything else. Sure, Kaa-san would go to neighborhood meetings and chat with the neighbours but she never really get close to anyone. She never talk about her life before she married. Kaa-san seems to only know how to be a housewife. She never tried to expand her world. No interest with anything at all. Her identity is completely dependent on other people, in this case, Iemitsu.” She paused. Reborn waited for her. “Everyone thought she’s an airhead, which she is, but they don’t bring themselves to get close to her. Keiko-baachan, Tsuyoshi-jiichan’s wife and Takeshi-kun’s mother, was the closest person to her… Maybe even best friends. Kaa-san was different around her. More… She was more. After Keiko-baachan passed away… There’s no one else. I can’t fill the void for her. I’m not enough.”

“Setsuna.”
“...When I was younger, Kaa-san told me that Daddy became a star. So I thought that was her way to say that he’s dead without actually saying it. I never asked about Iemitsu. I have no reason to. I just know that he’s dead and we live from his insurance money… And then when I was 15, I overheard her talking to the phone with a man. At first I thought ‘Kaa-san is dating again. It’s weird but I’m glad that she found love again.’ Only to find out later that she’s talking with Iemitsu. That woman spent 10 years not telling me the truth. When I confronted her about it, she had the gall to laugh at my face and call me ‘silly’ for thinking Iemitsu is dead. What am I supposed to think? Nobody ever talks about that man. Kaa-san had so many opportunities to talk about him. She didn’t. The next few times I caught her talking to Iemitsu on the phone… I noticed a pattern. Kaa-san never bring me up. Iemitsu never asked about me either. That’s when I realised I am nothing more than a piece. The last piece to complete the ‘perfect family’ picture they envisioned.”

One of the things that cause her to act like a little shit in high school.

“Coach Maeda and Masumi-sensei noticed straightaway. Kaa-san is not exactly the supportive kind. Her letting the press into our home was the last straw for them. For me.”

Setsuna tried. She attempted to connect with Nana through what she enjoy the most, cooking. She cajoled her mother to talk about her past, to no avail. Setsuna asked Nana to teach her. Anything outside of cooking and homemaking. She took care of chores so Nana will have time to do something else. But her mother stuck around, never stepping out of the house unless necessary. She never talk to her outside from greetings and asking Setsuna to watch the house while she’s away.

“Time seems to freeze in that house. Everything remains the same. Except for me and my bedroom. That woman only lives waiting for a phone call from her husband. She is empty. She scares me, Reborn.”

The Arcobaleno don’t say anything. He is not scared of Nana but he can see where Setsuna is coming from. That is just sad.

“That’s why I’m scared for Gokudera-kun, because he will become just like her if no one stepped in. He sees no fault in me, just like Kaa-san see no fault in Iemitsu. Iemitsu took advantage of that. It’s dangerous. Gokudera-kun will alter his self of sense to fit what he thinks I want. You sacrifice everything that makes you you. You lose yourself... For that one person. But what if that isn’t enough? What will you do when that person don’t give back? You get a very one-sided relationship. What will happen if that person leave you? You will realise that you’re just an empty shell without them… And you’ll shatter. You will be left a wreck. Once that person is gone, you… become lost. You have no life or identity outside that person. That is not a good way to live. No one should ever live like that. Gokudera must be able to live for himself. To stand on his own two feet. To walk down the path he chose. To build himself a life he wanted. So even if he’s no longer with me,
Gokudera-kun will be able to take care of himself.”

“Like a bird leaving the nest,” Reborn concluded.

Setsuna smiled at the allegory. “Exactly like that.”

Emotionally neglected by her mother and barely existing in her father’s mind. Reborn can only imagine what Setsuna is feeling. Iemitsu and Nana take their child for granted. Who knows how Setsuna will turn out if she doesn’t have Coach Maeda, Masumi-sensei, her best friends and everyone else to support her?

“Kaa-san didn’t realise that she was hurt. The way Iemitsu treat her… It’s not right. But he can do nothing wrong in her eyes, so Kaa-san never realised that she can do better. That she doesn’t have to put up with it.” If she ever meet Iemitsu in person, this is one of the first thing she will hold him accountable for. Not even Vongola will be able to stop her from cutting a bitch like her poor excuse of a father. “My weekly visit is my way to check up on her. To make sure she’s not getting worse. Kaa-san is not doing worse but she’s not doing better either.”

“Nobody can’t say you’re not dutiful,” Reborn told her. Iemitsu will no doubt whine when Setsuna reject him. He will try to guilt trip her and use honeyed words. The _idiota_ will have another thing coming for him.

Setsuna smiled. “Thank you, Reborn. Believe me, I’m so proud with myself that I am able to work this out. Everyone helped me to come to terms with my family situation. I’m really lucky to have them.”

Reborn is thankful too. For everyone. Without their support, Setsuna won’t be who she is today. A loyal friend. An understanding sister. A loving daughter. A strong woman. A Sky that supports all.

She is Sawada Setsuna and Reborn is honored.

Chapter End Notes

Gokudera has been sucked into the hell known as fandom.

And Yamamoto made his appearance!

Seriously, what is Nana thinking? She contacted Reborn through the flyer. It must be
planted by him or someone from Vongola but normal people would find it suspicious. When Dino and his men showed up, she just let them in with only Reborn’s words as guarantee. What would the neighbours think if a group of men in black suddenly blocked the path to your home and won’t let you pass unless you’re a Sawada? Not to mention Lambo, I-pin, Bianchi. Lambo carried around weapons for fuck’s sake. He used it in front of her. His actions (and Reborn’s) damaged the house multiple times. And she’s not in the least concerned. Not even for Lambo’s safety. The kid was catapulted to the air. Then again, she married Iemitsu, who has no problems giving alcohol to kids. You can only stay oblivious to a certain point. Unless Nana is faking it, she has some serious issues. I don’t know what’s worse. Nana faking not knowing a thing while all these mafia hijinks happening in front of her, or she is that out of touch with reality.
Gokudera step out from the convenience store with a smile on his face. He got the job! He can earn money now! Work is hard to come by in a town as small as Namimori. Gokudera learned to count his blessings ever since he ran away from his home. The senior employee was hesitant to hire him due to his appearance and age at first. But Gokudera is willing to take the late night shifts, so he got it. The adolescent will start next week. He need to be careful with his financial now. There’s only little money left in his savings. If Gokudera use it wisely, he will be able to pay rent for next month.

The Smoking Bomb has so much work to do. First and foremost, he must get inside the ice rink. If he can’t accompany Setsuna-hime to university or ballet studio, at least he can wait for her at the ice rink. But in order to do that, Gokudera must gain Coach Maeda’s approval first. Compilation of Japan’s Figure Skater Setsuna Sawada Calling Her Coach Dad shows how deep the bond between him and Setsuna-hime goes. Gokudera made a grievous error to insult Coach Maeda. An apology is in order. And hope that he didn’t get banned. He will be able to learn how to skate. It’s important to be in an even field as his Boss, even if he can’t catch up with her level. He need to save money to pay the fee as well.

Second, Gokudera need to get stronger. A star athlete like Setsuna-hime surely draw the attention of many, and not everyone have the best intention in mind. It could be haters, stalkers, or even enemy mafioso. It still puzzled the hell out of him how Setsuna-hime escaped the mafia notice for so long. Everyone who studied mafia history knows that Vongola Primo moved to Japan after he passed the leadership of his organisation to Secondo. The line he started survived until now, similar to how Vongola stood against all odds and time. They are aware that Vongola have backups in Japan but there wasn’t any need for them until now. Even if Setsuna-hime have no interest in the mafia, the enemy of Vongola certainly is. It’s only a matter of time until an assassin is dispatched to Namimori. It’s not like Setsuna-hime is completely anonymous. Even a monkey can type her name in the search bar and click Enter. Once the season start and Setsuna-hime travel overseas… Yeah, Gokudera need to save money for that as well.

Third, he need to catch up with the fandom. Gokudera have memorised ISU rules and everything technical about figure skating, but he is still very much in the dark about everything else. Figure skating fans posted analysis about Setsuna-hime’s performances over the years (there were other Japanese figure skaters too but Gokudera have no interest in them). Their effort is very much appreciated. Some fans posted stories about their encounter with Setsuna-hime. Most of them are positive. His Boss is just so warm and considerate to others. But there are some ugly and downright weird information. The story of the press invading the Sawada residence was worrying. A stalker was responsible of leaking their address. Then Gokudera read stories of how female figure skaters would sometimes receive lingers. It’s sexual harassment! And then there’s the RPF. It stands for Real Person Fanfiction.
Gokudera doesn’t quite know what to think of them…

(He regret clicking a M rated fanfic. Oh how he regret that. The horror.)

But it brought him to another information. Shipping. Pairings. Speculations. Setsuna-hime has been paired with male and female athletes, both from in and out of Japan. There’s also this one actor who according to rumor got involved with Setsuna-hime when she guest starred a drama. Both sides denied the rumour but it remained a hot topic for awhile. Apparently the chemistry between those two is so real. In any case, Gokudera furiously search for more information about the people paired with his Boss. Every. Single. One. Of Them. The meta analysis provided by his fellow fans give him the much needed material. Gokudera is not done sorting through them. He need to know which ones are worthy and which ones are not. If Setsuna-hime settle with someone, that person need his approval first. He won’t let his Boss end up with the wrong person. It’s bad enough reading about Olympic Village Experience. Whenever asked, she just tell them the basics. What does her room looked like, how many people lives there, the recreation rooms, etc. But when the topic turn to romance, Setsuna-hime just chuckled and smirked, not answering the question. Did she witness walk of shame? Did she saw someone enter a bedroom that is not theirs in late hours? Did she hook up with someone? What is she into? No one had a clue. Setsuna-hime knows something but is not sharing. The fandom as a whole is dying to know. It felt weird to think about his Boss’ sex life but Gokudera is determined not to think much about the sex part.

At least studies wouldn’t be a problem. School is boring to Gokudera. He already knows all the materials up to third year. Everyone around him is equally boring. Girls would make goo goo eyes at him from afar and giggle. The teachers, especially Nezu, are not as good as his old tutors. It’s bad enough that he meet Turf Top everyday at school. The only reason he didn’t skip is because Setsuna-hime takes education seriously. It will reflect on her badly if he has a bad record at school. Gokudera draw the line on the uniform regulations. He’s keeping his rings and necklaces, thank you very much.

Setsuna-hime is a tremendous help. She took the time from her busy schedule to teach him how to cook, and recipes that save money at that. His Boss is so admirable. Gokudera even cut down smoking for her sake. He won’t completely quit but just enough to be allowed near children. Setsuna-hime spend a lot of time around them, so Gokudera need to be on his best behavior to get Masumi-sensei and Coach Maeda to approve him.

And every day, without fail, she would tell Gokudera that his life is priceless. Reassure him that his life is not meaningless, no matter what.

Gokudera can’t suppress his smile. Setsuna-hime barely knows him, but she readily accept him. Patiently teaching him. Setsuna-hime never threaten him with physical violence (the flick on the forehead doesn’t count). She is worried about him, asking him how school went, did he get enough sleep, or if he feeling homesick.
It felt… Nice. To have someone care for him.

The only person who cares for him like that is Bianchi, his estranged sister. Every now and then, she texted him, asking him how he’s doing. Her texts tend to be long. His sister told him about everything that’s been happening in her life. Gokudera was surprised when she told him that she did a mission with Reborn. She even became his lover. She also give him updates about Father. Bianchi told Gokudera that Father cares, even after everything. That man remain a touchy subject for him, though not as much as his biological mother. Gokudera is not ready to talk to him. Not yet.

Hearing about Setsuna-hime’s father got him thinking. Compared to them, Gokudera’s relationship with his Father is much better. It’s one thing of not knowing you have a bastard, it’s a whole other thing to know you have a child, a legitimate one at that, and forget her age. His father acknowledged him as his true son and raised him. He cares for him, though Gokudera wonder if it’s only because he is Lavinia’s son.

Setsuna-hime never talk about her parents. Gokudera is aware that her mother is very much alive. She is living in Setsuna-hime’s childhood home. Reborn implied, without actually saying it, that Setsuna-hime don’t have the greatest relationship with her mother either. It couldn’t be as bad as with her father, couldn’t it? The internet don’t have much information about Setsuna-hime’s family life. It’s understandable since his Boss keep her private life… Well, private. Japanese media are much more tame compared to their western counterpart. They keep their distance if the object of the spotlight wishes for it. The fandom treat Coach Maeda as her father. For all intent and purposes, he is her true father. Setsuna-hime even dedicated a program to him. The program? The FS that landed her at the podium at 2005-2006 Grand Prix. In fact, that program is a tribute to her coach. Gokudera teared up when he watched the video. He weep even harder when he read the backstory.

Her theme for that season? Bond

It was certainly fitting.

Gokudera wonder how Setsuna-hime see him. She don’t acknowledge him as her right hand man (yet). Maybe more like a younger brother. She does consider him a friend. He looked at her as Boss, a savior. The way she fusses over him reminds Gokudera of Bianchi. Just a little bit. A teeny, tiny part of him wonder if this is what it feels like to be mothered. Bianchi’s mother has always been distant with him. She is also distant with her daughter, so he never think about it too deeply. Still, since he put himself in her service, Gokudera is part of her Famiglia. Even if Setsuna-hime don’t want anything to do with the mafia. Does she consider him as her family? He sure hope so.

Wouldn’t it be nice? Him and Setsuna-hime travel the world together. Setsuna-hime snatch gold
medals and become legendary figure skater. Gokudera and Coach Maeda supporting her behind the stage. He will double act as his assistant and bodyguard for Setsuna-hime.

The adolescent didn’t realise that he’s grinning the whole time until he sensed someone’s eyes on him. He turned around, ready to glare at the person, before his eyes widened in surprise.

It’s the girl from the ice rink. The one who gave him the magazine.

Nagi has been staring at the boy for the last five minutes. She was on her way home from school when she found him standing in front of the convenience store. It’s the boy from the ice rink. The one who called Setsuna-senpai Hime. His expression changes from happy, thoughtful, grim, thoughtful again and then happy once again. Interesting. The boy finally snapped out from his reverie, sensing her stare. Nagi shrink back, thinking that he’s going to yell at her. The yell never came.

“Hello,” Gokudera nodded awkwardly at the girl. “You’re Setsuna-hime’s rinkmate, correct?” She was featured in some of Setsuna-hime’s photos online. Make sense, since they share the same rink. “I would like to thank you for the magazine. I will pay you back for sure.” Gokudera is indebted to her. He can’t afford to be antagonistic with her. And since she’s Setsuna-hime’s rinkmate, that makes her one of Coach Maeda’s skaters. She might tell the old man if he do anything. Gokudera is not taking any chances.

“Hello,” Nagi bows to the boy. “Did you find the magazine helpful?”

“I did,” Gokudera replied. ‘You have no idea.’

Nagi nodded. “Can I ask you something, Stranger-san?”

“Yeah?”

“Are you by any chance SetsuHime4ever?”

Gokudera’s eyes widened. “How did you?”

“I noticed a new user with that name browsing the forums for hours. I thought it was you, since you look like you’re new in all these.”
“Oh,” The adolescent calms down. “Yes, SetsuHime4ever is me.”

Nagi nodded once again. “My username is Kuroneko.”

Black cat, huh?

“Kuroneko. Got it,” Here, Gokudera paused. Hesitantly, he meet Nagi in the eye. “Is it okay if I ask you some questions?” Nagi nodded. “Maeda-san. Does he work on Sundays?” Setsuna-hime and the skaters rest on Sundays. The ice rink belong to Coach Maeda so it’s not surprising if he even goes there on Sundays. The girl shakes her head. “Okay… Did he… tell you if someone get banned from the ice rink recently?”

Please say no. Please say no. Please say no.

“No, Coach didn’t say anything about someone being banned.”

Oh, thank God.

Gokudera relaxes.

“Are you okay, Stranger-san?”

“Yes, I’m okay.” He gingerly rubbed the hand that got injured by Coach Maeda. “Don’t call me ‘Stranger-san.’ It sounds stupid.”

Nagi shrinks back.

“No, no. I’m not angry with you, okay?” He put up his hands in placating manner. “My name is Gokudera Hayato.” If he’s going to be around the rink for a long time, he should get himself familiar with the members of Maeda Skating Club.

“My name is Kudou Nagi,” The dark haired girl introduced herself. Gokudera actually already knows her name but he nodded. “Are you really Senpai’s right hand man?” She looked at him
curiously.

Gokudera puffs up his chest with pride. “I sure am.” Then he deflates a little. “But the adults, Maeda-san and Masumi-san, are yet to acknowledge me. I suppose it will be harder with Masumi-san. She fought Reborn-san and won.” He needs to get stronger. Masumi-san will surely approve him if he can show her he can protect Setsuna-hime.

Nagi blinked. “Reborn-san? The baby with fedora?”

Gokudera nodded vigorously. “That’s him. He’s also known as the World’s Greatest Hitman.”


“Family business,” He said vaguely. “I can’t say much more than that.”

“Can I help?” Nagi asked.

Gokudera eyed the girl. She’s younger than him. While Gokudera has yet to know how good she is as a skater, she have the perspective of one, something he lacks. The girl shrinks a lot. Definitely not a right hand man material. And Nagi did give him the magazine. He relaxes.

“We’ll hear what Setsuna-hime and Reborn-san have to say first.”

- 

To think up of a theme is harder than one would think.

Everyone’s case is different. There are those who get struck by inspiration in the showers. There are those who discovered it after experiencing something new. There are those who wanted to challenge themselves and go with something they’re not used to. There are those who revisit their past and utilise it to show how much they have grown.
Every skaters, in Setsuna’s opinion, are a mix of those.

There was *Metamorphosis*, the theme she used on her senior debut. It was the year of 2003. That year Setsuna became a third year in high school. She wanted to show the world that she is not a little girl anymore. She has become a woman. It was certainly fitting at the time. For the exhibition, she picked *No Scrubs* by TLC. Hana approved. High school boys are the worst. Teenagers are shit. Setsuna was no different. She was a little shit. But she got better. Teenagers are still shit though. Gosh, remembering those times make her so embarrassed.

The theme she used when she won her first Grand Prix was *Bond*. 2005-2006 season was the toughest season in her life. So much had happened before that. And 2005-2006 season was the culmination of it. She took inspiration from the people around her, but the one who influences her the most is her dear coach. Oh, Coach Maeda. He had been the one to give her a chance. Setsuna can’t imagine her life without him. The old man has become a fixture in her life. He is her real father, as far as she concerned. That’s how much he meant to her. Setsuna owed him everything.

Setsuna used the Pink Panther theme song for her SP in 2000. Simply because she likes the tune.

On her first National Japan Junior, Setsuna skated to *’Go The Distance’*. The movie was released the previous year. She loves it. It’s just seems fitting. That was her first time competing on national level. She was a nervous wreck at the time. She did better than she expected though?

Last season was hard too. Everyone were looking forward for her new programs. Will Sawada Setsuna be able to defend her title? Or is it just a one time thing? There were expectations. From her club, from her fans, from her country, from herself. The pressure almost drown her alive. She was scared. And then she found courage. So that’s what she used that year. *Courage*. She won her second gold at the Grand Prix as the result. Setsuna preserved. Setsuna showed them.

This year, she will get her third gold.

*But what is her theme going to be?*

BANG

Setsuna tilt her head. The bullet was an inch away from her ear. She glared at Reborn, who looked back at her from his spot on the kitchen counter.
“Your reaction time is getting better, Setsuna,” The Sun Arcobaleno put down his weapon.

“Do you mind? I’m trying to concentrate here.” She pointed to her textbook in front of her.

“Constant vigilance,” said Reborn casually.

“Harry Potter?” Setsuna joked. “Your Hogwarts house?”

“I would say… Slytherin,” Reborn smirked.

Setsuna nodded. “Slytherpuff.”

Reborn return her nod in kind. “It’s time for our lesson.”

Reborn started to teach her Italian since Monday. Setsuna found out that he’s actually a decent teacher. She almost say normal until she made a mistake and Reborn whacked her with a paper fan. The kind one use for slapsticks. Sometimes he use a toy hammer. Setsuna has a nasty suspicion that the only reason he didn’t dish out heavier weapon is because she can’t afford to get injured. Reborn never really interfere with her university work so Setsuna can’t complain. He’s been reasonable with her so far. Besides, adding one more language in her resume will benefit her in the future, such as if she take a commentator job.

Learning Italian made her wonder about the land her ancestor come from. Italy is also the homeland of Valentina Marchei, Anna Cappellini, Karel Zerenka, Federica Faiella, Luciano Milo and many other great skaters. Setsuna only been to Italy just once, and it was for the Olympics. When she think of Italy, she think of Merano Cup. No Japanese skaters ever win the Merano Cup before. She like pasta. She need the carbohydrate and protein.

Maybe she should try to skate to opera? On second thought, maybe not. She don’t know operas that well. The setting of Romeo and Juliet takes place in Italy. Ballet originated from there. Perhaps an Italian song…?

Not now. Setsuna need to focus on the lesson. She don’t want to find out what Reborn will do next if he realise her mind is elsewhere.
Today’s ballet class ended without any trouble. Setsuna is getting changed in the locker room when her phone buzzed. She flipped open her phone. It’s a text from Nana.

_Tsu-chan,_

_A friend of Reborn came to our home. He is looking for him and currently very confused. Can you take Reborn and come?_

Setsuna frowned at the text. A friend of Reborn? The baby doesn’t say anything about any friend of his coming to Namimori. If it’s Reborn… Then it must be someone from the mafia. Her eyes widened.

Mafia. In her childhood home. Alone with her mother.

Setsuna quickly type a reply.

_Kaa-san, I’m on my way. PLEASE BE CAREFUL. The moment you feel uneasy, GET OUT_

She hastily put on her clothes. Masumi-sensei looked at her in confusion when she came running to the lobby. Reborn is with her.

“Setsuna-chan? What’s wrong?” The ballerina asked in concern.

“You,” Setsuna point a finger at Reborn. “Why didn’t you tell me there’s mafia in town. One of them is with my mother right now, claiming to be your friend.”

Masumi-sensei’s eyes widened. She turn to Reborn.

“I didn’t contact any mafioso to come anytime soon,” He answered. Shamal is not scheduled to come in another few weeks. It could be Bianchi. Even though they break up amicably, she is still in love with him.
“Setsuna-chan, one of the staff own a bike. It’s at the back. You can use it. I’ll tell them it’s for emergency,” Masumi-sensei told her. The figure skater is gone in a flash. Masumi-sensei pull out her phone. “If anything happens to Sawada Nana, your head will roll,” She hissed at Reborn before dialing Coach Maeda’s number.

Next thing they know, Setsuna is already outside riding a bike. She looks nothing more than a flash of orange as she cycle furiously. Leon changed to a mini helicopter and Reborn flew out of the building.

Setsuna cycle the pedals like a madwoman. Her Locked Sky Flame roar at the thought of the mafioso hurting her mother. Nana is not exactly the paragon of motherhood but she don’t deserve that. She is not always… present, but she was there. Unlike Iemitsu. That has to count for something.

People get out of the way for her. They must have sensed her urgency or something, for they looked really uncomfortable when they look at her. Good.

Her heartbeat accelerate when she enter her old neighborhood. Her house came to view. At least it’s still standing. Setsuna dread what sort of bloodbath that have occurred inside.

“Kaa-san!” She slammed the door open.

“Tsu-chan?”

Oh thank Kami-sama!

Nana’s head poke out from the kitchen. “Tsu-chan! Reborn! That was quick!”

That was when she realised Reborn is standing next to her. How did he catch up with her so fast? Wait, that’s not important right now. “Kaa-san, what’s going on-”

Something big and black poke out from the kitchen. It took Setsuna a few seconds before for her mind to register that she’s looking at a child. No wonder Nana thought he is Reborn’s friend… Is he?
The child clearly recognised Reborn. Next thing she knew, he pull out a pistol, and Setsuna has spent enough time with Reborn to figure out it’s *real*.

“Die, Reborn!”

*Click*

Four sets of eye stared at the gun. The child look confused for a moment before he toss it aside and pull out a *knife* instead. He lunged towards Reborn. The baby simply swat him to the side, not batting an eyelid.

Setsuna winced when the child’s head hit the wall. “Reborn-”

“That hurts...,” The child moaned in pain. “I must’ve tripped over something...” And then he *laughed*. “I, Lambo-san, a five year old from Italy, a hitman from Bovino Famiglia, tripped! Favourite foods are grapes and candy! And I, Lambo-san, who met Reborn at a bar, tripped!” Is he... Trying to laugh it off? “Let me try again!” Lambo stood up and dust of his cow print suit. “Yo, Reborn! It’s me, Lambo!”

Reborn is not even paying attention to him, already going inside the kitchen.

Lambo hold back his sniffle to after him. Setsuna and Nana looked at each other before joining the boys at the kitchen. Reborn is fixing himself a cup of coffee while Lambo circled him.

“Fohohoho! This time, I borrowed a lot of weapons from the boss that are passed down in the Famiglia!” He pull out a bag out of nowhere. And Lambo proceed to pull out a freaking *bazooka* from such a small bag. How is he even able to hold it up?! “Ta-dah! The Ten Year Bazooka! Those who are shot with this will switch places with their future self for five minutes!”

‘...*How- No, Setsuna. It’s best not to think about it deeply. The mafia is crazy enough to build time travel weaponry.*’

“But it’ll be a waste so I’ll put it away,” Lambo put it back. Did the mafia find out how to manipulate space? *Hammer space*? “Oh my! I found something good! What could it be?” He pull out a... Hand grenade?! “Die, Reborn!”
Lambo throw the grenade at Reborn… Only for him to deflect it back to the child. With a plate to boot.

**BOOM**

“Gupya!”

“Lambo!” Setsuna watch in horror as the child is thrown out of the window. The smoke made it hard for her to see if he landed or… “Reborn! What the fuck!”

“Tsu-chan! Language!” Nana admonished her daughter. *She is more upset with her swearing than the fact she just witnessed a child thrown out of the window with a grenade on his face???

“The Bovino Famiglia is a rather small group,” Reborn said. “I don’t associate with lower ranks.”

“That doesn’t give you the excuse to be so cruel to a child!” Granted, Lambo tried to kill Reborn but still! “I’m going to look for him!” He couldn’t be that far. Setsuna is fairly certain the child is still in the neighbourhood.

Setsuna dash out of the house. “Lambo!” She call out for the little boy. “Lambo! Where are you?”

Her searching did not take long. Eventually, Setsuna saw a figure holding a large black bush that can only be Lambo’s crazy hair. “Lambo!” She smiled in relief. The figure turned and she recognised them instantly. “Ah! Hibari-kun!”

“Duck,” Hibari acknowledge her. Ever since ducks become her official mascot, he’s been calling her that since. He call the younger members at the club ‘ducklings’ as well. “One of yours?” He lift Lambo’s prone form higher for her to see.

“Yes,” Setsuna nodded. “He- ah- got into a fight.”

The teenager hand her the unconscious Lambo. Setsuna hold him close. “The herbivores are complaining about loud noises. It came from your old house,” He told her, his grey eyes narrowed.
Setsuna grimaced. “It’s a long story that I rather tell you later. When things calm down a bit. Coach Maeda will be able to explain to you now if you want.”

Hibari studied at her. “I smell gunpowder on the cow child.”

She grimaced more. “I told you. It’s a long story. The sort where you need to sit down to hear it. We’ll explain it to you. I promise. Just not now. I need to take care of Lambo.”

Hibari stared. On one hand, he is curious about what sort of story Sawada Setsuna have to tell him that it brought a cow child that smells like gunpowder to Namimori. Is he a threat? Or just a taste of what is more to come? Enemies must be eradicated. Peace in Namimori is his to uphold. On the other hand, he has no desire to get in the way of a female caring for her young. He saw what happened on that one occasion when a stupid herbivore paparazzi harassed a duckling in an attempt to reach Sawada Setsuna. Maeda is a swan. Swans are highly territorial. Setsuna is a duck. But when she step into the ice, she transformed to a swan. Or so he thought, until he witnessed her transformed to defend her duckling. The two of them never fought before, but Hibari knew better.

(The reasons it never made the news are because one, the duckling’s father is a lawyer. Two, he is Hibari Kyoya. Three, Maeda and Setsuna combined terrified the herbivore enough to keep his mouth shut.)

“You and Maeda owe me an explanation,” He said. Setsuna nodded. He left her to resume his patrol.

Setsuna return her attention to Lambo. Her instinct tell her not to go back to her childhood home for now. She has long learned to trust her instinct. Hyper Intuition. Whatever.

“Are you alright?” She looked at him in concern. Lambo sit up and sniffles. “Are you thirsty? There’s a vending machine here. You said you like grapes, right? I think they have grape juice.” Lambo nodded.

They do have grape juice. Setsuna bought a bottle of grape juice for Lambo and water for herself. They sit on the bench, sipping their drink. Lambo’s cry have reduced to hiccups. She pull out her handkerchif and clean his face from dirt and snot.
When his grape juice is almost finished, Lambo start to speak. “L-Lambo’s dream is to become the Boss of Bovino Famiglia and rule over humanity,” He told her. That’s… Quite the dream. Her old classmate in first grade once stated he want to be an evil overlord. Outlandish but they are children. “But my Boss told me to defeat the World’s Greatest Hitman Reborn first.”

“The same Boss that took you to a bar?” What the hell is he thinking?! Bringing an underaged kid to a bar! Unless it’s a bar exclusive for mafioso.

“Yeah!” Lambo nodded. “When my Boss took me to a bar for the first time, Reborn was there. We spoke a lot, even though we just met. While Lambo was eating his favourite grapes, Reborn was blowing bubblegum from his nose.”

...That usually the sign of someone sleeping, right?

Setsuna looked at her watch. She is late for practice. But she can’t afford to leave Lambo now. “Do you have anywhere to stay in Namimori?” She asked him. “Any relatives to take you in? Any allies of your Famiglia?” Lambo shakes his head. She frowned. “How did you get to Japan in the first place? Does your Famiglia know you’re here?”

“Lambo-san snuck into the plane. Then he snuck into a truck. Got lost a few times. Got chased by crows…,” And he start to list of the hardships he faced on his way to Namimori. Each word coming out from his mouth made her horror grew. “Boss knows that I’m going to kill Reborn, so he gave me weapons.”

“That’s it?” Setsuna frowned. Lambo nodded. Reborn did told her that the Bovino is a small family… But they would have known that they are sending Lambo to what basically is a suicide mission. The mafia is crazy. First Gokudera and now Lambo. “Are all hitman in the mafia started out this young?” She wonders.

“Yep! And Lambo is the best hitman in the Famiglia! Even better than the adults! That’s why Boss allowed Lambo to go! Boss told him that Lambo is the most suited to be Boss after him!” He puff out his chest in pride.

Better than the adults? Either they are too weak or Lambo is actually the real deal.

Growl….
Setsuna looked at Lambo. “Are you hungry?”

“Yeah!”

“When do you last eat?”

“Uh…,” Lambo fumbled. “I ate candy for breakfast this morning.”

“That’s not good,” Setsuna shakes her head. “Come on. My mother will cook you something. Finish your grape juice first.”

Lambo downed his grape juice in record speed. He is too short to reach her hand, so Setsuna bend down a bit to allow him to do so. For the rest of the journey, Lambo chatter her ear off. He talked about Italy, his cousins, the family ranch, candies and many others. Setsuna made a mental note to call his Famiglia after this. They better have a good explanation for sending a five year old all alone to the other side of the globe.

Nana doesn’t mind Lambo staying over. In fact, she seems to enjoy his company. She must be lonelier than Setsuna expected. Or maybe because Lambo is a child. Nana pretty much let her be when she hit puberty. Lambo keep his distance from Reborn and stick close to her.

“Lambo,” Setsuna pull him aside while Nana cook dinner. “Do you have any way to contact your Boss?”

“Yeah!” He rummaged his hair and pull out a piece of paper. “Boss told Lambo to contact him only after he kill Reborn. Lambo is not allowed to go back to Italy until then.”

_Only after?

Setsuna do not like the sound of that.

Dinner for tonight consists of spaghetti and salad. Setsuna made Lambo promised not to pull any stunts during meal times. She left everyone in the kitchen to go to her old bedroom. Once she closes the door, she pull out her phone and Lambo’s paper. His Famiglia have a lot to answer for.
She patiently waits for the call to connect until she hear a ‘click’

The person on the other side is an adult male, and he speak Italian.

“Greetings,” Setsuna greet him in English.

He switches to English. “Who is this? How did you get this number?”

“Lambo gave it to me,” Setsuna answered. “He is currently downstairs eating his dinner.”

The man switch his tone to apologetic. “Lambo? Did he cause you any trouble? We will send you a refund for the damage. I apologise for all the trouble he caused you.”

“He didn’t damage anything,” It was a close call but ultimately, nothing in the house got scratched. “You are his Boss, correct? I’d like to know why you sent a kid to Japan all on his own. Without any supervision or accommodation.”

“Lambo knows Japanese. He will be fine.”

“The kid was barely able to feed himself,” Setsuna told him. “Lambo told me that he must not contact you unless he assassinate Reborn. Lambo may be great for his age but Reborn is in another league entirely.”

The Boss’ voice grow stern. “He must be able to achieve that before he take the mantle of Boss.”

If that is the case, then they would’ve told her to kill Reborn. “I find that highly unlikely to happen, if that is one’s condition to inherit a Famiglia. Lambo told me you forbid him to return to Italy until he kill Reborn.”

“A Boss must be strong. If Lambo is not able to complete his mission, he cannot return home.”
“What if he tried for the rest of his life and still fail?”

“So be it then,” The boss said flatly.

Setsuna about to shout when a thought came to mind. “Did you… Set Lambo up to get rid of him?” Reborn has no qualms to harm children. Lambo could’ve died multiple times on his way to Japan. “Don’t you have any concern for him?”

“The mafia has no use for a kid as annoying as him. Our home have become much more peaceful ever since he left. Less headache, less mess, less mouth to feed.”

“You… Sent Lambo to accomplish the impossible, basically a suicide mission… Because he annoys you?” Setsuna gawked, horrified. “He’s a child! Children are supposed to be noisy and active! A five year old simply don’t have the same maturity as an adult! Parents are supposed to understand that!” She said hotly. “Children require unconditional love! They need guidance and attention! They make mistakes! Parents are supposed to help them learn from it and not do the same thing twice! I thought blood is also important in the mafia! Is Lambo not your blood? A Famiglia is supposed to care for its member, not abandoning him just because he’s too much of a child for you to handle!”

She received no answer. Setsuna take a few deep breath before continuing. “If you so readily abandon a child just because he annoys you… Then you, Sir, aren’t allowed to have any children. At. All.” She said coldly. “Lambo will be under my family’s care then.” She ended the call before the boss can say anything. It took her a few minutes to calm down.

“Setsuna.”

Setsuna turn around to see Reborn standing by the doorway. “You heard everything?” He nodded. “Your world is insane,” She run a hand through her hair. “What’s next? Lambo becoming a candidate to be my Guardian.” When Reborn didn’t answer, her jaw dropped. “You didn’t.”

“Iemitsu thought it’s a good idea. He discussed it with Lambo’s Boss and he readily agreed to send him to Japan.”

“Do you think Lambo is fit to be a Guardian?” Setsuna asked. Her voice dangerously calm.

“No,” Reborn admitted. “He has good foundations but he is still lacking in many departments. Even
if you are a middle schooler, the age gap is too great. You two won’t click easily. But Iemitsu insisted.”

“And you went along with it,” Setsuna’s tone is still calm. “You knew.”

Reborn can feel her Sky Flame flared in anger. At him. At Bovino Boss. At Iemitsu. Setsuna is truly pissed. If the heaviness in the room caused by the room does not clue you yet, her now orange eyes will. “Well, I couldn’t very well let Lambo return to Italy. He has no one there. Guess he’ll be staying here in Japan. Congratulations, you all got you wish for.” She spat.

“Tsu-nee!” Lambo called for her from downstairs.

Setsuna forced herself to calm down. “Fuck all of you,” She hissed before she left Reborn to stand there all alone.

Lambo can’t remember the last time he took a bath. The only reason he don’t smell is because he fell to a water fountain when he first arrived to Namimori. Setsuna gave him a bath while Nana put the dirty cow print suit in the washing machine. It took quite a while to dry his hair, and Setsuna already using the blowdryer. She dressed him in her old pajamas. They need to buy him new clothes. Until Setsuna can figure out what to do with him, she has no choice but to leave him in Nana’s care. Between work and university, Setsuna won’t be able to take care of Lambo. She has doubts about her decision but Nana is her best choice for now.

Setsuna put Lambo in the guest bedroom. They never have any guests over. Kyouko and Hana stayed at her room whenever they have a sleepover at her house. Now that he is fed and clean, Lambo is much more docile. Of course, it’s also because he’s tired. “Lambo,” Setsuna started. She need to tell him before he goes to sleep. Today has been a long day for him. For her.

Green eyes looked up to her. “Yes, Tsu-nee?”

“I don’t know how long you will be here in Japan, but as long as you live under this roof, there are rules you must follow. You are a guest here. That means you must not do anything that would harm the other occupants in this house or damage the building. You don’t want Kaa-san to get injured when you attack Reborn, right?” Lambo shakes his head. “It’s also part of your responsibility to make sure no harm comes to her.” It’s a big thing to say to a kid, but if Lambo is entrusted with real weapon, he must know how severe the consequence will be if he mess up.
“I understand, Tsu-nee,” Lambo nodded. The solemn tone in his voice is enough to convince her that he does understand.

“Good,” She pat his head. “It must have been difficult for you.” She said softly. “I can’t say that all of your problems are now solved… But I’m here for you, okay? That’s why…” She handed him a small piece of paper. “This is my cellphone number and my address. If anything happens, don’t hesitate to contact me, okay? I can’t guarantee I will be able to go to your side immediately but I will definitely pick up.”

Lambo stared at the piece of paper in his hand. “Yes, Tsu-nee.” He put it in his hair.

Setsuna smiled. “Go to bed now,” She pull out the blanket. “You must be tired.”

“Tsu-nee?”

“Yes, Lambo?”

“Can you stay here until I go to sleep?”

Her eyes softened. “Of course. Scoot over.” Lambo is more than happy to do so. Setsuna joining him in the covers. She smoothed his hair and sing him lullabies until the child drift off to sleep. Setsuna place a kiss on his forehead before slipping out.

Setsuna said her goodbye to her mother. It’s already nighttime. She missed practise. But Setsuna don’t want to go home just yet. To Reborn’s surprise, she went to Coach Maeda’s house. His home is a traditional Japanese house. Judging from the size, his family must be an affluent one.

“Setsuna,” He greeted her on the front door. He looked so relieved to see her. “You’re okay.”

The young woman moved closer to hug him. Coach Maeda returned the hug.

“They sent a child, Tou-san,” Setsuna muttered. “His family basically abandoned him, and Iemitsu took advantage at that. The kid is five. Yet they deemed him qualified to be a Guardian candidate. My Guardian candidate.”
Coach Maeda stroked her hair. The kid is five? That’s even younger than his own grandchildren! What is wrong with these people?

“What if they send more kids, Tou-san?” Setsuna asked. “Reborn already insisted on Takeshi-kun. And Gokudera-kun is… I can’t. I can’t let them get dragged into this. There are no guarantee I can save them all. I don’t have that kind of power. All of them are kids.”

“We will figure it out,” Maeda told her. “You’re not alone, Setsuna. It’s not your burden alone. Masumi-san and I will be with you every step of the way. And we will hold those people responsible.”

“We can’t save every orphan and lost sheeps,” Setsuna sniffed.

“No,” He agrees with her. “But will you let that stop you?”

“No,” She whispered. “No,” She said it again, louder this time. “Not if I can help it.”

Her eyes flashed orange once more. Maeda saw that and smiled. “That’s my girl."

Chapter End Notes

Now all the kids are accounted for, with the exception of Mukuro.

Gokudera is confused. Gokudera regrets so so much. I, FOR ONE, REGRET NOTHING

According to wikia, Nagi’s favourite animal are cats. The username Kuroneko is also a shoutout for an old Japanese horror movie with the same name. It’s about two ghost women who lured unsuspecting samurais with illusions and then kill them. When I read the plot summary, I immediately thought of Nagi. She strikes me as the type of person that would enjoy horror or mind screwing movies/stories. I contribute some of it is due to her being a Mist.

Masumi-sensei’s name is another shoutout. This time to Swan, a manga about ballet. The main character is a ballerina named Hijiri Masumi.
Okay, about Lambo. It’s easy for us to forget that he’s in the mafia due to his age and childishness but he clearly knows his weapons. Guns, grenades, knives, missile launchers. Lambo is able to use Dying Will Flame. His Box Animal listens to him from the very beginning, unlike Tsuna and Gokudera. He speak Japanese fluently, in contrast of I-pin who understand it but can’t speak it. This kid went to Japan all on his own and survived long enough until the Sawadas take him in. Lambo is often overshadowed by I-pin and older characters, but this kid has a lot of potential. We don’t know his rankings other than the fact he is most annoying. But annoying is not the same as being useless. This kid has to be the youngest Vongola Guardian ever. Not bad for an annoying cow.

We don’t know much about the Bovino Famiglia, other than they make Ten Year Bazooka and rather small. We do know they keep sending weapons and ammunitions to Lambo. Other than that, absolutely nothing. When Iemitsu told them he want Lambo to be the Lightning Guardian, the Boss cried tears of joy. Is it because their position is elevated or because they can shove Lambo to Vongola? So they don’t have to deal with him? Remember, Lambo immediately latched onto Tsuna after he gave him candy and listened to him. Tsuna, a complete stranger. And he is completely devoted to Nana. What sort of people Lambo has been living with until that point? Food for thought.
Gokudera is beside himself with worry. A few hours ago, Nagi texted him that Setsuna-hime didn’t show up at practice. That is a rare occurrence according to her. Nagi overheard Coach Maeda talking on the phone with Masumi-sensei. Though she didn’t quite get anything, the agitated look on his face told her that it’s serious. What clinched it is when she hear him say ‘mafia.’ Unfortunately she can’t hear anything else afterwards. Coach Maeda went to his office. Gokudera is more than ready to search Namimori upside down to look for his Boss. Before he can step out from his apartment, Reborn sent him a text message. The text said that Setsuna-hime is safe. There are no threats. He is to stay put until further notice.

Was it an ally of Vongola? A freelancer? Or even an enemy? Gokudera wonders. Just the word mafia is not enough. Reborn told him to stay put so he did. For the first two hours he stayed in his apartment, doing chores to pass the time. When the sky turn dark and still no news from either Setsuna-hime or Reborn, he got even more worried. Nagi texted him that Setsuna-hime never show up in the end. Coach Maeda simply told everyone it’s a private business.

In the end, Gokudera waited in front of Setsuna-hime’s apartment. She and Reborn will show up eventually. He checked the forums and news for any sightings of his Boss. Nothing. That means Setsuna-hime is safe. Word would spread if she got into an accident. But the mafia knows how to cover up (that include hiding a body). He knew he should’ve have stick close with Setsuna-hime. When she needed him the most, Gokudera wasn’t there. Some kind of right hand man he is. Gokudera is ashamed with himself. He promised to himself that he would do better. That he will get Setsuna-hime’s approval. But what is he doing? He is just staying put.

Going to look for them himself sounds like a good idea. Gokudera is seriously considering of doing it when Setsuna-hime and Reborn finally show up.

“Hime-sama!” The relieved tone in his voice is so obvious. “I’m so glad you’re safe! I didn’t know there was another mafia in town. Please excuse my negligence!” He bowed down to her.

“Gokudera-kun,” Setsuna’s eyes softened. She sounds so tired. “It’s okay. Everything is under control. Don’t tell me you’ve been waiting for me for hours. Again.” The teenager grinned sheepishly. Setsuna let out a small sigh. “The least I can do is to cook you dinner.” She search for her keys in her backpack. “Come in, Gokudera-kun.”

Setsuna and Reborn already ate dinner at her childhood home but she still cooked two servings of food for Gokudera. He is a growing boy after all. Even though she is teaching him how to cook and
nutrients now, Gokudera is still too pale for her liking. He must not have a balanced diet while living alone. And how long has he been living by himself? Setsuna put more carrots in the curry.

Gokudera thanked God for granting him another opportunity to eat Setsuna-hime’s cooking. It is much more delicious than the five star cuisine served everyday when he still lived at that castle. Setsuna-hime is watching him intently. Is him eating really that entertaining for her? He didn’t spill any, did he? Gokudera is sure that his table manners are not poor. Some lessons from his childhood still sticks to him. Reborn is seated on the other side of the table, drinking coffee.

“How was your day, Gokudera-kun?” Setsuna asked.

“It went fine,” answered Gokudera. What should he say? There’s nothing worth to tell her. He want to keep his part time job a secret so Setsuna-hime won’t be worried. And then there’s Nagi… They share the same rink so his Boss would eventually find out that they knew each other. “I met one of your rink mates today, Kudou Nagi?”

Setsuna’s eyes widened in surprise. She smiled. “Nagi-chan? Where did you met her?”

“At the convenience store,” He told her. “And before that, we met near the ice rink. She was the one who gave me the magazine.”

“What did you guys talked about?” Setsuna leaned forward, interested.

“Uh…,” Gokudera look down on his half finished curry. “We talked about… Stuff.” More specifically, fandom. About Setsuna-hime. They talked about technicalities at first, before Gokudera start dropping hints. Nagi catch his meaning. She proceed to explain to him about shipping. Lord knows Gokudera is out of his depths with this one. Then he asked her if there’s anyone special in Setsuna-hime’s life at the moment. She looked at him for a long minute before telling him that no, that is really not her business to tell.

(“Is Setsuna-hime aware that people write those… Stuff about her?”)

“Yes.”

“And she’s not… Freaked out about it?”
“I don’t think so. No.” Here, Nagi’s voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper. “I think she has an account and wrote stories herself. About other skaters of course. But still.”

“Wait,” Gokudera narrowed his eyes. “You mean… There’s a possibility she saw… Everything?”

“Possibly.”

“Oh my God.”)

“Stuff,” Gokudera repeat again. No chance in hell he’s ever going to talk about that with Setsuna-hime. Ever.

Ah… Teenagers and secrecy. She won’t get anything out of him. Setsuna smiled. “Did you enjoy your time together?”

Gokudera thought about it. To be honest, he rarely talk to girls his age. The girls at school are always fawning and screeching and ugh. Just… Ugh. Nagi is the complete opposite of them. She’s rather easy to get intimidated and quiet. But she’s not that timid. She didn’t run away from him first when they first met. They only talked about Setsuna-hime and ice skating. But that was… Enjoyable. He don’t know if they are friends, but Gokudera don’t mind her presence. They even exchanged phone numbers and email addresses. Gokudera already approved of her friend request online.

“I’m not sure,” He answered honestly. All this is still new to him. “But Kudou is a nice girl.”

“She is,” Setsuna smiled. Gokudera is making a friend! All on his own! She is so proud of him for taking this step. “What about school?”

“School was fine,” He shrugged. Setsuna nodded. It’s good if kids like school, even if it’s just because their friends are there. You can’t force them to like school. That’s just impossible.

“What about your day, Hime-sama?” Gokudera asked her, eyeing her reaction. The change is instant. The happiness in her eyes died and her smile dropped. She slouched her shoulders. “Hime-sama?”
Setsuna took a deep breath before answering. “I’m not okay.” She told him truthfully. Before Gokudera said anything, she beat him to it. “But I’m better now. I went to Tou-san’s—Coach Maeda’s place before coming home. He helped me.”

Gokudera relaxed minutely. Good job, old man! “What happened?”

“What do you know the Bovino Famiglia?” She asked.

“No. Never heard of them.” So whatever troubling her is mafia related.

Apparently Iemitsu thought it’s a great idea to have one of its members as her Guardian candidate,” Setsuna pinched the bridge of her nose. Gokudera’s eyes widened. Another candidate! “His name is Lambo and he is five.”

What

“Five?” Gokudera frowned. While children in mafioso start training at that age, it’s odd to send them away so soon. Unless as a hostage, to honor a pact or someone offered to raise them. Is that the case? They want a child to be with Setsuna-hime so soon so they will grow up in accordance to her need? Basically grooming them? He can see why Setsuna-hime is troubled now. They sent a child. Her civilian thinking won’t be able to understand that.

“They disguised their true intent by telling Lambo to assassinate Reborn. If he complete it, he will be made Boss of the Bovino Famiglia. So they have him go to Japan… All on his own. To fend for himself,” She paused. “I spoke with his Boss on the phone. He told me that he was glad to be rid of him. Because apparently Lambo is too annoying for him to handle. Just for that reason, he readily sell his own blood to someone like Iemitsu.”

Gokudera gulped when the air suddenly grew heavy. And did Setsuna-hime’s eyes flashed orange just now?!

“Lambo is under my care now,” Setsuna said, voice still calm. “If they demand him back, they will get another thing coming.” She promises solemnly. “Wipe that look off your face, Reborn. You knew and played along with this farce. I’m blaming you as well.”
“It’s for the sake of the Famiglia,” said the Sun Arcobaleno.

“By doing so in a roundabout way. Won’t it be easier if you just talk about it? No need to lie to a child about an impossible mission. There must be another way, gentler way, to break the news to him.” Setsuna pointed out. “All the mafia did so far is to make themselves look even worse in my eyes.” Gokudera inwardly winced. “I know that some people find true happiness in the mafia… Or that not all of them are that bad… But that doesn’t erase the fact that we’re talking to the same people who toyed with people’s lives, especially children, like… That.” She looked at Reborn. “If that is what you’re teaching me, to be anything like those people, consider yourself studentless.”

“You know very well I can’t do that, Setsuna,” Reborn eyed her.

“I know. The contract. World’s most influential Famiglia. Succession. I know.” She grimaced. “But if you want me to lose myself to please the people that has done nothing for me, I will pull a Hail Mary. I don’t want to end up like her.”

Gokudera looked at her in confusion. Reborn know who is she talking about though. “That is the very last thing I want you to become, Setsuna.”

“But you’ll still groom me anyway. Either to be a boss or a trophy wife. I don’t see much difference. My life will still be under Vongola’s thumb. To be underneath some guy.”

Everyone catch the double meaning of her words. Gokudera blushed while Reborn keep his face blank.

“You won’t let that happen, Setsuna,” Reborn said. “You got to where you are now with your own strength. The mafia is just an entirely different field. I may have ties with Vongola but my loyalty is with my students. I will help you. I’m here to ensure you are strong enough to survive what about to come.”

“So you’ll choose me over Iemitsu?”

Between his students and that idiota, the choice is obvious. “Yes.”

Setsuna stared at him for a moment before nodding and turning her attention back to Gokudera.
It was in the middle of the lecture when Setsuna realised she left the bike at her childhood home. That’s bad. The bike is not hers. She need to get it back before she go to work. Maybe she should get her own transportation. A bike or a motorcycle. There are no parking lots or garages near apartment. Setsuna already has a driver license at least.

The visit will also allow her to check on Lambo. Nana likes him. Then again, she likes children. Setsuna noticed Nana is usually much more cheerful around kids, because they need more attention and care. After Setsuna get older and need her less, Nana start to pull away. She is more concerned with the neighbours’ kids who are younger than her than paying attention at Setsuna. Nana rarely watches Setsuna skate. The only times she got excited about skating is when Setsuna go abroad. Then she forgot her birthday. And then there’s the phone call that changed everything. Setsuna eventually noticed that Nana stopped paying attention at the neighbor's’ kids when they grow up. There is a pattern here. Setsuna is sure that when Lambo hit a certain age, Nana will pull away from him too.

She need to think about Lambo and everything that entails. Lambo has no one. Maybe he still have relatives in Italy who are not as callous as his Boss, who is willing to take him in. But at the moment, it’s just her and Nana. Her mother is not the most reliable person around. She could adopt him, but that will confuse the hell out of the boy. He need to be told, eventually, but now is not a good time. There are so many things to consider. A bigger space so Lambo can move in with her. More stable income to support the household. School for Lambo to enroll to when he’s older. Adoption papers. There will be so much paperwork to look into. And lest not forget the public reaction. They will ask questions. Questions Setsuna don’t know how to answer.

Can’t forget about the mafia as well.

Setsuna don’t even know where to begin.

Her life is turning to be like one of those shounen manga the boys in the club owned. Secret organisations, legendary lineage, magical attacks, improbable weapons, shapeshifting animals… What’s next? Love interests that only serves as the protagonist’s motivation and nothing else?

...Great, now she’s describing her mother.

Worse of all, all these mafia bullshit is dragging her feelings toward Iemitsu to the surface. It took
Setsuna a long time to be make peace with it, that she is not exactly on top of her parents’ priority list. She was confused and scared. Her life until then felt like a lie. Nana isn’t helping either. Every time Setsuna press the issue, her mother always give her the same answer. That Iemitsu is a globe trotting, man of dirt who occasionally manage traffic. Whenever Setsuna say something that put Iemitsu in a negative light, Nana would scold her and pinch her. Setsuna hated her for a time.

Coach Maeda and Masumi-sensei were the ones who talked her out of it. That the blame rest on Iemitsu. Nana is not well and Iemitsu took advantage of that. They had a brief discussion if Nana is actually aware of how wrong the situation is but don’t want to admit it to herself. Upon further observation, they concluded that the answer is no, Nana genuinely believe that her life is good and Iemitsu is an honest man. Setsuna eventually gave up to convince Nana to think otherwise.

She confided the matter to Kyouko and Hana. They are her dearest best friends after all. Hana theorised that Nana is his mistress. It makes sense. The absence in their lives, the amount of money that steadily flow in every month to support them, the lack of information in general. Kyouko pointed out that her life is eerily similar to the plot of Madama Butterfly. A foreign man who toyed with a Japanese woman’s feelings and left her behind for years. When he returned, he brought in tow his new wife, with the intention to take away the child resulted from his earlier union.

That is what’s happening here. Iemitsu’s true wife is Vongola. Nana is his mistress. A little plaything who martyred herself for his love. Eighteen years old Nana, just graduated high school and work as a waitress to save money for college when a blonde man swept her off her feet. Twenty year old Nana, all alone in her home with her newborn daughter because Iemitsu need to get back to work as soon as possible. Twenty five years old Nana, smiling at the mess her husband left for her to clean and laughed at her crying daughter. And now Iemitsu is back (in a figure of speech), intending to take her to be with his true family, the mafia. To take away one last thing Nana has, even if she take it for granted.

Despite everything Nana had done to her (and didn’t), Setsuna swear she is not going it leave her behind like Iemitsu did. That’s why she chose to stay in Namimori, even though that means she have to give up going to college elsewhere.

Setsuna never had a choice when it comes to her family.

Except this is not Madama Butterfly. This is her life. Setsuna will be the one making her own choices. Either taking those who matter with her and run, like in the original novel, or to escape via death, like the commonly known opera. Setsuna has no intention to die of course.

Or she can take the third option. To stand her ground and fight back. Win her freedom. Tell Iemitsu where he can stick it. Give the mafia the middle finger.
But she need to do this carefully. The mafia is the opponent she is up against with. She need to strategize. To get stronger. To be shrewd.

She need Reborn.

Reborn is her best chance. To survive. To come out on top. He is bound to stay here, to help her. He gave her his word. Setsuna will hold onto that. Reborn is an asshole, whose hand helped to orchestrate everything. But he has the guts to tell her in person, unlike Iemitsu.

That makes him a far better man than Iemitsu will ever be.

And that is enough for Setsuna.

For now.

- 

Setsuna is in a better mood than yesterday, Reborn noted. It might have something to do with having a peaceful day so far, and seeing Lambo is doing all right at Nana’s. She worked extra hard today to make up for the lost practice time from yesterday. Practice has ended. The three of them, Reborn, Setsuna and Coach Maeda, are in Coach Maeda’s car. They are going to pay Hibari Kyousya a visit. They are going to tell him about the mafia.

This speed up the process. It might complicate things even more, but hey, they will still have the same result.

As usual, Setsuna reported everything to Masumi-sensei and best friends. Each and every one of them are horrified for Lambo. Coach Maeda was the one who decided to hold the meeting this evening, right after practice hours. Hibari readily agreed.

Like the Maeda residence, Hibari Kyousya’s home is a traditional Japanese house. Coach Maeda parked the car at the front yard. They are welcomed by a male servant, who proceed to lead them inside. The servants didn’t blink at the sight of Reborn. Of course they won’t. They know Fon after all.
A teenager with pompadour hairstyle waits for them right outside of the inner room. According to Reborn’s intel, he is Kusakabe Tetsuya, Hibari’s lieutenant. Kusakabe nodded at the three of them. “Maeda-jiisama,” He greets Coach Maeda first. “Sawada-san,” He nodded to Setsuna, who returned his nod. His eyes fell upon Reborn. “And you must be the tutor.”

“Ciaossu,” Reborn greets him.

“Kyouya-san is right behind this door,” Kusakabe told them. “He’s been waiting for you all.”

“We shall not keep him wait any longer then,” said Coach Maeda.

Kusakabe nodded and slide open the door for them.

Hibari is sitting on the tatami floor, still dressed in his gakuran uniform. His grey eyes shine with interest when he saw Reborn. The Sun Arcobaleno had heard from his Storm counterpart that Hibari was a difficult child (still is). He don’t respect any adults except for his parents, grandparents and Fon.

“Good evening, cousin,” Coach Maeda greet the boy.

“Maeda.”

That’s right. Maeda Kazuki and Hibari Kyouya are related.

Kazuki’s mother is the sister of Kyouya’s paternal great grandfather, making them first cousins twice removed. His family, Maeda clan, have served the Hibaris alongside Kusakabe clan for centuries. In feudal times, the Hibari family is the nobility who rule over the area that is now known as Namimori. Maeda and Kusakabe are their vassals. They would intermarry every few generations, a tradition they still carry over to present day. When the samurai system is abolished and the old nobility could no longer live off land taxes, the three families worked together to survive. They are pretty much responsible for the development of infrastructure in Namimori. All public schools in Namimori were built by Hibari family. The Maeda ice rink was built by Maeda family and later on it was Maeda Kazuki who refurbished it.
(It was Setsuna who brought it back to life, but that is a story for another time.)

The three guests sit down. A servant brought in hot tea and snacks. After they took a sip of their tea, Hibari looked at them expectantly. Coach Maeda open his mouth and words start pouring out.

Hibari’s interest grew by the minute. By the time they get to Dying Will Flame, the teenager is smirking. Only the blind would not notice the excitement in his eyes when Reborn show him his Sun flame.

“So more herbivores will be coming to Namimori,” Hibari concluded. “Good. I was getting bored with the ones around these parts. My fangs will get dull.” A bloodthirsty smirk spread on his face. None of the adults speak out against that. The teenager wouldn’t listen to them. “You must be as strong as Fon. Fight me.”

“In due time,” Reborn told him, turning off his Sun Flame. “My first priority is to teach Setsuna here.”

Hibari turn his attention to Setsuna.

“Kyouya,” Maeda warned him.

“Hm.”

Sawada Setsuna and the rest of the skaters in Namimori FS club are part of Maeda’s bevy. If Hibari come to them in threatening manner, Maeda will defend them. Aggressively. Exactly like swans would. Swans count as herbivores but they are territorial. Hibari may not have a high opinion about herbivores in general, but he respect those that fight back. Maeda is not as strong enough to give Hibari a decent challenge but the old man trouble him enough if the stakes are high. Setsuna is a duck and sometimes a swan. He does have soft spot for birds and small animals.

“More mafia are coming to town. I don’t know who and when-” (“Yeah right,” Setsuna muttered under her breath.) but they will here for Setsuna. If you stay near her, you will encounter them faster,” Reborn said.

Hibari smirked once again.
“Reborn wanted you to become a candidate. To be my Guardian,” Setsuna told him. “He is trying to recruit others... Most of them teenagers. Iemitsu already sent a kid.”

“The cow child?”

“Yes,” Setsuna frowned. “So you understand why I’m unhappy with all of these. That is why... I would like to invite you to another meeting at the end of this week.” All three males turn to look at her. Reborn haven’t hear any of this before. She turned to Reborn. “Reborn, you have gone behind my back who knows how many times. You tried to recruit candidates without consulting me, the one who will be affected the most. All of your picks are underage. I bet you have no intention to tell Coach Maeda till the last minute that you want Nagi-chan to be my Guardian.”

“What,” Coach Maeda straightened up.

“I might have bonded with all of the kids, but that doesn’t mean they are the right fit for me and vice versa. What was it you say about Guardians? They stabilise and strengthen each other. So that means they got each other backs. To be supportive to each other. That is nice indeed... And it goes both ways. A Boss is supposed to take care of their comrades.

But I can’t with my good conscience have kids laying down their lives for me. You lived with me for almost a month now, Reborn. Do you honestly think I would let that happen? Why are you so hasty? Why couldn’t you let me pick my own Guardians? Why don’t you trust me? Nope, don’t answer that. Of course, the big boy mafia knows best. What would a civilian knows about the underbelly anyways? You will keep on lying, omitting the truth and manipulate. That’s what you do. You can lie to me all you want, but I won’t lie to the kids. I will to tell them the truth. From my own mouth. They need to know what they’re up against. We owe them that much.”

“What if they decide to stay?” Reborn asked her back.

“I will reject them,” Setsuna answered without hesitation. “This whole Guardian issue will set up an unbalanced relationship between the kids and I. Yes, I will support the kids but are we in an equal standing ground?”

“It might work if you are willing to try.”

“You said might. What if it didn’t work out? What if one of them want to get away?” Here, Setsuna look at Hibari. She looked back at Reborn. “You still haven’t told me more about the Guardian
system. How will it affect the group if it failed? Can one even break free? No, I am not willing to take that risk. I won’t play with their lives like that. I don’t want them to jeopardise their future for my sake. This is my way of showing how I care.” The figure skater turned to her coach. “Is it okay if we hold the meeting at your place?” Coach Maeda nodded. He was glaring at Reborn. She turned her attention to Hibari. “Hibari-kun…?”

“I’m not staying in the same room as the herbivores,” The teenager said coolly. He is curious with the other candidates. If the baby is the one who picked them, they must be worth something. The cow child though. He is far too young. And too skinny. Hibari can tell that much when he picked him up the other day. The cow child has been adopted by the Duck. He is in good hands.

“Deal,” Setsuna nodded. “We’ll contact you later.”

- 

His student is not amused. Reborn gathered that from the start. Iemitsu decided to drag her into this mess and shoved Reborn at her. Setsuna agreed to go along for the most part until Lambo. The child is the last straw for her. It won’t take long before she eventually press for more answers from him. Why do he insist on teenagers and kids? Why not people her own age?

The Sun Arcobaleno rather to answer those questions after he teach her Dying Will Flame. Once she is Unlocked, it will be easier for her to Harmonize. He was hoping she would do it before she realised what’s happening. That way, when she does start questioning him, it would be too late. It is possible to break a Bond but Setsuna doesn’t have it in her to do it. Doing so will hurt her Guardians. Her Hyper Intuition will be able to pick up his half truths and Reborn must tell her about the First Generation.

That’s why the Ninth insisted on having the kids as her Guardians, because they all resemble the First Generation. He decided that after Reborn sent him a picture of Setsuna (not when she’s skating). Her resemblance with Primo is not noticeable until you take a closer look… But it’s enough. And then there’s Gokudera and his uncanny resemblance to G.

They will be like the second coming.

Xanxus’ own resemblance to Secondo is enough to throw the mafia to a loop. Imagine what it will be like when they see Setsuna and the boys? The intimidation effect alone...
Reborn can foresee problems in the future. Federico is yet to have a complete Guardian set. They are pressuring him as well. Vongola is desperate to protect their status quo. The Ninth is getting weaker, two candidates are already dead, the other surviving son is disinherited despite his competence. And then there’s Iemitsu. The Vongola will start pressuring Setsuna as well. This is the mafia. They will have no problem to drug her and throw her to a sham of a marriage to secure their power. And his student knows it.

(It’s unlikely to happen but Reborn won’t discard the possibility of some idiots got it into their heads to make Setsuna Decima instead of Federico.)

Reborn knows that if she wanted to, his current student can destroy Vongola. With her Twitter. Her followers is still lesser in number compared to, say, Britney Spears’, but Reborn didn’t live this long without knowing that sometimes… Sometimes it was the tiniest, overlooked detail that can foil everything.

One tweet can expose Vongola.

The mafia won’t immediately catch on, because they don’t put much focus on social media more than they do to, say, online gambling.

(Reborn is going to need popcorn ready at hand when that happen.)

Setsuna made it clear that she will not tolerate any of it. That’s why she insisted on holding a meeting with the Guardian candidates. His student is trying gain control of the situation. To break out from the flow Reborn created.

Told you adults are harder to manage compared to children and teenagers.

- 

Something’s about to happen.

Gokudera is equal parts nervous and excited. Setsuna-hime told him to come by to a place after school. She gave him the address yesterday. This is important. Gokudera have a feeling this related to Setsuna-hime’s declaration the other night. He had always thought she was just shook from all the revelations. About her father, Vongola, her candidacy. But that isn’t the case.
Setsuna-hime is pissed.

At first, he didn’t understand why she is so against joining the Vongola. Then he remember that she was brought up as a civilian. She has build a life for herself. His Boss is currently on top of her game. Everything is looking great. And then the World’s Greatest Hitman showed up at her doorstep, telling her that she is second to inherit Italy’s biggest Famiglia. To top it off, her father is so disconnected with his own daughter that he forgot her age.

It’s different. Gokudera knows that. But the secrecy is the dealbreaker. Gokudera left home after he learned the truth about his biological mother. He is beyond angry at his father and everyone. How long will his father keep Lavinia a secret from him? When he is enrolled to mafia school? After graduation? Or maybe never? Everyone in that castle knows the truth. They all played along with the stupid charade. His life felt like a lie. That’s why he ran away. To get away from those people. To figure out who he is.

Imagine how Setsuna-hime must feel.

Maybe she will talk about it in detail with him in the future. Gokudera is not sure what to say to her, or if Setsuna-hime even want to be comforted. But he will be there to support her.

The address brought him to the part of Namimori he never been to. Gokudera found himself standing in front of a traditional Japanese home. The plate ‘Maeda’ is hung on the front. Shit, this is Coach Maeda’s house? Why is Setsuna-hime wanting him to come here?

“Gokudera? I didn’t expect to see you here!”

Gokudera flinched at the cheerful voice. He know the owner of that voice. Reluctantly, he turn around.

Yamamoto smiled at the scowling teen. From the moment he stepped into the classroom, Gokudera Hayato instantly grab the girls’ attention. He kept to himself all the time, not particularly interested in anyone. His bad boy attitude seems to only cause the girls in class to fawn over him more. Gokudera easily snatch first place in academics, earning full marks on every single tests despite not paying attention in class. It would be a lie if Yamamoto say he’s not curious with his new classmate.

Gokudera is still scowling at him. “What are you doing here?”
“Setsuna-nee told me to come here after school,” Yamamoto told him. He noted the change on Gokudera’s face and body language when he mention her name.

“Setsuna-hime did?”

“Hime?” Yamamoto blinked at the title. Setsuna-nee is well known around these parts. She is their local heroine. But he never hear anyone refer her as ‘princess’ in real life as opposed to the internet. “You know Setsuna-nee?”

Gokudera didn’t answer. He just glared at him.


That does it. Gokudera gritted his teeth, reaching out for his pocket. He paused. He told himself that he’s going to be good, didn’t he? So he can be near his Boss? If he kill this idiot in front of Coach Maeda’s house… Gokudera lowered his hand. “Don’t act so chummy with me,” He spat. The baseball player laugh nervously.

“Gokudera-san?”

Both boys turn around to see Nagi standing not far from them. Gokudera’s features softened at the sight of her. “Kudou, were you told to come here too?”

Nagi nodded. She eyed Yamamoto warily.

Yamamoto stared at her for a moment before his eyes widened. “Oh hey! You’re one of Maeda-san’s skaters are you? I saw you on TV once. You came to our place a few times too.”

Nagi nodded again. “Setsuna-senpai told me to come here after school…” She looked towards the house. “This is my first time coming to Coach’s home.” She hugged her school bag tighter.
“You too?” Yamamoto blinked. “Weird. Setsuna-nee told us the same thing. You don’t think there will be more?”

‘Hopefully not,’ Gokudera thought wistfully. Nagi he can understand but what is Yamamoto to her?

But the universe decide at that moment to tell him the contrary. Gokudera winced when he hear an ‘EXTREME’ from the distance.

Sasagawa Ryohei is jogging towards them, punching the air as he did so. His eyes lit up at the sight of them. “Yamamoto!” He called the baseball player first.

Yamamoto smiled. “Senpai! Were you invited by Setsuna-nee too?”

“EXTREMELY!” Ryohei shouts, causing Gokudera to wince.

“Wow! Us too! We were told to come here after school!” Yamamoto grinned. “I wonder why?”

Nagi blinked at the newcomer, unsure what to think of him.

Gokudera about to yell at the other two boys when another voice come up behind him. “Herbivores who crowd will be bitten to death.”

‘Not another one,’ Gokudera groaned internally.

They all turn around to see a black haired teenager carrying tonfas. Gokudera noticed Nagi and Yamamoto took a cautionary step back.

“Oooh! Hibari!” Ryohei did not show any trace of fear whatsoever. “Did Setsuna-nee tell you to come here as well!”

“The Duck did,” Hibari acknowledged him.
‘Duck? He actually call Setsuna-hime Duck?’

Hibari studied the herbivores in front of him. The girl is one of Maeda’s so she is off limits. Yamamoto Takeshi from the baseball club. The loud herbivore Sasagawa Ryohei from the boxing club. And the newest student, Gokudera Hayato. A herbivore putting up the air of a carnivore.

So these are the other candidates?

Hibari turn around from the group and head inside. The teenagers looked at each other before follow him inside.

A servant come out from the house to welcome them. Hibari ignored him and get inside. The servant didn’t seem to be too bothered about it. He lead the other teenagers inside. Nagi looked extremely nervous when they enter the house. They were led to what appears to the living room. Coach Maeda and Masumi-sensei are already there. There is also another woman around their age. She appears to be around Masumi-sensei’s age. In contrast to Masumi-sensei who wear western clothes, this woman wear kimono. The three of them are seated on the couch.

“Ryohei-chan?” Masumi-sensei said in scandalised manner when she noticed Ryohei. “Even Ryohei-chan? That son of a-”

“Masumi-san,” The woman in clad in kimono warned her.

Masumi-sensei hold her tongue. “My apologies, Nagako-san.”

“SENSEI!” Ryohei beamed at the ballerina. “It’s been EXTREMELY too long! You look EXTREMELY well!”

She smiled back at the boy. “You’re right, Ryohei-chan. You’re as energetic as well.”

“Um…,” Nagi looked back and forth between Masumi-sensei and Ryohei, looking lost.
Coach Maeda coughed. “I believe some introduction is in order. Why don’t you all sit down first.”

So they did. The teenagers sit on the same couch, opposite of Coach Maeda and Nagako. Nagi is seated between Gokudera and Yamamoto. Ryohei take the spot next to the baseball player. Masumi-sensei occupy one of the armchairs. Hibari is in the room next door.

“For those who don’t know, this is my wife Nagako,” He gestured to her.

Nagako smiled at the children. “I heard so much about you all in the last few days.”

Gokudera can feel his face heating up from embarrassment. Coach Maeda’s wife! That means he told her how he has behaved towards him.

“We’ve met before once, didn’t we?” Yamamoto asked Nagako. “I accompanied my old man to the hospital to deliver sushi when Maeda-san was sick.”

Nagako smiled. “Yes, we did. Your sushi has always been delicious. Our family always ordered some once in awhile. You’ve grown so much, Takeshi-chan.”

When Coach Maeda was sick?

*Oh!*

Gokudera’s eyes widened. It was around *that* time.

Coach Maeda continued his introduction. “From left to right, Gokudera Hayato, Kudou Nagi, Yamamoto Takeshi and Sasagawa Ryohei. In another room is Hibari Kyouya. This is Hajime Masumi. Setsuna’s ballet instructor.”

“And Ryohei’s. Or I used to be that is,” Masumi-sensei added. “He used to dance ballet until he was seven years old.”

“That’s when I take up boxing!”
“Setsuna-senpai mentioned you a few times,” Nagi said. Ryohei’s smile widen.

They start to talk about Ryohei’s ballet days. Gokudera have no interest in them. The same servant from earlier return with refreshments for everyone. Gokudera’s eyes scanned his surroundings. A potted plant at the corner of the room. A couple of paintings. Most of the frames hanging on the wall are photos. Next to him, Nagi suddenly gasp. She stood up abruptly from her seat. She made her way to one of the photos.

“Coach, is this Setsuna-senpai when she was younger?”

Gokudera’s eyes widened. Setsuna-hime at the early days of her career?! He stood up and join Nagi. Indeed, it is a picture of a younger Setsuna-hime. The photo was taken in front of an ice rink. Her outfit seems to be inspired from Greek toga. Coach Maeda is standing next to her.

“Yes. That photo was taken at her first National Japan Junior. It was the year of 1998.”

Gokudera almost squealed. Almost. Nagi, though, can’t quite hold back hers. She pressed her hands on her mouth but everyone heard.

Yamamoto and Ryohei have gotten up to join Gokudera and Nagi. There are more pictures of Setsuna with Coach Maeda’s family. When she is still in elementary school, middle school and high school. It’s as if she is part of the Maeda family from the very beginning.

“Are these two your kids, Maeda-san?” Yamamoto pointed to the picture of a pair of twin boys.

Nagako smiled. “Yes, those are our boys. Susumu and Takumu. They already left home and have a family of their own.”

“What about this one?” Ryohei pointed to an old picture. It is a picture of two men and a woman in ice skating outfits.

“Oh, that one? The one of the right is me. On the left is my senior Sato Nobuo-senpai. The woman is Okawa Kumiko-san. We were in Austria as Japan’s representative for the Olympics. That was the 1964 Olympics, you see.”
“Eeeeh?!” The boys look away from the picture at the same time to look at Coach Maeda. Nagako and Masumi-sensei chuckled at their reaction. Nagi did not appear to be shocked. She already knew, of course.

Coach Maeda calmly sip his tea. “You heard that right, kids. I was in the Olympics.”

Gokudera’s respect for Coach Maeda rise to the roof. The Olympics! Setsuna-hime’s coach was in the Olympics! Holy shit! He had show such disrespect towards him! Gokudera pressed his hands to his sides and give the old man a deep bow. “I humbly apologize for being so rude to you the other day!”

Coach Maeda simply looks at him.

The silver haired youth start to sweat under his gaze.

“Anata, you should say something,” Nagako prompt her husband.

“The only reason I even let you step in my home is because Setsuna gave me her word that you’ll behave. Don’t think that this means you are allowed to come near the ice rink,” He said coldly.

Gokudera winced. He did not expect for Coach Maeda to forgive him so easily but it still stung.

“Tou-san, are you bullying Gokudera-kun again?”

“Setsuna-nee!” Yamamoto and Ryohei said at the same time.

Setsuna is standing at the doorway, holding hands with a child with voluminous black hair. Reborn is also with her.

“Hime-sama,” Gokudera smiled at the sight of her.
“Hello everyone. I’m sorry for our lateness. I have to pick up Lambo first.” She gestured to the child.

“Hi! I’m Lambo!” The little boy waved at them. “My favourite food are grapes and juice! When I grow up, I will rule over the planet!”

Nagako smiled warmly at the young woman. “Setsuna-chan, it’s been awhile.”

“Nagako-baa-chan,” Setsuna smiled back in kind.

Nagako looked at Reborn and her eyes turn sharp. “And you must be Reborn.”

“Ciaossu,” Reborn greet her. This woman is Maeda’s wife. Already he can feel himself being assessed. Nagako doesn’t feel like a Cloud… A Storm?


“Already?” Setsuna raised an eyebrow. “We already had lunch, Lambo.”

“Why don’t I take the little one to the kitchen? I can whip up something fast,” Nagako offered, getting up from her seat. Setsuna looked up to her and nodded. “Come on, dear.” She offer her hand to Lambo. He looked at it for a moment before taking it. Nagako throw her husband a look before she and Lambo leave the room.

Setsuna take the spot Nagako occupied moments earlier. Reborn sit next to her. “Now that everyone is here, we can begin.” She started. “First of all, I thank you all for gathering here on such short notice. It meant a lot to me.”

“It’s no problem at all, Setsuna-nee!” said Ryohei. “What do you want to talk about? Is it EXTREMELY important?”

“Yes,” Setsuna answered. “What I about to tell you must not leave this room. It will sound outrageous but it is all true. Do you understand?” The teenagers show different degrees of tension, Gokudera most of all, but they all nodded. Setsuna looked at her teachers and they nodded. She take a deep breath.
Setsuna start her tale. Of how Reborn show up on her doorstep, bearing news that she is now a candidate to inherit an Italian mafia family. Of how her family’s branch, though distant, is still connected to the Italian branch despite everything. Of Sawada Iemitsu who has been absent most of her life decided to bring his daughter into the mess. Reborn is here to train her so she will be able to survive the upcoming conflicts. Of how Gokudera and Lambo are sent to Japan to be her subordinates. The boys got really excited when Reborn show them his Sun Flame. They get even more fired up when Reborn told them the basics of the Guardian System. Even Nagi have a spark of excitement in her eyes.

“So all of us Harmonised with Setsuna-nee?” Yamamoto asked.

“Not quite. Setsuna has been Courting you without realizing it. Partial bond, yes. Fully Harmonisation, no. For true Harmonisation, both sides require their Flame to be Active.”

“Then what are we waiting for?” Ryohei got up from his seat. “Let’s Unlock this Flame thingy!”

“No.”

All eyes turn to Setsuna.

“Setsuna-hime?” Gokudera looked at her in confusion. Isn’t this a good thing? He still has issues with the other candidates (not Nagi) but they are going to Unlock their Flames. That’s a good thing!

“The reason I told you all of this is so there will be no miscommunication in the near future. Reborn here has no qualms to manipulate everyone present here so things go accordance to his agenda. That includes making you all as my Guardians without any input on my part. Don’t you see the problem here? We will be stuck with each other, carrying a role thrusted upon us without knowing what it really means.” Setsuna closed her eyes. When she opened them, they are orange. The teenagers gasped. “I will not do that to you. You all have such bright future ahead of you. I won’t let the mafia jeopardise your life.”

“But Setsuna-nee… The other candidate is still around, right? You might not become Boss.” Yamamoto try to reason with her. “And this Guardian System is not such a bad thing. It meant we’re a team, right? I know a thing or two about being in a team. It won’t be so bad! As long as we got each others’ backs, we can survive anything!”

“This is not a shounen manga, Takeshi-kun,” Setsuna said. “This is real life. This is the mafia.
Magical flames doesn’t guarantee that any of us will come out alive. Swinging your baseball bat won’t solve anything. Not this one.”

“But Reborn-san could teach us!” Gokudera also got up from his seat. “I have my dynamites! I can defend myself!”

Setsuna put up her hand, causing him to stop. “If you want to Unlock your Flames, I won’t stop you. But I won’t Harmonize with any of you.”

Gokudera felt the air being knocked out from his lungs. Her words punched him in the gut. “W-What?”

“Harmonize is a two way thing. So even if you wish to Harmonize with me, I will not.” Before Gokudera can interject, Setsuna beat him to it, “It’s not the matter of being worthy or not, Gokudera-kun. You don’t have to prove anything to me. I care about each and every one of you. That is why I won’t Harmonize with any of you. You are still too young to understand what you’re getting yourself into. You all are too young to settle down. It is my responsibility as an adult to make sure you don’t stray off. I don’t want you to sacrifice your lives and future for me. I don’t want your lives to be toyed by the mafia’s twisted system. I can't bear the thought of all of you in danger because of me.”

“B-but.” Nagi’s lips tremble.

“I don’t hate any of you. In fact, it’s the opposite,” Setsuna looked at each of them. Gokudera’s heartbreaking expression, Yamamoto’s oddly blank face, Ryohei’s confused one and Nagi who looked like she about to cry. Wonder what Hibari is thinking? She knows he can hear them from the next room. “I am fighting for all of you. That is my way to show you I care. Consider this tough love.”

Chapter End Notes

More information about Coach Maeda~

And yes, Sato Nobuo is a real person. He is a ten time winner of Japan National Championship. He married figure skater Okawa Kumiko and they both worked as coaches after retirement. Nobuo’s students include Shizuka Arakawa, Miki Ando, Mao Asada, Fumie Suguri and so on.

Think about it. In canon, each and every Guardian have issues. Tsuna, who is called Dame his entire life by his own mother and peers, manipulated by Reborn and Iemitsu.
Every time he said he don’t want to be Decimo, he is ignored by everyone else. He will turn around, don’t worry! And look what happened in the TYL future. Gokudera, who grew up in the streets and has trust issues. He is ready to throw his life just so his idol’s name is not besmirched. Yamamoto, who is ready to jump off the building when the one thing that makes him HIM no longer works. This sort of stuff didn’t come out of nowhere. He has depression. I remember reading a fanfiction that state that Hibari checked symptoms of PTSD. Now, canon never got around about his private life but PTSD is not something to laugh about. Even if that is not the case, Hibari’s attitude would not be tolerated in the real world. Lambo, five year old and already the butt monkey. He was physically abused by Reborn and Gokudera (and his fifteen years old self still get the same treatment) for laughs. Mukuro who was used as a guinea pig by his own Famiglia, driving him hellbent to destroy the mafia. Chrome aka Nagi, who was emotionally neglected all her live, cling onto the person who told her he need her. She gave up her body for Mukuro, along with her identity. You know what, Chrome’s obsession is similar to Gokudera’s. The only one most(ly) adjusted in the group is Ryohei. But he doesn’t listen to others and constantly lies to his sister so he can keep fighting.

They are such a dysfunctional group. Tsuna run himself ragged to manage all of them. And he cracked in TYL. So many manipulations, so many illogical decisions.

Setsuna is different from Canon!Tsuna. She realised how bad it is to Harmonize with people she can’t bring herself to fully trust/rely on. And all of them are still underage. This whole situation is wrong. And that is why she is fighting so hard. To stop the situation from deescalate even further.
Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes.

Today is Saturday.

Setsuna is scheduled to be a guest star in Namimori’s local radio talk this morning. Good thing she has no class scheduled on Saturdays. She left after breakfast. Reborn didn’t come with her. He’s probably busy making reports to the people in Italy.

Most likely about yesterday.

As expected, the teenagers, Gokudera especially, didn’t take her words calmly. He pleaded and bargained with her. Ryohei got progressively louder and louder. Yamamoto looked hurt. Nagi didn’t say a word but on the verge of tears. It all culminate with Hibari stormed into the room with his tonfas out. He threatened to bite everyone present to death for disturbing peace. That’s when Coach Maeda declared that meeting is over. Everyone sans Hibari went home with their heads hung low.

Setsuna return to her apartment to find Reborn waiting for her. “Are you going to yell at me?” She asked him, closing the door behind her.

“No,” Reborn answered. “We need to talk.”

“About the Guardians?” Setsuna take off her shoes.

“Those kids are your best bet.”

“No, that’s what you decided. I’m the Sky here. Based from my past interaction with all of them, I have come to the conclusion that none of them are fit for the Guardian role as they are now. You’re not going to talk me out of this. It’s too late.”

“What if we wait until the kids are older?”
“Vongola don’t have much time.”

Reborn had to agree with her there. “No, they don’t.”

“Can one force to Harmonize with someone else?” She asked him. “I need to know, Reborn. I don’t want someone to force their Flames on me. Can a third party force a Bond?”

“No,” Reborn told her. “Harmonisation is not something that can be forced. To coerce a Bond to happen will only damage both sides. I’m not going to force a Bond.”

“Huh…,” Setsuna looked at Reborn. “So you do have a line you wouldn’t cross.”

“I’m a hitman, not a madman.”

“That did little to console me, coming from someone who is regarded as the best by the mafia. Your standard of normal is different from ours.”

“You had your chance to have a complete Guardian set in one go,” Reborn said. Most Skies would kill to have a full set so soon. There will be one less thing to worry about if Setsuna Harmonise with the kids. “And you turn it down. Why?”

“Really, Reborn?” Setsuna give him an annoyed look. “Must I repeat what I told the kids yesterday? You were there.”

“They all have so much potential. Lambo is too young so I understand where you’re coming from. But Gokudera knows how the mafia works. As a boxer Ryohei would perform the duties of a Sun Guardian magnificently. Hibari’s prowess as a fighter cannot be doubted. Yamamoto and Nagi have so much potential.”

“You want to know why? I’ll tell you why. Let’s start with Ryohei-kun,” Setsuna grabbed a chair from the kitchen and sit down. “Do you know how he got that scar?” Reborn do know. He read his profile. But he will let Setsuna tell him. “When I was on my second year in middle school, a group of upperclassmen kept harassing us. Ryohei-kun found out and went to challenge them. We found him all beaten up and bleeding in the middle of the street. He suffered a fractured skull, Reborn. You know what the first thing he said after he gained consciousness? Ryohei-kun said wanted to learn how to fight so he can protect us. He quit ballet and signed up for junior boxing club. Kyouko-chan
cried. She blamed herself for the whole mess. We tried to talk him out of it but it was too late. Ryohei already fell in love with boxing. He loves it like Kyouko-chan loves ballet. There’s no changing his mind.” She take a deep breath before continuing. “It doesn’t take long before we noticed something. Ryohei-kun likes boxing a little too much. Or rather, fighting. He would challenge people left and right, dragging anyone who display the slightest hint of athleticism to the boxing club and he once sneaked to the zoo to fight a bear. Ryohei-kun even challenged Tou-san and his entire family once he’s out of challengers from his own age group.”

Reborn’s interest is piqued. “How did that go?”

“Tou-san refused at first, because Ryohei-kun was just a child back then. Susumu-niisan and Takumu-niisan refused as well. When he keep pestering them, all three apologized to the Sasagawas in advance before making a short work out of him. It only made Ryohei-kun fired up. He finally stopped when his ass got handed by Nagako-baachan. It took a three hours lecture from everyone; the girls, me, Masumi-sensei, Tou-san and Nagako-baachan, until Ryohei-kun got the message. He calmed down for a time… Then when Kyouko-chan left, he started acting up again. It wasn’t until middle school he got calmer…. But that’s only because Hibari-kun beat him once a week.” Setsuna shakes her head. “I think he’s addicted, Reborn. Bringing him to the mafia will only make him worse.”

In fact, Setsuna avoid taking her usual jogging route this morning because if she bump to Ryohei, he will undoubtedly start to pester her about Dying Will Flames and the mafia.

“He will try to fight everyone. Not everyone in the mafia are willing to fight honorably. Ryohei-kun will get himself killed. Kyouko-chan would never forgive me or herself if something happened to him.”

Setsuna did watch the boy grow up. Same goes to Yamamoto.

“Takeshi-kun… He is not exactly in the good spot right now. The other day, when I told him that he need to find something else other than baseball, I didn’t mean the mafia. Don’t think I didn’t notice how quickly he jumped into all that when we told him. He thought it’s like a game or shounen manga come to life. I bet he’s thinking to make this his new ‘thing’. Or at least give him a chance to explore ‘himself’ if you get what I mean. No, Reborn. The mafia is not a good place to find yourself. It mess people up. You don’t have to look far. Look at Gokudera-kun.” Thinking about that boy always make her heart ache. Gokudera-kun is doing better, little by little, but sometimes he still reminds her of her mother. “Now, I don’t need to tell you about Gokudera-kun. You know it’s bad when we draw comparisons between him and my mother. So I’ll leave it at that. Hibari-kun do not like being controlled. Period. The only reason he listens to me and Tou-san is because we remind him of birds. We are willing to negotiate and he knows we won’t push much. Vongola don’t. He, like Ryohei-kun, loves to fight. We were barely able to contain Ryohei-kun. We won’t have any such luck with Hibari-kun. His logic still baffles us every now and then. I know myself enough to know that I won’t be able to rein in the boys. Even with everyone else’s support.”
“There’s still Nagi.”

“Nagi-chan may be the most timid amongst the kids but that doesn’t mean she’s any less troublesome. It’s always the quiet ones, Reborn. And she’s a girl. Have you ever dealt with adolescent girls before?” Reborn nodded. His fourth lover Bianchi is a teenage girl. She can be… Handful. “So you get what I mean. It’s a good thing that she and Gokudera-kun are getting along… But we’re talking about adolescents here. There will be drama. I was a teenager once. I know how bad it can be. Teenage drama and mafia drama? Hell no.” The figure skater let out a sigh. It will be too much for the kids to handle. She doubt there will be enough of her to provide emotional support for them. Lambo and Gokudera need her attention the most at the moment. It won’t be fair for the others.

“Not to mention her mother is a famous actress. Nagi-chan has as much exposure as I do simply by her association with her. Her relationship with her is not the greatest either. What will happen if her mother found out? I don’t want to put her at risk anymore than this. It’s bad enough that they know about Vongola. It’s bad enough that we keep the mafia a secret from their family. I can’t do that to them either. I know that they won’t tell their family anything… They are teenagers after all. But Tsuyoshi-jiichan already lost his wife. I can’t take Takeshi-kun away from him. We will eventually have to tell them at some point. We have to think about the families as well. Just because mine is so dysfunctional doesn’t mean others have to pay for it.”

Setsuna’s brown orbs meet Reborn’s black ones. “I have lines I won’t cross, Reborn. My line is not to take advantage of emotionally vulnerable children who decide to put their trust in me. Don’t make me cross mine. Don’t make me regret trusting you.” She got up. “I have some phone calls to make.” She went to her bedroom, leaving him to stand there alone with his thoughts.

- After talking to Setsuna-nee and to his father, Takeshi take their advice to take it easy for the next few weeks. He didn’t go to the batting cage or staying behind at school to practice more. He distanced himself from his teammates. Takeshi suddenly find himself with more free time. He don’t quite know what to do with it. For the first three days he lounge around his room, tackling homework and help his father downstairs. But it felt like there’s something is missing. Takeshi is relaxed but he’s not having fun either. Setsuna-nee said that he need to step back and think, so that’s what he did.

Okay, baseball has been the most fun thing in his life. It was his mother who got him hooked on baseball. She used to be in the softball team when she’s still in school. She would play catch with him. His parents took him to baseball games. They do take him to places like the zoo or beach but baseball is different. It is a huge part of his childhood. Then when his mother passed away, Takeshi
continue to play baseball to honor her memory. Whenever he hold a bat or throw a ball, it felt like she is still present. Takeshi cling to baseball even more.

When he was a bit older, Takeshi joined the small baseball league. He played a bit better than his peers and suddenly everyone wanted to become his friends. Takeshi enjoyed the attention at first… But there was still that hollow feeling that his mother left behind… It grow bigger and bigger. He feel… Fake. Like everything else in this world, him included, is fake.

Was that the beginning of everything?

The emptiness worsens as time pass. On bad days, Takeshi feel like giving in and just sink. Then his father’s face would appear in his mind every time. If Takeshi leave, he would be all alone. He couldn’t do that to him. So he try his best to stay on the surface. Takeshi hold onto everything he could think off to stay afloat. Pops, baseball, milk and sushi (his favourites), his favourite mangas. He hang out with classmates and teammates from the club. And figure skating. Takeshi always make sure to watch Setsuna-nee skates, even though it’s past his bedtime. He found that each time he watch her skate, he is able to breathe easier and sleep better.

He have good and bad days. As long as Takeshi still floats, he can take whatever come his way.

Then after he entered middle school, the pressure doubled. Everyone expect him to carry the baseball team to the podium, to win another trophy. Takeshi wanted to yell at him. Why should he be the one doing the heavy lifting. They are a team, everyone should pick up their own slacks. But he swallowed those words and laugh instead. Deep down… He’s afraid that he’ll sink even lower if he lose these people. He had gotten to the point of having to rely on fake people. He put on a mask so he can still be allowed to be with them. Sometimes Takeshi wonder if there is still something in him that is real.

(On the worst days, Takeshi would remember the feel of her hands holding him steady as they skate through the rink. It’s a different feel from his mother but he cling to it anyways.)

Talking to Setsuna-nee really helps. She gave him the push he needed to tell Pops… everything. His father didn’t say a word until he finished… And then he hugged him. At that point, Takeshi couldn’t hold back his tears. He hugged him back and just let it out. After he calmed down, Takeshi found that he feel so much lighter. He can’t remember when was the last time he feel this good.

He had been meaning to thank Setsuna-nee when she sent word to him to come to Coach Maeda’s home. It was most odd. Takeshi met her coach a couple times before but they never exchange a word beyond greetings. It get even more bizarre when he met his new classmate Gokudera Hayato and
senior Sasagawa Ryohei. There’s the girl Kudou Nagi, Takeshi saw her on television a few times, usually when the media cover Setsuna-nee and Namimori FS Club. What surprised him even more is Hibari Kyouya. Nagi he could understand but why are the boys here?

He got his answer soon enough.

Once everyone gathered, Setsuna-nee told them everything. It was very hard to wrap your head around it. The mafia? Setsuna-nee is related to the mafia? He knows that there’s no way his big sister figure would be as cruel as the mafia on television. It does at least explained about her father’s absence. Takeshi has always wondered about Sawada Iemitsu but no one seems to ever talk about him. They just don’t. And to hear that Iemitsu actually forgot her actual age… That tell Takeshi everything he need to know about that man.

Next, she told them about Dying Will Flames. It’s like a revelation. Takeshi always has that unexplainable warm feeling he only sensed whenever he’s around Setsuna-nee. He cling to that feeling whenever he feel like sinking. They have a Bond. Something real. Takeshi would shed a tear of relief if he wasn’t excited at the time. When Reborn (how strange, a baby as a hitman) explained to them about the Guardian System, everything fell into place.

Guardian. He is meant to be her Guardian.

And the others, even though Takeshi don’t know them that well, they are connected to Setsuna-nee as well. They are meant to be comrades in arms. Teammates. These people are real too. They won’t be fake around him and he don’t have to be fake around them either.

It felt like hope.

...Until Setsuna-nee crushed it to pieces by stating that she won’t Fully Harmonize with any of them.

Takeshi felt like being punched in the gut.

She called it tough love. Setsuna-nee is not budging. She shut them all out. She is not giving them any chances to prove themselves. He knows that she is worried for their welfare… But it still hurts.

If only he can show her that he can take care of himself… That he has what it takes to survive the mafia… The current Takeshi only know baseball, but he know someone that can change that.
“Pops?”

Tsuyoshi who is currently cutting a fish looked up from his work. “Takeshi? What is it?”

Takeshi looked at his father squarely in the eyes. “Will you teach me kendo?”

Tsuyoshi put down his knife. “Why the sudden interest, Takeshi?”

He hesitated for a moment before answering. “I need to know how to fight. I need to get stronger. There’s someone I need to protect.” He can tell his father at least this much right?

“What if that person don’t want your protection?”

Takeshi faltered. “I…”

“This is about Setsuna-chan, isn’t it?” Tsuyoshi asked him.

Takeshi’s eyes widened. “Pops?”

“She called earlier. She come clean about everything.” Takeshi’s eyes is now the size of platters. “Yeah, that includes the Vongola and Dying Will Flames.”

“You’re not… Mad?”

“Mad? Why would I be mad? No one can stop a Sky from Courting the other elements and vice versa. Even I wanted to, I couldn’t stop you two from meeting up. You two are just kids.”

“Stop us from-” It clicked in his mind. “You knew this whole time?!”
“Takeshi, when one walk down the path of a warrior, they will eventually find out about Dying Will Flames,” Tsuyoshi told him patiently. “I’m a Rain like you.”

Takeshi’s head is spinning. His father knew about Dying Will Flames? He knew about Setsuna-nee Courting him? “When are you going to tell me all these?”

“When you’re older. High school perhaps. I will pass down my sword skills to you, along with the knowledge of Flames. I will tell you everything then.”

Takeshi stared at Tsuyoshi for a moment before swallowed. “Can you teach me now?”

Tsuyoshi fold his arms. “No, I won’t. You’re still too young. You’re not in the best state to learn anything right now. You’re too desperate. I know you will try to Harmonize with Setsuna-chan as soon as your Flame is Unlocked. Don’t. When one element don’t want to Harmonize, the other must back off. I’ve seen what happened when someone forced a Bond to happen. I don’t want that to happen to you two.” He move away from behind the counter and stood in front of his son. “Takeshi, I know that you love Setsuna-chan, but you have to respect her decisions. You need to...” He swallowed. “You need to heal first. The mafia will only get worse from here. Setsuna-chan and I don’t want you to go down this path before you are truly ready.”

The baseball player is quiet for a moment. “Do you think we will ever Harmonize?”

“I don’t know, son. I truly don’t know.” Tsuyoshi placed his hand on Takeshi’s shoulder. “But I do know that she cherish you greatly. And you her. It might not be Full Harmonisation but the bond between you two is just as strong. You two will always have that. Why can’t that be enough for you?”

“I…,” Takeshi bit his lips. “I’m scared, Pops. What if I get worse? What if help come too late? Harmonization will help me. I can be there for Setsuna-nee.”

Tsuyoshi pull his son close. “It won’t come to that, Takeshi. I’m here too. I’m glad you told me. Setsuna-chan will always be there for you as well. There will be more people in the future that will care for you, Takeshi. To see the true you. It doesn’t take Harmonisation to make someone care. It will get better. I promise.”

Takeshi stood there for a moment before returning his hug.
Today’s training is a disaster.

Nagi screwed up all her jumps. She either over-rotate or under-rotate with her spins. She miscalculate her distance and got dangerously close to the barrier. She wasn’t able to evoke the feeling of a ghostly maiden. Coach Maeda’s frown turn deeper and deeper. If that is not a sign that she messed up, she don’t know what is.

She fell down for the sixth time.

“Nagi,” Coach Maeda call out to her. “Take a break.”

Nagi feel her cheeks heat up. Setsuna-senpai is standing near Coach Maeda. She must have seen her fall. She had to. Her senpai is looking at her with worry. Nagi looked away.

She retreated to the vending machines. Warm chocolate milk will calm her nerves. It always does. Nagi put the money and punch the button. She cradle the bottle in her hands, warmth seeping in. Next, she went to the emergency staircase. It’s like a spot for skaters to retreat to when they are stressed. Or to yell at the void. Sometimes even Coach Maeda comes here.

(No one is sure what the heck is he doing down here. Rumour has it he feed the spirit who lives on this site so it won’t bother the skaters. Or to subdue it through a fight. It says something about Coach Maeda when everyone agree that he would win even against an otherworldly force.)

Nagi hugged her legs. Yesterdays was… Was…

Disappointing? Heartbreaking? Crazy?

Yesterday she and the others get so much info dump it made her head spin… And her heart crushed.

Setsuna-senpai is the reason she’s here in Namimori.
Nagi had long learned that she is not her parents’ first priority. Her mother is too busy with being an actress and high society. Her biological father never bother to meet up with her after he and her mother divorced. Not that they ever been close before that. Like Mother, Nagi’s biological father focus more on his occupation as producer. Her stepfather too is more absorbed with his work rather than to try to get to know her. Growing up, Nagi had been raised by babysitters. Neither of her parents are ever home to share a meal with her or to help her with homework. Mother has her own living space. Nagi never even step a foot there.

Still, even though her mother never try to be a part of her life, she still demand for Nagi to follow her footsteps. She signed her up for classes such as acting, vocal training, piano, dancing, English and put her on a strict diet. When she’s a little older, Mother start to signed her up for auditions. Nagi never win a role, which led her to earn the disdain of her mother. Nothing Nagi do ever satisfy her. Her mother often bemoaned why her daughter is nothing like her. At least Nagi is not ugly. Imagine the humiliation if she had birthed an ugly daughter.

Eventually, Nagi picked figure skating as her main focus. There is no need for speaking or performing with other people in figure skating. The ice rink is always cold. Her mother don’t like the cold. Nagi was kind of wishy-washy about it at the start. She don’t dislike the sport but she can’t bring herself to like it either. Her rink mates are too competitive and sometimes so ruthless it reminded Nagi of her mother. Nagi couldn’t bring herself to open up to them. She’s used being alone anyway. Kids at school keep their distance from her because she is either too weird or too haughty in their opinion.

So Nagi just drift along, keeping to herself and stay out of trouble.

Until the Grand Prix Finale 2005.

Nagi’s figure skating club is chosen to be the sweeper girls for this big event. Nagi never attended an event of this scale so even she was excited. And seeing Setsuna-senpai’s heartfelt performance was Wow. Just wow. There are no words that can describe it. Seeing her perform made Nagi want to skate. To see how far she can go. To be more.

Any fans of Setsuna-senpai know that 2005-2006 season had been an emotional rollercoaster for her. There were rumours of her retiring, Coach Maeda’s illness, pressure to go to the Olympics. Setsuna-senpai broke down crying as soon as she finished her FS. No one can fault her for that. It was such an emotional piece. It brought tears to her eyes. She still has goosebumps every time she watch the video. Nagi remember it like it was just yesterday she brought flowers and stuffed animals to Setsuna-senpai.

“Ano...,” Nagi looked at the older figure skater, unsure if she should say more or just hand over the gifts.
Sawada Setsuna turn to face her. Her eyes red from crying so much. She will need to put on concealer after this. Still she find it in her to smile and accept the gifts. “Thank you.”

It’s genuine. Nagi can tell that much. She grew up watching her mother act after all.

The judges are not done with the scores. The cameras are not pointed at Setsuna. Nagi decided it’s now or never. “Ano!” She started. Setsuna looked at her once more. “Your skating today! I will never forget it. Do you think I can ever be as good as you?”

Nagi is count it as a blessing that Setsuna is willing to humour her. “I don’t know if I am that good…,” She looks at her. Nagi remember being nervous, but not as nervous she thought she would be when others look at her? Setsuna looked at her as if she is a person, not just an extension of her mother. Her gaze is soft and warm, reassuring even. How did she do that? How can she still find it in her to care for a perfect stranger even though she is so exhausted mentally and physically? “But as long as you know who you are and stay true to yourself, it will show in your skating. Do you know who you are?”

Who is she? Nagi don’t know how to answer that. She never really thought about it. “Nagi,” She answered after a few moment passed. “I am Nagi.”

She will never forget the way Setsuna smiled at her.

“Nagi,” She whispered. “I hope I will be able to skate with you someday, Nagi. My name is Setsuna.”

Setsuna-senpai is the first person who accept her as she is. The one who taught her that it’s okay for her to be Nagi. Even when Nagi herself don’t quite understand herself. Setsuna-senpai wanted to see her again. She already acknowledged her that much.

After that Nagi become… More assertive. She worked harder to improve her skating. She told her mother that she want to train with Setsuna-senpai. Her mother let her go easily. Coach Maeda’s reputation as coach is cemented when Setsuna-senpai won gold in the Olympics. Her daughter will have the spotlight. Nagi moved all the way from Tokyo to Namimori. She entered the difficult Midori Middle. She joined Namimori FS Club. She become Setsuna-senpai’s rink mate. Coach Maeda has zero tolerance for bullying and the like, so the club is much more friendlier than her old one. Nagi find herself spending time with her peers. A year ago that would be unthinkable.
Nagi tensed when she hear the door opened. The footsteps is too heavy to be the kids or Setsuna-senpai. That leaves…

“Nagi”

“Coach…”

The old man sit down next to her. Neither spoke for a little while. Nagi is a mess today. Everyone who’s been at the ice rink today would know that.

“Coach,” Nagi break the silence. “How long have you known…?”

“Since Reborn.”

“I see…,” The baby is not here today. Nagi is not sure how a baby could be a hitman but that is the least of her concern right now. “What do you think of all these?”

“The mafia are garbage,” Coach Maeda said in the blandest tone possible. “Their entire system is trash. Children used as sacrificial pawns, adults who shouldn’t ever be parents, blood money, corruption… I would never let you or Setsuna or the others get dragged into that kind of world.”

Nagi looked at Coach Maeda. He really care. He care more for her than her biological parents ever did. Coach Maeda try to keep his distance from his students, to maintain a professional relationship but everyone knows that deep underneath he is aggressively paternal.

(There’s a running joke in Namimori FS Club that at some point every member of will call him Tou-san or Jii-san at least once. Nagi has yet to reach that point yet.)

“…I was happy… When Reborn-san said I have a Bond with Setsuna-senpai,” Nagi looked down on her chocolate milk. “I chased her all the way from Tokyo. I became her rink mate… I get to see her everyday. I get to spend time with her. I still want more. I want to skate on the same stage as she is. I want to be her to acknowledge me as her rival. I want to be on equal standing with Setsuna-senpai.” That is what she thought when Nagi arrived at Namimori. But then… “It’s not enough. I want to become more than that. I want Setsuna-senpai off the ice too. I want to be… Someone precious to
“You already are to her,” Coach Maeda said.

Nagi shakes her head. “No, Coach. It’s different. I… When they explained about the Guardians… I was happy. I can become someone Setsuna-senpai need. We can become something more. We can become closer…”

“She said no to keep you all from harm,” Coach Maeda told her. “Do you understand the reasoning behind her decision?”


Coach Maeda pat her back. “There is no way to get around it. There are no shortcuts. You have to get through it.”

“Will the pain ever go away?” She whispered.

“It depends,” He said. “Sometimes it fade away. Sometimes it stays. The most important thing is to acknowledge that it happens. It will become part of you.”

Nagi don’t know how people survive heartbreaks. It’s really painful and make you hard to breathe. But Nagi is familiar with pain. Maybe she will learn how to live with this one.

-...

...Calling...

Click

“Ryohei!”
Ryohei smiled when his big sister’s face appeared on screen. “Onee-chan! Good morning! You look extremely good!”

Kyouko giggled. “Good morning to you too!”

It’s evening in Japan now, which means it’s morning in New York. Kyouko is sitting in the kitchen, holding a mug of coffee. It’s a ritual between the two siblings. Every day, without fail, they would chat with each other via Skype. It shakes the sleepiness out of Kyouko too. Sometimes they would do a video chat like this. Sometimes their parents would join them.

They tell their siblings about their day. Kyouko told Ryohei about rehearsals, her coworkers, fitting, exploring New York. Ryohei told his elder sister about club activities, boxing, the people that caught his eyes, more boxing and what’s happening in Namimori.

“...and yesterday I went to Coach Maeda’s- AH!” Ryohei stopped mid sentence. So close! He almost tell his big sister about yesterday. It supposed to be a secret! It will be bad if Kyouko-nee find out.

“You went to Coach Maeda’s home?”

“Nevermind! So after I got home I watched the boxing match between-”

“No, I want to hear it. The last time you went to Coach Maeda’s house, you challenged the entire family. Did something happened?”

Ryohei start to sweat. “Nothing happened, Nee-chan! You just worry too much! So this guy has a really mean right hook-”

“Are you sure nothing happened?”

He shakes his head, putting on a smile to reassure his sister. “No, Nee-chan. Everything’s all right back home.”

Kyouko frowned. Why is she frowning?
“Even though Setsuna-chan is living with a hitman who is sent by Vongola?" 

Ryohei blinked. “How did you know?!”

“Setsuna-chan told Hana-chan and I,” answered Kyouko. “About Iemitsu, the mafia and Dying Will Flames. She told me that she has been unknowingly Court you all these years. She also told me how excited you are to Unlock your Flame.”

The boxer swallowed. His sister knows! What should he do?! 

“Ryohei, are you ever going to tell me?"

Ryohei didn’t say anything. That is her answer.

“You always do this. You keep lying to me, to our parents, to everyone. Just so you can keep fighting. You think it’s because you don’t want us to worry but you’re wrong. You’re just selfish. You never stop to think how your behavior will impact the others. You don’t care.”

She give him a look of disappointment. He can’t take it! “No, Nee-chan! I care! I just don’t want you to get hurt!”

“You hurt me, Ryohei.” Kyouko said scathingly. “You hurt me when you lie. Have you ever thought about that?”

Ryohei opened his mouth but no words come out. It’s… True. He never think about that. He only ever thought about keeping his sister in the dark so she won’t worry. She is always worried. Ryohei don’t want to make her worry all the time. He did it for her own good!

“Ryohei, when Setsuna-chan told you about the mafia, your first thought was fighting, isn’t it? You didn’t think about her, or me... You only think about yourself. What you want.”

Her little brother loves boxing. He didn’t care when his knuckles bleed or blue bruises appear on his
body. The joy on his face when he won a bout is the same with Kyouko after she finished a performance. She didn’t care when her feet bleed or her muscles scream after fouette. But she knows how to pace herself, to learn gradually. Her brother don’t have such inhibitions. He always charge straight on.

Ryohei has always been energetic. It’s not his fault he can’t help it. Kyouko often wonder if she did enough. Their parents simply don’t have the patience to deal with her brother. They gave up to reprimand him to mind his volume. They go along with his whims if it meant peace in the house. They would apologize to the school or another kid’s parents whenever Ryohei cause trouble, but they long stopped to scold their son. Anything they said would fell on deaf ears anyways.

But not her, not Kyoko. She always made sure to remind her brother when about to go too far. Even if Ryohei shrug off what he said, she keep doing it. Because if no one keep him in check, her brother will got himself hurt. The incident when his skull is cracked is more than enough basis for her fear.

Ryohei need an outlet to channel all that energy of his. At first he just followed his sister’s example and take up ballet. He have a real talent for it. Ryohei was so eager to catch up to her level. He would nag at his instructor to stay behind to train him. They stayed behind the entire time, otherwise Ryohei will hurt himself attempting a stunt that his body simply could not take. Often time it was Masumi-sensei who keep an eye on him. She is one of the few people who have the patience to deal with Ryohei. Her little brother tried to mimic her best friends as well. One day, they signed Ryohei up to a ballroom dance lesson for kids. He ended up making his partner cry for being too forceful. The girl couldn’t keep up with him and Ryohei keep yelling at her. Hana-chan, who have the least patience for Ryohei but tried anyway because he is her brother, had turned to Kyouko and told her ‘no.’ Ballroom dancing is not for Ryohei. Kyouko is inclined to agree.

Figure skating is hardly any better. Ryohei grasped the basics fairly quickly. It ended up with her, Setsuna-chan, Hana-chan, Coach Maeda and several staffs chasing after her brother on ice because Ryohei was so damn fast. His repeated attempted for triple and quad jumps ended up with Ryohei falling or crashing to the barrier.

(He had the potential to become a speed skater but it is not Coach Maeda’s area of expertise. That and the old man don’t have Masumi-sensei’s patience.)

Boxing is a curse and a blessing… Kyouko is happy for her little brother to find something he loves doing but the reason he took it up in the first place always cause a pang in her chest. She has been worried when she left for Europe. She know that Setsuna-chan and Hana-chan will keep an eye on Ryohei… But they have their own thing going on. Masumi-sensei is busy with her ballet studio. Her parents always told her that Ryohei is doing fine but Kyouko don’t believe them. They love their children, Kyouko knows that, but they had pretty much give up. It’s not the same case with Sawada Nana but things would be completely different if they put more effort in disciplining their son.
“Nee-chan! I need to get stronger!” Ryohei told her desperately. Couldn’t she see? If he get stronger, he will able to protect everyone better. “There are more EXTREME fighters out there! I need to catch up to their level! If I Unlock my Flame, I can be as EXTREME!”

“It’s the mafia, Ryohei. The hitman tutor is trying to recruit you to the mafia. Setsuna-chan wouldn’t allow it. I know she wouldn’t… But you’ll say yes. I know you’ll say yes. And then you will lie to me about it. “Ryohei, I have let many things slide. Your lies included. If you keep doing this…. I don’t know if I will ever be able to trust you again.”

“Nee-chan, I—”

“I love you, Ryohei. You will always be my baby brother. That will never change. But there has to be a line to be drawn.” Kyouko take a deep breath before delivering the next line. “You need to learn to consider everyone else… Otherwise you are no different from Sawada Iemitsu.”

Yes, she did go there. Kyouko is surprised herself. But as she said just now, a line has to be drawn. The look of hurt on her brother’s face breaks her heart… But no… She will not budge. Ryohei need to learn that his actions has consequences.

“Nee-chan…,” He looked at the screen in disbelief. Did she really just compared him to such an un-EXTREME man like Iemitsu? The man who pretty much has abandoned his family? How could she? Ryohei is an EXTREME man. He had to hide the truth so his loved ones wouldn’t worry. He can take care of himself. He need to get stronger so he can take care of others. A few white lies here and there wouldn’t hurt anyone…

Except his lies did hurt someone. It hurt his nee-chan.

Ryohei’s eyes widened. He never wanted to hurt his sister, or Setsuna-nee and Hana-nee, or his family and friends and loved ones. But he has been un-EXTREME this whole time. This un-EXTREME-ness is the reason why Setsuna-nee wouldn’t take him as her Guardian. Because like Kyouko-neechan, she noticed his un-EXTREME-ness. All he can feel right now is remorse and disgust. Remorse for being so blind to everyone else’s feelings. Disgust at himself for being so un-EXTREME.

He is a horrible, horrible little brother.
Gokudera wanted to *scream*. 

His Boss, his saviour, said that she won’t Harmonize with him. Won’t make him her Guardian. Setsuna-hime didn’t even give himself a chance to explain. He was sent to Japan in the first place to be her subordinate. Yes, the circumstances was messy but it was meant to be. He is supposed to be her right hand man, her Guardian, her *family*. 

He didn’t have the time to convince her. The asshole Hibari suddenly bursted into the room, threatening to bite everyone to death. The fuck does that mean?! Coach Maeda kicked them out afterward. On Turf Top’s case, literally. Gokudera and Turf Top did not go quietly. The old man did not hit Gokudera again, but he did kicked Turf Top. It would be satisfying to watch if only the situation was different. 

Gokudera cried himself to sleep last night. He didn’t go to school today. Instead he slink away like a wounded animal, retreating to the mountains. He need to be away from people. *Away from Setsuna-hime*. He need to- He need to make some explosions. He need to take out his anger at something. He need to be alone. 

It has been his dearest wish, to be taken in by someone. To be part of a *Famiglia*. A real family. His biological family was too damn dysfunctional. If he stayed, it will be only a matter of time before he died from food poisoning. Father only see him as an extension of Lavinia (why else would he raise a bastard as his true son?). To his father’s wife, he is the physical reminder of her husband’s infidelity. Gokudera could not fault her for being distant. Having a mistress’ child paraded around in front of you is like a slap on the face. The only person who come as close to genuinely love him is Bianchi… And Gokudera couldn’t bear to look at her without pain shot through his body. 

He had pledged himself to Setsuna-hime. She took him in. Harmonisation would complete everything. It is every non Sky’s dream to Harmonize with a Sky. It’s so rare that most Elements didn’t Harmonize until they are fully adult. Gokudera is still a teenager and he is so lucky to find a Sky like Setsuna-hime. He couldn’t bear the thought of Harmonising with anyone else but Setsuna-hime. 

Setsuna-hime, who saved his life when he tried to take hers. Setsuna-hime, the first person to hug him in *years*. Setsuna-hime, who fully accepted him despite his shortcomings. 

All he wanted is for Setsuna-hime to let him stay by her side.
He doesn’t need anything else. Everything will work out on its own. For her sake, Gokudera will eat his sister’s cooking.

The bomber throw yet another dynamite to the air. He is deep in the mountain. There is no need to worry about civilians, except for hikers. The sky has gotten dark but Gokudera honestly don’t care. He has no part time work tonight. He have his dynamites to defend himself from wild animals.

Gokudera is mad. At Setsuna-hime. He never thought such thing is possible. It is. The fact that he is mad at her make him hate himself even more. Setsuna-hime is his savior. He shouldn’t have these thoughts in the first place, but he can’t help himself. He need to make these feelings disappear. He must. He cannot return to Setsuna-hime’s side while he harbour such ugly thoughts. Gokudera need to get it out of his system.

If it means he will be short of dynamites till next month, then so be it.

“Double Bomb!”

Gokudera watched as explosions filled the area. He put a cigarette in his lips.Fuck, he need to smoke badly. Where is his lighter? It was then he noticed a presence close by.

Gokudera whip out more dynamites. “Who’s there?!”

He waited until the dust and smoke clears up. A tall, dark shadow is looming at the distance. He can hear them getting closer. It sounds like… Clopping?

“Ara! Gokudera-san! I never thought I’ll find you here, of all places.”

Green eyes widened.

“Nagako-san?!”

Maeda Nagako is riding a grey horse. She is wearing a *hakama* and her hair is tied to a neat bun like
yesterday. But the more pressing question is, what the fuck is she doing out here? Gokudera get the impression that she is a high class lady. Nagako is the last person he expect to run into here. Does Coach Maeda knows?

“I often go out here for a little bit of exercise,” Nagako told him, as if reading his mind. “I stayed out longer that I planned to. I was about to go back when I noticed the explosion. So I decided to check it out.”

“I-I see…,” Gokudera can’t help but wonder what sort of people are Coach Maeda’s family. And is that a quiver on her back???

“So what are you doing here so late, Gokudera-san?”

“Uh…,” He look down on his feet. He can tell her, right? She is Coach Maeda’s wife. Setsuna-hime must have trust her too. “I need to be alone,” He told her truthfully. “I need to blow stuff up.”

To his relief, she simply nodded. No judgement or anything. “Do you feel better?”

“…No.”

“I see. In any case, it’s getting late. You’ll catch a cold if you stay out too long. You can come down with me and Shiro,” She pat the horse on the neck.

Gokudera blinked. “It’s very nice of you to offer… Are you sure?”

“Yes,” Nagako give him a motherly smile.

Well, he couldn’t say no, could he? Beats walking. A few awkward minutes later, Gokudera is seated right behind Nagako, holding onto her shoulders. They didn’t say a word as they descend down the mountain. The silence may not bother Nagako but it sure did bother him.

“I can tell you’re curious about something, Gokudera-san. Ask away.”

Well, since she brought it up, she’s probably okay with it. “Does Maeda-san know you’re here?”
“Of course he does. He is my husband, is he not?”

“R-right…”

This is awkward.

Should he talk to her some more? Or will that bother her instead? Nagako seems to be more approachable than her husband. What sort of topic should he bring up?

“My husband and Setsuna-chan talked about you, you know,” Nagako said.

Gokudera perked up. “They did?”

“Oh yes. My husband talked about how rude you were to him on your first meeting,” He blushed from embarrassment. “Setsuna-chan talked about you and the kids to him as well. She cares so much about you. And my husband told me all about it,” Nagako chuckled. “She told us the story when you almost start a fire in the kitchen when she came over to teach you how to cook. You like to do it step by step as if it’s a science experiment. That when you’re thinking you would tie your hair and put on glasses. You subscribed to the magazine ‘The Wonders & Mysteries of the World.’ You also play the piano.”

The silver haired youth can’t help but smile. Setsuna-hime has been talking about him! Granted it’s Coach Maeda but that man is pretty much her father.

“My husband would never say it out loud but the fact that he told me these at all means that he care for you as well, Gokudera-san.”

Gokudera blinked. “Uh,” He said eloquently.

“My husband is what you kids these days call a ‘tsundere’. I don’t know what does a tsundere constitutes but my husband is a giant softie inside.” Nagako chuckled. “He could make you disappear. Won’t be the first time either. Yet he didn’t. He let you stay in this town.”
Make him disappear? Not the first time? Shit! So Coach Maeda know how to hide a body?!

Nagako is totally unaware of his panic. “Granted, he didn’t do it out of altruistic sense. Setsuna-chan wanted to take care of you and he doesn’t want her to get into trouble because of her attention for you... Or your attention for her, to be exact. But he still let her interact with you.”

“That’s because he loves her,” Gokudera said. “He is, after all, her ‘Tou-san’.”

“Yes… Setsuna-chan regard my husband as her father… It make sense that she would take after him… And I guess you remind my husband of Setsuna.”

“...Huh?”

“Gokudera-san, the way you argue with Setsuna-chan yesterday was exactly how Setsuna-chan argue with my husband. Heck, it’s basically a role reversal! They used to clash in the past. You are exactly her age when it first happened. The look on your faces were exactly the same to Setsuna-chan’s when my husband prohibit her from doing things like quads.” The old woman shakes her head. “Understand, Gokudera-san. When Setsuna was your age, she is going through several things. The stress pushed her to acted out. She got reckless. Setsuna-chan got herself in trouble multiple times. It’s part of growing up, of course, but doesn’t mean it’s any less dangerous. That girl have long learned her lesson. Now it’s her turn to look out for the others, those who are younger than her. She doesn’t want to Harmonize with you to keep you out of trouble. She want all of you to have a peaceful life.”

“I’m already a mafioso,” Gokudera said. “The Bovino brat too. Our definition of peace is different from civilian’s. Setsuna-hime’s mindset is more of a civilian.”

“That may be the case,” Nagako acknowledged. “But it doesn’t change the fact that Setsuna-chan wish for you to have the peace you’ve been denied of. Every child need a peaceful environment so they can grow up. My husband understand that. That’s why he let you to stay in Namimori. That’s why Setsuna-chan chose not to Harmonize. Because we wish for you kids to have a chance. You deserve a chance, Gokudera-san. To be whatever you want. To go wherever you want. The possibility is limitless. Setsuna-chan don’t want you to lose those. The mafia tend not to leave much room for choices.”

“It doesn’t have to be Vongola. I don’t care if Setsuna-hime become boss or not. Hell, I’ll even fight Vongola for her sake,” Gokudera said. “I made a promise to follow her anywhere.”
“Gokudera-san, have it ever occurred to you that it also mean you can go anywhere? That you don’t have to stay a mafioso?”

“Setsuna-hime said something similar in the past but I never… I never really consider it.”

“This is what Setsuna-hime wants you to have,” Nagako said. “A chance to be more than a mafioso. Not becoming a mafioso is a choice. You don’t need Setsuna-chan to dictate who or what you are. If you keep subjecting yourself to her, you will deny yourself a chance. Setsuna-chan is giving you space. You’re just too young and hotheaded to see it.”

Space? Space for what? Gokudera don’t need space. All he need is Setsuna-hime and time to prove himself. Gokudera is fine of not being a mafioso.

...Is he?

Not becoming a mafioso… It is an option. He never see himself as something other than a mafioso, having grown up in the mafia community.

Then… If he is not a mafioso, not Smoking Bomb, neither a right hand man or a Guardian… What is he then?

*Is it okay to want to be something other than a mafioso?*

*-

*Ring ring ring ring ring ring*

*Click*

“Hey. I hope it’s not a bad time.”

“...,”
“How are the others?”

“...,”

“That’s good… I’m glad everyone is doing well… ....Listen… I need your advice. It’s something personal.”

“...?”

“I got into a disagreement with several people. My juniors. I told them I won’t let them do… This thing. It’s dangerous. I told them it was for their own good.”

“...,”

“That was yesterday. I haven’t heard from any of them today… Okay, I did avoid one of them. I wanted to give them space. So temper would be cooled the next time we meet, you know?”

“...,”

“No, no. It wasn’t that bad. Coach Maeda did kicked them out but that’s because a fight almost broke out.”

“...?!”

“Hibari-kun started it.”

“........”

“Yup.”
“...,”

“Yes, they are nice kids.”

“...,”

“Really? You really think it'll work out that easily.”

“...,”

“...I don’t know.”

“.....?”

“Actually, yeah. That does make me feel better.”

“...,”

“Thank you. Seriously, thank you.”

“...,”

“Mm. I know.”

“...,”

“Goodnight.”


"Click"
Does Coach Maeda know how to hide a dead body? Who knows… He is half Hibari so let’s not put it past him.

Ryohei is inherently selfish. God knows how many lies had he told Kyouko so she would back off his case. (I also wonder how much Canon!Kyouko believe his lies.) He keep pestering people to join the boxing club or fight him. He used his loudness to shut other people. He forgot details easily because he don’t care enough for it. You know who is inherently selfish? Iemitsu. His constant lying and the absurdity of those lies are disturbingly similar to Ryohei’s.

Gokudera and Nagi has similar issues. Their sense of identity is dependent to other people. They both latched onto Setsuna. In Gokudera’s case his mindset is still very much mafia. He can’t bear the thought of not being with his Sky/Boss. He still doesn’t know that it is possible for him to be NOT a mafioso. In Nagi’s case it’s because Setsuna encouraged her to be Nagi, even though at that point ‘Nagi’ is a little more than a blank slate. I hope you catch my meaning.

I didn’t include Hibari’s reaction because out of everyone, he really really don’t want to be tied down. He acknowledged Canon!Tsuna but didn’t go out his way to connect with him either. Canon!Tsuna, for his part, let him do as he pleases, knowing that trying to force Hibari to listen will only earn his ire. Also, Hibari is very sure with himself. He doesn’t budge if he don’t want to be budged. Setsuna is important to Namimori so she is under his protection. She will also bring in new/strong opponents for him to beat up, although indirectly. It’s a win-win situation between them. Out of the teenagers, Hibari has the most reservation of getting Full Harmonisation, because it limit his freedom (from his point of view). The fact that Setsuna won’t try to Harmonize with him reassures him.

I have something planned for Lambo. Look forward to it!

Writing Takeshi’s segment is very hard for me. It hit too close to home. Takeshi has depression. Remember how their other classmates just shrug it off and thought Takeshi was just joking when he threatened to jump? Tsuna was the only one to show real concern for him, that’s why he hang out with him regularly after that. He regard Tsuna as his real friend. He hold onto Tsuna (and others to a lesser degree) as his lifeline. I don’t know if Takeshi ever really recover in the manga or if he EVER talk about it to someone else. So I have him come clean to Tsuyoshi in this story.

To my readers, if you have depression or any other mental issues, please talk about it to someone you absolutely trust. It doesn’t have to be parents. I know how hard it is when your parents don’t believe you have mental illness. Call the hotline if your country have one. I believe you. I love you. I’m here for you. DM me if you want to talk about. I probably won’t be able to reply ASAP but I WILL REPLY BACK.
Setsuna decided that she will take her usual route today. She already avoided Ryohei yesterday. Kyouko-chan told her via Skype that she talked to him. He should have cooled down by now. Of course, there’s still the possibility that Ryohei will try to change her mind. But Setsuna is prepared for that. She couldn’t run away from the kids forever. Setsuna share the same rink as Nagi. She is a regular at TakeSushi. Gokudera is just a couple blocks away. She’ll see Hibari when he is on patrol.

Reborn didn’t bring up the Guardian issue after yesterday. Setsuna knows that he is planning something though. He always has a scheme or two. It will come again in the future. Sky Attraction is a natural process. If she has been Courting Takeshi, Ryohei and Nagi for such a long time, it won’t be odd if she Court more people without knowing. They only just met but Setsuna already Attract Gokudera. Who else? Fellow skaters? Someone from university? An old classmate? Kyouko and Hana? Setsuna would refuse to Harmonize with her best friends. She trusts those two with everything, but not mafia. She would never drag them down with her. At least, Kyouko and Hana would be understanding. But… Guardians are people who are ready to sacrifice their lives for each other and their Sky. Can Setsuna reach that point with someone she barely knew? The only people she trusts her life with are Tou-san, Masumi-sensei and her best friends. They already knows about the mafia… And it will only get worse from here.

All Guardians must know how to fight. They can use Dying Will Flames and have certain skillsets. Reborn told her the other day. Storm as the offensive force. Lightning as line of defence. Sun as the expert in martial arts. The ever dependable Rain. Cloud who keep an eye on everyone from the distance. Tricky Mist who hide the Famiglia with illusion. Those are the traditional roles of the Guardians according to their element. Nowadays Dying Will Flame users don’t have to follow such rigid roles. Take Reborn as example. He is a Sun but he favors firearms instead.

She can see why Reborn picked Gokudera and Ryohei. They would fit Storm and Sun respectively. Good thing she shut that down. If Sky Attraction is inevitable, she want adults at least. It will still be a bitter pill to swallow, but it’s easier. Better adults than kids. And Japanese. It will be hard to explain if she Court someone foreign. Gosh, what if she Court her competitors? She hope not. That would be a mess. Could a Sky Harmonize with another Sky? Iemitsu is a Sky. Setsuna absolutely don’t want to Harmonize with him but he might try. She should ask these questions when Reborn teach her how to access her Dying Will Flame. Setsuna has no idea what to expect. The baby won’t shoot her though. Small mercies. That leaves training and life threatening situations. It will be awful. Setsuna can tell already.

They run past the billboard and here Setsuna knew Ryohei will show up. And he did.
“Setsuna-nee!” He waved at her from the distance.

Setsuna take a deep breath. Showtime.

They stopped in front of each other. She is bracing herself for another tirade when Ryohei bow down to her.

“I’m EXTREMELY sorry!”

...Huh?

“I had been so Un-EXTREME to you! To Kyouko-neechan! To everyone!” Ryohei said. “I lied to Kyouko-neechan for too many times. She told me she don’t know if she could trust me. She… She said I’m similar to Iemitsu.”

Setsuna’s eyes widened. ‘Holy shit. Kyouko-chan went there? That’s brutal.’

“Iemitsu is an Un-EXTREME man… To be compared to him… I must have been really bad.”

“You are,” Setsuna agreed. Ryohei can’t help but wince. “Ryohei-kun, I know that nothing you ever do is done with malicious intent… But the fact still remains that you were pretty Un-EXTREME. It will take a long time and a lot of effort before we can trust you again… And I don’t want you to get even more Un-EXTREME. Mafia’s definition EXTREME is completely different to your own. You might try to meet their standards but the opposite could happen instead.”

“...I understand, Setsuna-nee. That’s why I will respect your decision. I won’t be your Guardian. I need to improve myself first. To undo the Un-EXTREME.”

Setsuna’s gaze softened. Ryohei is not yelling. He is understanding. Kyouko did it. Her words got through him. “Raise your head, Ryohei-kun.” The boxer straighten up. “Now that your eyes are opened, you have a lot of work to do.”

“I know,” Ryohei said solemnly.
“You need to show Kyouko-chan that you changed for the better, when she come home.”

Ryohei’s eyes softened at the mention of his sister. “Yes.”

Setsuna pat him on the shoulder before she walk past him.

“He’s a good boy,” Reborn commented once they put enough distance between them.

“Yes, yes, he is.”

(Destroying the misfortune that attacks the Famiglia with their own body, they become the Sun that brightly shines upon an area. That is the role of a Sun Guardian. But what if the Sun is blinded by their own brilliance? Or worse, burn themselves to death like Icarus who got too close to the sun.

Ryohei is lucky. He has a sister to pull him back when he get too high and a Sky who stop him before he burn himself.)

“Tsu-nee!” Lambo jump to her arms when they arrive at the Sawada residence. Setsuna smiled and hug Lambo tight. The child stiffened when he took notice of Reborn. “Bweh!” He stuck out his tongue to the Sun Arcobaleno. Reborn ignored him and head inside the house. That only incensed the child even more.

“Lambo, we’re about to have a meal. Remember the rules,” Setsuna remind Lambo when she saw him reaching for his hair. She can see candies, junk and weapons sticking out from his poofy hair. Guess it’s the hammer space for Lambo. Lambo grumbled and pull away his hand.

“Tsu-chan! Reborn!” Nana beamed when they enter the kitchen. You two are just in time!”

Nana prepared yet another feast. Lambo eat in such hurry Setsuna has to tell him to slow down. A part of her wonder if it’s because he is afraid this will be his last meal, since he’s been on the road
until recently. He is still still clumsy with chopsticks. Some of the food ended up spilling or stuck on his hair. How did Lambo manage that, Setsuna has no idea. She should get him training chopsticks. Speaking of which, have her mother bought new clothes for him? Lambo is wearing the cow print suit again.

After they finished eating, Setsuna stayed behind in the kitchen to help her mother. Lambo went to the living room to watch cartoon. Reborn vanished somewhere.

“How was Lambo?” Setsuna asked as she scrub the plates.

Nana smiled at the question. “Oh, he is such a cheerful child. Quite the active one too. He likes to play outside.”

“Are you happy to have him?” The figure skater asked in soft voice.

Her mother’s smile widen. “Yes, I miss having small children around.”

Setsuna internally wince at the answer. Nana is lonely. She is glad that Lambo cheered her up. But… “Kaa-san,” Setsuna eyed her mother. “You’re not curious?”

“Hm? About what?”

“About Lambo.” Like where did he come from? Where are his family? Was he lost? Why hadn’t anyone come looking for him? Why does he have all those weapons? Nana never asked questions. She take everything in stride. She readily took in a child without knowing anything about him. People would call her as big hearted but… Surely, even Nana would wonder about Lambo?

“What about Lambo?”

“Like why is he attacking Reborn?”

Nana smiled and shakes her head. “It’s just little kids fights. They’ll make up by the end of the day.” She giggled.
“He used a grenade,” Setsuna pointed out.

“Toys these days are so realistic!”

“...Nevermind.”

Her mother just don’t see it. Normal toys don’t blow up. Firecrackers don’t emit that much smoke. Even their neighbours were alarmed. Lambo was seriously trying to kill Reborn. He wants to go home after all. And Reborn’s reaction is not normal for a toddler (Not that he is normal to begin with). If Nana truly care for Lambo, she would ask questions. The boy is not even subtle. The grenades are sticking out from his hair. It’s only a matter of time before Lambo try to kill Reborn again-

“Gupya!”

Setsuna put down the plates and sponge before rushing out of the kitchen. In the living room, Reborn is standing over Lambo. She can hear his sniffles.

“Lambo?” She rushes to his side. She tilt his head up. There’s an ugly bruise on his cheek.

“To… Le… Rate… Uwaaah!”

Setsuna glared at the uncaring Reborn before moving to pick up the crying child. However, Lambo pulled away from her. He takes out a purple bazooka from his hair. Using a string as extension, he pulled the trigger. Brown eyes widened. “Lambo—”

BOOM

Pink smoke filled the room. Why would Lambo shot himself! Wait… That purple bazooka… It’s the Ten Year Bazooka?!

“Yare, yare,” A deep voice said. An unknown stranger stood at the spot where Lambo was. When
the smoke dissipates, Setsuna sees a teenager in a cow print shirt, black jacket and beige pants. He has Lambo’s black hair (though not as unruly), his green eyes and the mark underneath his left eye. The teenager looked at her and brightens. “Tsu-nee!” He smiled at her happily. “Long time no see!”

“L-Lambo?” She points a shaky finger at him.

The teenager smile wider. “Yes, it’s me!” He help her get to her feet. “It appears I was brought back ten years in the past by the Ten Year Bazooka.”

“Wow… You got taller than me…,” Setsuna studied his face. This is how Lambo will look like in ten years? Puberty sure is something else.

Teenage Lambo notice Reborn’s presence for the first time. The hitman baby is sitting on the couch, flipping through the channels. “Hey, Reborn. I changed a lot, didn’t I?” He walk around the couch. “It’s me, Crybaby Lambo. You used to ignore me.” Reborn show no indication that he hears him. Teenage Lambo’s face darken. Setsuna’s instinct told her that things is going to get troublesome. “Geez… It looks like I have to show you how much I’ve grown in ten years….” He pull something out from his pockets. Setsuna recognise them as horns, judging from the shape. Teenage Lambo put them on his head. Are those the same horn set five years old Lambo wear?

“Electrico Cornata!” Sparks of electricity start to shoot out from the the tips. Teenage Lambo charge at the Reborn.

Reborn throw the remote without taking his eyes off from the TV. It hit Lambo squarely on the face. Teenage Lambo stopped on his tracks. The electricity died down.

“L-Lambo?”

“Tolerate… Uwaaaah!”

“Lambo!”

Teenage Lambo rushes out from the living room and head upstairs.
‘He didn’t change at all…’

Setsuna head upstairs. She hears crying sound from her old bedroom. The door is slightly ajar. When she poke her head in, she found Lambo huddling at the corner of her room. “Lambo…”

Teenage Lambo look up. Blood is trickling down his nose.

“Oh my God, Lambo!” Setsuna rushes to his side. She crouch down in front of him. “Let me see…,” She pinched his nose to stop the bleeding. Setsuna gently dab the blood with her handkerchief.

Teenage Lambo sniffs, “Tsu-nee…”

“Don’t worry. Your nose is not broken at least… The bleeding will stop.”

He let out a sigh. “You’re always so kind, Tsu-nee… You always take care of me. You taught me lots too.”

Setsuna blinked. To be perfectly honest, she has lots of questions for Teenage Lambo. Does he still live with Nana? Or did he go back to Italy? Is he still part of the mafia? In the end, Setsuna settled with one question. “Are you happy growing up?”

Teenage Lambo blinked at the question. He smiles. “Yes. Everyday was fun. Tsu-nee taught me skating and dancing. Tsu-nee played with me. Tsu-nee gave me tips about girls. Everyone else are nice to me, even Tou-san.”

“Tou-san?” Setsuna can’t quite hold back her grin. Her Tou-san and Lambo got that close?

“Mm. You’re all my precious family,” Teenage Lambo said. “I love you, Tsu-nee.”

Hearing those words cause Setsuna to tear up. “I love you too, Lambo.” Even though they just met and barely knows each other, she meant it.

Teenage Lambo smiled.
The lanky teen is replaced with a five year old child. Kid Lambo is back. And he’s still crying.

“Oh, Lambo…,” Setsuna pull him to her lap.

Lambo refused to go downstairs where Reborn’s at, and he doesn’t want Setsuna to leave him. So she has no other choice but to ask her mother to bring an ice pack upstairs. Setsuna has Lambo lie down on her old bed, pressing the ice pack against his cheek.

“Lambo, are you ready to go back downstairs?” Setsuna asked him once Lambo calmed down. The boy stiffened and shakes his head vigorously. “No? Okay then. We can play here… Unfortunately I don’t have any toys left… How about I read you a story?”

“Oh… That was an album from my childhood,” Setsuna settled beside him.

Lambo flipped through the pages. “It’s all figure skating,” He noted. “You have so many medals! Do you still have those?”
“Yes, they’re in the closet.”

Lambo drop the album and went to the closet. She followed him behind. “Uwah! There’s so much boxes in here! Where are the medals?”

Setsuna helped him take out all the boxes. She can’t help but take pictures with her phone when Lambo try on her medals and old skates. Her best friends would love it. Well, Kyouko would. Lambo noticed her phone and start doing victory poses. One gold medal around his neck and three more on his head. Hm… Maybe she should start bringing a camera with her whenever she come here.

“Are you still skating, Tsu-nee?” Lambo asked.

She smiled at the question. “Yes, I do. I still compete.”

“Did you win more gold medals?”

“Oh, yes. Those ones are in my new home though.”

“So you’re good then?”

What a cheeky boy. “I like to think I am.”

“Hmmmm,” Lambo rummage the boxes once again. “What’s this?” He pull out a folded piece of paper. “Eew! It’s old!” He throw it over his shoulders. Curious, Setsuna pick it up and fold it open.

It’s a writing piece from when she was in first grade.

*My name is Sawada Setsuna. I am seven years old. My dream is to become a figure skater. Even though I can't land a jump now, I will definitely become a figure skater when I grow up. I will win gold in the Olympics!*
“Tsu-nee?” Lambo looked over her when she didn’t make any noise for a long time. He put down the stuffed monkey to climb onto her lap. “Tsu-nee?”

Setsuna blinked away her tears and look at the child. “Yes, Lambo?”

“Why are you crying?”

“It’s not sad tears, Lambo. I’m just…,” She rubbed her eyes. “It’s an adult thing.”

Lambo frowned. “Adults are weird.”

Setsuna can only laugh. “I just read something from my childhood, and it brought back so many memories.” She show him the paper.

Lambo looked it over. “Did you succeed?”

“Yes,” Setsuna smiled. “I made my dreams come true.”

“Was it hard?”

“Oh, yes. There are times I almost give up,” She told him honestly. It has been a long, long road. And she’s only twenty one.

Lambo frowned. “…Is it bad if Lambo-san wants to give up? Not that Lambo-san will! Lambo-san is strong after all!”

“…I won’t repeat whatever you want to say. It’ll be a secret between us.”

Lambo looked up to her and then at the floor. “Lambo-san was told by his Boss to kill Reborn but he couldn’t do it. And Reborn always hit Lambo-san back. Lambo-san don’t like the pain. But Lambo-san wants to go home.”
“Oh, Lambo…,” Setsuna hugged him. “It’s okay to feel like giving up. It’s totally normal. Everyone feel the same from time to time. What you’re feeling is valid.”

“Valid?”

“It means it’s perfectly understandable,” Setsuna smoothed his hair. “Killing Reborn is hard, isn’t it?” The boy nodded. “I think you better stop for now, Lambo. You need to polish your skills first. Reborn is too much for you to handle right now. What if he decide to kill you?”

Lambo shuddered in her arms.

“It’s okay if you want to take a break from killing Reborn. You can focus on something else instead. Like having fun. Learn cool things. Make new friends.”

“But Boss said—”

“A Boss is supposed to take care of their people,” Setsuna repeat what Reborn said in one of their lessons. “Did he take care of you, Lambo?”

Lambo’s silence is her answer.

“I’ll take care of you, Lambo,” Setsuna whispers. “You’re safe with me.”

Lambo hug her tight.

(To draw the damage to himself and away from the rest of the Famiglia, serving as a lightning rod. That is the function of the Lightning Guardian. But what if the damage is too much for him to handle and the Lightning break?

Lambo was abandoned by one Famiglia already. He is then picked up by a Sky. He will be protected and nurtured. The world shall tremble when he became the Lightning itself.)
“Ah!”

“Hey!”

“Oh!

“EXTREME!”

Gokudera pressed his mouth to a thin line. He is on his way to the ice rink when he bump to Kudou Nagi, Yamamoto Takeshi and Sasagawa Ryohei. Judging from the direction, they have the same destination in mind. Nagi is a figure skater so she has an excuse. What about the other two?

“Is everyone here is heading to the ice rink?” Yamamoto looked at his peers. He can’t help but grin. “What a coincidence! Let’s go together!”

“Extreme! Let’s go!” Ryohei balled his fist. Why must he be so damn loud all the time?!

Nagi simply nodded, hugging her bag tighter.

Gokudera sided up with Nagi. The girl is proven to be the least annoying person here. Seriously… What are the odds of all four of them meeting here..? And now they are going to the ice rink together. Everyone here… Almost become his comrades. They are his fellow Guardian candidates… Former candidates to be exact. Gokudera can’t help but think ‘what if.’ What if Setsuna-hime agreed to Harmonize with them? What if Gokudera tried harder? What if he has been a little more stronger? What if. So many what ifs.

Nagako-san’s words from last night made him to think. The reason Setsuna-hime refused them is so they will have a chance. A choice. To give them space. It fits with what Setsuna-hime said to him last week. If he want to follow her, Gokudera will have to lay down his weapons eventually. His Boss has no intention to lead a life as a mafioso. He had think about it and decided that no, he won’t leave her. Gokudera want to be with Setsuna-hime. Simple as that. But if Setsuna-hime don’t want him to be a mafioso… What else does he have? To stay a mafioso or retire. Gokudera never hear of a mafioso retiring at his age. His father and sister would flip if he retire now. But… If he retire… What will he do? Mafia is everything he knows. Well, not everything. Gokudera is interested in
Piano is the only thing he has left from his mother. Gokudera don’t have any picture of her. He can no longer remember her voice. But every time he hears the sound of piano, he can picture her smile, the scent of her perfume, the feel of her hands guiding him… Gokudera don’t really believe in the afterlife. Okay, that’s not entirely true. A part of him kinda does. His mother have to be somewhere out there, you know?

*(What would Lavinia think if she see her son right now?)*

He want to stay at Setsuna-hime’s side. That, he has no doubt. But to stay by her side he need to be… More. He need to grow, exactly what Setsuna-hime said to him in the past.

He need to do this.

For Setsuna-hime

For himself

Learning how to skate is a good place to start. One step at a time. He imagine the look of delight on Setsuna-hime’s face when she see him skating. It will be worth it. And maybe, just maybe… These people will not be so bad.

*(Continuously at the heart of the attack, the furious Storm that never rests. That is the purpose of a Storm Guardian. But what happen after the storm come to pass? What is left for the Storm to do? Or if there’s even a piece of them left after standing in the centre of that much power.)*

Gokudera was broken. His heart shattered and life on balance. But now, he is able to pick up the pieces and rebuild anew. He is no longer alone. He has a Sky now. Once he learn to open his heart, loneliness is a thing in the past.

- Baseball is no longer enough. He need more to sustain him. If he keep relying on baseball only,
Takeshi will relapse. Once he realised that he need more than just baseball, it hit Takeshi just how empty he is. The majority of his life… His identity… It centred on baseball. If this go on any longer… If Yamamoto is too late to realize… He will just be a vessel for baseball.

Scary

Yamamoto couldn’t trust his classmates or teammates. They never try to get to know him. Really get to know him. They only like his facade and talent in baseball. So Yamamoto is pretty much alone at school. With the exception of Gokudera and Sasagawa-senpai. Hibari-senpai counts too, but he doesn’t like to socialise and Yamamoto don’t want to force him. Gokudera and Sasagawa-senpai treats everyone equally. He can drop his guard around them. Yamamoto has yet to hold a real conversation with Kudou Nagi but anyone who cares for Setsuna-nee is a good person in his book. They didn’t become Guardians…. But surely it’s okay to be friends with them, right?

He went to the ice rink today to have fun. It’s been years since he last skate. Skating to him is fun. Yamamoto wish to capture that feeling again. No expectations. No pressure. Just fun. Originally he wanted this to be a time just for himself… But hey, Yamamoto won’t say no to company. Maybe it’s because deep down he is scared to be left alone with himself.

He wanted Setsuna-nee, but she couldn’t always be there for him. To hold his hands. Yamamoto need to learn to pick himself up. To learn how to cope. To accept it. Ultimately, he will be able to be at peace with himself… And to move forward.

Yamamoto is terribly, achingly lonely. He can’t go back. There’s no way he can take it.

All these years, people come to him. This time, it will Yamamoto who do the chase. You need to put effort yourself if you want true friendship.

(To become a blessed shower that settles conflict and washes everything away. That is the task of a Rain Guardian. But what if the Rain is the one who get washed away instead?

Takeshi is truly blessed. He has a father who hold onto him and a Sky who gently push him back to the surface. One day, he will be stronger. Even if he slip, he knows that someone got his back.)
Nagi may be young and more often than not doubt herself and everything she does… But coming to Namimori is the best decision Nagi ever made. She is far away from her mother’s influence. She make new friends (had she stayed in Tokyo such thing would be unthinkable). She actually look forward going to school. She received guidance from Coach Maeda. And she is able to be closer with her idol Setsuna-senpai. Nagi won’t exchange her life now for anything.

With everything that has happened so far… Nagi feel like she need to confront herself. To remind herself of why she chose figure skating in the first place. It’s time to find out who she is. Setsuna-senpai told her that when she know who she is, it will show in her skating. What makes her… Her? Has she changed or is she still the same girl? Who is Nagi?

The boys’ presence is a surprise. Nagi is aware of Yamamoto Takeshi’s and Sasagawa Ryohei’s existences before they properly met. The boxer is the brother of Setsuna-senpai’s childhood friend. She mentioned him everything she talk about Sasagawa Kyouko and Kurokawa Hana. Nagi dined at TakeSushi a couple times before. She saw the pictures on the wall. Of Setsuna-senpai and tiny Yamamoto. Gokudera Hayato is new in town. Born and raised in the mafia, he’s supposed to be fearsome. But to Nagi, he’s just a boy as awkward as her deep down and love Setsuna-senpai. It’s rare for her to talk to boys… Considering she go to all girls school. But she never feel awkward around Gokudera.

Everyone know about Hibari Kyouya of course.

Lambo is a five year old child. He’s adorable but Nagi doubt that everyone would let him get into mafia action, even if he is raised in the mafia like Gokudera.

In another world, these people are her comrades. They are the Guardians to Setsuna-senpai’s Sky. Maybe they still have a chance, small as it is, to be like that. Not necessarily comrades… But still more than a group of strangers.

Namimori always surprises her. Nagi look forward what else this town is going to bring into her life.

(Creating something from nothing, and nothing from something; thus bewildering the enemy, to render the Famiglia’s true form intangible with visions of deceit. That is the function of a Mist Guardian. But when the mist cease, what would one find? Does the Mist even aware what is real and what is not? Do they know their true essence?

Before coming to Namimori, Nagi does not know who she is. She is either a poor reflection of her mother or just a shadow that slip through everybody’s lives without them knowing. Now? She has a Sky to help her figure herself out and a Cloud to watch over her. Whoever, whatever Nagi becomes,
they will accept her.)

Lambo insisted of going ice skating. And well, how can Setsuna resist that? So she bundled Lambo as best as she can before she took him away from the house. Setsuna told her mother that they would most likely be late so there is no need for her to prepare dinner for Lambo. They will eat outside. Reborn is nowhere in sight. If it weren’t for her Hyper Intuition, Setsuna won’t know that he is following them.

Lambo is so happy that someone took him for a trip. Nana didn’t go out much. She played with him for a while before never long enough for him to be satisfied. Lambo played at the playground nearby. There were other kids but their parents looked at him strangely and pull their kids away. It’s obvious that the boy is lonely. Setsuna asked if he used his weapons at them or played too rough. Lambo looked away nervously and change the subject. Setsuna bite back the urge to sigh. She need to apologise to her neighbours… And talk with Nana.

They arrived in front of the Maeda Ice Rink. A few others visitors look their way. They gasped a little when they recognise her. Setsuna is used to it. Instead, her attention is directed to a group of teenagers in front of her and Lambo.

“Ryohei-kun?” She would recognise that white hair everywhere.

Ryohei turn around first, followed by Gokudera, Takeshi and Nagi. “Setsu-nee!”

“Oh wow,” She can’t help but grin. “What are the odds of all of us coming here?” The Guardians candidates. All that is left is-

“Herbivores”

They all turn around to see Hibari standing not far from them. “Get inside. Don’t crowd in front of me.”

“Yes, yes,” Setsuna pick up Lambo and usher the teenagers inside. “Have a safe patrol, Hibari-kun.”
Hibari watch the Duck herd the herbivores inside. They are the ones who showed up at Maeda’s home. The Guardian candidates. There’s the loud herbivore who always sniff around his home. The herbivore who put up airs of a carnivore. The herbivore who camouflage himself so the herd would accept him. One of Maeda’s ducklings. The calf. No one is worth his time. Challenging the Duck to a fight would be interesting. Hibari knows that she is not a fighter. Not like the way he like to fight. But when she transformed to a Swan, he saw glimpses of her potential. Maeda would flip if he did anything to her… Hibari back off. He know better than to mess with someone’s flock.

The baby’s arrival changes things. The baby is a Carnivore. Hibari can practically smell it. He itches to fight him. Under his guidances, Duck’s potential will be brought to the surface. He will wait until that day come. It won’t do if he hurt Namimori’s icon. Setsuna single handedly improve Namimori’s economy with her achievements. While he doesn’t particularly care for the herbivores, Namimori is his to protect. That includes the well being of said herbivores. He never said that Namimori is doing bad… But when Setsuna win her first gold medal in Seniors, it seems like Namimori finally wake up from its long slumber. Productivity went up, more little animals are born, the herbivores are happy. Hibari know he owes it to the Duck.

She didn’t push to Harmonize with him. The Duck respect him enough to know not to insist on adding him to her flock. Though with her maternal instinct, she will still brood over him. You can’t negotiate with maternal instinct. It cannot be stopped. At least the Duck have plenty other kids to mother. Those herbivores better behave. He can seek out the baby anytime he wants… Still beats his other option. No way he’ll contact his great uncle and ask him to teach him Dying Will Flames.

Now… He still have a patrol to finish.

(To be the aloof, drifting Cloud that protects the Family from an independent standpoint, and whom nothing can ever bind. That is what a Cloud Guardian does. People call them anti social one, the loose canon, the one to stay away from. But never claim that Clouds don’t care. They care so much. Why else would they stick around and make sure Death don’t claim the other Elements?

Hibari need his space. Hibari has his own way of doing things. The Sky understand this and don’t try to change him. He only give his respect to those who give him freedom to be himself.)

Setsuna watched with a smile on her face as everyone coach Gokudera and Lambo. Lambo is the first to pick it up. Now he is zooming all over the ice rink. Ryohei chase after him, yelling
“EXTREME BE CAREFUL!” This is karma. Setsuna is convinced. Gokudera skate along the barrier first, never taking his hands off, before he accept Nagi’s hand. He let her pull him away from the barrier. Takeshi give him words of encouragement, hovering in case Gokudera slipped.

She let the kids have it. They need this.

Gokudera need to learn to open his heart to someone other than her.

Ryohei need to learn to be considerate to others.

Takeshi need to find his footing, and he need a support system of his own to achieve that.

Lambo deserve to have someone who love him unconditionally.

Nagi need to connect with other people so she can grow.

Hibari is a very sure with himself. He will come if he want to come. No one can force him.

Setsuna will give them care, guidance and occasional tough love. But they don’t necessarily need her. And that’s okay. All kids will grow up and leave the nest eventually. Setsuna will be there for them if they wish to return and rest. Even grownups need a safe place to go back to, when theirs hearts are weary and body exhausted. But by the end of the day, their dynamics is not fit for Guardianship.

Her life is changing fast. Setsuna is struggling to keep it from out of control. She can’t drag these kids when she don’t even know if she will make it. She will need to have Guardians by the end of the day. It’s imperative for her survival. But who could she trust? Setsuna trust only a few people. Tou-san, her best friends, Masumi-sensei, Nagako-baasan, Susumu and Takumu. She couldn’t interfere with their lives.

Setsuna supposes, when it comes down to it, she will figure out the right person to Harmonize with, at the right time, in the right place.

As long as Reborn or Vongola don’t meddle first.
(Rain, Storm, Cloud, Sun, Mist, and Lightning, she influences all of them. She understands and accepts all of them. That is the sort of person a Sky is. But do the other elements understand her in return? They affect her as much as she affect them.

A Sky holds up the rest of the Elements. But who who hold up the Sky?)

-  

Setsuna

Kyouko-chan

Girl

Sometimes I forgot you like to go straight for the throat.

Hana

???

Setsuna

This morning Ryohei-kun apologized to me for being un-EXTREME

Kyouko-chan’s words shake him to the core

Kyouko

I told him that he’s acting like Sawada Iemitsu

Hana

Damn girl

That’s cold

Kyouko

But it worked
Hana

I love it that we use Iemitsu as the parameter of shitty

No offence, Sets

Setsuna

None taken

Also

I figured out my theme for this year

Kyouko

Ooooh!

Hana

Well? What are you waiting for? Spill it!

Setsuna

My theme for this season will be…

Drum roll please

Hana

SETSUNA

Setsuna

Okay, okay!

My theme is…
Hey, guys. How are you? I hope you're doing well. I want to tell you that my next update will take awhile. Between college and depression... It's hard for me to find the time and focus to write. I need prioritise my welfare first. I hope you understand.

So Setsuna finally meet Teenage Lambo! I always wonder what happened to Teenage Lambo in the TYL Future. He always refer Tsuna as Young Vongola, suggesting that he returned to Bovino Famiglia. Since he claim that Tsuna took care of him, he must have stayed in Japan for a few years. I don't know how the Bovino treat him after his return. Guess we'll never know.

Meanwhile, the teenagers (sans Hibari) are learning. Hopefully for the better.

Now, readers, I have something to tell you! I have these story ideas of Fem!Tsuna. I don't know when I will be able to write ALL of them. Most likely after this story about Setsuna is halfway finished. I'll let you decide which one I should write next.

Title Coming Soon
Verde never view himself as a family man. Him and children simply don't mix. Just because he is trapped in the body of a baby, it doesn't mean that he has to like them. Still, when a little girl somehow stumble upon his secret lab, Verde can't help but be curious. Especially when the girl has Hyper Intuition. Growing to care for the girl is not part of his plans though. Featuring Verde as That Character-Who-Claim-To-Dislike-Children-But-Adopt-Them-Anyway and Sawada Tsukumi who has Sun Flame as her Secondary.

Title Coming Soon
Aspiring pastry chef Sawada Mitsue only wanted is to open her own shop and make delicious sweets. She left Japan to work in Italy to polish her skills and get experience. She has no idea that her sweets would be a craze amongst the mafia. After a kidnapping or two, Mitsue is rescued by a woman with a flower tattoo. She found herself working for her and her young daughter. Featuring Mitsue whose Sky Flame is infused to her sweets, tiny bebe Yuni and Aria who juggles between being a Donna and a mother.
Sawada Iemitsu and Sawada Nana were assassinated when the former visit Japan for the first time in years. As the next of kin, Timoteo brought five years old Sawada Katsuko to Italy with him. Daniella took the girl under her wing and things get very interesting.

Princess Mononoke
It all begins when Hibari found a group of herbivores bullying a small animal. When said small animal revealed to have the ability to speak with animals, he knew he hit the jackpot. Featuring Sawada Hatsu as an Animal Whisperer.

Please vote! Thank you!
Poison Scorpion

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Things calmed down considerably after the kids accept that they have nil chance to Harmonize with her. Setsuna is so proud for all of them for being understanding, especially Gokudera. He still give her the puppy eyes but otherwise didn’t say any word about being a Guardian.

Now that the Guardians issue is settled, she can focus on figure skating. Coach Maeda gave her the ‘OK’ to go with ‘Dream’ for her theme this season. Masumi-sensei has been notified that her studio will be needed for the next few months. Setsuna need to choreograph a couple routines for the exhibitions as well. She need to select the songs. And the costumes preparation. The costumes are important.

It’s July already. Things are going to get busy around here. There will be a local novice competition in a few weeks. Nagi and the others will compete with figure skaters from the neighbouring cities. Junior Grand Prix will start in August. Examination Week will be held at the end of the month. Not to mention all the events scheduled for her to participate.

No big deal. Nooooooo big deal. She got this. Yup.

“Setsuna, are you paying attention?”

She looked at Reborn. He is wearing a hakama instead of his usual black suit. Must be because they are in a dojo right now. Tou-san allowed them to borrow his family’s dojo for Flame training. Their original plan is to train in the mountains but everyone vetoed Reborn. The dojo is a much better choice. More private, Tou-san or Nagako-baasan can keep an eye on them and the servants won’t leak any information.

“I am now,” said Setsuna.

Nagako-baasan is watching them from the sidelines. Tou-san wanted to watch but he need to train the little ones for the upcoming competition. Setsuna is dressed in orange sports tank top and grey jogging pants. A stark contrast to what Nagako-baasan and Reborn are wearing right now.

Leon transformed to a gun. Setsuna twist her body slightly to avoid the bullet.
“You need to focus,” Reborn said as Leon return to his original shape. “Training start now.”

Setsuna wanted to make a smart ass comment at that but decide not to.

“Hyper Intuition is directly linked to Dying Will Flames,” Reborn started. “Since you’ve been using Hyper Intuition, it means you’re a Dormant. What we’re going to do today is to Fully Unlock it. Every time you use Hyper Intuition, your Flame is Activated. Those sensation you felt, I want you to focus on that and bring it forward. To your palm or fingertips.” He lit his Sun Flame on his palm. “It all comes down to resolve.”

Resolve, huh?

Setsuna thought about figure skating. No, it doesn’t feel right. She need to separate mafia and figure skating. What about the other times she felt that heat?

Stopped a pickpocket from stealing Nana’s wallet when they’re out buying groceries. She was 8 years old.

Getting out of the way from an upcoming ball when they play dodgeball in 4th grade.

Grabbing Kyoko-chan when they about to cross the street. An overworked driver fell asleep while on the wheel and didn’t notice the red light. That was in 6th grade.

Somehow got caught in a school gang war in Osaka during National Japan Junior 1999. Setsuna managed to slip away but not before kicking someone on the groin.

Going back to the classroom the very moment she saw the mean girls of Namimori High waiting for her in the empty hallway. They wanted to gang up on her and cut her face.

Rescuing Hana-chan just in the nick in time from said mean girls.

That time when the strange man followed her around and offered to be her sugar daddy.
Prevented her fellow athletes from getting roofied when they go clubbing last year during the Olympics.

Saving a kid member of Namimori FS Club from a paparazzi.

There were more occasions when she used Hyper Intuition but those incidents stood out the most. It activated whenever she or someone else in danger. To protect herself and others.

*Protect*

Setsuna thought of the people she hold dear. Tou-san, her best friends, Masumi-sensei, Nana, Masumi-sensei, her best friends, Nana, the kids, the members of Namimori FS Club. She will do anything to protect them. And… They are in danger. From the mafia. Setsuna is under no illusion that Vongola or rival Famiglia will try to hurt them first to get her. She can’t protect them. Not with her current self. Setsuna need to get stronger. She need to protect them.

There. The warmth.

Reborn said to bring it forward. To the surface? Like how he summon his Flame on his hand. So… Like cupping water with your hands then? Feel the flow. Guide the current. Don’t fight the surge. Hold onto the warmth. She can do this.

She think of what it is she’s protecting. Tou-san giving her silent encouragement from the sideline. Masumi-sensei giving her input when she choreograph her programs. Kyouko-chan and Hana-chan cheering and teasing her. Nana’s joy when she welcome Setsuna and Reborn for their Sunday brunch. The look on Gokudera’s face when they cook together. Meeting Ryohei in the morning. Going to TakeSushi. Playing with Lambo. Greeting Hibari when he’s on patrol. Having fun with Nagi and the rest of the kids in the club.

She want to skate. To win competitions. To open a path for her *kouhais*. She want to graduate. To get new place for herself and Lambo. Help Tou-san at the club. Choreograph more programs. Take part in shows. To meet someone and fall in love. Marry them. Start a family. Teach her kids skating. Setsuna is so far from *done*.

They are what she’s fighting for. The future. This happiness. This is the lives they deserve. No chance in hell Setsuna is going to let Iemitsu and the mafia ruin everything.
“Setsuna,” Reborn called her.

Setsuna slowly open her eyes (when did she close them?). She can feel Nagako-baasan’s gaze on her. Reborn is staring at her as well. Setsuna look down.

Bright orange flame flickering on her fingertips.

This is Dying Will Flame.

The one thing that Tou-san never get involved with is choreography. Her father figure can do the ballet and Japanese traditional dances, but female movements is beyond his understanding. He get the technical parts, but can only give little to none help. What makes it harder is that Tou-san only has sons. He never teach anyone anything outside of martial arts or traditional Japanese arts either. To a little girl no less. When he first started coaching her, Tou-san is so out of his depths it’s not even funny. They don’t have any money to hire a choreographer so Setsuna take it upon herself to choreographs her own programs. Masumi-sensei, her best friends and other instructors are always ready to help her so it’s not like Setsuna is completely in the dark.

The pre ballet class is more than enough warm up for her. After saying goodbye to her students, Setsuna go to the studio on the topmost floor. It is usually reserved for the senior students and her. She dance to her song selections, feeling them out, try to see which one fits the theme and her feelings the best. No routines are completely useless. She can pick a couple and polish them for the exhibitions. Last year she made a tribute to Michelle Kwan on one of her exhibition programs. She should do one for Surya Bonaly next. The French now American skater won’t be mad if she try to do a backflip right? And land on one foot? Right? It will give Tou-san a heart attack if she try to pull that off.


First, she must dissect the theme.

Setsuna sit down on the floor. A notebook on her lap and a pen in her right hand. She wrote ‘DREAM’ on top of the paper and underlined it twice. How should she approach this? One theme.
Two routines. Setsuna pull out a piece of paper from her bag. It’s her childhood dream homework. She became a figure skater. She won gold in the Olympics.

Setsuna write down ‘Childhood’ and ‘Adulthood’ below ‘DREAM’.


...Adulthood is really bleak, huh? The realities one discover when they turn to an adult is what made them wish they can be a child again. Meanwhile, a child wish they can grow up fast so they will be free to do whatever they want. Funny how that works.

Setsuna stared at the page for a moment before writing down a word.

Why?

Because dreams are the thing that keep us going.

It’s what drive the little girls here to train so they can become the ballerinas they admire so much. It’s the reason why Lambo is readily accept his mission. The thing people work their whole lives for. It’s what shaped her to become the person she is now.

But what happened when one fail to realise their dream?

Figure skating is a short lived career. One grave injuries can give you long term setbacks or destroy you irreparably. The same thing happen in all kinds of sports. People who spent their entire lives building their physique, polishing their skills, sacrificing time and resources… Their dreams are deemed impossible once they hit that wall that is so hard to tear down. Sometimes they don’t even have a choice but to give up. It’s a cruel, cruel world.

But what if they refuse to let go?
Her Tou-san retired after the Olympics to finish his education and get married. He took over the family business. He became the head of the Maeda clan. He raised two beautiful boys with his loving wife. He is a respected member of the community. Maeda Kazuki had it good.

Yet he took an early retirement to become a coach for a little nobody.

Tou-san’s decision shocked everyone. His family, his employees, his peers. Many people blamed her for his decision. What’s so special about Sawada Setsuna?

But Setsuna and his family knows. Maeda Kazuki misses the ice. Figure skating to him is like ballet to Kyouko-chan. Boxing to Ryohei-kun. He can never erase it. He can’t let go of it.

That’s why he decided to become her coach. Because she is his ticket to return to the world of competitive skating... And because he saw something in her, that made him want to reach out and help her realise it.

Maeda Kazuki once lived his dream... And he don’t want to stop.

Setsuna understand that feeling. Once upon of time, she resented him for using her… But they have resolved that particular bout. Whatever his original motivations were, Tou-san never lose faith in her. He never left her. He share her dreams.

Life is not that simple of course. Dreams are not like books, something you can put down and finish reading later. Dreams are complex and so intrinsic to humans. One day, these kids must swallow that bitter pill of realisation that life is not at all like fairytales and cartoons. The adults look back at the memories of their childhood dreams with bittersweet feeling. But still they dream and dream and dream, even if ultimately nothing come out of it.


So many feelings. So many contradictions. So obvious. The emotions are swirling inside her.

Setsuna take a deep breath.
“This one is for the dreamers. For those who just started. For those who made it. For those who don’t know if they can go on. For those whose hearts are broken because they have to put down their dreams. For those who have nothing left but dreams. This one is for you.”

The sun shine so brightly today. Truly, this is the sign that summer is here. Setsuna wipe her forehead. At least the ice rink will be cool and nice. She still need to be careful and stay hydrated. Oh, and protect her skin too. Does she still have enough sunblock and moisturiser? Hopefully Gokudera and Lambo didn’t get heatstroke. Summer in Japan is different from summer in Italy. This is their first summer in Japan! So many things to teach and show them! Cicadas, ghost stories, summer festival… Those two boys are adjusting quite well. She should give them a treat. Cook them their favourite food? A trip to the movies?

Ring ring

Setsuna turn around. Not far from behind her is a woman riding a mommy bike… With boots? And helmet and goggles? The woman remove her helmet. She has reddish brown hair and green eyes. She is really pretty. And her Hyper Intuition go haywire.

Dangerdangerdanger

She need to get away from this woman. NOW.

“Please have it,” She throw her something before riding off. Setsuna made no move to catch it. It was a canned soda. It fell to the pavement and its content spilling everywhere. The liquid is a nasty purple. Something tells her it’s not a grape flavoured soda. Purple fumes rise up to the air. Setsuna backed away. A bird flew overhead and got caught in the fumes.

Thud

“Oh my God! Its dead!” Setsuna gasped in shock. To her growing horror, the soda melt the pavement.
That woman tried to kill her.

Mafia. That woman is in the mafia. How else would a person concoct a poison like this? If it’s the mafia then…

Reborn. Fucking Reborn.

Is that woman another Guardian Candidate? Did he set her up like how he set Gokudera up? Or is she an assassin sent by Vongola’s enemy?

Setsuna cradled the bird’s dead body and wrapped it in a towel. She will be late for practice but Tou-san will understand once she tell him the reason.

A while later, Setsuna finished bury the little bird at a park near her apartment. When she returned to her apartment, Reborn is lounging on the couch drinking ice coffee.

“There’s a mafiosi in town, did you know?” Setsuna keep her tone calm. “I ran to her earlier.”

“I know. My contacts informed me.”

“Your contacts- Nevermind. Did you told her to come here?”

“That mafiosi is Bianchi. We worked together before. She is a freelancer so she is not affiliated to any particular group. Her special skill is to poison her targets with her cookings. They call her the Poison Scorpion,” Reborn told her.

“Okay… Why is she here?” Setsuna fold her arms.

“I didn’t tell her to come here. She must have tracked me down to Namimori.”

“Why would she do that?”
“It must be because Bianchi loves me.”

All sorts of alarm is blaring in her head. “...What?”

“Bianchi and I went out for a brief period of time. She was fourth lover,” Reborn hold up four fingers to drive his point home.

“Lover-” Reborn is an adult man despite his baby form. And that woman…” And how old is this Bianchi?”

“She’s seventeen.”

Setsuna’s eyes widened. “Seventeen?! She’s underage! And you dated her-”

Morals have little importance in the mafia. But to knowingly date a seventeen year old girl… *Reborn is a predator.*

She take a step back away from him. “...Was… So you two broke up?”

Reborn doesn’t seem all that concerned. “Yes, we did. We first met when we took the same job. Mixing romance and work is not exactly a good thing, especially in our line of work, so after we run a few hits, I told Bianchi it’s best for us to part ways.”

“...Did she take it well?”

“She did.”

“Are you sure about that? It took some dedication for her to track you down and come here… And why would she target me?”

Reborn didn’t say anything.
Setsuna’s jaw dropped. “Holy shit, she’s a stalker. Your stalker. And I’m in the way.” This is a nightmare. “Hell no! I don’t want to get dragged in your drama! She’s your ex, Reborn. You fix this.”

“Setsuna, all humans are fated to die one day,” Reborn said sagely while sipping his iced coffee.

“Fuck no! This is your mess! Not mine or Vongola’s! Yours! Like hell I’m going to be the one to clean it up! You go meet her right now and explain things to her! This is on you!” She jab a finger at him.

“Setsuna-”

“Oh no, you don’t. You don’t get to turn it to me or another mafia lesson. I am staying out of this one. I’m out of here,” She grab her duffle bag and walk out the door.

- 

“Reborn has a what now? Coach Maeda said in disbelief.

“An ex. I couldn’t believe it either,” Setsuna said grimly.

The two of them are currently in Coach Maeda’s office. Everyone else are either at the rink or training room. Nagi shot her a look of concern when she show up late. Her junior is a smart girl. She must have realised that it’s mafia related.

“Are you sure she’s not here under Reborn’s order?” He asked her.

“He told me no. My instinct told me that he’s not lying. I don’t know if he’s going to do anything about her though,” Setsuna sighed in annoyance. “Bianchi is seventeen.”

Her Tou-san’s face darkens. He has views on adults who take advantage of children and teenagers. “I will notify both Nagako, Masumi-san and Kyouya about this.” Setsuna nodded. That is a right decision to make. “I want you to stay at our place until Reborn settle this lovers’ quarrel of his.”
“Okay,” Setsuna see no reason to argue. That and she don’t want to deal with Reborn’s stalker all by herself.

“Good. Now go join the others.”

Setsuna saluted him and left the office.

- 

The little ones are getting fired up as the date of the novice competition draws near. The older kids are able to tone down their excitement but they are excited nonetheless. There are talks to send a couple of kids for the Santa Claus Cup in December. But Coach Maeda won’t be able to accompany them in favor of Setsuna. They are thinking Golden Bear of Zagreb, an annual competition held in Croatia. There are also the Bavarian Open next year, Dragon Trophy and Triglev Trophy in Slovenia, Helena Pajovic Cup in Serbia and many more. It cost a lot of money but Japan is pushing its skaters to compete abroad. She herself competed in Nebelhorn Trophy last year in Germany. It’s a good thing that they have more people now. Assistant coaches, trainers and choreographers. The assistant coaches can chaperone the kids abroad.

Going abroad, to Europe specifically, might not be a good idea for her at the moment. But Setsuna has been in the international light for years and Vongola had not a single clue. She can handle it. And it’s not like she need their permission.

She always told Nana whenever she about to compete abroad. Her mother would smile and wish her safe travels and tease her to bring back gifts. Setsuna checked if her mother told Iemitsu on the phone. She didn’t. A part of her wonder if Nana would notice if she leave the house for days without telling her. But she couldn’t do it. It will be cruel… And Setsuna don’t know if she can handle it if Nana still don’t notice.

Setsuna glide her way to the exit. She’s feeling thirsty. The assistants always made sure to prepare water and barley tea for the members. She put on the blade covers before making her way towards the table.

Instead she found Bianchi hiding underneath the table.

“You!”
Having been caught, Bianchi fled.

“Don’t drink anything!” Setsuna told the assistant coaches before she pursue the woman. It’s stupid, chasing after someone who tried to kill you. But this bitch is at the rink, near the kids, endangering everyone. Tou-san must be thinking the same, for he is running after her. He ran past her, since he has longer legs and Setsuna is still wearing her skates.

By the time Setsuna reach outside, she saw Bianchi’s unique hair colour disappear around the corner and Coach Maeda crouching over someone on the ground. Did Bianchi hurt a passerby? That silver hair is familiar…

Setsuna’s eyes widened. “Gokudera-kun!”

- 

When Gokudera come about, he found Setsuna-hime looking over him. She looked so stressed.

“Gokudera-kun!” She smiled in relief.

That was when he noticed something cool and damp on his forehead. When he reach for it, it feel soft and wet. Oh, a towel. “How- How long I was out?”

“About twenty minutes or so,” Setsuna answered as he sit up. Gokudera look at his surroundings. It appears they are in a clinic of some sort. “How are you feeling, Gokudera-kun?”

“...My stomach hurts.”

“Would you like some painkillers?”

“That would be nice. Thank you.”

Setsuna went to check the drawers. She return to his side with the promised painkillers and a glass of water. Gokudera smiled at her gratefully.
“Do you remember what happened?” Setsuna asked after Gokudera took the pills. “Tou-san said you just crumpled when you come face to face with that woman.”

He winced. Gokudera had no idea his sister is in town. “Where is Maeda-san right now?”

“He is talking with the security at the moment. The other members were sent home. Nagi-chan is still here though. She is waiting outside. She’s worried about you. Should I call her in?”

Kudou waited for him? That’s nice of her. “Y-yes, please.”

Setsuna nodded and went to get Kudou. The girl looked extremely anxious when they come in.

“Gokudera-san, are you okay?” She stand next to his bedside, on the opposite of Setsuna-hime.

“I took the painkillers already. They should kick in any minute now.”

“Are you sure you’re not hurting elsewhere? You were in a lot of pain when we brought you in,” Setsuna-hime look at him in concern. “Did you see what that woman did to you?”

“N-no…”

“But you collapsed. Tou-san saw it clearly,” Setsuna-hime frowned. “Why are you here?”

“That’s what I like to know too,” said a deep masculine voice.

They all turn around to see Coach Maeda standing at the entrance. He looked pissed.

Gokudera swallowed. “Kudou texted me. She told me that Setsuna-hime was late for practice. When she showed up, she looked like she is troubled by the mafia again. So I came here as soon as I could…”
Coach Maeda looked at Kudou who blushed in embarrassment. “Nagi, we’ll talk about this later. Boy, did that woman do something to you? We know she’s a poison user. Setsuna encountered her earlier today. She spiked the drinks at the rink. It’s a good thing Setsuna caught her in the act. Otherwise we will have to prepare tiny coffins.”

Gokudera winced. Coach Maeda’s tone is calm but you can tell that he is pissed. His sister have made a serious mistake to strike this place. “It’s a long story.”

“We’re all ears.”

And the words just came tumbling out. He told them about his childhood. How they discover his sister’s ability, his father hold countless concerts to show him off, how Gokudera ran away from home. When he finished his tale, Setsuna-hime and Kudou looked at him horrified while Coach Maeda narrowed his eyes.

“Let me get this straight,” Setsuna-hime pressed her hands together. “Your sister have the ability to make all her cooking poisonous. Your father ordered you to eat them, knowing that it makes you sick, so you can perform according to the weird standards of his guests. And it continued until you’re eight. By then you left your home and never look back.” Gokudera nodded. “And your sister basically made you her guinea pig and is happy to see you in pain? And your father thought you liked her cooking?” Gokudera nodded once again. Setsuna take a deep breath. “Do you have any idea to get her out of this town?”

Gokudera thought for a moment. “Before Reborn, my sister was obsessed with this man. He died some time ago. But she’s still hung up over him. If we can find a guy who looks like her former boyfriend, my sister chase him to the corner of the world.”

Setsuna-hime looked thoughtful. “Bianchi’s ex, how did he die?”

“...I heard it was food poisoning.”

“...Was it her by any chance? Poison Cooking?”

“...most likely...”
Setsuna-hime looked up to the ceiling as if she’s asking for whatever deity to grant her strength.

“Do you have any picture of his ex?” Coach Maeda asked him.

“Tou-san!” Setsuna looked at him in disbelief.

“She could’ve poisoned the children, Setsuna. One way or another, we have to drive her out.”

“Um, give me a moment,” Gokudera pull out his phone. He checked his folders. “Right, here it is.” He show them his phone.

They all leaned closer. Setsuna-hime’s eyes widened. “Oh my God! It’s Lambo!”

“Huh?” Kudou looked at her confused. “Lambo-chan is five, senpai.”

“It’s a long story. It’s hard to believe… But it’s true,” Setsuna-hime sighed. “I still won’t sacrifice Lambo for this.”

“Then we have no choice but to lure Bianchi with you as bait.”

“No!” Gokudera jumped out the bed. “Maeda-san! Don’t! I’ll be the bait!”

“We have no other choice, Gokudera-kun,” Setsuna-hime said tiredly. “Bianchi is already targeting me. She will appear eventually. We just need to incapacitate her. We’ll sick Reborn at her. Bianchi will listen to him. If not… Then we’ll hand her over to the Disciplinary Committee. Like Tou-san said, one way or another, we have to get rid of her.”

The next day, everyone has been notified in regards of recent events. This includes Masumi-sensei, Nagako and Hibari. The Disciplinary Committee are instructed to apprehend Bianchi if sighted. Everyone in the know are to contact each other as soon as they see a glimpse of the assassin. The cover story is Bianchi is an obsessive hater of Setsuna (which is true) and a highly dangerous
individual (so very true). She sneaked into the rink with the intention to sabotage Setsuna by spiking her drink. Once Bianchi is caught, she will be brought to the Maeda estate for further questioning.

Gokudera wanted to help but he will only end up as a hindrance for others. So he was told to stay put, much to his chagrin. Nagi is not included in the operation. But she is told to be on alert and contact others if she spot Bianchi. Gokudera forwarded Bianchi’s picture to everyone. For safekeeping, they stationed a couple guards at near Setsuna’s old home. Bianchi have no qualms involving bystanders after all.

The key players of this operation are Setsuna and Reborn. Setsuna is the target so she will serve as bait. Reborn is the only who have influence over Bianchi. The baby hitman went along with it. Setsuna will go along her daily routines. When Bianchi show up, they grab her. Sounds easy in theory, but Bianchi is tricky. Everyone is cautioned to keep their distance and carry gas masks on their person.

Setsuna could hardly concentrate during class. She keep checking her door, expecting Bianchi to burst out and attack her. It’s a good thing she brought a recorder. She stayed at Tou-san’s place last night. Tou-san drove her to university this morning.

She skipped lunch today. Setsuna has this nasty feeling that Bianchi will pop out when she is in contact with food. Once she get back to the Maeda estate, Setsuna can eat.

A couple blocks away from Tou-san’s home, Setsuna hear the sound of bike wheels behind her, followed by bells.

(She just have to make her presence known.)

Setsuna turn around to see Bianchi on her bike again, glaring daggers at her. “Those who bothered someone else’s love life should die covered in poison,” She said darkly. She throw a can of soda at her direction. Setsuna easily move out of the way.

Bianchi hop off her bike. She pull out a box of pizza out of nowhere.

Bang!

“Ah!”
“Reborn!”

Reborn has come out of nowhere, holding a smoking gun. Bianchi’s poisonous pizza have been shot away from her hold. “Ciaossu, Bianchi.”

“Reborn!” Bianchi teared up. Setsuna blinked. She’s seriously crying. “My love… I’m here to bring you back. Let’s do more job together. A dangerous, thrilling dark world is much more suited for you than this place.”

“I can’t do that, Bianchi. My job now is to raise Setsuna.”

Bianchi fell silent. Setsuna’s Intuition scream for her to leave. “…Poor Reborn. He has been brainwashed by some strange woman.”

….What?

“Unless that woman is murde- died from an accident, Reborn will never be free from her dark spell,” The teenage girl pointed at her.

What?

“Don’t worry, Reborn. I will take you home with me.”

“Are you deaf?” Setsuna hissed. “Or do you have selective hearing instead. Reborn has a job to do. He can’t go with you. And this isn’t some goddamned love triangle. Removing me won’t solve the problem.”

Bianchi narrowed her eyes. “You just want to hog Reborn all to yourself!”

“Little girl, even if Reborn is the last male on Earth, I will never see him as a potential partner.”

The younger girl gasped. “How can you not! Reborn is wonderful! No one can match his skills! He is a complete gentleman! His sideburns are so cute!”
“Your point is?”

Setsuna need to keep Bianchi’s attention on her. Two Disciplinary Committee members are creeping up behind the teenage girl. Both of them are wearing gas masks. Good.

“Someone like you is not fit to be by Reborn’s side! I am!”

“Well, Reborn. What do you have to say about that?” Setsuna turn to Reborn.

Reborn’s gaze locked with Bianchi’s. “Bianchi, you are a capable hitman. I enjoy our time together while it last. But it’s over now.”

“My dearest, you don’t mean that,” Bianchi smiled. “I knew it. It’s the witch’s fault.” Bianchi pulled out what appears to be rice balls. Setsuna can see worms sticking out. Gross. She went to an offensive stance, ready to pounce. The two Disciplinary Committee members behind her are ready as well.

*Her Intuition told her to turn around.*

“Get away from Tsu-nee!”

Brown eyes widened. *Lambo?*

Indeed, the five year old there, holding a rocket launcher, of all things. Six rocket missiles are aimed at Bianchi. Amazingly, she dodged all of them, even coming close to Setsuna while at it. The two Disciplinary Committee scrambled back, surprised by the missiles. Setsuna ducked under Bianchi’s swipe. In the corner of her eyes, she can see pink smoke.

*Lambo used the Ten Year Bazooka.*

“Yare yare. I got sent back to the past again...” Teenage Lambo sighed, unaware of the danger he’s in.
“Romeo?” Bianchi gasped. “You’re alive?!”

Teenage Lambo blinked in confusion. “Romeo?”

“DIE!”

Bianchi shoved a handful of her Poison Cooking to Teenage Lambo’s face. He was taken by surprise, unable to dodge. The sight of Teenage Lambo falling to the ground made something inside her snap.

Bianchi stood over Romeo’s prone form. She never thought he would be here in Namimori, of all places. What is he doing here in Japan? No matter. She killed him. Did she? He’s still breathing. She should shove another Poison Cooking down his throat, just to be sure.

Someone grabbed her shoulder, causing her to turn around-

**SMACK**

Setsuna’s fist hit Bianchi square on the face. The sickening sound told her that her nose is broken at the very least. It throw Bianchi off her balance and she fell on her butt. Blood is gushing out of her nostrils.

“You little-” Her retort got caught in her throat when Bianchi feel sudden heaviness fell upon her. She suddenly find it difficult to breathe.

Orange eyes looked down on her. Despite the fire it held, those eyes are cold.

Setsuna stood over Teenage Lambo’s prone form. He’s still breathing. Five minutes is not enough time to save him. Hopefully the doctors in the future are able to treat him.

Bianchi flinched under those bright eyes. She can’t move a muscle. Sky Flame. This girl is using Sky Flame to subdue her. Bianchi never feel such a strong Sky Flame. In the corner of her eyes, she can
see two bystanders fallen to their knees. It appears they are unable to withstand the Sky Pressure.

“Setsuna,” Reborn step in front of Bianchi. “Control your Flame. Take the Pressure of the Committee members. We need them moving.”

She glanced at the Committee members, who looked back at her fearfully. Taking a deep breath, she direct her Flame away from the two. She focuses it on Bianchi instead. The younger female whimpered as the weight over her mind doubled. “You two. Tie her up.”

“Y-y-yes, Ma-a-a-am,” A Member stutters. They move closer to Bianchi. She let them touch her. She is in no state to resist anyway.

Setsuna cradle Teenage Lambo in his arms. Foam is coming out of his mouth. Poor kid. He’s in so much pain. Pink smoke clouded her vision for a few short moments. When it cleared up, five years old Lambo is looking up at her. He looked at a tied up Bianchi and then at her.

“Tsu-nee! You beat the enemy!” He grinned. He hugged her neck.

Setsuna hugged him back. “Yes, yes, I did.”

-  

Apparently, Lambo overheard the Committee Members stationed at her old house discussing Bianchi. He got it in his head to go ‘save Tsu-nee from the enemy’. So he left the house and go look for the enemy. By some bizarre twist, Lambo stumbled upon them when Setsuna and Reborn faced Bianchi. Setsuna was touched by his concern... But what he did was stupid. A scolding will be coming his way in the future.

They gathered at Maeda’s dojo. Bianchi is tied up on the floor. Nagako just finished treating her nose. Reborn keep an eye on Setsuna while she cool down. Coach Maeda hand over Lambo to his staff.

When Setsuna, Reborn and Coach Maeda entered the dojo, Bianchi flinched. Yet she still has enough fire in her to glare at the figure skater. “You broke my nose,” Bianchi hissed.
“You tried to kill me and Lambo,” Setsuna replied back coldly. She stand in front of her.

“That wasn’t Romeo?”

“Romeo died by your hands. He was poisoned with your Poison Cooking. Didn’t you remember?”

Bianchi blinked. Then comprehension dawning on her. It looks like she really did forget. “Whenever I think of Romeo, I feel intense rage. When I saw the boy I just reacted.”

There’s something incredibly wrong with this girl.

“It’s not him,” Setsuna said. “He just looked like him, that’s all.”

“Bianchi,” Reborn step forward. “You need to stop this. I am not going back with you. I need to stay here. Setsuna is my student.”

“I just want you to be happy!” Bianchi cried. “I can give you that! Happiness! We can build a live together in Italy! I love you!”

Bianchi believe in true love. Even though she is born to the world of full of bloodshed and backstabbing, she still believe in such thing. After all, love is one the strongest, if not the strongest driving force in man. If you lose a true love, it’s okay! One can have more than one true love. They are out there somewhere. You just have to look for them. Because they are looking for you too.

Her parents were arranged to marry by their own parents. Her mother loves her husband dearly, but she is a cold woman. She find it difficult to show affection. But if you know where to look, you’ll see it. Behind the poker face mask and icy attitude, lies a passionate heart that burns. Bianchi knows that her father care for his wife in his own way, but her cold exterior drove him to another woman’s arms.

Bianchi is hardly surprised that he fell in love with Gokudera Lavina. That woman is gentle and warm, a contrast to Bianchi’s mother. Not to mention brilliant as well. Her father attended one of her concerts and he fell for her on first sight. The fact that Bianchi liked Lavina made Father even more pleased.
Her mother is not.

She remembered Mother being stiff and and even more colder than usual. No one is surprised. Her husband is openly courting another woman in front of her. Having mistresses is not unusual. Mother wouldn’t care if Father did it behind her back. She loves him so much. Mother never said a word. Not when Father brought Lavina to their home. Not even when Hayato is born. But when she found out that he wanted to divorce her and marry Lavina right after… That was the last straw for her.

Her mother is a very good actress. Very careful. But not careful enough. Bianchi saw her lips quirked and her eyes lit up when they received the news of Lavina’s death. Bianchi don’t blame her mother for being happy. It’s natural to remove the obstacles on your path for love. It’s never been proven if her mother had anything to do with Lavina’s death. Father suspected but the investigation told him otherwise. She feel bad for Hayato but that’s just life is. People die. Some win, some lose. And Bianchi is a winner.

Romeo was a lot like Father. He was selfish. He cheated on her Lord knows how many times. At first she only intimidated her rivals. When they persisted in making advances on Romeo, she put an end to them. Romeo never turn them away either, making the situation even more messier. He would also make comments about her. Her appearance, her cooking, her actions. It was a hot mess. But Bianchi loves him so much. Even though he’s dead now, she is still in love with him.

Reborn is simply amazing. He respect her, as a hitman and a woman. He never make fun of her. He made her smile and laugh. He is also faithful. Reborn is everything Romeo is not.

It broke her heart when Reborn broke off their partnership. Bianchi gave him some time to think it over. Once he realise his mistake, he will come back to her. Bianchi will forgive him and all will be right again. Then she received news that Reborn accept yet another job from Vongola Ninth. Another student. When Bianchi discovered that Reborn’s newest student is a female, she is angry.

Obstacles must be eliminated. This girl is in the way of her happiness. So she took the natural course. Sawada Setsuna must die.

But she miscalculate. Sawada Setsuna is a Sky. A very strong one at that. She stood no chance. Even now, Bianchi can still feel a trickle of Sky Pressure weighing down on her.

“Bianchi,” Setsuna addressed her. The teenage girl stilled. “You do realise, that if I die, it means Reborn breached his contract, right? He will have to pay for that. There will be a blot on his reputation. Have you thought about that?”
Green eyes widened. She hadn’t thought of that. “I-I didn’t mean to trouble Reborn. I never wanted.”

“I know,” Setsuna crouched down to her eye level. “But your action still hurt him.”

Bianchi turned to her former lover. “I-Is it true, my love? Did my actions hurt you?” Reborn didn’t answer her question. But the look in his eyes told her answer. The teenage girl started to sob. Everyone just looked at her as she broke down.

“It felt awful, isn’t it?” Setsuna said softly. “To be the one who love more.” Bianchi looked up to her. “You showered that precious person with love and attention… You told yourself you expect nothing back from that person… But you do. You want them to love you back just as much. You give more and more, hoping that they will change. That they will stay with you. And when they didn’t… It broke you.” Bianchi didn’t say anything. She listened to her raptly. “I know that Reborn care for you, Bianchi… But he couldn’t give you what you want, no matter how hard you tried. You need to let go of him. And Romeo as well. Only after that you will be able to heal.”

“But who will love me then?”

“Why, that would be yourself, of course,” answered Setsuna. “The one who stayed with you throughout the heartbreaks and hardships was yourself. It’s only fair for you give yourself the love and care you give for others.”

“Myself…”

“Now, we are going to untie you. You will have 30 minutes time to talk with Reborn. After that, we want you out. I don’t want to see your face around these parts again. Clear?”

Bianchi nodded.

Coach Maeda reluctantly untied her. He, Setsuna and Nagako, stepped out of the dojo, giving the two hitmen their privacy.

A staff announced Hibari’s arrival. The teen asked them where is the poisonous herbivore. Setsuna told him to be patient. Bianchi will leave today. Half an hour later, Bianchi came out with red puffy eyes, followed by Reborn.
Hibari looked at Bianchi’s face. “Whose work is that?” He asked, out of her earshot.

“Mine,” Setsuna answered. “She tried to kill me and Lambo.”

He looked at the teenage girl again. This herbivore tried to kill a duckling and lived? Either she’s actually a challenge or the Duck spared her. “Why didn’t you kill her?”

“She’s Gokudera-kun’s sister. Half sister to be exact. Blood siblings, nonetheless.”

“Ah.”

Coach Maeda drove Bianchi to the train station, bought her a one way ticket and watch her get on the train.

Peace once again settled in Namimori. The question is, how long will it last this time?

Setsuna

Ready to hear the latest mafia bullshit?

Hana

Oh no

What is it this time

Setsuna

Reborn’s ex showed up. Tried to kill me via poison, since I was in the way of their ‘love’ Tried to kill Lambo too because he reminded her of her ex. To top it off, she’s Gokudera-kun’s half sister.

Hana
What the actual fuck

Kyouko

Are you okay???

Is Lambo okay???

Setsuna

I broke her nose

Lambo is recovering

Hana

Good work, bestie

What happened next

Setsuna

We tied her up. Talked some sense to her. I honestly have no idea if she gets it. She did listen though. Tou-san drove her to the train station and made sure she get on that train. She won’t show her face again if she know what’s good for her.

Hana

She better

Kyouko

I hope Lambo will recover soon!

Hana

Reborn looks like a baby and Lambo is a five year old. Is that girl a pedophile or something?
Thank you for your concern, Kyouko-chan

I hope he recover soon too.

Honestly? I don’t want to know

Girl is seventeen by the way

Hana

Wtf????

Chapter End Notes

Gokudera’s family situation is just fishy to me. His Father already have a wife and a child when he fell for Lavina. He courted her and proposed to her. Lavina was most likely a civilian. Of course his legal wife would be pissed at him. Not only did he cheated on her, Gokudera’s father planned to set her aside. And have to call a mistress’ child as your own must have hurt. And Lavina’s death has never been solved, isn’t it? It’s easy to suspect the legal wife as the true mastermind. I imagine Legal Wife is really pleased when her rival died. And then in regards of Bianchi poisoning Hayato… What is their father thinking?! What if Hayato died? By his own sister’s hands even! He is teaching her that it’s okay to poison your family and friends! He thought Gokudera is genuinely enjoy her Poison Cooking! I think that’s where Bianchi get the mindset of ‘If you’re full of love then you will survive this’

Their Father also strike me as sexist. In one of KHR’s bonus story, he tried to stop Bianchi from looking for Hayato who ran away, saying that it’s not something girls do. Hayato made the right call to get away, that’s all I’m saying.

Mafia men make shitty fathers.

Bianchi… She is a mess to be honest. She does not listen to Reborn. Or rather, hear what she want to hear, twisting his words to suit her fantasies. Bianchi view the relationship of Iemitsu and Nana as normal, something we know is anything but. During the Test of Courage chapter, she has the spirit of Romeo summoned… So she can kill him again. Her definition and understanding of love is so convoluted. And Bianchi is only a year older than Hibari. That girl scares the crap out of me. And we have the likes such as Mukuro, Belphegor and Byakuran.

Reborn himself have no issue of taking advantage of Bianchi. Not in a sexual sense (ew) but he used her for Tsuna’s mafia training. He also never clear up any misunderstanding between them, even when Bianchi hold a freaking WEDDING. And it is shown in the TYL arc that Bianchi is still so taken with Reborn. He emotionally manipulated her. I don’t care if he’s a main character or the World’s Greatest Hitman. IT. IS. NOT. OKAY.
Princess Mononoke got the biggest number of vote! I will write this one in the future!
Thank you for voting!
“I said it before and I’ll say it again. How did this become your life, Setsuna-chan?”

“Iemitsu.”

Teacher and student are doing warmups together at the barre. Setsuna want to show Masumi-sensei her routines so far and song selections. Reborn was with them just earlier. He left to visit his favourite coffee shop in the area.

“First Gokudera-kun, and then Flames, and Reborn’s ex who coincidentally is also Gokudera-kun’s sister showed up. What’s next?”

“Please don’t say anything more, Sensei,” Setsuna grimaced. “I have this feeling that you’ll jinx it.”

Masumi-sensei closes her mouth. “Hm… Good call, Setsuna-chan.” She changed the topic. “How is Lambo-chan? I heard he tried to help you and his… Ah, teenage self got hurt?”

It was a bizarre experience to explain the Ten Year Bazooka to the elderlies. Reborn vouched that it’s the truth. So are the Disciplinary Committee members who were present during the commotion.

Setsuna grimaced some more. “Yes, he did… And I have absolutely no idea if Teenage Lambo is cured.”

“I hope he is well,” Masumi-sensei said softly. “What do you have in mind with the child?”

“Hm?”

“Lambo-chan. He entered this country illegally, didn’t he? That makes him an alien… And leaving him behind with your mother is…,” She didn’t finish.
The figure skater is silent for a moment. “I’m working on it at the moment, Sensei. I’m saving money so Lambo can move in with me… I don’t know what sort of arrangement Iemitsu had with the Lambo’s Famiglia, but it’s safe to say that Lambo can’t back out of it. He’s stuck with me. It’s worse for him because he has no idea. There will be a lot of paperwork to be dealt with in the future.”

Masumi-sensei frown. “You mean… You want to adopt him?”

“In the future,” Setsuna confirmed. “Lambo’s biological family pretty much abandoned him. It’s either living in the streets or orphanage. But Lambo still retain the mafia mindset, on top of children’s short sightedness. He won’t make it. Maybe someone else would adopt him but I don’t think it will happen anytime soon.”

“Why must you take responsibility, Setsuna-chan? First Gokudera-kun and then Lambo. There is no guarantee there won’t be more. Are you going to adopt all of them? I don’t think you can balance between a single parent and an athlete. Moreover, people will notice,” The ballerina shakes her head. “What if it’s a ploy to get you into the mafia? Make you too attached to the kids and you have no choice to join the underbelly to keep them safe.”

“It’s a possibility,” Setsuna acknowledge her point. “But I’m already related to the strongest and the biggest of them all. Can’t get any deeper than that.”

Masumi-sensei observe her. “Are you sure it’s not because the kids remind you of your past self?”

Setsuna lowered her leg. “What do you mean by that, Sensei?”

“These children have similar circumstances as you. Different, but have enough similarities to make you relate to them. You won’t be able to ignore them, even if you tried. You picked them up and become their replacement parental figure. Even to your detriment.”

“That’s right,” Setsuna answered. Masumi-sensei blinked. She half expect her student to deny it. “Lambo and Gokudera-kun need a parental figure in their lives. My mother think of the former as amusement or something to pass the time with. Almost like… Like a pet,” She grimaced at her own words. “Gokudera-kun has been treated badly by adults for most of his life. They are at the age that they need someone to care for them. That’s also why I don’t accept them as my Guardians. No mother want to see their children in danger after all.”
“Already referring yourself as a mother now, Setsuna-chan?”

“What can I say? Maybe in the future they’ll call me Mother Goose,” They chuckled at that. When it died down, Setsuna looked at her ballet instructor somberly. “When I was little, not much older than Lambo now, I wished Kaa-san is a bit more like Hana-chan’s and Kyouko-chan’s parents.” Even though she was really young, Setsuna can already tell that Nana is not quite there. “I felt awful to compare Kaa-san with theirs… But I can’t help it. Kaa-san is… Too different compared to the other moms. Not good different. And the other kids still have their fathers. I really wanted that. Someone to take care of me. Someone I can trust. Someone who understand me. And I guess, someone who give me their undivided attention. Someone who I don’t have to share with. For a time, I wanted that person to be you, Sensei. But you have so many students to take care of, especially Kyoko-chan.”

Masumi-sensei didn’t say anything. She just listens.

“And then Tou-san came along,” Setsuna said softly. “He changed my life for the better. I want to do the same for others. Everyone deserve that. I want to be there for Gokudera-kun and Lambo, like how Tou-san was there for me.”

“What if it’s too much for you?”

“I will be okay,” Setsuna smiled. “I got you, Tou-san, Kyouko-chan, Hana-chan, Tsuyoshi-jii and everyone else. I’m not alone. And I knew better now.”

“I’m still worried.”

“I know,” Setsuna’s gaze softened. “I’m worried too.”

The room fell silent, until Masumi-sensei break it. “That’s enough warm up. Now, what about those choreographies?”

It wasn’t the most subtle attempt to change the topic but Setsuna take it anyway. “As you know, my theme for this year is Dream. I want the two programmes to contrast each other. The short program will be about childhood. Childhood dreams, if you will. The free program is about adulthood. I narrowed down the songs already.” She hand over her Mp3 player to Masumi. “The costumes will be contrasting as well. My costume for the free program should be something mature. Something a grown up would wear… I’m thinking a little black dress.”
“Your theme is a bit similar to *Metamorphosis*. Be careful,” Masumi-sensei said as she look over the playlist. “Which one do you like the most?”

“Clara’s Solo from the *Nutcracker* for the short program and Journey’s *Don’t Stop Believing* for the free program,” Setsuna grinned sheepishly. “And yes, I was a teensy tiny bit inspired from *Glee*.”

“I think those two are solid choices,” Masumi-sensei smiled. “Tell me more.”

“I want the short program, *Childhood*, to be based on ballet… Since ballet is the beginning of everything. I wouldn’t met you or my best friends if it weren’t for ballet. And the Nutcracker is my favourite. What can I say?” She grinned. “Also… Back then, Kyouko-chan, Hana-chan and I would peek whenever the senior students are practising. We wanted to be able to do everything you guys do. To wear pointe shoes. To be able to jump that high. That flexibility… That moment you danced in front of us for the first time? Simply magical.” Setsuna smiled at the memory. “And every year, new kids come in. Like the kids before them, they will secretly watch the seniors. Each wanting to be like that when they’re older. That is a dream.”

Kyouko was driven near tears when she discovered the younger ones have been secretly watching her dance. Like Setsuna, Kyouko was having an internal battle at the time. To continue dancing or give it up altogether. Her family has money but they hesitate to send her off to a dancing school. It doesn't have to be Tokyo. It can be the one in Osaka or Nagoya. Kyouko has good grades. She can get scholarship. Kyouko is a good dancer. The best in their generation. In Namimori that is. Dancers from bigger cities, with better facilities, more spotlight and harsher competitions, they are intimidating. Kyouko was able to get a glimpse on them in real life when the girls went to Tokyo. Suffice to say, she was cowed.

Masumi-sensei told her not to worry about her competition. Kyouko has the determination, skills and talent. Why does it matter that she came from a small town like Namimori. But Kyouko remain indecisive. To be fair, she was a teenager at the time.

Setsuna was looking for Masumi-sensei so she can look at her choreography, when she found a handful of girls crowding in front of the door. When she joined them, it was then she saw her best friend. It was an afternoon like many others. Kyouko retreated to the training hall for senior students. She danced the Odette solo and coda from Swan Lake Act 2, her favourite pieces. The room glowed orange from the sunlight coming through the window. There was no music. Only Kyouko and her shadow.

It felt like *deja vu*. Only the roles are switched. Kyouko is like Masumi-sensei for these little girls.
They are the push Kyouko needed for her to pursue her dream.

“There will be thousands of little kids watching me skate. I want this program to be the push they needed to chase after their own dreams. It goes for the teenagers and grown ups too,” Setsuna paused. “What do you think?”

Masumi-sensei smiled. “I think it’s wonderful.”

The days passed by and it’s Sunday again. Nothing major happened during the week. They had three more Dying Will Flame training sessions. Setsuna would be left sore and exhausted afterwards but that’s nothing new. The kids are throwing themselves to study, since end of terms exam is coming. Gokudera is not bothered. It was clear that his intelligence is well above his peers. Setsuna and Tou-san had a meeting with a sponsor just two days ago, and a photoshoot just the day before. All in all, it’s been a productive week. Almost peaceful even.

Knowing Reborn and the mafia, it won’t last long.

The two of them are on their way to the Sawada residence, as usual. Reborn is walking on the fences, as usual.

What is unusual this time, is that there is a girl standing in front of Reborn. Right on top of the fences.

“H-hello,” the girl greeted him, blushing. Setsuna eyes her wobbling legs.

“Ciaossu,” Reborn looked nonplussed.

“My name is Miura Haru,” She introduced herself. Haru appears to be around her kids’ age…

“I know you. You live in that house, right?” Reborn pointed to a house next to them. Haru smiled wider and nodded.
“Would you be my friend?” Haru asked shyly.

“Sure.”

“Ha-hieek!”

Did this girl just swooned?!

Haru lost her balance from all the excitement but she managed to land on her feet. “Wo-hoo!” She throw up her arms in the air.

…This girl… Does she have a crush on Reborn? That reaction of hers is not normal.

“Um…” Haru looked at Reborn again. “I know it’s sudden… But can you hug me like this?” She wrap her arms around herself.

...even Reborn looked puzzled at that.

“Don’t touch me so easily,” Reborn pull out his gun. “Because I’m a hitman.”

Haru’s jaw dropped.

Next thing she know, Setsuna is dodging Haru’s hand.

“What are you-“

“You meanie! What are you teaching him?” Haru glared at her.

“You-“
Haru didn’t give her a chance to even finish. “Babies are angels with pure white heart!”

“You’re not a baby!” Setsuna snapped at the younger girl. “He may look like that but he’s not!”

“You’re lying!” Haru move to grab her shirt but Setsuna dodged just in time. “Why would you make up such a lie about your sibling?”

“We’re not siblings.”

“Liar! I saw the two of you walking together every Sunday!”

“No, we’re not,” Reborn supported her.

Haru looked at her aghast. “You kidnapped someone else’s baby?!”

What is this girl saying?! “How did you come up with that conclusion?” Setsuna stare at her incredulously.

The younger girl ignored her. “You dare corrupt someone else’s baby?!”

“Now listen here-“

Haru gasped out loud. “Aren’t you that famous figure skater? Sawada Setsuna?”

“Yes, I am her. But that’s not the issue here.”

“I can’t believe Nagi-chan would admire someone like you!” Haru shouted in disbelief. What? Nagi-? “Someone who turn babies evil!”

“Miura-san!” Setsuna snapped at her. “Reborn. Is. Not. A Baby,” She said the words slowly. “We have our own circumstances, which is none of your business. How do you even know Reborn’s
name anyway?"

“I heard it from the neighbours.”

Neighbours? Oh. It must be Nana. Word travel fast around these parts.

“Look, Miura-san,” Setsuna looked at her patiently. “You can’t impose your beliefs on others. It’s rude. And throwing punches at someone without giving them a chance to explain themselves is problematic.”

“Babies are angelic beings with pure hearts!” Haru glared at her. “Just because you’re a famous skater doesn’t mean you can get away with it!”

“...Get away with what?”

“Corrupting babies with your rotten heart!”

“This again? You’re like a broken record. Miura-san, Reborn is not a baby. He looks like one, but he’s not. Have you ever heard of systemic hypoplasia? It’s a case of underdevelopment. Reborn is basically a man whose body never grow. He is much older than me.”

“Hahi?”

They both turn to Reborn. “I’m a hitman.” That is all he have to say, neither denying or confirming it.

“You evil...” Haru’s glare worsen. “Listen! You shall not see Reborn-chan anymore! You’re a bad influence! You wouldn’t even let him act his age!”

“That’ not possible,” Reborn said calmly. “I have a job to train Setsuna. I cannot be separated from her till then.”

Once again, Setsuna dodged Haru’s fist. “I can’t believe the lies you fed him! You even restricted
Reborn’s freedom!”

Just how thick is this girl?!

“**Haru!**” Someone from inside the house called out for her.

“Coming!” Hari shouted back. She gave Setsuna one last glare, and a smile at Reborn, before heading inside.

“...What the fuck just happened?”

“Reborn, must you introduce yourself as a hitman everytime we meet someone new?”

“Yes.”

Setsuna massaged her temple. “I don’t know which one is worse. You pretending to be my relative or the truth. It’s a pain to explain both.”

“I’ll say stick to the truth. Less lies to remember.”

“You just like seeing me struggling.”

“It is amusing to watch.”

“Cazzo!”

“You’re learning.”
Gokudera’s idea of a relaxing Sunday is a mug of coffee in one hand and occult magazine on the other. That or catching up with Setsuna-hime’s fandom from his laptop. He would have a few tabs open at the same time. He also would chat with his fellow fans, though he speak more to Nagi. Somewhere along the way, their conversation deviate from Setsuna-hime and turn to occult. It turns out that Nagi likes horror movies. One evening they had a lengthy discussion about Japanese ghosts and other mythical creatures. Sometimes she would ask him about studying. Gokudera is always happy to lend her a hand.

This Sunday, Gokudera promised to tutor Nagi. Exams is coming soon. He already know the entire material like the back of his hand, so Gokudera can kick back and relax. The same cannot be said with others however. Baseball Idiot approached him a few days ago asking him to tutor him. He promised him sushi in exchange for his time. Gokudera would never turn down free food. He is saving money to buy a new fan at the moment. Summer in Japan is brutal.

“You’re late, Octopus Head!”

...It still doesn’t explain why Turf Top is here, at the family restaurant where Gokudera agree to meet up with Nagi and Baseball Idiot.

“What are you doing here?” Gokudera take his seat next to Nagi.

“I heard from Yamamoto! You’re going to tutor him and Kudou! I want in!”

Gokudera glared at his classmate. To his credit, Baseball Idiot looked apologetic. “You’re a third year!” He direct his glare to the boxer.

“You’re the only one I can count on to teach me!”

“Why should I teach you!”

“I’m desperate here!” It’s true. There is a hint of panic in his voice. The fire in his eyes is somewhat
dimmed. “I need to pass these exams! My homeroom teacher said that I might not graduate with my current grades! I want to graduate!” He paled at the possibility. “I’m bad at studying! I need someone to teach me! No one in my grade is willing to tutor me! You’re my last hope!” Ryohei slammed his forehead to the table.

A concerned waiter approached their table. “Is everything okay here?”

“We’re fine. We’re fine…,” Gokudera half heartedly glare at his upperclassman.

“Maa, Gokudera. Why don’t you give senpai a hand?” Yamamoto pat Ryohei on the shoulder. “He had a rough month. More than half of the boxing club quit.”

“What happened?” Nagi asked.

“After I talked to my sister, I realised that my behaviour had been inexcusable. I dragged many people to join the boxing club… against their will,” Ryohei don’t bother to lift up his head. “I just want to show them how great boxing is…”

There was no boxing club when Ryohei entered Namimori Middle School, so he formed one. During his first year, he was the only member. He was given an unused storeroom but that was it. Ryohei had to clean up everything, bought the equipment with his own money and train by himself. It wasn’t until he won a number of competitions did the school agreed to set up fund for the boxing club and a ring. By the end of the year, Ryohei has an actual clubroom. On the spring of his second year, Ryohei was so eager to add more members to the roster he chased after so many first years. First, he watched the other sports clubs for promising students. Second, he approached them and badgered them to join. Third, he pretty much drag them to the clubroom so he can let them discover boxing with their own body. Not many first years stayed but Ryohei is just so happy that he is no longer alone. He did the same thing this year too.

But after talking to Kyoko-nee, Ryohei wonder how many of them that truly like boxing. So he called for a club meeting. He gave them a sincere apology for his forceful way. When he asked how many of them like boxing, there was hesitation. One by one, his juniors speak up. None of them liked boxing, save for a select few. When Ryohei asked them why they never speak up about it, their answer pained him.

“Because we’re afraid that you will get angry and beat us up.”
Is that how everyone think of him? That Ryohei will punch everything when he doesn’t get his way. But what really get him is the way they looked at him.

_Fear_

His juniors are truly EXTREME afraid of him. They really believe he would EXTREME hurt them. Ryohei would never. Sure, he will be disappointed but he won’t hurt them! Then again, he dragged them to the boxing club and yelled at them non-stop until they sign the club forms… Him resorting to violence when he didn’t get his way doesn’t sound surprising.

Ryohei is not that kind of person. He is neither a bully or a thug. Those are the people who bugged his big sister in middle school. He just…

They all looked at Ryohei as if he sprout two heads when he told them he won’t get EXTREME angry if they quit. He didn’t yell at them. He apologized for his behavior. Ryohei wish them luck and promise to back them up if they want to join other clubs. It’s a bit late to join or change club at this point of the year… But he can’t help but feel responsible. He had dragged these kids away from doing the things they love.

He really was Un-EXTREME all this time.

“I want to change,” said Ryohei. “I have been so Un-Extreme all this time. I have hurt people. I never meant to, but I did. My sister even told me I acted like Sawada Iemitsu.”

‘Oh, shit,’ Gokudera looked at Nagi and Yamamoto. That bad, huh?

“I don’t want to hurt people. I want to be better. I want to make Kyouko-nee and Setsuna-nee proud. I need to make amends of my mistakes. _I need to graduate,_” Ryohei looked up. His expression desperate. “Please.”

Green eyes softened. It’s not like Gokudera can’t understand his feeling… “What’s in it for me? Baseball Idiot here will treat me sushi in return.”

“What about Kudou?” Ryohei glanced at the girl.
“She is much less annoying compared to you two.”

Ryohei’s volume dropped. He looked at Gokudera intensely. “I’ll lend you home videos of Setsuna-nee when she begun ballet and skating.”

Gokudera paused. That is a tempting offer. Pictures of Setsuna-hime when she was younger is incredibly hard to find. The only ones who have this kind of documentation are Coach Maeda and Setsuna-hime herself. Even Nagi and Yamamoto look alert.

“Deal,” Gokudera grunted after a few moment passed. Turf Top brightened in miliseconds. “Pull out your textbook. Tell me which subject you have problems with.”

Nagi take out her science textbook… While Baseball Idiot and Turf Top pull out their textbook for every subject. Nagi stares at them.

Gokudera’s blood boil at the sight. “You idiots!”

This is not how he envisioned his Sunday will be.

Lambo is wearing the cow print suit. Again.

Nana had bought him new clothes and shoes but it appears Lambo refuse to part with his trademark suit. She has to try to persuade him to at least go to bed in proper pajamas. Her mother also bought Lambo new toys, per Setsuna’s suggestion. Setsuna keep him company while Reborn is downstairs doing who-knows-what. They take refuge in her childhood bedroom.

“Wheeee!” Lambo raised his toy car up high. “Woooo!” And it descend sharply… “BAM!” And crash right into the building blocks. “Take that! And that! Bow before the great Lambo-sama! Gyahahaha!”

...boys…
“Lambo, be careful with the car. A true Italian man take good care of his car, no?” Setsuna pick up the fallen toy blocks.

“It’s fine! It’s not a Mercedes!” Lambo wave it off.

“But Mama chose that one, didn’t she?”

Lambo froze. “Mama did…” After that he play with it more gently.

“Say, Lambo?”

“Mm?” He look up to her.

“Why did you go after Bianchi?”

“Bianchi?”

“The girl with the bad smelling food? The one who went after me last week?”

Lambo’s eyes widened in realisation. “Oh! That’s because it’s a lord’s job to protect his subjects! Like a boss taking care of everyone in his territory! Lambo has to protect Tsu-nee and Mama!” He place his tiny fist over his heart.

‘Oh Lambo…’ Setsuna pull him to her lap. “It supposed to be the other way around. It’s my job to protect you. You shouldn’t have to risk your life for my sake.”

“But you’re Famiglia ,” Lambo frowned in confusion. “Famiglia take care of each other.”

“...You think of me as your family?”
“Yeah!” Lambo answered happily. “Mama is Lambo’s mama! Tsu-nee is Lambo’s sorella!”

Lambo already think of her like that? That really touched her. But Setsuna must keep her focus. “That’s really sweet, Lambo. I think of you as my fratello too,” Lambo grinned. “And it’s also my job as the older one to take care of you. You don’t have to come to my rescue every time.”

Lambo frowned. “Am I annoying you?”

Setsuna’s heart skipped a beat. “Where did you get that impression, Lambo?”

“Sometimes… When Boss and the others didn’t know Lambo is there… They would talk about Lambo. They called me annoying. Annoying kids are bad kids. Bad kids are weak. And weak kids are not…,” His lips tremble.

“I don’t care about strengths, Lambo. I care about you,” Setsuna cupped his cheeks. “Even if you didn’t become a boss. Or failed to kill Reborn… It doesn’t matter to me. I will still love you.”

Lambo is silent for a moment before he look up to her. “But what if something happened to you when I’m not there to protect you?”

“Lambo, do you know why Reborn is here?”

“To tutor you?”

“That’s right. That means I will learn more about the mafia. That includes how to fight and Flames. I have a lot to catch up on, but I won’t be a sitting duck. I also have many people supporting me. And I support them back. That’s how I will survive. Because I’m not alone.”

“Like Guardians?”

Setsuna smiled. “Not quite like the Guardians mafia have in mind… These people are my friends and family. You don’t necessarily need Guardians to survive. But having someone you can trust to watch your back is great,” She hugged him closer. “Thank you for having my back that day, Lambo.” She nuzzled to his hair. “And you are not annoying. Loud, yes, but not annoying.”
Lambo hugged her back.

“Do promise me one thing.”

“Anything!”

“Tell a grown up first before you’re going to attack someone, okay? So we can coordinate with you. Make the mission much smoother.” She doubt that Nana will take Lambo seriously... Or that she will contact her immediately... Maybe Setsuna should give Lambo another adult's number?

Lambo’s eyes widened in understanding. “Report to mission control! Got it! Of course the great Lambo-san can do that!”

---

**Setsuna**

**Wtf**

**Hana**

*Okay, if you start the convo with that, it’s got to be bad.*

**Kyouko**

*Are you okay???

**Setsuna**

*I’m fine

*Reborn has an admirer

**Hana**

*Okay, that’s a good reason for a ‘Wtf’

*Continue*
Setsuna

Her name is Miura Haru. I think she is Nagi-chan’s upperclassman. She stopped us when we’re on our way to visit Kaa-san. She asked Reborn if they could be friends… The girl actually climbed the fence to talk to him. And she practically swooned when Reborn said yes. She also got strangely excited when she asked him to hug her…

Kyouko

What an odd girl

Hana

Weird doesn’t even cut it anymore, K

Setsuna

Reborn being Reborn, told her that he’s a hitman. Next thing I know, Miura tried to hit me.

Hana

Why would she??!!!

Setsuna

Because according to her, I’ll corrupt him with my rotten heart. Miura is very set with her belief that babies are angels with pure white heart. She accused me of teaching Reborn strange things.

Hana

If only she knew...

Kyoko

You did try to explain to her, right?

Setsuna
I did. She still won’t believe me. Tried to hit me again.

Hana

I swear all admirers of Reborn have some screw loose.

Setsuna

Look, I’m tired of talking about the mafia/Reborn induced craziness in my life. Can we talk about something else?

Hana

Sure

Kyouko

The barista from the cafe across the ballet studio asked me out.

Setsuna

Oooh

Hana

Details! Is he cute? Did you say yes?

Kyouko

barista.jpg

Setsuna

Mmmmm yes

He can put whip cream on me any day

Hana
I’ll lick the whip cream off his body

**Kyouko**

Down, girls

We’re going out this weekend

He won’t say where, just told me to dress casual

**Hana**

You better consult to us first before you decide what to wear

**Kyouko**

Of course

What about you guys?

**Hana**

This rich kid from my class asked me out. Invited me to go clubbing with him.

Since he will be the one paying and I do need some time off, I accepted

Then I beat his ass on the dance floor under 5 minutes

Guy thought he’s all the berries

In reality, he is just another monkey

Sets?

**Setsuna**

There’s nothing going on

**Hana**

Not even a phone call from someone or something?

**Setsuna**
There are no male students in my university. And no one invited me to another mixer since last time.

*Kyouko*

Ah, yes

*All the guys there wanted to talk to you and ignored the rest of the girls*

*Hana*

*Still, absolutely nothing?*

*Come on*

*You have so many hunks in your contact list*

*And don’t you even think for one second I given up about the Olympics*

*Gurl I knew you get some while you were there*

*Tell us whooooo*

*Setsuna*

(:

*Kyouko*

*You must have flirted with someone*

*Setsuna*

*Sorry girls*

*What happened in the village, stays in the village*
other than that, school is fine. Nagi likes her classmates and they like her back. She is also cordial with a few upperclassmen. For her, that is more than enough.

So it come as a surprise to Nagi when Miura Haru approached her with such hard expression on her face.

“Nagi-chan, can we talk? In private?” She sound to be on edge.

“Yes,” Nagi readily agree. She like Miura-senpai. She is a bit of an oddball but really nice. She also know lots about pastries and fashion. Her senior had gave her tips about her costume in the past.

Miura-senpai led her to the back of the school building. “What’s wrong, senpai?” Nagi asked.

To her bewilderment, Miura-senpai pulled her to a tight hug. “I’m so sorry!”

“Um???”

“To have such awful woman to be your senior, it must be hard for you, Nagi-chan!”

“Ano-”

“I understand if you can’t say anything, Nagi-chan. Fame and all that. First Nagi-chan and now Reborn-chan! That awful woman! Don’t worry! Haru will take care of it!”

“Senpai!” Nagi didn’t mean to snap but Miura-senpai is not making any sense right now. And did she just say Reborn?! “What’s going on?”

Miura-senpai loosen her hold on her. “Sawada Setsuna. She’s horrible. She corrupted a sweet baby like Reborn-chan. She must have treated you horribly too, Nagi-chan. Haru will liberate both of you!”

Nagi hesitated. Coach Maeda had given her a lengthy lecture about the importance of keeping the whole mafia issue under wraps. How Miura-senpai found out about Reborn, she has no clue. But for
her to call Setsuna-senpai horrible…? The dark haired girl steeled herself. “You misunderstood, Senpai.”

“Hahi?” Miura-senpai blinked.

“I don’t know what’s going on… But Setsuna-senpai is a good person. And she is not corrupting Reborn-san. He is not a baby. Setsuna-senpai and Coach Maeda made that pretty clear. Reborn-san has a condition.”

Miura-senpai let go of her. “Does that mean… Reborn-chan really is a hitman?! The real deal?!”

Nagi swallowed. “I-I can’t say anything about that.”

“So it’s true?!”

“Uh…,” Nagi just look down on her feet.

“I-I need to think about this. Thank you for coming with me, Nagi-chan. I… I’m just gonna go.”

Nagi waited until Miura-senpai is out of sight before she take out her phone. She need to tell Coach Maeda. And Setsuna-senpai. Miura-senpai is nice but she is headstrong. Who knows what she will do? Nagi can’t wait for a disaster to happen. She need to prevent it. Damage control is important.

- Kazuki rubbed his temple. There is so much to do and the worst has yet to arrive. On Sunday he and Nagako revised a training plan for the staffs at the rink. After Bianchi infiltrated the place, it made him realise how weak the security is against the mafia. He will train the staff himself. As least his wife is there to keep an eye on Setsuna and Reborn when they train.

The novice and junior competitions are coming up. His children and grandchildren will be coming home this summer. There are discussions of Susumu and his family moving back to their home since he finished his Masters degree in Germany. They need to talk to the sponsors later this week. There are functions he and Nagako need to attend. These people never truly live down his retirement. How
he gave up the family business and pass it along to his children to… Become a coach? How unusual. These people knew better than to say it to his face of course. Kazuki like to remind the world every now and then that he is a Maeda and a Hibari. He still serve the Hibari family to this day and let me tell you, it’s not a walk in the park.

The last thing he need is another interruption.

Yesterday Nagi told him over the phone call that an upperclassman of hers from school has views about Setsuna. She is afraid that her senior might do something drastic. Setsuna confirmed his worry when she told him about her encounter with said girl last Sunday.

Fucking Reborn

That man has been a thorn on his side ever since he step foot in this town. He’s also pretty sure Reborn built a hideout somewhere in the his territory. Sadly, there is nothing Kazuki can do to drive him out. Setsuna’s life is at stake here. Reborn stays.

(And fuck Iemitsu)

Setsuna is still at the ballet studio. Kazuki wait patiently for what kind of choreography she come up with this time. He hope she pick something classical this time… Kazuki don’t know if he can handle another sexy routine. This is the 21st century, yes, but he doesn’t like men looking at his protege funny.

There is a knock on his door.

“Um…,” A nervous staff poke his head in. “Coach, there’s a… situation? I guess? At the entrance.”

“Elaborate.”

The staff flinched under his hard stare. “There’s this girl… We think it’s a girl. She is wearing a full set of armor… And just stood there. She said she’s looking for Sawada-san. We told her that she’s not here yet. The girl said she won’t leave until she meet Sawada-san. She is adamant about that.”
He has a feeling he know who it is. “Go back to your task. I’ll handle it myself.”

The staff’s eyes widened and he stiffly nodded.

Kazuki went outside. There is a short figure wearing a full set of samurai armour, save for the helmet. They wear a motorcycle helmet instead. They have a hockey stick for a weapon.

“Miura Haru,” He called out.

“Hahi?” Ah, so it really is her. She fumbled over the helmet for a bit before she manage to pull it off.

“Who are you?”

“I am the one in charge of this place and coach to all the figure skaters here. What business do you have here?”

The girl straightened her spine. “I’m here to see Sawada Setsuna. I need to settle something with her.”

“You didn’t book any appointment with her and you’re clearly not here to skate. Leave the premise immediately.”

The girl is visibly unnerved by him but she steeled her gaze. This one got guts. Stupid, but gutsy. “I’m afraid I can’t do that, Coach-san. This is important.”

Kazuki give the girl a look over. It’s obvious the girl didn’t rest at all, judging from the bags under her eyes. And she wear such heavy armour under this heat? It’s only a matter of time before she collapse. “And what is so important about this matter that it drive you to go this length?”

“It’s about protecting pure, angelic souls such as Reborn-chan,” The girl answered. “But if Reborn-chan is really a hitman, then Sawada Setsuna must be strong. If she can prove her strength, I will respect Reborn-chan’s wishes and say no more about the matter.”

Kazuki stared at the girl. She went from ‘stupid’ to ‘delusional’. “It’s time for you to leave,” He declared.
“Haru is not leaving!”

“And I’m not asking.”

Miura Haru glared at him. Kazuki narrowed his eyes.

“Senpai!” Nagi rush out from the building. She just finished changing when she overheard the staff talking about a weird girl in armour having a showdown with Coach Maeda outside. “Senpai! What are you doing here?”

Miura Haru’s form lose a fraction of tension. “Nagi-chan…”

“Why are you doing this?” Nagi asked.

“I did this for Reborn-chan’s sake… I was awake all night thinking about what he said. If he really is a hitman, that he can take care of himself… But I don’t know what to believe! Is Reborn-chan really not a baby? But he’s just so… Cute! Babies are supposed to be angels on Earth that we supposed to protect!”

“OH MY GOD!”

They all turn around to see Setsuna and Reborn standing there. Setsuna is pinching the bridge of her nose. “For the last time, Reborn. Is. Not. A. Baby!”

“I’m a hitman,” Reborn added.

“You’re not helping!” Setsuna put up her hands.

“Sawada Setsuna!” Miura Haru put her helmet back on. “Please have a match with me!”

Before she can say anything, the younger girl swing around her hockey stick. “Achooe!”

Setsuna dodged the attack. The younger girl fell to the ground. She didn’t move.
“Miura-san?” Setsuna kneel next to her prone form. No response. “...she passed out?”

When Haru open her eyes, she is no longer outside. She is lying down on a bed. The blanket cover her lower half. There is a damp, cool cloth over her forehead. “Hahi…? Where am I?”

“Senpai?” Nagi’s face came to view. “You’re awake,” She let out a sigh of relief.

“...Where am I?” Haru sit up.

“We’re in the infirmary right now. You collapsed from heatstroke. Setsuna-senpai carried you inside.”

“She did?” A weird feeling start to prickle inside her. Is this… Guilt?

“You were running around in those heavy suit under this heat,” Coach Maeda has come over to her bedside. “That was incredibly stupid of you.”

Chastened, Haru look down on her lap.

“How are you feeling?” Haru looked to her left to see Setsuna and Reborn sitting down on the plastic chairs. “You were unconscious for a while now.”

“I’m still a little bit dizzy,” Haru answered truthfully. “But I do feel better now.”

“I’m glad,” Setsuna smiled softly.

“...I’m sorry…,” Haru looked down on her lap again.
“Do you still want to have that match with me?” The figure skater asked patiently.

“N-No… I was wrong. About you. You still carried me inside when I have been nothing but horrible to you. I’m sorry… And thank you.” Haru give her a hesitant smile. Setsuna smiled back.

“As long as you learn your lessons now.”

“Y-yes….” She is not angry? Truly? Haru had attacked her and Sawada Setsuna just forgave her like that? ‘What a nice person…’

“We’ve contacted your parents. They will pick you up,” Coach Maeda bring back her attention.

“O-oh… Thank you.”

“We also have filled them in with the reason of your visit. Your father is keenly interested with what you have to say for yourself.”

Haru’s eyes widened in horror. “You told my parents?!”

“They are your parents,” Coach Maeda said as if it’s the most natural thing in the world. Yes, they are her parents but-! “They will be the one who will decide what your punishment will be. They obviously have been lax with your upbringing in the past. Today’s events should make them reflect on themselves.”

Haru would jump off the bed if she weren’t feeling so weak right now. “My parents are good people!”

“Good people do not equate good parenting,” said the elderly man blandly. You should not look far for an example. Take the Hibaris. While they are not evil, they are not the nicest people to be around with either. How they raise one Hibari Kyouya would raise several eyebrows, if not outright alarm. Sawada Nana have zero malice in her bones but she is not exactly one would call a good mother. “Miura Haru, your behaviour toward Setsuna is disgusting. You didn’t take Reborn’s word seriously, despite your claims that you care for him. You butt your nose in matters that are frankly none of your business. So yes, I’m questioning what sort of upbringing you had until now.” Coach Maeda said coldly.
“I-I-” Haru can’t think of a comeback.

“Nagi has spoken to me on your behalf. She vouched for your characters. I am still very much unconvinced but she tried so hard to defend you. So I will not ban you from the rink. But one more slip up…,” He left the sentence hanging.

Haru swallowed. “Haru understand. Thank you, Nagi-chan.” Her underclassman smiled shyly.

The door swing open. A staff entered the room, followed by a middle aged man wearing glasses. “Haru!”

Haru’s chocolate eyes widened. “O-Otou-san!”

“Haru, I’m glad that you’re okay but,” Her father’s eyes sharpened. “What in the world were you thinking?”

Haru whimpered.

“That was eventful,” Reborn commented as they enter the supermarket.

“Ugh, don’t even, Reborn. You were partially at fault here,” Setsuna grab a basket.

“That was all Haru,” He already scanned the aisles. “I’m craving cauliflowers for tonight.”

Setsuna turn to the vegetables aisle. “You better bring cash with you today. I can’t believe you threatened to shoot the barista when he didn’t believe you own a credit card.” That as a couple of weeks ago. Thank goodness a staff from the rink was at the same cafe and offered to pay instead.
“Sometimes my patience for idiocy can run thin. Especially when I have yet to have caffeine,” They got in front of the cauliflowers. Reborn pick two up and study them, before dumping the one on the right into the basket.

“We are not obligated to fold to your worldview,” Setsuna shot back.

Reborn ignored her, “Tomatoes.”

“You’re lucky we’re in public space or I’ll curse at you,” Setsuna grab a plastic bag for the tomatoes. She could curse in French instead but it’s the principle of the thing. “You know what? After the kind of day I had, I deserve to treat myself. We’re having ice cream tonight.”

“Sure, but first, dinner.”

They get the rest of the ingredients they will need for tonight’s dinner and tomorrow’s meal. Setsuna make a quick stop at the hair care aisle to get her shampoo. Now they can go get her ice cream.

They went to the frozen food aisle. Popsicles, ice cream tubs, ice cream bars, mochi, cakes… There are so many to choose from. She should buy some for Gokudera. He is not much of a sweet tooth. Then again, Setsuna never see him eat any sort of sweets before. She should go for safe flavours like vanilla…

Setsuna bumped her shoulder to another shop goer. “Oh! Sorry!”

“No! No! I’m sorry!” The woman she bumped into apologized back. She has shoulder length auburn hair. Something about her seems familiar. Setsuna squints at her for a split seconds before her eyes widened in recognition.

“Shouka-chan?!”

“Wha- Setsuna-senpai!”

It really is her! Irie Shouka! Setsuna worked with her at McDonald’s for two years in high school. Shouka is a year younger than her. She was saving money to go abroad. Some friendships are born
from cleaning puke together, such as the one between her and Shouka. They also bond over music.

“Oh my God! It’s been so long! You look so good, Shouka-chan!” Setsuna hold her hands. Reborn stay silent, wanting to see where this is going.

Shouka smiled. “I know! I’m sorry I didn’t keep in touch! Things have been so hectic...”

“I’m sorry too. I’m also at fault here,” Setsuna grinned sheepishly. “And you wear contacts now! Wow! You look so different! So mature!” Her praise got the younger woman to blush. “When did you return to Japan?”

“We got here two days ago, Setsuna-senpai.”

“We?”

“Shouka!”

The two women looked up to see a tall man heading their way. He has long blond hair tied to a low ponytail. He is carrying a lot of marshmallow with him. When he got closer, Setsuna find herself staring to a pair of brilliant purple eyes.

Shouka smiled at the man before turning to Setsuna. “Setsuna-senpai, this is my boyfriend, Gabriel Gesso.”

Chapter End Notes

:DDDDDDDDDD

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope this year will be kinder, softer and make much more damn sense to us

Haru don’t listen to others well. She is quick to jump to assumptions, resort to hitting people when they don’t agree with her beliefs, and crossed Tsuna’s personal boundaries many times. And no one ever call out on her behaviour, save for Gokudera (not that it do much). I do believe that Haru is a good person, just misguided.
Considering Ryohei's insistence to get Tsuna to join the boxing club, who to say Tsuna is not the first to get treated like that? The boxing club doesn't seem to be a lot of members, as shown in the manga. How many managed to get away from him, I wonder?
“Your boyfriend?” Setsuna’s eyes widened. Her Flame sparked at the revelation. She forced it down. The last thing she needs is to make everyone in the supermarket woozy from her Pressure. A small amount of her Flame did leak, curling around Shouka protectively. Shouka herself blinks and shifts.

Oh no. Can she sense that?

The interest in Reborn’s eyes did not help.

“Yes, my boyfriend,” Shouka blushed. “We met in college. Gabriel, this is Sawada Setsuna-senpai.”

“The Setsuna-senpai?” Gabriel dumped the bags of marshmallow to the cart before taking his place next to Shouka. “Shou-chan talked about you a lot. Never missed your performances too. It’s nice to finally meet you in person.” He stuck out his hand. Setsuna accepted it, making sure she hold his hand tight. Gabriel show no sign of pain or discomfort. She has to give him a mental point for that.

“I have so many questions right now but that means we will be here all night,” Setsuna keep her eyes on Gabriel. Shouka chuckled.

“Oh hello there,” Gabriel smiled at Reborn, bringing the two women’s attention to the tiny hitman.

“Ciaossu,” He greets them. “My name is Reborn.”

Setsuna seized the chance before Reborn can say more. “He’s staying with me at the moment. Family matters. Also, he is NOT a baby. He just looked like one. He suffers from systemic hypoplasia.”

Shouka’s eye widened. Systemic hypoplasia? She know about that condition. Saw some pictures too. But she never heard a case like Reborn… And to see it in person… “I see,” She managed to say.

“Nice suit. Custom made?” Gabriel nodded at Reborn’s suit.
Reborn looked pleased. “100% Egyptian cotton.”

Gabriel let out a small whistle. “Nice.”

“I don’t mean to be rude but we really need to get going. It’s my turn to cook for the family tonight,” Shouka gave her an apologetic look.

“It’s fine, Shouka-chan. How long will you be staying here in Japan? I would love to catch up with you,” Setsuna glanced at Gabriel. “And get to know Gesso-san.”

“We will be here for the rest of summer. So there’s plenty of time for us to catch up and spend time together. Do you still use the same number?” The auburn haired woman pull out her phone. The two women exchanged phone numbers. “All right. I’ll text you tonight, senpai. It’s really nice meeting you here. Goodbye, Reborn-san.”

“See you soon, Setsuna-san!” Gabriel waved at her enthusiastically.

Setsuna waved back, if only because Shouka is still watching. It wasn’t until they disappear behind the shelves did her smile dropped. When Reborn looked at her, her eyes are orange.

“What is it?” He asked. Anything that draw a Vongola Intuition out like this is always serious.

“Gabriel Gesso,” Her eyes narrowed. “There’s something about him. I don’t know what yet.”

“If it got your Intuition tingling, we have to keep a close eye on him indeed.”

Setsuna stay silent.

*Slam*
Gokudera dropped a heavy stack of books on the desk, causing Yamamoto and Ryohei to slightly jump. He placed both of his hands on the desk and leaned closer. “You two are idiots,” The silver haired youths started. “But I faced worse than this. Explosions, bullets, my sister, Coach Maeda. I survived them all. I refuse to be defeated by the likes of you. You two will get passing grades even if it’s the last thing you do. And don’t make any complaints. I don’t give a jack shit. So you better prepare yourselves because I won’t have any mercy. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes!” The two athletes answered at the same time.

“Good,” Gokudera put on his glasses. “We’ll start with science. Don’t you dare complain!” He snapped when Ryohei open his mouth. “Do you want to graduate or not?!” The boxer grumbled and pull out his textbook.

So this is their new routine now. At least until exam is over. Every day after school, when the other two are finished with club activities, they meet up with Gokudera somewhere for tutoring session. They had a session at the public library yesterday but the librarian kicked out the group because Ryohei and Gokudera won’t stop arguing. Once they had their study session at the school’s library. They ended up getting beat up by Hibari for disturbing peace. So for today Gokudera will tutor them at Yamamoto’s home. Nagi couldn’t make it today. She will join their study session in the weekend. She was uncomfortable when Yamamoto invited him to her house. Gokudera has an inkling that it has something to do with going to a guy’s house on her own and be the only girl. For now, she will study with her classmates from Midori Middle. Tomorrow they will go to Ryohei’s house.

Even though Ryohei forgot to mind his volume sometimes (read: most of the time), the look of concentration on his face make his two juniors pause. He is taking this seriously, so Gokudera doesn’t have it in him to stay mad at him for long. At least Yamamoto is behaving.

In the evening, Gokudera would leave his apartment after dinner for part time work. The tutoring session left him exhausted. Who knew teaching can be so hard? He has a new found respect for teachers now. It’s a good thing there aren’t many customers in late hours.

Setsuna-hime found out about their lessons from Nagi yesterday. She showed her support by giving him cold treats last night. She offered to cook him meals but Gokudera graciously (painfully) turn it down. Didn’t stop her to come to his apartment bringing food with her. Setsuna-hime claimed she made too much. This time Gokudera accepted. It is so nice for her to use her precious time for their sake. Gokudera is aware that they have start Flame training. Setsuna-hime is looking more tired than usual these days.

Speaking of Flame training, he should Unlock his soon. However, it’s best to Unlock one’s Flame
with someone experienced observing. To act as a control in case something goes wrong. Gokudera always thought that his Flame would be Unlocked in the middle of a fight. He lived in the streets until recently. He has fought for his life on numerous occasions. He could throw himself to a dangerous situation, but that will only make Setsuna-hime and his friends worried-

Gokudera blinked.

... *Friends?*

Gokudera looked at Yamamoto and Ryohei, both in deep concentration. Nagi also come to mind.

Does he consider them as friends…?

____________________________

**Shouka**

_Setsuna-senpai, this is Irie Shouka. Do you want to meet up this Sunday? I understand that Sunday is your day off and you wish to rest at your home. Please let me know when will be the suitable time for you._

_Setsuna_

_Hello, Shouka-chan! You’re so polite :)_

_Sunday works for me! McDonalds. 2 pm. What do you think?_

_Shouka_

_Senpaai! You picked that place in purpose, didn’t you? XCCC_

_*sigh* Sure. Gabriel want to see where I did my part time work._

_Do you mind if he come along?_

_Setsuna_

_Oh no! It’s fine! I would love to get to know your boyfriend! My friends and I are dying to know how you two meet._
“I always find it funny when people use the smiley emoticon while in actuality they are in fact not smiling,” Reborn mused.

Setsuna looked up from her phone. Reborn is sitting on her shoulder. She didn’t bother to reprimand him not to peek at people’s texts. The baby often ignore common sense or personal boundaries. “None of this is funny.”

“Your Hyper Intuition told you something.”

“Gabriel Gesso. That man…,” Setsuna trailed off. “There’s something off about him. I can’t quite put my finger on it. But we need to keep an eye on him. It’s bad enough that Shouka-chan is dating him. I’m worried.”

“Are you sure it wasn’t just a big sister concern?”

She quietly shake her head. “I’m not sure. My Intuition told me that he… He is not who he says he is. Yet… I didn’t sense any aggression from him… It’s… Hard to describe. I’ll know more after I speak to him.”

“Hm,” Reborn hop off her shoulder. “Always listen to your instinct, Setsuna.”

Setsuna smiled ruefully. “Don’t I always?”
No matter what kind of shitty day she had, or whatever foul mood she’s in, children always lift up her spirits. Even just a little bit. They have always been and will forever be her soft spot. She’s lucky to find a job involving children. If she isn’t a figure skater, Setsuna would probably be a kindergarten teacher or become a full time ballet instructor. She enjoy teaching that much. Her students are all so adorable and hard working and love dancing. Half of them will be gone when they enter elementary but Setsuna is not worried. So what if ballet is not their thing? What is the most important is that the children enjoyed their time.

She can see why Masumi-sensei open the ballet studio in the first place. Masumi-sensei loves children too. After her long, successful career as a ballerina, Masumi-sensei gave it all up to return to her hometown. She opened the GENERATION Ballet Studio in hope to spread the joys of ballet to the next generation and then the next and so on. Hence the name. In a way, she too is a pioneer. Many people were disappointed with her decision in the beginning. Masumi-sensei had a shot to become the Art Director or at least the Ballet Mistress of Tokyo Ballet Company. Yet she turn it all down to settle with a small town like Namimori.

But if you look at these children… At their clumsy yet heartful attempts… The smiles on their faces… How can you not fall in love with it?

Setsuna loves children. That’s why she couldn’t possibly ignore a child in distress.

She just wrapped up a class when a little girl dressed in Chinese clothing just wandered in the reception area. She looked lost. Setsuna crossed the room to get to her. She knelt in front of the little girl. “Hello there. Are you lost?”

“I’m sorry. I-pin is lost,” answered the girl in Chinese.

Setsuna blinked and switch to Chinese. Let’s hope that her lessons with Tou-san payed off… “I see. I can speak Chinese too. Not that fluent though. Your name is I-pin?”

The little girl, I-pin, sighed in relief. “Yes. I am lost. I am looking for this person,” She showed her a photo. Setsuna looked at it. Wow, this man is ugly… Wait a minute!

“I-pin… I’m afraid I don’t know who this man is, so I don’t know where he is… Why are you looking for him?” The second man in the photo tipped it off. The classic black suit and sunglasses
scream mafia. If her suspicion is right, then I-pin is…

“I-pin is looking for him because he is my target.”


“Are you related to any particular mafia group?” Setsuna asked. “There was a situation with a mafiosi happening here not too long ago. She put civilians in direct danger. We don’t tolerate those.” The memory of Bianchi attacking Teenage Lambo cause her Flame to flare.

I-pin winced. “I’m so sorry! I didn’t know that this is a Sky’s territory!” She bowed her head.

Setsuna realised her mistake. “No! No! It’s okay! I’m not mad at you! And this is not my territory! It’s just that the mafiosi harmed someone under my protection.” She dialed down her Flame. Wait, this girl can tell she’s a Sky? Setsuna should ask Reborn how to do that. “I’m the one who should apologize. I have yet to completely master my Flame. How about we start over?” I-pin relaxed and nodded. “My name is Setsuna.”

“My name is I-pin.”

“All right, I-pin. Are you allowed to tell me who sent you here? Do you have a place to stay in Namimori?”

“I am afraid I cannot tell you more about my mission. My Master have relatives in Namimori. I am told to stay with them.”

“Okay, who are your Master’s relatives?”

“They are called the Hibaris, Big Sister Setsuna.”

Setsuna blinked. She did not expect that. “Well… My father- Father figure- is half Hibari… So he is technically a relative to your Master. How about I take you to him?”
I-pin smiled. “That would be lovely. Thank you for your help.”

“Right… I’m going to give him a call. You can take a seat, I-pin. Do you want a drink?” I-pin shakes her head. “Okay… I’ll be right back. Wait, what’s the name of your Master?”

“My Master’s name is Fon, Big Sister.”

“Fon… Right…”

Setsuna moved away from the reception area. She took out her phone and dialed Tou-san’s number. He picked up immediately.

“What is it, Setsuna? Did something happened?”

“Fon’s disciple is here. She said Fon is related to the Hibaris?”

There was a pause on the other side. Tou-san sighed. “I’ll contact my cousins. Don’t go anywhere. I’ll pick you up myself. Stay with the disciple.” And then he hung up.

When Setsuna returned, she found Reborn talking to I-pin. He is speaking Chinese fluently (Not that she is surprised anymore. This is Reborn.)

“My Tou-san will tell the Hibaris about your arrival. He himself will pick us up,” She told I-pin. “In the meantime, why don’t I treat you with some snacks? You’re a long way from home.”

I-pin bowed to her once again. “Thank you for your kindness, Big Sister.”

One hot cocoa and strawberry donut later, Coach Maeda showed up. Masumi-sensei (who got curious and went downstairs to check what the commotion is all about) noticed him first. “Ah, Maeda-san.”

Maeda nodded. “Masumi-san, I apologize for coming in such short notice.”
“It’s fine, Maeda-san,” The ballerina step aside. Setsuna and I-pin are seating on the couch. I-pin jump to her feet when she noticed Coach Maeda and bowed.

“You must be Fon’s disciple.”

“Yes, Sir. My name is I-pin.”

“I have contacted the Hibari family. They are making preparation to accommodate you as we speak. I’ll take you to them.”

“Yes, Sir. Thank you very much.”

He nodded and turn to Setsuna. “We’ll drop I-pin first. Then we head to the ice rink.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“So who is Fon exactly?” asked Setsuna after they drop off I-pin at the Hibari residence. She is seated at the front. Coach Maeda driving and Reborn at the back.

“He is a master martial artist from China. He know more than a hundred styles. His skill in hand to hand combat is even greater than mine.” If Reborn said that much, this Fon must be tough.

“A family member of Fon married to the Hibari family,” Her Tou-san adds. “It’s been awhile since we last heard from him”

“How did he get involved with the mafia?” The Hibari clan is far from normal but even they would hesitate to take in a bride from such background…. Wouldn’t they?
“The Triad,” Reborn answered. “There might be more mafioso from China or South Korea coming to Namimori after this. Keep your guard up.”

Setsuna rolled her eyes. “Yay.”

Practise haven’t even gone for an hour when Coach Maeda got a phone call. Apparently I-pin somehow blew up a part of the Hibari residence. She was sent all the way flying to downtown and was found by- wait for it- Yamamoto Takeshi, of all people. Perhaps the word ‘caught’ is more accurate in this case. I-pin was brought to TakeSushi, where she will stay until someone picked it up. Coach Maeda was told that it is too risky for the Hibaris to take I-pin in, so it’s best that she will stay with Coach Maeda.

Her Tou-san looked so done with everything.

Her Tou-san looked so done with everything.

Gokudera yawned.

Late night shifts are boring as hell. There aren’t many customers coming in at this hour. The most entertaining that have happened so far was a sheepish looking man buying ice cream for his pregnant wife. If it weren’t for store policy, Gokudera would already brought his magazines along. He finished counting the spots on the ceiling. That’s how bored he is.

He was on the verge to fall asleep standing up when the bell chimes in. Oh. A customer. A tall foreigner with long blonde hair make his way to the sweets aisle. Gokudera watched with an eyebrow raised of how many sweets he dumped into the basket. When he got up to the cashier, the teenager notice the bags under his eyes. The customer stop short at the sight of him and just stares.

“Is there something wrong, Sir?” This man is creeping him out. What is it with night time and freaks crawling out? A werewolf or vampire would be welcomed though. The customer didn’t move. He just stand there and continue staring. “Sir?” Gokudera try again, careful not to sound snappish. The last thing he need is another earful from the boss from being rude toward the customers.

That got the customer to snap out of it. “Oh- Sorry. I-” He sighed. “It’s been a long day. I didn’t mean to… To…” He sound so tired.

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“Are you happy?” The customer asked suddenly.

“What?” Gokudera look up from the screen. “Sorry, can you repeat that?”

“Are you happy? Do you like it here?” The customer asked once more.

Okay, this is getting way too weird to his liking, but there’s something in the customer’s eyes that seems… Desperate. “The job you mean? I would like to have a different job but not many places are willing to hire me. I don’t dislike it here, I guess.”

“No, I mean…,” The customer hesitated. “Are you happy?”

Gokudera narrowed his eyes. He is already so tired dealing with the idiots today. He can’t deal with this weirdo. Customers are kings they say. Fuck that. Gokudera is this close to say something rude to him when he remember that he needed the money. ‘I need this job,’ He repeat it over and over in his mind. Once he is calm enough, Gokudera regard the customer carefully. “I’m doing okay.”

“Are you sure?”

What the hell do you want, man?

“Sir? Are you okay?”

“Please… I need to know. Are you happy?” He sound so… Broken. Gokudera has heard that kind of tone being used in the slums.

“I think I am,” Gokudera finally said after a moment of silence. “I’m doing better than I’ve been for years ever since I came here. It’s not perfect but-“ He thought of Setsuna-hime, Nagi, the almost Guardians, Coach Maeda and Nagako-san, and oddly, Lavina. “…I’m getting there. I think I can be happy here.” He paused.

The customer has an unreadable look on his face, before he smiled. “I’m glad to hear that. I truly
He ring all the items and the customer paid. Gokudera watched the man leave. He had this oddest feeling that this won’t be the last time he see that strange man.

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**Setsuna**

*Time for me to update you of the latest weirdness in Namimori*

**Hana**

*I don’t think I’ll ever be ready for this.*

**Setsuna**

*I’ll make it quick then.*

*A five year old assassin from China came by. Her name is I-pin. She is the student of Fon, an in-law of the Hibaris. I-pin was supposed to stay with them but she blew up a part of the house. So the Hibari family passed her over to Tou-san.*

**Kyouko**

*Um*

**Hana**

*I don’t have the words*

**Setsuna**

*Next news*

*Shouka-chan came back from abroad*  
*WITH A BOYFRIEND*
Kyouko

Oh My God!

Hana

Is he hot???

Setsuna

I don’t have a picture of him

But yes, he is attractive

I’m going to meet up with them again this weekend

Hana

Squeeze out as much information as you can

And that goes double to you, Kyouko

Kyouko

It’s just a date, Hana

Not a marriage interview

Hana

Sorry

I just can’t resist juicy gossip

Setsuna

Well, what about you?

What’s the latest news from Tokyo?

Hana

Same old, same old
You would think that a city like Tokyo will have drama at every corner
Not quite
Then again it might be just me
I’m too tired to go anywhere after class and practice

Kyouko
But not too tired to go clubbing

Hana
Hey, the guy offered to pay, okay?
And I need to release all these pent up stress

Setsuna
Are you still looking for older guys for you to sink your teeth into and suck the life out of them?

Hana
I’m still looking
It’s not my fault if they can’t handle me
And I just can’t deal when they got jealous
There’s nothing going on between my partner and I
How many times do I have to say it

Setsuna
If you’re really that frustrated
Go to the sex store, buy a toy or something
Tokyo have lots of those, I bet
We’re old enough to go

Hana
Rub it at my face would ya

It’s not like I have booty call on speed dial

Setsuna

I never had a booty call

Hana

Sure

Sure

Setsuna

Kyouko-chan, tell Hana I never had a booty call

Kyouko

So you use toys, Setsuna?

Setsuna

What is this, Sex In The City?

Kyouko

Hey, you brought up the sex store first

Setsuna

And you are surrounded by men in tights five/six days a week

I’m honestly surprised you haven’t go out with one at this point

Hana

Yeah, K, what’s up with that

Which one has the biggest package?
Those tights conceal little, if you know what I mean

**Kyouko**

I feel uncomfortable discussing my coworkers’ lower body parts

I’ll talk when Setsuna start talking about Olympic Village

**Setsuna**

It will always come back to that, huh?

**Hana**

Duh

At least give us a hint

Pleaaaaase

**Setsuna**

Sigh

If you insist

**Kyouko**

Yay!

**Hana**

FINALLY

Well???

**Setsuna**

The hot tub is forever ruined for me

**Kyouko**
Sunday is all kinds of nerve wrecking for Shouka. She is going to meet with her senpai after so long. So many things have happened. They have lots to catch up on. Not only that, Gabriel and Senpai are going to talk. The bespectacled girl hope that Setsuna-senpai will give her stamp of approval to Gabriel. Shouka would love nothing more for the two of them to get along. At least she can put her worry of her family not liking Gabriel to rest.

Her family was shocked when Shouka told them about Gabriel over the phone before they fly to Japan. Her younger sister thought she was lying to make herself look better. Little geeky Shouka with her big glasses finally land a boyfriend. Even her parents thought it was a lie and reassure her that she don’t need to lie for their sake. Shouka will never forget the look on their faces when she and Gabriel got out from the Arrival gate. Her sister teased her mercilessly afterward but it was oh so
satisfying to see them looked so gobsmacked.

As soon as they reach home, her family launched a barrage of questions at her boyfriend. How did they meet? How long have they been going out? Where is this relationship going? Shouka thought she is going to die when Gabriel admitted to her family that he is already thinking of marriage in the future. They have yet to have a proper discussion about that but Shouka would be lying if she say she haven’t think about it. The most important thing is that Gabriel and her family get along well. Now let’s see if the same can be said with Setsuna-senpai.

Gabriel is nervous too. He tried to hide it but Shouka can tell that he is just as nervous or even more nervous than she is now. She is worried for him. Gabriel is yet to have proper sleep ever since they came to Namimori. At first she thought it was the jet lag but she was wrong. So wrong.

The nightmares started again.

Gabriel was basically an insomniac when they first met. His sleep would be plagued by nightmares and stress from college didn’t help. He need to see a counselor. He wasn’t the nicest person to be around with either at the time. It was a mess. It took Gabriel a breakdown in front of her before he opened up to her. The closer they are, the more grounded Gabriel become, and the better sleep he get. The night they bumped to Setsuna-senpai at the supermarket, Gabriel was so restless. He need to go out and wander around. One night, he went to the convenience store and bought so many sweets. He did looked calmer after that. Actually, Gabriel has gotten weirder than usual ever since she asked him to come with her to Japan. Shouka tried to get him to talk, to tell her what’s wrong, but Gabriel clamped up. She hope that Setsuna-senpai would loosen him up.

“Shouka~” Gabriel called out from outside. “Are you ready?”

“In a minute!” Shouka open the lipgloss’ lid. Two swipes and she’s done. “I’m done!” Gabriel is waiting for her outside of the bathroom. Her parents and sister are lounging at the living room. “We’ll be going now!”

“Take care!”

Shouka closes the door behind her. They head to the elevator. “Are you nervous?” She asked him.

“Yes,” Gabriel admitted. “You really look up to this Setsuna-senpai. I want her to—” He paused. “I want her to approve of me.”
“She will,” Shouka reassures him. “Be as truthful as you can. Setsuna-senpai can tell when people are not being honest.” When she sees Gabriel become more tense, Shouka squeezed his hand. “My family already like you. You can do this.”

That got her a smile. “You’re right. I can do this. I can be a real charmer,” He winked at her. “After all, I got you to say yes~” Before Shouka can dodge, Gabriel pull her closer and kiss her on the cheek.

Shouka turned red. “Gabriel! We’re not in America anymore! The neighbours might saw!”

“I love it when you turn red,” He nuzzled her head.

She wonder when the elevator will get here.

Setsuna arrived at the McDonald’s first. She waited in front of the store for Shouka and Gabriel. Reborn accompanied her halfway before vanishing. Maybe he is watching her right now, in disguise. Setsuna is in no hurry to look for him. They only had little practice to sense other people’s Flames. Reborn had her practice with the employees at the Maeda estate. Apparently it’s a lot harder to pinpoint one’s Flame type when they are Locked, but on the flip side, it will be easier to detect Dormant or Unlocked Flame. It made her happy when Setsuna found out she can sense Tou-san’s and Nagako-baasan’s presences without looking just by their Flames. Of course, that goes to Reborn too. He lives with her. Wonder what kind of Flame Kyoko and Hana have…

“Setsuna-senpai!” Shouka’s voice cut through the crown.

Ah, they’re here.

“Shouka-chan!” Setsuna waved at the couple.

“Did you wait long?” The younger woman asked. Setsuna shakes her head no. “Shall we go in?”
Setsuna glanced at the smiling Gabriel. “Yes, yes we shall.”

The employees at the register gaped when the trio entered the restaurant. Setsuna patiently waited for them to get a grip before making an order. Behind her, Shouka hide her giggle. They picked a table at the back. Gabriel give way for the women so they can take the cushioned seats. They eat their burgers. Setsuna and Shouka reminiscent of their days here. That time when the ice cream machine broke. When the manager has to chase out a swarm of bees that has no business being in the shop. Or that one time Setsuna has to deal with a child throwing the mother of all tantrum when they didn’t have the Happy Meal toy he wanted. Lambo’s tantrum paled in comparison. The highlight of course, was Shouka’s first day. She and Setsuna stayed behind to clean up some kid’s puke. Some friendships are built over puke and crazy customers.

“So,” Setsuna leaned in once their laughter ceased. “Tell me more about yourself, Gabriel. How long have you been dating? And America. I want to know everything.”

Gabriel sipped his cola. Is that his way to stall time? “Hm… Where should I start? I’m an only child. I was born in Italy before my family moved to the States. So I don’t remember much about Italy. I’m an avid gamer.”

“He liked it so much that he picked Computer Programming as his major so he can make his own games,” Shouka shakes her head.

“I didn’t know what I wanted to do at first… So on my first year I was Undeclared. It took me awhile to figure things out. And Shouka was a big part of it,” He smiled at Shouka who blushed. “We played online games together. We also dropped by at the arcade sometimes. Then she has this brilliant idea to make a game of our own… It made me realise that my true passion is gaming… And Shouka.”

That got Shouka to blush hard. “Gabriel! Stop teasing me!”

“What? I’m telling the truth!” Gabriel chuckled. “She also taught me Japanese. Before Shouka the only Japanese I know were limited to what I often heard from anime.”

“Your Japanese is fluent,” Setsuna can’t help but admit. “So you two met through gaming.”

The couple grinned sheepishly. “Er… Not quite. It’s kind of embarrassing…,” Shouka remember
that day like it was just yesterday. It was a sunny Saturday.

A new album of her favourite band, Blood + Pepper, was finally released. Shouka downloaded it to her iPod right away. She put on her headphones and soon enough she forget about the world. So caught up with the song, Shouka didn’t notice that she is walking to someone until it’s too late. That someone was holding ice cream. Needless to say, she got it spilled on both of their shirts. That someone was Gabriel. Shouka apologized right away, offering to pay for the laundry or wash it herself… Then Gabriel just burst out laughing. Shouka laughed nervously, unsure how to react to that. He told her it’s okay and went on his merry way. Which make his standoffish behaviour on their next meeting even more confusing…

Setsuna shake her head fondly after Shouka finished her tale. Gabriel take over and start to regale her the story of their first time at ComicCon. The figure skater observe the two. The soft, warm gaze Gabriel held whenever he look at Shouka. How relaxed Shouka is around him. Gabriel subtly pushing his tray closer to her so she can take the last french fry. Shouka unconsciously reaching for his hand and Gabriel give it to her.

They are in love

Shouka excused herself to the bathroom, leaving Setsuna and Gabriel alone. Setsuna narrowed her eyes at him. Gabriel didn’t look away.

“You love her, huh?”

Gabriel smiled softly. “Yes.”

“Shouka is a nice girl. I would hate for her to get hurt.”

He winced slightly. “I… I’ll be honest. I was not all that nice to Shouka at the beginning. I made her cry before. I was such an ass. Yet Shouka… She believes in me, when I was full of self loath and being all around jerk. She is like a ray of sun. How could something so tiny can hold so much brilliance? I am darned lucky to have her in my life. Her returning my feelings is like… I love her.”

He said it as if it’s the biggest thing in the world. “So… I would strive to be the best man I can be. For her. I don’t want to make her cry again. I hope you will accept me, because it will mean the world for me and Shouka if you give us your blessings.”

He is so raw and true it actually hurt.
“I believe you,” Setsuna said softly. Gabriel start to relax. “But,” She can feel her Flame flaring. “I also believe that you're hiding something.”

Gabriel’s smile fell.

“I’m back!” Shouka saunteer to their table. “What did you guys talk about?”

“Gabriel-san here was just telling me how much he loves you,” Setsuna teased her junior.

Shouka turned red again.

“Aaaw, Shouka~ You look so cute when you blush~” Gabriel join in the teasing.

They picked up their conversation where they left it last. Setsuna made sure to ask as many questions as possible. She answered the couple’s question as well. Shouka was interested with Midori University. The auburn haired woman would have enrolled there if she didn’t go to America. Her sister is also interested in said university. They start talking about subjects, exams and crazy people in college.

Throughout the whole time, Setsuna didn’t turn off her Flame. The output is not strong enough to drown people (like what happened with Bianchi), she made sure of that. It didn’t take long for her to feel Shouka’s and Gabriel’s Flames. She didn’t coax them out. Just… Enough to get the general sense of what their Elements are.

Setsuna is still not very good at this yet, but Shouka felt like a Sun.

And Gabriel? Gabriel felt like a Lightning.

Exam week was long and tedious. Gokudera spent a better part of it sleeping. The teacher gawked at him but otherwise didn’t do anything. It’s not like Gokudera was doing anything suspicious. He clearly saw the teen writing something down. His intelligence is something of a common knowledge in Namimori Middle School these days. Gokudera is guaranteed to get full mark on each subject.
The real test here, is whether or not those two dunderheads passed the exams.

Teaching Baseball Idiot and Turf Top had been an experience. At least Baseball Idiot was calm before the exams. Turf Top... Not so much. Every morning he came to school looking like a mess. Each day after school they gathered at TakeSushi or the boxer’s house to review everything. Baseball Idiot was confident he passed Social Studies and Japanese. Gokudera figured out a way to make history interesting for him by telling him famous swordsmen in each period. Turf Top was confident in English. He recorded and watched boxing matches from aboard. Gokudera is not worried about Nagi. The figure skater is bright and diligent. It helps that Coach Maeda cut training time short so his skaters can focus on their exams. Setsuna-hime too had exams this week. He didn’t see her much from last week, but his boss check up on him everyday via text messages. Reborn will undoubtedly be there to help her study.

In any case, they have done everything they can. All that is left for them to do is to wait and see.

Summer vacation will officially start after they receive their exam results. Gokudera is already planning to look for more part time jobs for the duration of summer. Preferably indoor... So Gokudera don’t have to spend more time outside than needed. Summer in Japan is nuts. But he won’t be working all the time. He should use the time to train. There aren’t many action here in Namimori. Gokudera is afraid that his skills have become dull. Problem is, there is only so much he can do by himself. He need feedback. He need challenges. He need...

“Leave us alone!”

Gokudera turned around. It sounds like a female in distress. He saw three tugs surround two girls around his age.... The girls’ backs are facing him. The jackets they wear have ‘GENERATION Ballet’ stitched on it.

Green eyes widened.

‘They are Masumi-san’s students.’

There is no way he could ignore them now.

The thugs backed the girls against the wall. Onlookers standing at the sidelines are torn between watching or interfering.
“We just want you to spend time with us, that’s all… We’re not going to do anything weird…,” One of those assholes drawled. That only made the girls look even more fearfull.

“Hey!” Gokudera called out “Leave those girls alone.”

The thugs, all bigger and older than him, sneered. “And what are you going to do, pretty boy?” One of them asked.

Gokudera answered by smashing his nose.

While that one dirtbag hold his bloody nose, the other two attacked him. Gokudera received training ranging from self defense and firearms from when he was four years old. He spent the last six years in the street. He went through hell and back to earn his moniker as the ‘Smoking Bomb.’ These guys have no idea just how wide the gap between him and them.

The fight was so short it was pathetic.

Gokudera huffed before turning to the girls. “Are you all right?” He did his best to mimic the tone Setsuna-hime used on him in the past. It seems to be working. The girls appear to be relaxed. Then they tensed again. Gokudera about to ask what’s wrong when he sensed someone behind him.

It’s Hibari.

Gokudera immediately put himself between the older teen and the girls. He never hear of Hibari hitting girls… But he don’t want to risk it.

“Herbivore.”

Gokudera just grunted.

Hibari glanced at the heap of bodies on the ground, Gokudera’s handiwork. As if he summoned them via telepathy, half a dozen members of the Disciplinary Committee appeared. They pick up the
thugs and drag them to who-knows-where. The girls keep quiet.

“Escort the females.”

“Don’t order me around!”

Hibari ignored him and walk away. Gokudera glared at his retreating back before turning his focus at the girls. “Right… I’ll walk you two to Masumi-san’s place.”

Masumi-sensei was understandably concerned when her students told her what just happened. She thanked Gokudera for saving them. Delinquents are everywhere, even in a town as small as Namimori. The ballerina was worried that it was only a matter of time before they set their eyes on her students.

“It’s a good thing that you were there to save them, Gokudera-san,” Masumi-sensei said to him. “The Disciplinary Committee is effective but they don’t have enough numbers to patrol the entire town… I hate to think what would happen if you didn’t step in.”

“I’m glad I was able to help,” Gokudera smiled.

Masumi-sensei smiled. “It’s been awhile since we last saw each other. How are you, Gokudera-san?”

“I’m… I’m good.” And he actually meant it.

“I’m glad to hear that. A little birdie told me that you helped Ryohei-chan with his studies.”

“Yeah… I don’t know how he made it this far, to be honest. Sorry.”

“Academics is not Ryohei-chan’s strong suit,” Masumi-sensei agreed. “You know, Gokudera-san. You look like a different person compared to the first time you came here.”

Gokudera blinked. “I do?”
“Yes,” Masumi-sensei nodded. “You have more colours in your cheeks… Not to mention the air around you is different.” She stared him down. Gokudera is careful not to fidget under her gaze. “Setsuna-chan told me and Maeda-san how much you have progressed in the past few months.

Setsuna-hime talked about him? And Coach Maeda?

“She also told me that you play the piano.”

“Yes…?” Where is this going?

“Are you any good?”

“I am,” He is out of practise… But Gokudera play better than kids his age.

“I see,” Masumi-sensei stared at him some more. “I want you to bring a recording of your playing to me at your earliest convenience. Can you do that, Gokudera-san?”

His eyes widened at the request. Masumi-sensei want to hear him play? Not even Setsuna-hime has hear him play the piano!

“I… I’ll see what I can do,” Gokudera-san managed at last.

Masumi-sensei nodded. “Very well. I need to return to class now. Take care on your home, Gokudera-san.”

And she sounds like she actually meant it.

“I will, Masumi-san.”

As Gokudera step outside, he can’t help but wonder.
'What was that all about?'

Chapter End Notes

*sticks leggy out* //just because

So

Chapter 11 everyone

Yes, Gabriel is the Byakuran of these verse. He is the same age as Shouka, so he is a year younger than Setsuna. He is a Lightning instead of a Sky. Think of him as Ghost, but not naked and with actual emotions. In canon, it was stated that Byakuran and Shouchi meet in every parallel universe. EVERY. SINGLE. ONE. OF. THEM. They are soulmates. No doubt about it. So it just made sense if they meet and become a couple in this one.

Gokudera is one of the main focus in this chapter. I found that out of all Guardians, he has the most potential. KHR don't have many information about characters' pasts, but Gokudera is one whose past is most detailed. So naturally, he will have more POV compared to other characters in this story as he continue to grow.

WE WILL HAVE FIGURE SKATING ACTION NEXT CHAPTER! STAY TUNED!
Nagako didn’t even blink when Setsuna drop a sack full of stuffed animals in the living room. She is not even surprised to see Reborn come out from the sack, wearing a teddy bear suit. The Maeda matriarch have long learn that she should focus her energy to more pressing issues, such as Setsuna-chan’s survival, rather than wondering of how many costumes Reborn has in his disposal. Or the rising price of eggs.

“Good evening, Nagako-baasan,” Setsuna greeted her with a huge smile.

“Ciaossu.”

Nagako can’t help but smile back. “Hello, Setsuna-chan! Reborn,” She nodded respectfully to the hitman, which he reciprocate in kind. “My, that’s quite a haul you have there. Is it for the children?”

“Yes~ The toy store was so kind to give me a discount. They must have figured that I would buy a bulk this year as well~”

Ever since she graduated high school, Setsuna would go buy stuffed animals in large quantity for the competitors participating in the novice circuit. Everyone got one. Everyone. It was her way to show support to her juniors. The upcoming novice competition is not a big of a deal to the skating community at large, but for Setsuna and these kids, it’s the biggest thing ever. Setsuna will never forget how happy she was when someone throw her a rose and a stuffed animal for the first time (coincidentally, it was a duck). These kind of things stayed with you. At least that’s how it is for the young woman.

“You are just in time for dinner. I’ll tell them to prepare extra serving for you two,” said Nagako.

Setsuna grinned. “Aw, yes! Mundou-san’s cooking is the best!” And she doesn’t have to cook tonight! Yay!

They sit down on the couch. Reborn occupied the armchair.
“So how are you, Setsuna-chan?”

“I’m just relieved that exams are over,” Setsuna sighed. “Now I can focus on training again.”

“Good to see you so eager, Setsuna,” Reborn smirked from his spot.

The figure skater shot him a deadpan look. “Anyways… How is it going, Nagako-baa-san? It must be quite a change to have I-pin here. Speaking of I-pin, where is she?”

“I am doing marvelous, Setsuna-chan. Thank you for asking. As for I-pin-chan, she is in her room writing a letter to her master.”

Nagako has pretty much take I-pin under her wing. She is such a darling, polite and considerate. Nagako teach her Japanese. They have hired a tutor to teach her other subjects. In the morning, she, her husband and I-pin would go through katas together in the yard. They also spend time in the dojo to practise. I-pin usually take off after lunch but always sure to return before sundown. In the evening, the three of them would talk about their day over dinner.

Nagako has to admit, she missed having children around.

“So what exactly did I-pin do to blow up the Hibari estate?” Setsuna asked.

Nagako inwardly cringed. Setsuna won’t like what she about to tell her. “Hm… I-pin-chan has this secret technique… That basically turn her to a human bomb.”

“What?!”

Before her daughter in all but blood start to rant, Nagako beat her to it. “Apparently she is born with a body that can… Endure things normal humans couldn’t, so her master thought it is acceptable to teach her such technique. Since I-pin wouldn’t die from using it.”

“Acceptable?!”
“From what the people at the Hibari’s told me, she was triggered by the sight of young Kyouya-san. I-pin-chan has a crush on her master, and Kyouya-san resembled him greatly…”

Setsuna facepalmed. “Stupid mafia…”

Nagako pat her arm.

“So? What about the man I-pin supposed to kill?”

“According to our intel, someone else already got him.”

Setsuna can’t decide if she should be glad or not.

“Setsuna?” Kazuki step inside the living room, I-pin followed right behind him.

“Hey, Tou-san,” Setsuna waved at him. “I’m here to drop off the stuffed animal.”

Kazuki nodded. Setsuna always drop off the stuffed animal at their home the day before the competition, so they can put them away in the car.

I-pin bowed. “Good evening, Big Sister,” She greet her in Japanese.

Setsuna smiled. “Good evening, I-pin. Your Japanese is good.” I-pin beamed at the compliment. “Let’s have dinner.”

Dinner was lovely. They served siew mai for I-pin. Kami-sama knows the girl is homesick, no matter how well she hide it. Nagako made note to take her to the nearest Chinatown in the area next weekend. The little girl would love that. Setsuna told them about her exams and her kids. Nagi, Gokudera, Yamamoto and Ryohei. They just finished with their exams as well. Masumi told her that Gokudera saved two of her students from delinquents earlier today. It’s good to hear him doing so well. The same goes to all the kids. I-pin was intrigued with the two mafia children who live in the same town, Lambo and Gokudera. It would be good if Lambo and I-pin become playmates (and
more kids for her to dote on).

After dinner, the woman had tea in the living room. It’s been awhile since Nagako had a girl talk. I-pin had retired to her room. The men went to another room to watch the news. Nagako told Setsuna that her boys and their family will stay here for the duration of summer. Oh, how she missed them. Their conversation take a turn to Kazuki’s birthday. Her husband will turn sixty two on August 12th. Each year the skaters at the rink would pool their money together to buy him a gift. (Or if you’re a little one, make a drawing/painting of Coach. Her husband keep all of them in his office). Then they will have a private dinner party at home.

Setsuna and Reborn went home sometime before nine. Nagako went to look for her husband. She found him at the back gazing at the moon. She take a seat next to him.

“Are you nervous for tomorrow?” She asked him.

“Yes,” He admitted. Even though he is no longer competing, Kazuki still feel nervous for his students’ behalf. Such a sensitive man. He won’t show it of course. He need to maintain composure for their sake. “I have faith in my students.”

Nagako smiled. “Make sure to tell our other grandchildren tomorrow I say hello. And break a leg.” It is a long running joke that the ducklings (the nickname for skaters under Kazuki’s wing) are also dubbed as their other grandchildren. A fact that grate the upper stiff lips in the area. But neither she or Kazuki care.

“Yes, Dear.”

“Don’t forget to bring the video camera. I want to see the footage.”

“Yes, Dear.”

“Oh, and make a quick stop at that dorayaki place near the rink. I love those.”

“Yes, Dear.”

Nagako rest her head on his shoulder. “I love you.”
Kazuki wrap an arm around her shoulder. “Yes, Dear.”

Takeshi wake up bright and early that day. He, Gokudera and Sasagawa-senpai will go support Kudou at the novice competition today. He help Pops with today’s preparation in the kitchen like every other morning. When his tasks are done, Takeshi made simple onigiris for their lunch today.

The novice competition will be held in Hamana City. Takeshi only went there once for an unofficial match with the local team. They are okay. The three of them will take the bus to go there. The Namimori FS Club will be riding cars. The skating club has a van. Parents offered their ride for the members. The club will meet up at the rink before going. They said Coach Maeda himself will be driving the fun. He switch with Setsuna on their way back home. Sharing a car with them would be quite the experience.

He went to meet up with Gokudera and Sasagawa-senpai in front of the train station. Sasagawa-senpai was there first. He greeted Takeshi with his trademark ‘EXTREME Good morning.’ Gokudera arrived not long after him.

His classmate glanced at the bag in his hand. “What’s that?”

Takeshi grinned and raise the bag for them to see. “Lunch for us.”

Gokudera look torn between choosing to scowl or frown. He choose to frown. “You didn’t have to.”

“It’s okay, Gokudera. I want to do it.”

“I can’t EXTREME wait for lunch!”

Takeshi grins. “Hahaha! Thanks, Senpai.”

The train ride was uneventful. It take at least half an hour. It took them another half an hour to reach Hamana Ice Rink. Even though it’s still pretty early in the morning, a small crowd have formed in
front of the building. Is Namimori FS Club here yet? It doesn’t appear they have arrived. Yamamoto hope there isn’t any issues down the road.

This might be the last time they hang out together for awhile. Takeshi has a one week long summer camp and then joint practices with other schools. Sasagawa-senpai and Gokudera will be looking for part time jobs. Kudou will be busy with training as well. Study sessions with these three had been fun. Takeshi hope they can spend time together without studying.

(Takeshi received higher scores than usual. Sasagawa-senpai managed to scrape through, to everyone’s relief.)

Their interests differ. The commonality shared between them is Setsuna-hime. But that doesn’t matter to Takeshi.

These people are his friends, true friends.

He feel like he could trust him with his secrets.

They are not that close yet. Sasagawa-senpai is an open book but the other two are still reserved. But Takeshi is certain that everyone will consider each other true friends. Gokudera is understandably wary of everyone, everything. Takeshi can only imagine what kind of life he had before coming to Namimori. The silver haired teen like to curse and glare, but he still agree to tutor him. It’s a work in progress.

Kudou is a shy thing, but really nice. She only open up to Gokudera in the beginning but they encouraged her to come out from her shell. Kudou stay quiet most of the time but she always have a witty comment about everything. She is not interested in Takeshi, not in the way girls at school are interested in him due to his ace status. She has her eyes on someone else and Takeshi has a feeling he know who it is.

Takeshi look at Gokudera and Sasagawa-senpai who are in the middle of a serious conversation about the science behind spins and smiled.

Today is going to be a good day.
Nagi had made preparation for today.

Today will be the day when she will get the result of all her effort.

It is only a competition for novices. A small competition that offer little to no prestige. Her mother would scoff at the scale of the competition. But for Nagi and every skaters competing, it is an important milestone for them. This is her last time at Novice. Next year she will move on to Junior.

She is going to make this one count.

Everyone gathered outside the building. The younger ones have a guardian coming with them, unlike Nagi who showed up alone. She never let it bother her though, because she has Coach Maeda and Setsuna-senpai.

Her senpai is chipper this morning. She showed up along with Coach Maeda. They had a short briefing before each and everyone of them climb up to the car. Nagi share the van along with five other kids. Coach Maeda as the driver and Setsuna-senpai calling shotgun. Reborn came too. He stayed quiet the whole time and they have learned to ignore him. The ride was fun. They sing along with the radio. Coach Maeda reluctantly joined in, having been persuaded by his skaters. Nagi waved at her fellow members in the other cars whenever they line up. She almost wish the ride would never end.

They arrived at the Hamana Ice Rink. To Nagi’s surprise, Gokudera, Yamamoto and Sasagawa are there.

“You guys came?” Nagi look at them in wonder after she join them.

“Of course we came,” Gokudera replied. It is only natural they came and support her.

Nagi start to feel warm, and it is not from the summer heat. “Thank you. It meant a lot for me.” She smiled.

“How are you feeling?” Yamamoto asked kindly.
Honestly, she feel like throwing up her breakfast.

“I’m nervous,” Nagi admitted. The boys nodded in understanding.

“You can EXTREME do this, Kudou,” Sasagawa-senpai said to her. “You know what you’re doing. Just remember that you got this locked down. You will be fine out there. I know you will.”

“And don’t forget to have fun,” Yamamoto adds.

“We believe in you,” Gokudera smiled at her encouragingly.

Nagi blushed.

“Ara? You boys made it!” Setsuna and Reborn walk over their spot.

Gokudera smiled. “Yes, Setsuna-hime. I won’t miss it for the world.”

Setsuna grinned. “I’m glad to hear that. Supporters are important. Having one supporter on your side can make a world of difference.”

But what if they can’t live up to their expectation?

Nagi didn’t say anything.

“You skated here before, right Setsuna-hime?” Gokudera asked.

Setsuna nodded. “This place is where I compete for the first time. It was a long time ago.” She looked at the building wistfully.
“I heard you placed last,” Sasagawa-senpai blurted out.

“Yes, I did place last but that was my starting line. That is what’s important. It’s only to keep going or to quit from that point on. And here I am.”

To keep going or to quit

This is not the end. No matter what kind of result she will be getting later, Nagi will keep going. That, Nagi is sure of. The knot in her stomach considerably loosen.

“Nii-chan! It’s Setsuna-senpai!” A girl with red hair pointed at Setsuna-senpai. A red haired man, presumably her brother, scold her up immediately for pointing.

‘Ah,’ Nagi watched the duo approach Setsuna-senpai. ‘Senpai’s fans.’

Her senpai will be preoccupied after this. The little children will flock on her until the competition start. Setsuna is weak against children.

To Nagi’s surprise, Setsuna-senpai smiled widely. “Mami-chan! Enma-kun! Long time no see!”

Kun?

The teenagers snap to attention as the man get closer. They never hear Setsuna addressing a male her age with the honorific ‘-kun’ before. Gokudera’s eyes narrowed dangerously.

Reborn perk up in interest.

“Guys,” Setsuna-senpai turn to the teenagers and Reborn. “This is Kozato Mami-chan and Enma-kun. They are from Shimon city. Mami-chan will be competing as well.”

Mami is a girl perhaps a year younger than Nagi. She has a bright red eyes that matches her hair. Her bangs are pinned to the side with a cherry shaped hairpin. Mami is slightly shorter than Nagi but is brimming with confidence.
Enma share the same red hair and eyes. Nagi is not entirely sure if they are natural or because Enma didn’t get enough rest. He looked awfully tired. Still, his gaze softened as he watch Setsuna and Mami.

“This is Kudou Nagi-chan. She will be competing in Group Novice A, same as you, Mami-chan. And this is Gokudera Hayato-kun, Yamamoto Takeshi-kun and Sasagawa Ryōhei-kun. They are here to support Nagi-chan.”

“Hi there!”

“EXTREME nice to meet you!”

“Hmph.”

“And this is Reborn. Don’t be fooled with his appearance. He is not a baby. Reborn has this condition called systemic hypoplasia. His growth was stunted.”

“Ciaossu.”

Mami looked at Reborn curiously, while Enma’s gaze turn cautious.

Setsuna-senpai looked around. “Are the rest of your family here as well?”

“Yes,” Enma nodded. “In fact, they are walking towards us right now.”

Another group of teenagers are coming their way. They are all eye catching in their own way. It’s hard to miss them. Especially when one them wear two tubes.

“What the fu- ogh!” Yamamoto cut off Gokudera by elbowing him. There are minors around. The baseball player can understand his feeling though.
Enma ignored Gokudera’s outburst. He proceed to introduce his family members to the Namimori kids. He explain to them even though they have different surnames, they are all related.

Suzuki Adelheid, a serious looking girl who is as tall as Yamamoto. Her black hair is tied to a ponytail. The boys try hard not to look at her chest (which is enviably large). Adelheid greeted the group politely, if somewhat chilly.

Katou Juri is a laid back teenager sporting a goatee. His yellow shirt and white fedora hat combo is striking. He winked at Nagi during his introduction, which confuses her and grate the boys.

Aoba Koyo is a green haired boy who wear glasses. He immediately proclaim himself as the ‘Hope of Boxing World.’ Naturally, that got Ryohei to get fired up, a sentiment Koyo return with as much fire. Setsuna-senpai and Enma cool them down with carefully selected words.

Mizuno Kaoru beat Yamamoto and Adelheid in the height department. He has a pompadour hairstyle like Kusakabe Tetsuya, only with blond hair. He even looks older than Enma and Setsuna-senpai. Kaoru didn’t say much. Must be the quiet type.

Ooyama Rauji is not as tall as Kaoru but still taller than Yamamoto and Adelheid. He is the heaviest out of the group but Nagi suspect he actually has muscles. There is an X shaped scar on his cheek. He greet them warmly.

Shitt. P, who prefer to be called Shittopi-chan, is easily the most eccentric person Nagi have met in her life. From her fashion style, speech and just about everything about her is different. She speaks in riddles (or at least Nagi thought as riddles). Gokudera outright call her UMA in front of everyone. Shittopi-chan looked amused by it rather than offended.

“I’m glad to meet you guys again this year! You all look well,” Setsuna-senpai smiled at them. They all warm up at that. Even Kaoru’s eyes soften.

“Mami has been looking forward to meet you, Sawada-san,” Adelheid smiles, putting a hand on the younger’s shoulder.

“Nii-chan and I are huge fans of Setsuna-senpai ever since her Senior debut!” Mami grinned. “It’s because of Senpai I decided to skate!”
‘That’s cute,’ Nagi can’t help but think.

“I’m a huge fan too,” Julie slide up next to Setsuna-senpai, smiling flirtatiously. Gokudera looked like he’s going to bite his head off if it weren’t for Enma who pull the back of his collar. Setsuna just look at him blankly.

“Kudou-san, please ignore this idiot. He likes to flirt with anything with a skirt,” Adelheid shot him a look of annoyance.

Setsuna-senpai raised an eyebrow. “You do realise my father is here, right? He would be displeased to know you flirt with one of his skaters. Again.”

Julie looked sheepish.

“What does she mean ‘again’?” Nagi hear Gokudera whisper.

“Anyway,” Mami speak up “I’m in a tip top condition today! And I’m going to win!” She said confidently.

“Well, aren’t you confident?” Setsuna-senpai looked at her fondly.

“Sorry to break it to you, kid, but Kudou is going to EXTREME win,” Ryohei said with pride.

“Hmph. I admit that Coach Maeda has great students,” Koyo nodded respectfully at Setsuna-senpai, “But our Mami is going to win in the end.”

Those two glare at each other.

“As a fellow fan of Setsuna-hime, I am always happy to meet fellow fans, but!” Gokudera raise his head higher, “Kudou will be the one on that podium today.”

“Don’t worry, Nagi-chan. I’ll comfort you when you don’t get first place,” Julie move closer to Nagi.
Yamamoto step forward, putting him on a halt. “Kudou won’t need any comforting today, because she is not that weak.”

The tension in the air become thicker as the boys eyed each other warily.

“Children, please ,” Enma step in between the group.

“Be nice,” Setsuna-senpai stepped in as well. The boys, their boys, give her apologetic looks.

“I’m in the Novice A group,” Mami told them. “So we will be competing against each other, Kudou-san.” She turn to Nagi, “Well, what about you?”

“Huh?”

“We actually never hear you defend yourself. Your supporters seem confident that you’ll win. It’s great to have supporters, but do you feel the same as them? It’s pointless to compete if you think you’ll lose from the start.”

“I…”

“Mami,” Enma shot her a look of warning.

“No, Nii-chan, I want to hear it from her. They said you left Tokyo to train under Coach Maeda, to train with Setsuna-senpai. So you must be good then.”

“I don’t know if I’m any good or not…”

“Then why are you even here? This is a competition, not a recreation. I can’t believe someone with half baked motivation like you get to be in the same rink as Senpai-“

“Mami,” Enma repeat with more sternness this time. Mami shut her mouth but looked defiant. He
sighed. “I apologize for my sister.”

“But she’s not wrong,” Koyo added in. He promptly shut up under Enma’s hard stare.

Setsuna-senpai break the tension by clapping, “All right, guys. We can continue this standoff inside. The competitors need to register first. Nagi-chan, join the rest of our rinkmates. Boys, please find good seats for us. I need to go back to the van real quick. Reborn, don’t sow chaos while I’m away.”

“No promises.”

“And you kids,” Setsuna-senpai turn to the Shimon Group, “May the best athlete win.”

Nagi gulped.

Today is not shaping to be what she imagined would be.

Today has proven to be interesting, and will get even more so from this point on.

Reborn has to admit that even he was looking forward for the novice competition. He has been watching these kids train for months. He want to see how they be doing in actual competition.

Setsuna has been looking forward for this as well. She studied hard for the exams. This competition is just the thing she needed to recover her spirits. Which she will need because they will have full training again. This will also be another distraction for her from Gabriel-Shouka (He need to decide its ship name soon). Reborn has lessen her workload so Setsuna can focus on her exams. Under his tutelage, there is no way Setsuna would get just passing grades. She will get above average at least.

The confrontation with the kids from Shimon city was highly entertaining. The boys from each group (minus Rauji and Kaoru) glared at each other before they went separate ways. Enma shot Setsuna apologetic look, which she return. Reborn get this impression that there is something going on between Setsuna and Kozato Enma. He is going to have so much fun with that.
Nagi left to regroup with the rest of the club while Setsuna went to get the stuffed animals. The boys got sidetracked in the hallway when Gokudera noticed a photo of young Setsuna displayed. There is even a plate. Guess his student is even popular over here.

One-fourth of the seats are already taken. The boys quickly look for strategic place to sit. Parents and family members would undoubtedly make up most of the spectators today. Coaches will be right outside the rinks, obviously. Setsuna would probably prefer higher grounds so she can throw the stuffed animals...

The boys managed to find a great spot… At the same time as the Shimon kids.

“Boys,” Enma said sternly before any of them can say anything. Koyo turn around to argue but a level stare from Enma and Adelheid stopped him.

They all sat down, with an empty seat between them as some sort of border. Enma sit the closest to the Namimori boys. “So is this the first time you come here?” He start to make a small talk.

“I’ve been here before. It was… 1997 I think?” Ryohei scratched his head. “It was a long time ago. My older sister and Setsuna-nee are best friends. We grew up together.”

The Shimon group looked more interested now. “Did she win?” asked Rauji.

“I think she got first place. For the very first time. We got the video of that competition at home. And others.”

Gokudera looked at the boxer in envy. Yamamoto too. He only has videos of Setsuna after she start to compete in the Senior circuit. Ryohei have yet to show those videos to them.

“Are you all fans of Setsuna-nee?” Yamamoto asked.

They all nodded.
“We’ve been her fans since Senior,” Adelheid told them. “Mami is a huge fan. So you all childhood friends with Sawada-san?”

“Setsuna-nee and her mother have been regulars at our family’s sushi restaurant,” Yamamoto grinned.

“Setsuna-hime saved me,” Gokudera told them with so much solemnity Adelheid straighten her back seeing it.

“I guess we all won’t be here if it weren’t for Setsuna…,” Enma mused. There is something about the way he say it that made Reborn pause.

Before any of them can say anything else, the chatter dies down.

Suddenly, the entire rink fell into silence. Setsuna and Coach Maeda have arrived, followed by the rest of the Namimori FS Club. All eyes trained upon them. Awe. Curiosity. Respect. It reminded Reborn when a particular mafioso of high caliber such as the Ninth enter the room and everyone cease their chatter to pay attention to him. The atmosphere changed as well. You know that moment in movies where the cameras pan to this character, whom you know someone to watch out for. Someone who change the tone at the very moment of their arrival? This is it.

They are in the presence of two Olympic athletes. Maeda Kazuki, whose generation shaped Japan’s figure skating world (even if he returned a bit late). His pupil, Sawada Setsuna, Japan’s ace and one of the best figure skaters in the world. Those two are on an entirely different level compared to the gathering coaches and skaters here. It is understandable for everyone to feel a little overwhelmed at the moment.

Coach Maeda barely pay attention to the onlookers as he turn his attention to the little ones. The first group will be those under the age of eight. Also known as Chicks in other countries. They are undoubtedly be the cutest out of all competitors here. Setsuna made her way to their group, carrying a large sack with her. She take the empty seat next to Enma.

Yamamoto peered inside the sack curiously. “What are those, Nee-san?”

“Stuffed animals for the kids. I bought lots so everyone get one,” Setsuna answered cheerfully.
“Mami take such good care of hers,” Enma smiled fondly, “Especially the ones from you.” Setsuna smiled back.

Gokudera narrowed his eyes. Something is fishy here…

“Look! The warm up is starting already!” Rauji points to the rink.

Eight boys, all below 8 years old, enter the rink. They are all so adorable in their costumes. Woody from Toy Story, Dragon Ball’s orange outfit, Luke Skywalker, Masked Tuxedo from Sailor Moon, Tigger, Nutcracker, Peter Pan, Robin. Setsuna squealed in delight (“Look at them! Look at the babies!”). Their warm up time lasts for four minutes. The boys perform one by one. After the first group is done, come the next group. The performances have technical flaws, each and every one of them, but they are full of energy and cuteness. The girls are just as adorable as the boys. The audience respond everything they do. Applause for every successful jump, gasps when one of them fell, cheerings after they finish their program. (“Precious babies!”)

Setsuna throw a stuffed animal for each contestant after they are finished.

All of the winners are from Namimori FS Club.

The next age group to compete is for those between the age of 8 to 10 years old (also known as Cubs). They are just as adorable as the Chicks. The duration for each skate will be approximately 2 and a half minutes. Triple jumps are not permitted but flying spins entries are. Warm up session will take four minutes. Setsuna cheered for all of them, no matter which club they are from. They got stuffed animals too of course.

Namimori FS Club dominated this one too.

Gokudera looked smug at that. “Our club will win the Novice A and B as well.” Nevermind that Gokudera technically is not a member.

“Our Mami won’t lose to you!” Koyo stood up. “She is the ‘Hope of the Figure Skating World’, just like I am the ‘Hope of the Boxing World.’”

“Is she really that good?” Yamamoto asked.
“Of course. She won first place last year.”

“Mami-chan has a lot of potential,” Setsuna acknowledges. Koyo shot the Namimori boys a smug look. “But the thing with potential is,” She look down to the bottom floor, where Mami are watching her juniors with the rest of her club. “It’s unpredictable. Practise help you discover it but sometimes it’s not just the physical, but also the mental. You can never tell when it’ll start to show, nor where. By the end of the day, it all depends on the person.”

“So you don’t know who will win,” Reborn summarised. Or it’s more like Setsuna don’t want to take sides.

“No, I don’t,” Setsuna put her chin on her palms, gazing upon the rink. “Isn’t that what makes this so much more fun?”

In the mafia, such sentiment is not appreciated. It can be thrilling, yes, but not recommended in the long run. But they are not in the middle of gang war or playing a game of cat and mouse. They are here to watch and that is exactly what they will do here.

“You’re doing amazing, sweetie.”

They have a one hour lunch break.

The adults (namely she and Enma) pull the children away to join their respective clubs. Ryohei and Koyo almost got into another argument. If they leave those two alone, those boys would definitely come to blows. Reborn didn’t do anything to worsen the situation, which is suspicious in itself. Come to think of it, he didn’t introduce himself as a hitman lately. What’s up with that? Maybe she is thinking too deeply about this… Nah… It’s Reborn.

She is glad to see Enma and his kids doing so well though.

Setsuna first met them in 2004. In this same tournament to be exact. She was chaperoning the club as
she always did every year. Her father is yet to recover from his sickness at the time so it fell on her to look out for the children. This is also when Mami competed for the first time ever. Setsuna distinctly remember her pink dress that didn’t clash with her bright red hair. Her skate was not clean but Mami grab the audience’ attention right away with her energy. She won third place. Not bad for a first timer. But what really grab her attention was when the skate is over. Mami just bowed to the judges before rushing towards her. Not her brother Enma, but Setsuna. Setsuna was standing right outside the rink at the time.

Mami basically went ‘nyoooooom’ to her direction. She clutched the dog plushie Setsuna have thrown. The memory would always make her chuckle every time she remember it.

*Setsuna look down at the little girl who is staring back at her with sparkling eyes. She wonder if this is the sort of expression she wear when she met Ito Midori. “Hello there. That was quite the performance you just showed us. I enjoyed it.”* Setsuna smiled kindly at the little girl.

*Mami looked like her soul about to leave her body and ascend to higher plane. “I love you so much!” She blurted out. “I first watched you on TV! Metamorphosis is my favourite! I love your skating so much! I will treasure this for the rest of my life!” Mami hugged the dog plushie tighter.*

*Setsuna is trying SO hard not to squeal. “Thank you. That means a lot to me.”*

*“Can I have your autograph? Ack!” Mami look down on her person. “I didn’t bring any paper with me! Oh! There’s Onii-chan! He has paper! My Onii-chan is huge fan of you too! Onii-chaaan!” She waves to a young man messy red hair. Trailing behind him is a throng of children older than Mami, probably around Ryohei’s age. “Onii-chan! It’s Sawada Setsuna! The real deal! This is my onii-chan! Introduce yourself, Onii-chan!”*

*The older brother bowed his head, “Kozato Enma.”*

*Setsuna return the gesture. “Sawada Setsuna.”*

*“Onii-chan!” Mami tugged on Enma’s sleeve, “Setsuna-senpai just told me that she enjoyed my performance!”*

*Enma smiled. “She did?” He look up to meet her eyes. “Thank you…”*
Before Setsuna can say something, one of the children side up next to her. “Good afternoon, cutie,” He winked. Setsuna blinked at the nerve of this child.

The girl with the ponytail pulled his ear with a huff of her own. “I’m so sorry. Julie here is an idiot…”

“No harm done,” Setsuna reassures her.

Mami proceed to introduce everyone to her.

“Onii-chan has something he want to show you, senpai!” Mami tugged Enma’s sleeve some more.

Their eyes met once more before Enma look away. He mumbled something under his breath as he unzip his duffle bag. He pull out a brown tube (something she vaguely recall seeing something similar in the Art Department). Enma wordlessly handed it to her. Setsuna accepted it. Inside is a roll of paper. She unroll it.

It's a watercolour painting. A painting of her to be exact. From the free skate program of her last season, Metamorphosis.

Setsuna is speechless. She received gifts from fans before, but never this… Personal (not counting the lingers).

The kids smiled widely, knowing that Setsuna is impressed.

“It’s great, isn’t it! Enma-niichan is really good with these kind of stuff,” Mami said proudly. “He is your number. 2 fan.”

“And who is number 1?” Setsuna asked.

“Me! I’m your biggest fan!” Mami point to herself. “Everyone here are fans of yours, Setsuna-senpai!”
“I won’t let you down,” Setsuna smiled before addressing Enma. “Thank you for the painting. I will cherish it.”

Enma nodded. “I hope Coach Maeda will recover from his illness soon.”

Her smile turned sad. “Thank you.” It’s been hard but she managed. Her Tou-san is made from hardier stuff. He won’t let himself succumb to sickness.

Enma’s gaze softened. “You and Coach Maeda will get through this. You’re going to do great. I… We have faith in you,” He pulled Mami close. “So… Have faith in Coach Maeda as well.”

And that’s how she first met the Kozato Siblings and their cousins. Setsuna gave Mami her autograph afterward, and had a few pictures taken with her and her family. They parted in good terms.

Her theme that year is Faith.

Because at the time, she need faith more than ever.

They meet again the following year and the next. Each time, Enma present her with a watercolour painting. They also exchanged phone numbers. There is something about Enma that make Setsuna know that she can trust him with her contacts. Both of them are busy, so their correspondence are limited to text messages and occasional phone calls. They ask each other for advice. Enma usually asked about recipes and girls. Adelheid is a teenager now, and Mami will soon follow. She is always happy to help. Enma is a good person.

Well, enough reminiscing. She need to get out of here and return before the children get too excited or Reborn come up with a scheme. Setsuna had excused herself to the restroom a few minutes ago.

When she walk out of the door, it happened at the same time with Enma walking out of the men’s restroom.

“Oh!”
Enma smiled. “Hey.”

“Hey,” Setsuna returned his smile in kind. “So we meet outside of the restroom… Again .”

“What are the odds?”

“Apparently not that bad,” Setsuna put away her handkerchief. “So how are you?”

“I’m good. Thanks for asking,” Enma regard her carefully. “What about you?”

“I’m well.” Could have been better, if Iemitsu didn’t bring her into this mafia mess and chuck Reborn at her. “How are things at work?”

Enma stuffed his hands in his pocket, “I managed.”

Setsuna didn’t ask any further. Money is always tight in the Kozato household. Enma is the sole breadwinner in the family. He spent the majority of his high school years working multiple part time jobs. He didn’t go to college after graduation. College is expensive and he feel that the money would be better used for the kids. Also, Enma’s grades is not enough for him to be granted scholarships. Enma switched jobs every now and then until recently. Now he is working full time as a cat groomer.

“So those are your kids, huh?” Enma snapped her out of her musing. Setsuna nodded. “I know I only met them once but I can tell that they are good kids.”

Setsuna smiled softly. “They are.”

“I’m glad things work out between you and them,” Enma said softly. “It’s bad when you had a fight with one. Imagine all of them.”

“I didn’t have a problem with all of them,” Kyouya never wanted Harmonisation and Lambo is too young to grasp the situation. “But you’re right. It was awful.”
“One of the worst feelings in the world,” Enma said solemnly. They stood there in silence for a moment before Enma sobered. “I apologise for Mami. She didn’t always think first before she say something.”

“It should be Mami-chan who apologise, not you. And she should say it to Nagi-chan. But I know you mean it,” Setsuna pat his arm.

“I’ll tell her,” Enma nodded. “I’m going to go back. Mami must be wondering what’s taking me so long.”

“All right. See you later.”

Setsuna turn around, only to see Reborn standing there, smirking.

“Enma-kun, huh?” He teases her.

Setsuna didn’t take the bait, “I call a lot of people with that suffix.”

“Except they are kids,” For example, Gokudera, Yamamoto, Ryohei, or the male club members.

“There’s Kobayashi-kun,” Setsuna pointed out. Kobayashi is one of the staffs working at the rink.

“Kobayashi-kun don’t make paintings of you.”

“A lot of people gave me handmade gifts.”

“You don’t just text or call a random fan for advice.”

Reborn have listened to her phone calls and read her texts. Of course. *Of course*. Setsuna is hardly surprised. Reborn is that kind of asshole. Probably read her chat history with the girls too.
Setsuna rolled her eyes. She don’t want to waste time here talking about her non existent relationships with Reborn only to give him more ammo to use against her. “I’m going to have lunch.” She left him standing there and there’s that.

Takeshi is having the time of his life. He can’t for the life of him remember the last time he is the spectator, not the athlete. He is the one doing the watching instead of being the one who compete. It felt quite nice. Even though he is not the one on ice, he can still find joy in figure skating from the audience stand. Not to mention the kids are positively adorable. Those kids had the time of their lives. They were having fun.

Fun. That is also important. It wasn’t until he rested did Takeshi rediscover how fun baseball is. He couldn’t believe he almost lost something so important. Seeing those kids having fun… It reminded him of why he took up baseball in the first place. Because he find it fun. He was just like these kids once upon a time. Back then everything was simple. Can he recapture those magical moments. Probably not, because many things have changed, him included.

But that is all part of growing up, isn’t it?

Takeshi would never return to be that little boy, but he will always remember. That boy was real, and so is the present him.

He is real.

They had lunch together with the rest of the Namimori FS Club. Gokudera put a distance between himself and Coach Maeda out of respect and fear. Coach Maeda greeted Takeshi and Sasagawasenpai, only to give one look at Gokudera to acknowledge his presence but that was it. Nagi is grateful for their presence. None of her friends from school could make it. Takeshi caught her looking at the little ones and their parents with a hint of envy. The other two must have noticed as well, and tactfully don’t bring it up.

“How are you holding up?” Yamamoto asked Nagi kindly.

Nagi didn’t say anything, only staring at her cup. Ah, she must be nervous.

“Personally, I don’t think you’ll have any problem,” Gokudera fold his arms. “I know that I’ve only
seen you skate once… But you’re good. I know you’ll destroy the other competitions. Show those Kozato brat that you are strong. After all, it was Coach Maeda who trained you. Not to mention you have the support of Setsuna-hime.”

“Yeah!” Sasagawa-senpai joined in. “You are an Extreme skater, Kudou!”

Nagi just stay silent.

Takeshi think back of his conversation with Setsuna-nee weeks ago. When he was almost swallowed up by the pressure. The pressure his teammates, coach and peers put on him. He doesn’t want Nagi to be swallowed up.

Nagi look up when Takeshi touch her shoulder. “It will be okay,” He smiled kindly at her. “Remember to have fun.”

Her shoulders lost some of the tension. “Thank you, Yamamoto-kun…”

“That’s right! Fun is important too!” Sasagawa-senpai unconsciously put up his fists. “Make sure to enjoy yourself out there, Kudou!”

“Thank you, senpai.”

Takeshi grinned.

“Hey, kids!” Setsuna-nee wave at them, having finished her business at the restroom. “What did I miss?” She plop down next to Sasagawa-senpai.

“You didn’t miss much, Setsuna-hime,” Gokudera answered. Takeshi wonder when he will drop the ‘hime’ suffix?

Setsuna turn to Nagi. “How are you feeling, Nagi-chan?”

“I’m nervous,” The younger girl admitted.
Setsuna hummed. “Breathing techniques always work for me. You already know how to that.” Nagi mutely nodded. “But you know what works better, if you think of your important people. One look at them before the program start will calm you down. I always sneak one last look at Tou-san. He believes in me. That alone always make me believe in myself. So you could say I draw my strength from him and everyone else.”

“Like Guardians?” Nagi piped out.

Guardians. It’s been so long since Takeshi heard that word. No one in their group mention it until now. He thought about it, yes, but he never said it. Not ever since…

Setsuna-nee doesn’t seem all that bothered though. “If you want to call it that.”

That got Nagi to look thoughtful.

When lunch hour ends, they file back into the rink. Takeshi and his friends returned to their previous seats. The Shimon group is already there. Gokudera and Sasagawa-senpai glared at Aoba Koyo and Kato Julie. The green haired boxer return the glare. Setsuna-nee and Kozato Enma situated themselves between the teenagers, effectively acting as buffers.

Nagi and everyone else in Novice A went to get changed. Takeshi wander what sort of program she had prepared. The competitors trickle in one by one. Even from this distance, Takeshi can see it clearly. The look of concentration. The way they pressed their lips in anticipation. How they straighten their back… Come to think of it… The air felt different just now.

Many of them are looking at their direction. No, not him. Or Gokudera. Or Sasagawa-senpai. Nor are they looking at the Shimon group.

They are looking at Setsuna-nee.

“Is it just me or the tension just doubled?” Takeshi wondered. The air is heavier. The contestants looked tenser than before… He recognised this. He always feel like this before a game.

“It’s not just your imagination,” Adelheid said. “The little ones are too young to understand. But the
older kids are now under more pressure because of Sawada-san. She is after all, Japan’s best figure skater. She won gold in the Olympics. To have your skate watched by someone like her… It’s nerve wracking. The members from Namimori FC Club have it worse. Since they are coached by Maeda-san, everyone expect them to win. They also trained with Olympic gold medalist. They are the favourites around these parts. They have this pressure to continue the winning streak. To lose here means a crack on Maeda-san’s reputation. And Sawada-san’s. It will make the club look weak.”

“But they know what Setsuna-hime is like.”

“They do. But she is more than that. She is their goal.”

The figure skaters look up to Setsuna, figuratively and literally. She sits up high at the bleachers, smiling down upon them.

“She is someone these children could become in the future. Ace skater, champion of Japan, Olympic gold medalist. And who knows? Perhaps one person from this crop will climb high enough to compete against Sawada-san. Do you know what an immense pressure that is? To be watched by an athlete of her caliber?”

“Adelheid-san, you speak of me too highly,” Setsuna-nee blushed a little.

“I speak true, Sawada-san,” Adelheid replied. “Sports is not just the skills or physical strength. It is also a mental battle. These kids are beginning to realise that.”

“Well, it means little if their mental strength can’t withstand me.” Setsuna-nee said. “If these kids truly want to aim high, they won’t let the pressure swallow them. If my sole presence throw them off, how will they fare against athletes from other countries?” She crossed her legs. “This competition may be small, but it’s one step forward. This is the world of figure skating. If you want your name to be known, you have to fight for it.”

The way Setsuna-nee said it made them gulped.

The competition resume. Gokudera went off to explain the technical rules for Novice A. Their program must be two and half minutes long. The multiplying factor of the Component Score will be 2.5. A bonus of 0.5 will be given if a double Axel is executed, even if the skater fall. However, it is a one time deal. There will be no bonus points for jump elements performed during the second half of the program as well. Takeshi will leave it to Gokudera to calculate the points.
The boys went first. Gokudera and Sasagawa-senpai cheer loudly whenever someone from Namimori FS Club step onto the ice. They watched Coach Maeda put his hands on his athletes’ shoulders and give them the pep talk. This must be first time Takeshi see him being a coach live, as opposed to watching him on television. He sneaked a glance at Setsuna-nee. Is she not going down there? Nagi could use her support…

Takeshi looked at the competitors again. Figure skating to them is what baseball is to him. Something about that warms his heart. There is something in the atmosphere that excites him and somewhat nostalgic. He look at his surroundings. He is together with friends and Setsuna-nee (and whatever Reborn is), to support another one of their friend.

Takeshi is having the time of his life.

Takeshi is glad to be alive.

Takeshi is happy to be alive.

Nagi stand silently on the side as she watch her competitors enter and exit the rink one by one. They are good, every single one of them. The crowd loves them. She feel admiration for them, and envy.

‘They are rising stars,’ Nagi thought. ‘What does that makes me then?’

Self doubt is something she is familiar with. It had followed her for years and will rear its head in moments like this. It’s not something that can easily be shaken off, no matter how much Nagi has grown. She will probably be battling this feeling for years to come.

Everyone here are rising stars. They push themselves over and over till they reach new heights. Where do they want to go? Towards the Sky and beyond. Setsuna-senpai is already there, at the very top. The skaters in Nagi’s generation want to go where she is now. Little do they know, Setsuna-senpai actually is a Sky.
They never talked about it after that day at the Maeda residence. About Guardians, Vongola, the mafia… Nagi sense that Setsuna-senpai doesn’t want to talk about it in further details with them, to avoid implicating them further. But Nagi can’t help her curiosity. She wants to know more. She and the boys have different elements. Gokudera is certain that he is a Storm. Yamamoto is a Rain. Sasagawa-senpai is a Sun. Hibari is a Cloud. Nagi herself is a Mist.

What does it mean exactly? To be a Mist?

‘Creating something from nothing, and nothing from something; thus bewildering the enemy, to render the Famiglia’s true form intangible with visions of deceit.’

That is what Gokudera told her, when she asked him about Flames. It was a while back, but it felt like a long time ago.

To create something from nothing, and nothing from something.

It sounds like a playing pretend to her. To trick people. To impress them. Bedazzle them. Nagi can do that she supposes. She can entertain them. Isn’t that also a part of figure skating?

“Next contestant, Kozato Mami!” said the announcer over the microphone. “From Shimon Figure Skating Club. She will be skate to Strauss’ Voices of Spring Waltz.”

Mami glide to the center of the rink. She is wearing a grass green dress with colourful flowers sewn on it. The colour make her red hair pop out even more.

(“Uwoooooooh! Mami-chan! Ganbatte!!!!” Koyo waved enthusiastically from the bleachers.)

The music start to play. Mami throw her hands up in the air in a theatrical manner. It reminds Nagi of a blooming flower. Mami timed it so perfectly with the music that it catch everyone’s attention. That’s good. Everyone is familiar with this piece of music. It is catchy, fun and not to mention intense. Mami have to match the energy in order to own the music.

Nagi wander what Mami is supposed to be. A fairy? A flower nymph? Or maybe even Kore, the goddess of Spring? Nagi know that you don’t always have to act up a role everytime you skate… But all of programs so far have her acting as someone else. To transform to someone else.
Mami here looked like a flower blooming in the middle of a frozen lake. A shoot that slip through the cracks. Pretty yet hardy. Something that full of life, wanting to live, fighting for its life.

What sort of skater does Mami envision her to be, Nagi wonder. What kind of skater does she want to be?

“Double Axel”

Nagi’s eyes widened. Not only the jump is perfect, it was high. This must be the highest jump yet in this competition. Mami’s family roared. She will receive 0.5 bonus point for this. The crowd is on her side now. They are thoroughly enjoying her performance.

Mami’s skating is intense. And she is only eleven? Nagi’s 11 years old self won’t be able to skate to this program. Not like Mami did. She just couldn’t imagine it. Then again, all of her programs so far use soft music as opposed to a dynamic one like *Voices of Spring Waltz*.

Mami has a real shot to get first place. Nagi belatedly realised. She easily outshine the other skaters that performed before her. No mistakes are made. Mami has charm, energy, and the skills. And there’s something about her skating that felt… Different.

Yet something about the way the younger girl skates feel familiar to her….

Next to her, Coach Maeda looked thoughtful. Did he notice as well?

When the music ended, the room is filled with thunderous applause. The audience like her best out of every contestants so far. It will be difficult to win their hearts after this kind of performance. Mami meant it when she said she will get first place. She know she can win. That kind of confidence is something Nagi never had before. It is almost enviable and definitely frightening.

Especially knowing that it will her turn after this.

Well, not exactly. There is still another skater that will perform ahead before her. Someone from another club. Nagi sneaked a glance at the girl. She looked cowed. Oh no.
“The total score is 63.30!!!”

It is the highest score so far for Novice A Ladies. Mami’s family roared at the announcement. Mami (who has left the rink) whooped.

“Nagi,” Coach Maeda laid a hand on her shoulder. “You don’t need to watch the next one. Go warm up.”

Nagi gulped. “Yes, Coach.”

Mami is waving at the audience. She is being showered by flowers and stuffed animals. Is that not the sign that she is the most liked skater in this competition, Nagi don’t know what is.

She went to the back to do her warm up. She can still hear the crowd clapping for Mami. ‘No. Don’t think about it. Focus on yourself.’

Yet all she can think about is Mami’s performance and words.

“Your supporters seem confident that you’ll win. It’s great to have supporters, but do you feel the same as them? It’s pointless to compete if you think you’ll lose from the start.”

“Then why are you even here? This is a competition, not a recreation. I can’t believe someone with half baked motivation like you get to be in the same rink as Senpai”

Why didn’t Nagi say anything back? Why didn’t she defend herself?

Because she didn’t think she is good enough.

Before she knew it, the music ended. It will be her turn now. Time flies when your thoughts are preoccupied. Did she warm up enough? Stupid Nagi.
Nagi make her way back to the rink. Coach Maeda and her rinkmates are waiting for her. Without much word, Nagi take off her jacket. Her costume is a pure white dress with see-through sleeves. She is going to be a spectre after all. One of her rinkmates take her jacket.

Coach Maeda studied her. Nagi try not to fidget, but he must noticed that she is nervous. “Nagi,” She look up to him. “You have trained for months for this moment. There is only one last thing you need to do. Go out there and skate.” Nagi nodded. Coach Maeda’s grey eyes locked with Nagi’s violet ones. “Do you want to skate?”

“Yes,” Nagi answered without thinking. With absolute certainty.

“Then do so.”

“Yes!”

Nagi take off her blade covers and hand it over to Coach Maeda. She take a deep breath before stepping onto the ice.

“Next contestant, Kudou Nagi from Namimori Figure Skating Club!”

All eyes are on her now. Her heart is drumming against her ribcage. Nagi scanned through the crowd. She easily find her friends and Setsuna-senpai. Her friends are waving and cheering for her. Setsuna-senpai’s brown eyes meet hers and she nodded.

_Do you know who you are?_

_I am Nagi_

Melody filled the air as Nagi moved. The music is _Dance of the Willis_ by Adolphe Adam. It is one of the music for the ballet _Giselle_. Nagi had done her research. _Giselle_ told the story of love and death. A girl who went mad from heartbreak before she dies. Even in death, her love for the man she loves is so strong, she find it in herself to forgive him. She saved him from the other spirits known as Willis. In the end, she was able to rest in peace. The story of _Giselle_ was partially inspired by Victor Hugo’s poem _Fantomes_. Phantoms. Ghosts. The Willis are spirits of girls who died before they married.
Mami’s program is about life while hers is about death. A contrast.

All of the Willis died from a broken heart. It is a terrible thing, a broken heart. No wonder they and Giselle went mad. They are sad. They are angry. It led to madness. Not all heartbreak will lead to loss of sanity of course. The story was clearly written by men. But Nagi still get the sentiment.

Her heart has been broken before. When Setsuna-senpai told them that they won’t Harmonize. Nagi chased her all the way from Tokyo only to get rejected… Of course it would hurt. Nagi don’t know how she would recover from that if it weren’t from Coach Maeda and the boys.

It made her wonder. Did she come here to Namimori purely for Setsuna-senpai or for the sake of skating? It was for Setsuna-senpai. Nagi was so transfixed with her she unseat her whole life just to be near her. It all worked out in the end but Nagi admit that it was a reckless move on her part.

But it was so worth it.

It was all thanks to figure skating that Nagi was able to meet Setsuna-senpai. Namimori helped her to rediscover her love for the sport. She didn’t pick it just because her mother dislike the cold. Maybe she’ll remember what is it exactly about figure skating that dræ her so. For now, she just want to skate her heart out.

Kozato Mami is wrong.

Nagi may doubt her skills, but never ever doubt her love for figure skating. It took her this long to realise, but Nagi genuinely love the sport. She will prove it and make the red haired girl acknowledge her.

She is a Willis. A girl, not quite a moment yet, who died from heartbreak. She died before she can tie the knot with the one she love. A Willis rise from their grave, not quite human, not quite evil either. A spirit still attached to the mortal plane. Willis dance with the other Willis. They enchant men to dance to the death. That’s how they find peace. Except, not really. Their anger never truly go away. The madness never pass. Their hearts remain broken.

She is Giselle. A peasant girl born with a weak heart. Who fell in love with a man above her status. That man loved her, but he lied to her as well. When she found out, she danced her feelings out. They said she went mad. She died. And her lover still lives and due to marry. She hated him. She
wanted him to suffer. She wanted to forget about him. She love him still. It was agony mixed with happiness when he visited her grave. It was fear mixed with delight when she saw the Queen and the other Willis curse him to dance to death.

It was love that drove her to save him.

She is Nagi.

My name is Kudou Nagi. I am a twelve years old skater originally from Tokyo. I moved to Namimori a few months ago so I can share a rink with Sawada Setsuna. She is Japan’s best and my idol. Thanks to her I met my friends. There is still a lot about me that I don’t understand. But that’s all right. I’m getting there. Cats is my favourite animal. I like chocolate. I enjoy ghost stories.

I love...

Nagi crossed her arms delicately in front of her and bend forward slightly. The music ends. Claps and cheers fill the air. Nagi bowed to the audience as stuffed animals are thrown. Her eyes scanned through crowd. They are smiling. At her. It felt… Good? Yes, good.

“EXTREME!” Sasagawa-senpai’s shout cut through the audience’s cheers.

She easily find her friends. The boys has leapt to their feet, cheering and waving at her. Nagi can’t see Reborn but she can see Setsuna-senpai. Even amongst this crowd, she will always be able to spot her. Setsuna-senpai is looking at her, smiling at her. She is proud of Nagi.

Warmth filled her heart and Nagi smiled back.

Then something hit her on the head and the last thing Nagi remember is how cold the ice is.

Chapter End Notes

Muahahahahahaha
I never said it will be Setsuna who do the skating XP

The Shimon Famiglia is here!

Since Mami lived, Enma is in a much better mental state and thus capable to take care of his family. In return, the kids gave him the respect Canon! Enma didn’t have. Enma here is the father figure for Shimon kids. Work took most of his time but he always made sure to give attention to everyone equally whenever he’s at home.

Mami is the baby of the group. Everyone dote on her, especially Enma. He try to give equal amount of attention to the kids, but Mami always end up getting more. The older kids are understanding, to his relief.

Sadly, I can’t find a lot of reference about interclub competition rules. In the end, I used competition regulations based in Belgium (there is a file). The Chicks and Cubs part killed me. The names are so cute! Those regulations were last updated in 2017. They are also accordance to ISU Novice rules dated back from 2014. I can’t find anything from before 2007, please don’t flame me for this!

I am not a long time skating fan or a judge, so I apologise if I calculate the scores wrong. The rules for Novice stated two spins, a step sequence and a maximum of four jumps. Double Axel can only be used once. Triple jumps are strictly forbidden. And they only do Free Skate here.

I know the ‘You’re doing amazing, sweetie’ meme is not from 2007 but I’m putting it here anyway.

Midori Ito is a Japanese figure skater. She won silver in the Olympics in 1992. In 2003 she was inducted to World Figure Skating Hall of Fame.

I hope you dear readers realise what a big step this is for Yamamoto. Yamamoto’s segment is always hard for me to write. It led to self introspection. As someone with depression, I want to stress that ‘not wanting to die’ and ‘wanting to live’ are two different things. It’s hard to explain. I found myself editing this paragraph multiple times. In some days, I want to give up, but I was scared of that too. So I keep holding on… But that’s not what necessarily what you would call as ‘living’. I hope that one day I can be like Yamamoto and think to myself; ‘I’m glad to be alive. I’m happy to be alive.’
For just a split second, there was silence. The kind when suspense is the thickest. The kind where everyone hold their breath, waiting, knowing. The kind before all hell break loose.

Gokudera look on in horror as Coach Maeda rushed to Nagi’s prone form. One moment she was standing. The next, she is lying on the ice.

What caused it? A freaking stuffed animal.

Next to him, Yamamoto had turned pale. The baseball idiot wanted to throw a stuffed animal. Setsuna-hime happily handed him one. A black cat. He took aim and-

The bomber is aware of how fast Yamamoto can throw. He saw him at practice a few times before. He saw the trophies. He’ve seen the look in Yamamoto’s eyes whenever they play baseball during PE.

It’s supposed to be a gift.

The stuffed animal hit her so hard it cause Nagi to lose her balance and hit her head.

“You baseball idiot!” Gokudera yank the front of Yamamoto’s shirt. Rage has taken over him. He want to hurt the baseball idiot, to make him pay for what he did to Nagi. Even if it was completely accidental. Nagi shouldn’t be the one who pay for his idiocy.

“Gokudera!” Ryohei restrain him from behind.

“Let go of me!” Gokudera struggled to get free. Damn, the boxer is damn strong!

“Gokudera-kun,” Setsuna take a stand in front of Yamamoto, shielding him from the enraged bomber. “I know you’re upset but beating up Takeshi-kun won’t help one bit.”
“But he-”

“I’m sure Takeshi-kun here feel awful for what he did. Now, I’m going to check on Nagi-chan, but I
don’t want anyone here to get hurt. So can you promise me that you won’t lay a hand on Takeshi-
kun while I’m gone, Gokudera-kun?”

The teen looked like he want to argue but he rein his temper in. He still shot Yamamoto a poisonous
look. Ryohei loosen his hold on him.

Setsuna turned to Enma. “I’m sorry for troubling you but could you…”

“Keep an eye on the boys? Yes,” Enma nodded, understanding. “Go check on your junior.”

Setsuna give him a wry smile before she leave their row. Ryohei put a hand on Gokudera’s shoulder,
silently telling him to sit down. Enma take the seat previously occupied by Setsuna. This way, he can
shield Yamamoto from Gokudera in case he explode again. Ryohei must have reach the same
conclusion, since he has yet to remove his hand from Gokudera’s shoulder.

They watch in silence as Nagi is laid onto the stretcher. They carried her away. The crowd break to a
murmur, discussing what just happened. Reborn glanced at Yamamoto. The teen looks like he want
nothing more than to sink to the ground. Enma is watching the boys with careful gaze. The Shimon
kids didn’t say anything. What can they say in a situation like this? Nagi hit her head. It’s not a type
of injury you can just brush off. They will need to take her to the hospital at least.

As if wanting to break the tension, the announcer announce the score.

“The total score is 82.25!!”

Nagi won.

But it didn’t feel like victory.
No one stopped her from entering the medical bay. They take one look at her and move out of the way. When Setsuna entered the room, the medic is running a series of test on Nagi. She was sitting on the bed. Her junior didn’t seem to notice her entry. Her focus is entirely on the medic. He is moving his finger in front of her. Nagi seems to follow. Good. Setsuna take a spot next to Tou-san.

“Can you tell me your name?” The medic asked kindly.

“Kudou Nagi.”

“How old are you?”

“Twelve. I’m turning thirteen this December.”

“Where do you live?”

“Namimori, but I was born and raised in Tokyo.”

“What is the name of your school?”

“Midori Middle.”

“Tell me your parents’ name?”

“My mother’s name is Shizuka. Um…” Nagi scrunched her nose. “I have two fathers?”

“That’s fine. Can you tell me both of their names?”

“Ryuichi is my biological father and Shizuo is my stepfather.”
“Thank you, Kudou-san,” The medic wrote something down on his clipboard. “It looks like there aren’t any serious injuries but to be sure, you need to go to the hospital,” He look at Tou-san. He nodded in understanding. “You have our permission to go to the medal ceremony,” The medic smiled at her.

Nagi blinked in confusion.

“Your score is 82.25,” Setsuna filled her in. “You beat Mami-chan. You won.”

Nagi give her a blank stare before her eyes went wide. “Wait, what???”

The audience broke into an applause when they see Nagi climb to the podium. First place. She got first place. This is the biggest achievement she ever gotten in her entire life. First place! All right, it’s only a small scale competition in an obscure part of Japan but still, first place! There is a medal hanging around her neck. A gold medal. It felt so surreal.

Setsuna-senpai is standing outside of the rink, together with the rest of her rinkmates. They are all clapping and cheering for her. With Nagi taking first place, Namimori FS Club dominated all categories in this tournament. Senpai is smiling at her. She looked… Proud. Nagi feel like crying.

Next to her, Mami smiled stiffly.

She can hear Sasagawa-senpai cheering for her from the bleachers. When she look at their direction, she found Gokudera clapping and Yamamoto… Well, he looked really pale. What happened? Mami’s family is there too. Aoba is cheering loudly for Mami… Is he trying to one upped Sasagawa-senpai in terms of volume?

Coach Maeda is hovering behind the photographer, ready to take her away at any given moment. The medic told them that Nagi should go to the hospital after this. Nagi did hit her head… How did that happened? She remember a blur of black and then the world start to spin…
The moment the photographer gave the ‘ok’, Coach Maeda rushed to Nagi’s side. He support her as they head to the entrance. As soon as they step out of the ice, Nagi is swarmed by her rinkmates. All voicing concerns and congratulations. The younger kids want to take a closer look at her medal.

“All right, that’s enough!” Setsuna-senpai clapped to get their attention, “We can review our performances today back home. Coach need take Nagi-chan to the hospital. Go get changed.” They leave obediently. Setsuna-senpai turn to Nagi. “I’ll help you, Nagi-chan,” She smiled sweetly.

Nagi wants to die.

Back in the locker room, Setsuna-senpai help her unzip her costume. It leave her feeling vulnerable. They changed clothes together in the past, back at their home rink… But Senpai never help her before. This experience is so nerve wrecking for Nagi. She got goosebumps whenever senpai’s hand brushes her skin.

Coach Maeda is on the phone when they return. He nodded at them when he noticed their presence. “Nagi, Setsuna.” He put down his phone.

“Tou-san.”

“That was Kurata-san. I just informed her of what happened here.”

Kurata is a woman in her early fifties who work as a caretaker. Nagi’s mother hired her to look after Nagi in Namimori. It took awhile for her to open up to the older woman… But Kurata-san is nothing but patient and kind and… Motherly.

“She is very concerned. Kurata-san will meet us at the hospital. Setsuna, can you ask the other parents if they can take more kids?”

“Yes, Tou-san.”

A selfish, childish part of her want to ask Setsuna-senpai to come with her. To be at her side while she get her examination, but Nagi refrained herself. Instead she look around for her friends while the adults are talking. The audience have dispersed, now that the tournament is officially over. Some went straight home and some hung around. It didn’t take long for her to spot the boys. Gokudera all but run to their spot. Yamamoto and Sasagawa-senpai lagging behind.
“Kudou!” The silver haired teen looked so stressed. “Are you okay?”

“The medic don’t think I was hurt too badly. But I need to go to the hospital just in case,” Nagi told them.

Hearing that, Yamamoto went even paler. “It was me,” He blurted. “I’m the reason you fell. I threw the stuffed animal. It hit you on the head. I’m so sorry.” He bowed deeply.

Nagi blinked. “What?”

“I… I couldn’t control my strength. When I prepare to throw the stuffed animal… My body went automatic. For a moment there I was a pitcher. I used my full strength. Please forgive me.”

Before Nagi can reply, Coach Maeda step forward. His grey eyes narrowed dangerously. Gokudera mirrored his action and narrowed his eyes at the baseball player as well. Sasagawa-senpai watch everything unfold warily.

“Coach Maeda…,” Yamamoto swallowed before bowing even lower, “I have no words. I will accept any punishment.”

Her coach stay silent for a moment before he scoffed. “My first priority is to take Nagi to the hospital. I’ll deal with you later.”

Gokudera looks like he want to object but hold his tongue.

“Anyone else got something else to say before we leave?” Coach Maeda asked.

“Yamamoto-san-” Nagi started.

“Wait!”
Coach Maeda sighed.

They turn around to see Mami standing there. Eyes full of fury and hand clutching a silver medal. She too have changed back to regular clothes. Where is her family? Oh, there they are. It appears Mami had just bolted and they just catch up to her by now.

Mami’s glare is directed at her and Nagi knew that trip to the hospital have to wait for a bit longer.

Mami did not take her loss well. That is obvious to see. The others and her rinkmates congratulates her still. Trying to placate her that second place is not so bad. The winner this time was someone coached by Maeda Kazuki, it couldn’t be helped. Mami should be proud with her achievement. She did everything by herself without the help of a coach or a choreographer.

But Mami won’t have any of it.

His spitfire of a sister ran off at first chance she got, when their attention was divided. She went to confront Kudou Nagi, the girl who snatched first place from her. This is bad. Enma know Mami won’t start a physical fight but… Taking it out on the champion and her club is not the way to go.

Mami hesitated under Coach Maeda’s hard stare but pull herself together. “Before you leave… Can you tell me the reason I lost?” Enma give her a mental pat for being brave. Reckless and not to mention impolite, but brave nonetheless.


“Nii-chan! I need to know why I lost!” She turn to face Coach Maeda and Setsuna again. Setsuna is looking at his sister in… Understanding? “Please! I want to know!” Mami pleaded. “I had a clean skate! I nailed all my jumps! I gave it my all! I was perfect!”

“Yes, you did,” Setsuna acknowledged, “But Nagi was perfect too.”

Mami looked like she just been slapped. Had it coming from someone else other than Setsuna, his
sister would take it better. But there she is, the idol Mami looked up to, telling the younger girl that her efforts is still not enough. That her competitor was better.

“W-Why? What makes her better than me?”

“Because Nagi have a better understanding of her program compared to you,” It was Coach Maeda who answer this time. “She done her research on her piece. She told a story through her skating. She was able to convey the emotions to the audience. She made us believe. You had a concept but you weren’t able to fully deliver it. Not like Nagi did,” He waited for Mami to say something. She has none. “That and originality. You were copying Setsuna, unconsciously or not.”

Mami gaped at him. Coach Maeda continues, “I won’t say that you copied her 100%, but I can see the similarities in your movements. It’s almost as if you were following a textbook example and Setsuna is it. I’m positive the judges noticed it as well. What they want to see is Kozato Mami, not Setsuna. That’s why you have lower scores. Because there is not enough you in your program. Nagi beat you at that. She poured her heart and soul into her skating. She completely owned her program. That is the difference between you and her. You didn’t make your program wholly yours.”

Enma’s heart ache for his sister. Even though Mami belonged to a club, it doesn’t have a coach or a choreographer, just a couple of trainers to teach the kids how to move. Mami have to learn how to jump from videos. Setsuna’s videos. Naturally, she use Setsuna as her examples. There is not a day gone by without her watching records of Setsuna’s past programs on their TV. Enma is surprised the tapes and player didn’t break from the constant use. Mami has no one to teach her. She has no choice but to rely on recordings. The little girl would stand in front of the TV and copy Setsuna’s gestures and poses. It doesn’t surprise him that his sister reproduce these movements in her program in the end. She idolised Setsuna. It’s normal to mimic your idol. Mami just want to be like her. She pictured Setsuna when she skates. Only this time, it backfired on Mami.

This time, Mami couldn’t hold back her tears. She start to sob. “I- *hic* I just - *hic* I just want to be like you…”

His little sister admired Setsuna a lot. They started out the same. A small town girl, with few resources and the odds stacked against her. Setsuna shown them that it is possible to reach the top despite everything. She make thousands of girls and boys across the country that they can do it. That as long as you work hard enough and never stop believing, you can become a world class athlete. That it is not just a pipe dream on their part. She gave them proof that they can become more. She gave them hope.

Setsuna gave Mami hope.
“Kozato-san!” Kudou Nagi speak up. “To be completely honest, I thought you will take first place.” She look at his sister nervously, “I am not a confident person. Everyone have high expectations of me. I don’t do well with pressure… And… You were not wrong when you said my motivation is half baked. I don’t take figure skating seriously in the past…”

Mami has stopped crying now. Kudou have her full attention.

“But!” Kudou take a deep breath, “I love figure skating! I used to have doubts about it… But now… I can tell you with full confidence that I love it. And I don’t want to stop now. Figure skating is fun. I want to see how far where I go. I want to try many things. I want to meet many more people through figure skating. And Kozato-san… Your skating is really good. Your efforts is not fruitless! I want to compete against you in the future!”

Enma glanced at Mami. She looked… Surprised? Unsure? He subtly nudge her.

“Oh…,” Mami look down on her feet before lifting her head up to meet Kudou’s gaze, “I’m… Sorry. For telling you all those things earlier today. That was rude of me.”

Kudou nodded, “It’s okay, Kozato-san. I need to hear that.”

Mami shakes her head. “No, Kudou-san. I was super mean to you. Your skating don’t lie. You love this sport and you take it seriously. How else would you be able to pull off something so beautiful?” Her words got the older girl to blush. “Compared to you my program was….,” She didn’t finish.

“Mami-chan,” Setsuna speak gently to the younger girl, “You are a strong girl. I see you look out for your rinkmates. It’s hard, isn’t it? Being the oldest and the unofficial leader of the bunch. You shoulder their expectations. You were able to create a beautiful program on your own. You’ve proven yourself to everyone here. No one will say your skating was lackluster.”

“But I still lost.”

“Yes, and it stings. This is far from over. This is just the beginning. The road is stretched out in front of you. All you need to do is to take that step. Are you going to quit after this?”
“No! That would be unthinkable!”

“There’s still the All Japan and next year,” Setsuna smiled. “I’m sure this won’t be the last time you two compete against each other.”

The two girls looked at each other and smiled.

After making sure all the children have a ride home, Setsuna and Reborn went to the hospital with Coach Maeda and Nagi. Enma gave Setsuna something before he take his kids away. Mami wish Nagi good luck before leaving. The Namimori boys made their way to the train station in silence. The train car is mostly empty. Gokudera sit on the other side of the car, far away from Yamamoto. Ryohei sit down next to the baseball player. The black haired teen is still pale. Whatever Nagi wanted to say to him before Mami interrupted them, it has to wait. Coach Maeda whisked her away before she and Yamamoto can exchange anymore words.

Ryohei glanced at Gokudera. His kouhai is determined not to look at Yamamoto’s direction. He didn’t say a word throughout their journey to the train station. Chances are he will continue to the silent treatment for days. Maybe even weeks. He cannot let this go on. Ryohei need to get Yamamoto out of his funk and Gokudera to forgive him.

They are friends.

The boxer may have a weakness in the academics but that doesn’t mean he’s blind. He can already tell that the incident from today will eat Yamamoto. And not in a good way. And Gokudera… He is hot headed like Ryohei, but unlike the boxer, Gokudera is not healthy. No, he is not talking about his smoking habit at the moment.

Gokudera is full of… Emotions. Unhealthy emotions. And negative energy? Ryohei can’t quite explain it but his gut feeling tell him that his kouhai carry a lot of hurt. The mafia must have something to do with it. Nagi was the first person that Gokudera opened up to. After Setsuna-nee of course. Honestly, Ryohei would reacted the same if something like that happened to Kyoko-nee.

He can’t do this by himself. He need help. And not now. Ryohei have this feeling that he will only
make things worse if he press on the issue now.

‘I know! I should take these two to see Kudou tomorrow!’ Ryohei thought. Of course, they need to wait for an update from Setsuna-nee first... But the boxer is Extreme confident that Kudou will be alright. Setsuna-nee will get through Gokudera, if everything else fail.

By tomorrow morning, these two should be able to think more clearly. Or maybe not. In any case, Ryohei will be there to snap them out of it. These two will reconcile. Everything will be well again.

Gokudera left without any word once they arrived at Namimori. Ryohei walked Yamamoto home. Yamamoto’s father immediately took notice of his son’s dark mood. Ryohei gave him a short summary of what happened. Tsuyoshi thanked Ryohei for looking after his son. He promised to talk to Takeshi.

Ryohei went home with a heavy heart. He can’t wait for tomorrow to come.

Kurata-san beat them to the hospital. She is a short woman with short, greying hair. The first thing Kazuki noted when he first met her is that she has kind eyes. She jump out of her seat when the trio enter the reception area.

“Nagi-chan!” She grab hold of Nagi’s hands. “I was so worried when Coach called! Are you okay? Do you feel pain anywhere?”

Nagi flushed, “I-I feel fine, baa-chan…”

Setsuna stayed with Nagi while Kazuki and Kurata-san went to the registry. They didn’t have to wait long fortunately. Nagi’s number is called and the four of them got up to go see the doctor. The doctor ask Nagi a number of questions before send her off to prepare for CT Scan. A nurse took her away.

Now for the waiting part.

“Have you contacted Nagi’s mother?” Kazuki asked Kurata-san once they return to the waiting area.
“I did but…,” Kurata-san sighed. “She didn’t pick up the phone. I called her manager afterwards. She promised to relay the message.”

No one here is under illusion that Nagi’s mother would call back. Kazuki had only spoken with her exactly once… And there is just something about that woman that raise his hackles. Nagi didn’t have anything positive to say about that woman as a mother… Which is a red flag by itself.

“Let me tell you about the tournament,” Setsuna change the subject. “We will send you a copy of Nagi’s skate for sure!”

That cheer up the older woman a great deal. “Oh, thank you so much! I wanted to come but someone has to watch over the apartment…”

So his daughter told Kurata-san everything. How well received Nagi’s performance was. How much Nagi pushed herself. Kurata-san would understand, once she watch the video, of how much Nagi has come along. They chuckled when Setsuna told her Nagi’s reaction when they informed her score.

Kazuki went and bought coffee for the two women. Reborn come along with him. He paid for his own coffee. As if Kazuki would pay. The man-baby have been keeping quiet for a long while now. Kazuki prefer him like this. He don’t need anymore issue on his plate. Between the Hibaris, his own family, I-pin, figure skating and mafia, Kazuki could use a little peace.

It’s only a matter of time before things get hectic again. Kazuki knows that perfectly well. Setsuna’s Flame training is coming along nicely. They will eventually have to add physical combat in her training. His daughter is stronger than she looks but she never learn the basics of martial arts. Will they teach her martial arts? Who knows, but martial art is right up on his alley. And Nagako’s. Weapons will be included as well. Kazuki can cover that with Setsuna. Kazuki is able to use an array of weapons, though he has a preference for tanbo, while his wife is skilled with the naginata. She is a great archer too… If only her control is a bit more… Ehm, manageable. Have Reborn discovered Nagako’s archery skills yet? Boy, is he in for a surprise.

Maybe he should go talk with Yamamoto Tsuyoshi. Setsuna told him that the sushi chef is not only aware of Dying Will Flame, he implied that he can harness it. They should confront him about it. If Tsuyoshi knows Flame… That means he is bound to know about the mafia too. Kazuki have so many questions.
He don’t do well with surprises. Especially if it put his family and kids in harm’s way.

He must deal with the Yamamoto boy. His excuse of being unable to control his power is hardly a good one. It will be a blessing if Nagi didn’t suffer from any serious head trauma from his action. It was not easy to tell Kurata-san that Nagi had been hurt. It will never will be.

Training is in order. Not just for Setsuna but also for the staffs at the rink. They are personally trained by Kazuki upon their hiring. Why do a worker at a skating rink need to know how to fight? Unorthodox, yes, but Kazuki feel better knowing someone is capable to defend the place while he is away. The others chalk it up as one of his Hibari oddities. They failed with Bianchi. A mistake that almost cost the lives of his skaters. Kazuki will not tempt fate.

Nagi and the nurse return. They go to the doctor’s office, where he give them result. Praise the Lord Nagi didn’t suffer from any injuries. No cracked skull or anything. Kazuki’s shoulders lose their tension upon hearing the news. The doctor advised Nagi to take it easy for the next few days, and to schedule another checkup. Kurata-san must wake Nagi up every two hours when she go to bed tonight.

They all walk out from the hospital. Setsuna called a cab for Nagi and Kurata-san.

“Contact me if anything happen,” Kazuki said to Kurata-san who nodded. Setsuna give Nagi one last hug.

They go to the parking lot. Kazuki start the car. Reborn take the back seat. Setsuna sit on the front next to him.

“What a day,” Setsuna said once they leave the parking lot.

“That was certainly interesting,” Reborn commented.

“That’s one way to put it,” Setsuna replied drily. “But you know, I can help but think something good come out of it.”

“Oh?” Kazuki steered the wheel to the right to take a turn.
“Nagi did well in this competition. She finally come out of her shell. I can tell. So are the rest of the kids. That also goes for Mami and the other competitors. This competition have come so far compared to my time.”

Kazuki didn’t say anything until the traffic light turns red. “That Nagi… She told me once, that she want to be on equal standing with you. To compete against you. Never once had she told me that she want to compete against everybody else. This is the first time.”

Setsuna smiled. “These kids have lit a fire up in each other. That’s good. That’s how it supposed to be.”

“Do they light your fire?” Reborn asked.

Setsuna looked at Reborn’s reflection at the mirror and smiled. “As the matter of fact, yes, they do.”

Kazuki can’t help but smile too.

Back in his apartment, Gokudera fumed. His mind replay the memory of Nagi falling over and over again. He felt so helpless at the time. He hated it. He don’t know which feeling is worse. Being helpless or waiting for the news… There haven’t been any word about Nagi yet. She was able to focus just fine earlier… But what if they found something at the hospital? What if?

Coach Maeda have no reason to contact him… So that leaves Setsuna-hime. Gokudera resisted the urge to bombard her with text messages. It will make him look… Clingy. Like a child whose hand need to be held all the way. Gokudera is not a child.

He jumped when his doorbell rings. Was that his doorbell? Someone is visiting him? Maybe it’s the landlord or his neighbour. Was he making loud noises? Rent is up by the end of the month. No one from school knows where he lives. He told Nagi but with her state, Gokudera doubt that they will let her wander off so soon. So that leaves…

Gokudera dashed to the door.
Setsuna-hime and Reborn stood outside of his apartment.


“Of course!” Gokudera step aside. “Do you want tea? Water? Coffee? Ack! Let me clean up the table!” He hurried to the table, gathering the magazines. His room didn’t smell right? Gokudera went outside earlier to have a smoke so probably not. No dynamites out of place?

“Gokudera-kun,” Setsuna called out to him softly, “First, I want you to know that Nagi is okay. She will need to go to the doctor again in a few days but she’s okay.”

Gokudera dropped the magazines. *Nagi is okay.* His eyes watered before he wiped them quickly.

Setsuna-hime purposely don’t look at him, instead putting the bentos on the table. Reborn already help himself with the kitchenette. “Reborn already called dibs on the beef. Do you want the salmon or the chicken one?”

“S-Salmon, please.”

“Got it. I bought ice cream too, by the way.”

They eat their bentos in comfortable silence. After their meal, they enjoy their ice cream. This is what he need. Ice cream and company. Gokudera is not sure what he’ll do tonight if he is left alone. Probably go to the mountains again.

Setsuna-hime looked around his room. Her eyes eventually fell on the grand piano. “How long have you played the piano, Gokudera-kun?”

“I learnt to play since I was 3,” Gokudera told her. And before he can stop himself... “My mother was the one who taught me.”

“Really?”
“Y-Yeah… She was a pianist… She had concerts and everything… She stopped after she got pregnant with me. Professionally I mean,” Getting pregnant out of wedlock killed her career. But that didn’t seem to bother Lavina, according to what he heard. “I stopped playing after I left home. They don’t have pianos in the streets anyways. But I still…” He didn’t finish that sentence. Setsuna-hime seems to get it. “Masumi-sensei wanted to hear me play,” He said instead. “She want me to record it. I don’t know why.”

“There is a job opening in the studio. Our accompanist, Kunisaka-san, will be moving soon,” She told him.

Gokudera’s eyes widened. “She want to offer me a job?!”

“How could she? If you didn’t let her know what you are capable off,” Setsuna-hime told him rather bluntly. “She never hear you play. But what are you going to do about it?”

“I…,” Gokudera haven’t played in the piano in front of someone in years. The mere thought of it send him to the time when he was eight. When Bianchi would force fed him her cooking and his father had his men dragged him to the piano. When the guests take delight in his pain. No one did anything about it. Except for Shamal. Ugh, he hasn’t thought about that pervert doctor for years.

But… If Masumi-sensei really is offering him a job here… Gokudera might be able to kiss his job at the convenience store goodbye. For one, a studio pianist will have a much more reasonable work hours. And he will be able to spend more time with Setsuna-hime! No more dealing with weirdos and asshole customers!

“I’ll make the recording,” Gokudera said after a moment of silence. “Which piece should I pick?”

“I think,” Setsuna-hime said carefully, “You should pick a piece that means a lot to you. Do you have something like that, Gokudera-kun?”

Gokudera take another moment to think, “I can think of a few.”

Setsuna-hime smiled. “Tell me if you need anything.”
“Yes…”

Setsuna-hime put aside the empty ice cream cup and bring her chair next to him. She put a hand on his head. “Today was very scary for you, isn’t it?” She said softly. “You did a great job holding it in, Gokudera-kun.”

For a fleeting moment there, Gokudera is back at the ice rink. Nagi’s prone form laid on the ice. He wish to go to her but his feet is rooted to the ground.

(And for a second, Lavina was the one lying there.)

“Nagi is okay. Everything will be alright. You are okay,” She pull him closer. Gokudera leaned to her. “Let’s go see Nagi tomorrow,” Setsuna-hime said kindly.

“…yeah…”

And the dam finally break.

Gokudera sobbed to her shoulder. Setsuna-hime held him close.

He is crying again. On Setsuna-hime. Again. But right now, he don’t give a damn about that. Nagi is safe. He is glad. But he is also sad. So many emotions swirling inside him right now. He don’t even know where to begin.

“Take your time, Gokudera-kun,” Setsuna-hime murmured against his hair. “I’m here.”

Gokudera cried harder.

Later on that night, Setsuna sent a text message with details of Nagi’s condition to the older members of the club, who forwarded it to the younger ones. She didn’t forget to give an update to Ryohei,
Yamamoto and her best friends too.

(Yamamoto cried when he read the text.)

Setsuna-hime still have some errands to do so she told Gokudera to head to Nagi’s place first. She gave him her address. Gokudera make a quick stop at the supermarket to buy a watermelon for Nagi. That’s what you do when you visit a sick person, right? Bring them fruits?

Along the way he bump into Sasagawa. He appears to have the same thing in mind with Gokudera. The boxer bring oranges instead. He is also wearing a backpack for some reason. Odd. Together they head out.

Nagi lives in an apartment building much fancier than Setsuna-hime’s. Sasagawa was awed with the intercom outside of the building. It was Nagi’s caretaker who answered them and open the front door for them. A matronly looking woman greet them when they arrived in front of the apartment. This must be Kurata-san.

“Gokudera-san! Sasagawa-san!”

The two boys turn around to see Nagi standing there, well and relaxed. The tension leave Gokudera’s shoulders almost immediately.

“Kudou! I’m so glad that you’re Extreme okay!” Sasagawa smiled. “Look what I’ve got!”

“Oh! Thank you…,” Nagi accepted the oranges. She head to the kitchen. The boys follow.


Nagi smiled, “The doctor told me to take it easy for the next few days. Kurata-baasan is taking good care of me.”
Gokudera return her smile. “Here,” He put the watermelon on the counter, “I heard that summer in Japan is not complete without watermelons.”

“Oh, wonderful!” Kurata-san appear behind Nagi. “I’ll cut up the watermelon. Why don’t you kids spend time in the bedroom?”

Nagi flushed slightly. Gokudera can guess the reason why. They are friends, yes, but Gokudera is still a boy. Given how introverted Nagi can be, she must not have friends coming over often. “This way,” Nagi mumbled. The boys follow her.

Bianchi’s childhood bedroom is every little girl’s dream. Four-poster bed, every piece of furniture is decked with frills, a doll house taller than she was (complete with the tiny toy furniture and everything) and everything is clean and brand new. The color theme is pink and white. Gokudera will forever blame their father for giving Bianchi the toy kitchen set for her birthday. It became her favourite thing to play with. Soon enough Bianchi grew bored with plastic food and Play-Doh before going down to the kitchen to cook *real food*. The rest is history.

He stepped inside Setsuna-hime’s bedroom only once. It was a typical civilian bedroom but there is this homey feel to it. She has a special shelf to put gifts from fans, memorabilia and medals. The giant stuffed duck made Gokudera wonder how she was able to fit it through her door. He need to ask her in the future.

Nagi’s bedroom is as big as his studio apartment and twice the cleanliness. There are the standard single bed (she has more than one pillow. Oh, and the case have frills too), nightstand, desk, bookshelves and closet. Nagi’s medal is proudly displayed on the vanity. Gokudera counted 3 posters of Setsuna-hime on the wall. Soft, dark blue rug laid on the floor, where a white circular table is placed on it. There are cushions too. Another eye catching feature of the room is the grey bean bag in the cover which have cat ears. That’s not the only cat related item in this room. Nagi has her share of stuffed animals, most of them cats. There is a cat alarm clock on the nightstand. If he has to describe the bedroom in one word, Gokudera would call it ‘cute’.

“P-please take a seat wherever you like,” Nagi gestured.

Gokudera and Sasagawa sit down on the floor.

“Your room is Extreme nice,” Sasagawa said.
Nagi blushed and then smiled, “T-Thank you. I rarely have friends over…”

Friends

Something about that word made his inside feel warm.

“I brought something to cheer you up,” Sasagawa pull out something from the backpack. A CD case. “Took me awhile to convert the records and burn them to CDs but I did it.”

Gokudera’s eyes widened, “You mean that’s-”

Sasagawa grinned, “Setsuna-nee’s old skating videos.”

Nagi let out a squeal.

“What are we waiting for!” Gokudera got up to his feet in excitement. “Kudou, where’s the TV and CD player? The living room! Of course!”

“Wait!”

Gokudera halted. He turn to Sasagawa in confusion.

“Yamamoto is not here yet. We promised to watch it together with him, right? He’s on his way. I checked with him this morning.-”

Gokudera cut him off. “Why should we wait for the Baseball Idiot? In fact, why is he coming here? Did you already forget what he did?”

“Gokudera-”

“We’re goddamn lucky that Kudou didn’t suffer any serious injuries! Do you know what could’ve
happened? Hemorrhage, skull fracture, cerebral contusion, epidural hematoma, brain swelling. Head injuries is nothing to scoff at!"

“Goku-”

“Kudou might be injured somewhere else! Like her ankle or hip for instance. It will take weeks or months for her to recover, not to mention the therapy. In worst case scenario, Kudou will be forced to retire! It was sheer dumb luck! The Baseball Idiot should have remembered that we’re at an ice rink, not a fucking baseball field-”

“Gokudera-san, stop it!”

Gokudera stop his tirade. He and Sasagawa look at Nagi wide eyed. The girl never raise her voice. Ever. She is glaring at him. She never glare at anyone before. “I fell because of Yamamoto-san, yes. But I’m fine. One of the first things Coach Maeda taught us is how to fall properly so we can minimise the risk of injury. I was caught off guard but my body still remember how. It’s all reflects, I guess. It could have been worse, I admit that, but the main thing is that it wasn’t. I’m okay. I forgave Yamamoto-san already. I know you are angry at him, Gokudera-san. I’m happy that you are angry on my behalf, but you shouldn’t resent him for long. He already expressed remorse for his action. I want you to forgive him. Like I did.”

“Why should I?” Gokudera scowled. He is acting like a petulant child, he knows that. But he can’t help with his feeling.

Nagi’s eyes soften. “Because that’s what friends do.”

Takeshi ended up going to bed at 3 in the morning. What happened yesterday messed up his head. The guilt is eating him. It dug to the ugly feelings he’s been trying to sort out. To make peace with. He was so so scared. Then when he read the text message from Setsuna-nee, he couldn’t stop crying. Hence why he go to bed so late. Today Takeshi is going to Nagi’s home. He will apologize to her once again.

“Takeshi! Come down here!”
Ah, that’s his Pops.

Pops promised Sasagawa-senpai that he will talk to him but it never came. He just sent him upstairs. He told Takeshi that the talk will come tomorrow, because Takeshi is too distraught at the time. Takeshi’s head is much clearer now. Maybe he want to have the talk now. This might take awhile.

When he go downstairs, there are no customers. It doesn’t mean that the shop is completely empty.

Setsuna-nee, Coach Maeda and Reborn sit on the counter.

“Yamamoto Takeshi,” Coach Maeda eyed him. “We need to talk.”

Chapter End Notes

Gokudera is a Sad Boy. A confused one too. He is on his way on doing Better but it’s not an instantaneous thing. At least he has Mama Duck Setsuna and his friends.

Remember when Yamamoto hit Lambo so hard his tooth fell out? With baseball? Yeah... I always feel annoyed that they never address Yamamoto’s inability to control himself in the manga. So I’m doing it here. Someone gotta call him out on this one.

Oops I was wrong. There’s still the National. Nagi will have to compete in the National first before making her debut in Junior. I apologize for the inconsistencies.

The hospital scene is super short. I apologize for that. I want to hurry and move on to the next scene.

Plot bunnies strike again and here are my newest ideas for future Fem!Tsuna fic

Title Coming Soon
Tsuru woke up to find the baby she just gave birth to literally one day ago is missing. She was last seen being taken away by Sawada Iemitsu, who haven’t show his face for years until now. With the help of friends she met over the years, her loving husband by her side, and fueled with maternal fury, Tsuru go on a quest to Italy to rescue her newborn daughter and kick her No Good father in the nuts.

Title Coming Soon
Instead of meeting Iemitsu’s daughter face to face in Namimori, Reborn first meet Tsubura from the television screen. Featuring Sawada Hatsu as the 27th member of rising idol group.

Title Coming Soon
Namimori is that Weird™ Small Town where the unexplainable is the norm. With the kind of people living in this town, the World’s Greatest Hitman is not too out of place.
But even he has to draw the line somewhere. Magical girls is Reborn’s line. Featuring Sawada Natsuki as a Magical Girl.

who lives, who dies, who tells your story
Instead of being frozen, Timoteo sealed Xanxus’ Flames instead. He is then promptly shipped off to Japan. Xanxus ended up in a civilian neighborhood. As if being sealed and exiled isn’t bad enough, his life get even more complicated when he got involved with the girl next door. And according to her he is haunted. Featuring Xanxus who is Done With Everything and Sawada Itsuki the Ghost Whisperer.

What do you guys think? Please let me know your opinions of these plot bunnies!
Maeda Kazuki is best summed up as intense.

Yamamoto know the man almost his whole life even though he never really spoken with him. Setsuna-nee always bring him up whenever she come to the shop. He always see Coach Maeda on TV or when they cover Setsuna-nee in a news article. In what little interaction Yamamoto had with the man, he always look so serious. Something about those steely grey eyes made him snap to attention, lest he will be eaten alive. He has this dignified air around him as well as authority. This is not a man you want to cross. No wonder Gokudera is afraid of him.

(Yamamoto later found out that Coach Maeda is related to Hibari, which explains a lot.)

He oddly feel like a scolded puppy as he sit there, head low, the adults looking at him sternly. Except for Reborn. He always have that vacant baby look.

Setsuna-nee is the one who break the silence, “Do you know why we are here, Takeshi-kun?”

“You wanted to talk about yesterday,” Takeshi mumbled. “What I did…”

“Setsuna-chan and Maeda-san here have told me the full story of what happened,” Tsuyoshi said, “It is as what your senpai told me yesterday.”

Takeshi swallowed, “I’m sorry…”

“Do you think it’s possible that the same thing might occur again?” Coach Maeda asked him.

Takeshi gather his courage first before answering, “…yes…”

“Why?”
He has no logical explanation to that. “You know about the Zone? When an athlete is in this deep concentration mode that it allow them to achieve feats that usually don’t happen in normal circumstances? I feel like whenever I’m about to throw something I am back at the baseball pitch and-” Takeshi snap his fingers. “My baseball coach told me that I have this ability to slip into the Zone easily.”

“Your baseball coach,” Coach Maeda said in a deadpan tone.

Takeshi nodded, “I hold the position as pitcher in my team. My throw is the fastest.”

“Have there been any other instances when you slip to this ‘in-the-Zone’ mode in non baseball setting?” Setsuna-nee asked him.

The baseball player thinks for a moment, “There’s this one time when we play basketball during PE… I was supposed to pass the ball to a teammate but I ended up throwing it like a baseball. He moved out of the way in time. During a camping trip last year a classmate asked me to throw me a bottle of water… I threw it instead. Last year my class performed a drama for the cultural festival… I got to play as a ninja. I was given shurikens- plastic ones- and was told to throw it like this,” He make gestures, “But during practise I threw it baseball pitch style… It ended up stuck on a prop…”

“With the same amount of force you put when you throw that cat at Nagi?” Setsuna-nee pressed on.

Takeshi look down on his hands in shame.

“So it’s a pattern,” Coach Maeda concluded. “A dangerous behavioral pattern.”

“When you throw it, what type of throw did you do?” Reborn asked, speaking for the first time. “A fastball? A curveball? Slider?”

“Fastball,” Takeshi answered. “It’s always a fastball. It’s my specialty.”

“Do you know how to do the other types?”

“I do but coach said my fastball is all I need. So far no one can hit my fastball unless they do a bunt.”
Setsuna-nee and Coach Maeda exchange a look.

“We need to break this pattern of yours,” Coach Maeda tap his finger against the table. “You could seriously injure Nagi back then. We cannot let another slip up. If we don’t do anything now, it’s just waiting for an accident to happen.”

Takeshi swallowed. He figured they would say that. “How?”

“You need to control your tendency to slip into that tunnel vision state of mind,” Setsuna-nee said. “It’s good to have focus but not to this extent. You need to be able to realise that you are not playing baseball at the moment. You need to be able to identify your surroundings. Your mind must be able to stop your body before it move. You need to start *now*.”

“But the tournament is starting this fall!” Takeshi leap to his feet, “I have to train hard to improve my throws!”

“What will you do if you accidentally hurt your teammate?” Coach Maeda said scathingly. “What if it wasn’t a baseball player you hurt but a little kid instead? If we don’t do something now, this pattern will be so ingrained in you that you might hurt your own child instead.”

A vision come to him. Little Takeshi playing catch with Kaa-san. Little Takeshi is ready to catch the ball. Kaa-san smiled and take aim… The ball is so fast it hit Little Takeshi in the face. Little Takeshi fell. And the scene changed.

Grown up Takeshi standing at Kaa-san’s spot, looking down at a bleeding little girl who looks similar to Nagi.

His blood run cold.

The thought of him hurting someone like that by accident make him want to puke… What is even scarier is that Takeshi genuinely believe it *will* happen. He won’t question the possibility.

“If you are so worried about the tournament, improve your other throws instead,” Coach Maeda said, unbothered with Takeshi’s pallor. “Your fastball is already good enough. Can you say the same with
the other ones? Focus on those instead. Go back to the basics. Maybe it’ll help break the pattern.”

“I don’t think my coach would like that…”

Coach Maeda wave it off, “That coach of yours don’t know the first thing about coaching. He shouldn’t let you stagnant like that. Your progress is unbalanced. You have a lot of room to improve. It’s a coach’s job to guide you to the right direction. If we don’t do something, at this rate you will end up injuring yourself first. There is this little thing called moderation.”

“And it’s not good if you only know to do one thing,” Reborn said. “You will be so used doing fastballs that it will put you in the corner when someone show up and able to hit it. You will be forced to fall back to other throws but they are not good enough either. It’s good to have specialty but it cannot be your only weapon,” To emphasize his point, Reborn have Leon change from a pistol to a shotgun to a sniper and then finally to a bazooka. “We must be able to adapt.”

“Why do you think skaters learn more than one move?” Setsuna-nee asked him. “A sushi chef like Tsuyoshi-jiichan don’t make sushi only. He must be able to make other dishes as well. You can’t keep relying on one trick only,” She told Takeshi. “You must have back up. A hidden card up in your sleeve.”

Takeshi take a deep breath before meeting Setsuna-nee in the eye, “Yes.”

“Tell your coach what we just talked about. A coach must be able to listen to his players and take their feelings into account. If he choose to ignore you even after this, then his ability as a coach speak for itself,” Coach Maeda folded his arm.

Takeshi hesitated for a second before he look at the elderly, “What if I ended up costing the team?”

“Baseball is a sport played by teams. You may be the lynchpin of yours but that does not excuse the rest of your teammates to slack off. You won’t be in the team forever. They can’t rely on you all the time. Do you think of yourself so little that fastballs is all there it is to it about you as a baseball player?”

“What? No!”

“Then do something about it,” Grey eyes narrowed. “Give us proof that you want to change and
will work hard to achieve that. You owe it to Nagi. If I find out you cause another accident, consider yourself banned from the ice rink. I don’t want someone with zero self control around the little ones.”

Takeshi steeled himself, “I will.”

“This is your homework then,” Setsuna-nee smiled. “Not just for the training camp but for the rest the year, okay? There is always room for improvement. Don’t be so quick to feel satisfied. Because that is what makes you lower your guard. And it make things even more painful afterward.”

Takeshi nodded slowly.

“But please don’t push yourself too hard as well. Remember to pace yourself. There is such a thing called overextension. This is also a good opportunity for you to practise moderation.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

Setsuna-nee chuckled a little at that.

“I will make sure to keep a close eye on Takeshi when he’s home,” Tsuyoshi nodded at the other two adults in the room. “Besides, I still yet to give him a scolding.” He tap his son on the head.

Takeshi laughed nervously.

“Have you been crying?” Coach Maeda asked him.

Takeshi stiffens. He didn’t expect the elderly to ask him that question outright. Then again, Takeshi spent an entire night crying. His eyes is no longer swollen. How did he know?

“N-No?” Takeshi answered unconvincingly.

Judging from their expressions, it’s clear that no one is buying it.
Takeshi hunched his shoulders, ready to hear Coach Maeda berating him for being a crybaby.

“Why are you being so afraid of? There’s no shame in crying. It’s a natural biological function of the human body. Kids your age cry all the time. Don’t force yourself to act like grown up. You are still wet behind the ears. The world still spin no matter what you do. Now that you had your fill of tears, time to catch up with the rest of the world.”

Takeshi blinked. ‘Is he… Trying to encourage me?’

Coach Maeda’s eyes narrowed to grey slits.

Takeshi flinched and then straighten up, “Yes, sir!”

“Think carefully of what we talked about just now, Takeshi-kun,” Setsuna-nee helpfully interfere before Coach Maeda can set Takeshi on fire with his gaze alone. “Now, there is somewhere else you need to be at, right?”

Nagi

“I’m sorry for what I did to your pupil,” Takeshi bows down.

“You’re a brat. You’re bound to mess up. You will make mistakes all the time so get used to it. The next best thing for you to do is to own up to your mistake and learn from it. The adults are there for damage control. You also need to learn to forgive yourself. You’re only wasting your time and everyone else’s if you keep crying over spilled milk. Now go. The grownups have something to discuss.”

Tsuyoshi handed Takeshi a large platter of sushi for Nagi before kicking him out of the shop. Figuratively of course.

Takeshi stared at TakeSushi for a moment before turning on his heels. He never noticed that he has so many good adults around him… His Pops, Setsuna-nee and even Coach Maeda, aloof he may be. They are so kind, so patient, so cool. Even though Coach Maeda is so scary (Takeshi think he caught a glimpse of what Hibari would look like when he’s older). When he grow up, he want to become an adult like them.
“Bug Eyes can’t catch the great Lambo-san! Bweeeeeeeh!”

“Broccoli monster!”

Nagako smiled from her spot, watching the two children play. I-pin expressed her wish to meet Lambo when Setsuna and Nagako told her of the other child. Setsuna had already told Lambo about I-pin so all they need to do is to find the right time for them to meet. A playdate, if you will.

Setsuna is already so busy with everything (university, work, figure skating, training, etc) that she couldn’t make time for today. At least she showed up very early in the morning at her old home to pick up Lambo. She dropped him off at the Maeda residence before she and Kazuki left. Her husband told her what happened yesterday. Thank Kami-sama Nagi didn’t suffer any injuries.

The initial meeting between these two children was not that great. Lambo insulted I-pin from the get go and the Chinese girl insult him back. Lambo chase after her but then got intimidated when I-pin show that she is stronger than she looks. She chase Lambo and after Lambo retaliate he chase her bag. It’s a strange game of tag. Well, as long as Lambo didn’t pull out any weapons, I-pin didn’t seriously hurt him and they don’t make a mess, Nagako is fine just to watch.

Oh and Lambo call I-pin Bug Eyes because of the custom googles Nagako ordered for her. They discovered I-pin’s nearsighted sight on her first night here. Then Nagako ordered special googles for her since glasses is not possible.

Nagako had asked, before Setsuna leave with her husband, how is Nana doing. Setsuna gave her a resigned look. No changes at all then. Nagako can count with one hand how many times she met Sawada Nana. There is just something about that woman that rub Nagako wrong. Masumi-san feel the same way as well.

She is worried for Lambo. Setsuna had told her and Kazuki her concerns for Lambo’s future. They have yet to have another discussion about it but everyone agree that Lambo must not stay under Nana’s care longer than necessary. In a glance, Nana’s parenting style is more to free-range
parenting but it is anything but. Nana didn’t do anything to discipline Lambo. It come to the point when the neighbours go to Setsuna rather than Nana when Lambo create a ruckus. Lambo have enough sense not to draw his weapon at civilians but it didn’t change the fact that he did got into scuffles with the other children. Pranks, taunts, snatching toys without permission, destroy sandcastles in the sandbox… All sorts of childish things a 5 years old would do. It’s sad when you think about it. The whole neighborhood knows that Nana isn’t exactly a model parental figure. Nagako will forever be grateful to them for keeping the whole Sawada Family Drama a secret for Setsuna’s sake. Even though they don’t know the whole story, the neighborhood must have noticed that something is not right with that family. They could tell tabloids about Setsuna’s home life but they didn’t out of respect for Setsuna.

Setsuna’s heart is in the right place but she is not able to be there for Lambo. She simply didn’t have the time. It’s possible for her to adopt him after she retire from competition but by then Lambo’s crucial formative years have gone by. Something need to be done before it’s too late.

*Lambo can live here instead.*

Nagako blinked as the thought crystalised.

That… is feasible. They have plenty of room. Money is not an issue. Nagako stays at home most of the time. They have plenty capable men and women who can keep keep a secret. They already have another child living here… Setsuna knows she can trust the Maeda family. The whole family need to be here so they can discuss this matter. Luckily, her children and their family are coming.

Nagako look at Lambo and feel her resolve strengthened.

“Where should I begin?”

Setsuna looked at the sushi chef before them, wondering why she never noticed before. She known Tsuyoshi-jiichan since she was a little girl. She and Nana are amongst TakeSushi’s first customers. Nana and Keiko-baachan were close (as close as her mother could get with someone who is not Iemitsu). Setsuna felt Takeshi’s kick when he was still in the womb. She has so many good memories in this place. Never once in her life she suspect Tsuyoshi-jiichan to have ties with the underworld.
“Start with the part when you discover Dying Will Flame,” Tou-san answered when Setsuna didn’t say anything.

Tsuyoshi nodded. “I guess I should begin with the time my master took me in, along with my friend. I was not much older than Takeshi at the time. I was a bullheaded youth who ran away from home. It’s just me and my friend against the world. We lived in the streets. We committed petty crimes to get by. We were a mess. Then my friend ticked off the leader of this biker gang… I didn’t know until the last minute. I went to rescue him but I was beaten badly as well. The two of us would have died if it weren’t for Master interfering…,” His eyes went distant as he recall the memory. “He was a master swordsman. I have never seen such fluid movement before… My friend and I can only gape as we watched him sweep the floor with those gang members. Afterward, Master turn to us and asked if we want to continue this path and die a like a dog in some ditches. We answered no and he told us to follow him. So we did. He let us stay in his dojo but didn’t allow us to learn the way of the sword. We weren’t ready, he told us. We were still cocky. We need to humble ourselves first. We were given chores, physical training, meditation… But we were not allowed to touch even a wooden sword. It took us a year before Master finally deemed us ready to learn.” Tsuyoshi smiled fondly at the memory. “My Master is a practitioner of Shiguren Soen Ryuu style.”

The name means nothing to Setsuna but Tou-san sit up straighter at that. “That style still exists?”

Tsuyoshi chuckled. “Yes, it still exist. As far as I know, there is at least two other successors left in this world other than me. I intend to teach my son the way of the Sword when he become a high schooler. Whether or not he is worthy to be a successor remain to be seen. Where was I? Oh yes. So my friend and I learned the way of the Sword. Master also taught us about Dying Will Flame. I’m a Rain. So was my friend.”

“Was?”

The sushi chef smiled sadly. “We’ll get to that part. So my friend and I worked our asses off. It took us a couple more years but it was worth it. After we proved our worth, Master sent us away so we can hone our skills and learn more about the world. We were back on the road again but this time it’s different. We are no longer two ignorant kids who hated the world. We have grown. We have purpose. We challenged dojos. We met fellow warriors. We took part time jobs whenever we can before we go back on the road. We see new places. All is well until…”

“Take your time,” Setsuna said gently.

Tsuyoshi-jiichan smiled at her. “Thank you, Setsuna-chan. I’m fine. All is well until they found us.”
“The mafia,” Setsuna whispered.

“Yes,” Tsuyoshi-jiichan suddenly looked so weary. “They wanted to recruit us. We had to fight them off because they accept no other answer except yes. But these people never stop. Eventually we came to an agreement that it is better for my friend and I to go separate ways. It’s just safer that way… At the time…,” Tsuyoshi-jiichan sighed. “We still keep in touch though. A couple years later, I took a part time job at a sushi shop. It’s just a small shop, not unlike this one, but it was good. Aside from the chef and I, there is another employee. It was Keiko.”

Setsuna smiled at the mention of Keiko-baa.

“We just clicked. Keiko was alone like me. She was saving money so she can travel, even though she don’t have any particular destination in mind. Keiko often joked that she will probably buy a one way ticket on the spot. Make the journey even more interesting that way. Meeting her was a life changing experience. I just knew she was the one. So I stayed at the sushi shop so I can be with her. I even became the chef’s apprentice. My plan were to open my own shop and marry Keiko. I already taken steps to ensure that the mafia wouldn’t bother us anymore. Everything was going well… Until the universe turned everything upside down.”

“What happened?”

“My Master passed away,” Tsuyoshi-jiichan’s eyes glazed with unshed tears. “He was already so old… It’s not like we’re not expecting it, but he was so spry of his age. You can say we try not to think of the possibility that Master could die. We just couldn’t picture it. He was that big of a presence for us. I brought Keiko to his funeral. That is also when my friend and I first reunited after we parted. He changed. I changed. Everything has changed,” He covered his face with one hand. The three of them waited for the sushi chef to continue. “My friend was being Courted by a Sky at the time. The Sky is not related to mafia but was chased as well. My friend had serious doubts if he should Harmonize or not… But the Sky wanted to take on the Underworld… My friend was so tired of being chased, he wanted to declare a war against them. He wanted me to join him. I refuse. Master’s passing is the last straw for me. I was so tired of fighting. I had enough of this lifestyle. I am ready to settle down. I want to be with Keiko.”

“Does she know?” Setsuna asked.

“Yes, she knows. I came clean to her before I proposed so she know what marriage to me will entail. I assured her that I won’t get upset if she turn me down.”

*If only Iemitsu is a bit more like Tsuyoshi-jiichan.*
“My friend was disappointed when I turned down his offer but he expected it. No hard feelings. We agreed that the next time we meet is at the wedding,” Tsuyoshi-jiichan closed his eyes. “But he never make it to the wedding. Not long after Master’s passing, I received a message from him to get away as far as possible. Turns out a mafia group, the same mafia group that have hunted us down for years, finally got a hold of him. And they are coming after Keiko and I. My friend and his Sky ended up destroying the mafia group for good. But not without a price… My friend gave up his life so we can escape… We laid low for awhile before finally moving to Namimori. You know the rest… Sometimes, sometimes I wonder if I done enough. If what I did is good enough.”

Silence permeated the room. Tou-san is now looking at Tsuyoshi-jiichan with softer eyes. Reborn’s eyes is shadowed by his fedora so they can’t see them. Setsuna try to hold back her tears for Tsuyoshi-jiichan’s sake.

“It was enough,” Tou-san said gently. “Your son is a good boy. Keiko, your friend and Master would be so proud of you.”

Tsuyoshi-jiichan break down.

They waited until he calm down. Reborn pushed the tissue box towards him. Tsuyoshi-jiichan blow his nose.

“What is it, Setsuna-chan?”

“Can I ask you something?” Setsuna eyes the sushi chef.

“What is it, Setsuna-chan?”

“Were you truly okay when I was Courting Takeshi? Even though I did it unknowingly?”

“I would be lying if I say I wasn’t a teensy bit upset about that,” Tsuyoshi-jiichan answered truthfully. “But I figured that you would never get Unlocked. I also know for sure that you won’t join Vongola. At least not willingly…”

“So you knew about Iemitsu,” Setsuna said calmly.

“Not right away. Sawada is a common enough surname. Besides, I never knew Iemitsu. We never met.”
“Oh.”

“More mafia is coming to this town. Reborn is just the beginning. We were lucky so far. But that luck will eventually run out as stronger opponents come by.” Tou-san’s eyes turn serious. “It’s hard enough to juggle Setsuna’s time with figure skating and training from Reborn. We still need to look for Guardians candidates. You’re not one,” He added quickly. “Even if we find one compatible, it doesn’t guarantee that they and Setsuna will Harmonize. They might be even be civilian but that is a bridge that we’ll cross when the time come. Should Harmonisation happen… We need someone to teach them.”

Tsuyoshi-jiichan point to himself, “You want me to teach them how to fight.”

“We know it’s a big thing we’re asking you here,” Setsuna said. “But there is no one else we can trust with this matter but you, jii-chan. I understand that you don’t want to fight. We will drop this matter if you refuse.”

There. They said it. The ball is on Tsuyoshi-jiichan’s court now. She will be bummed if he refuse but she will not be angry at him. Tsuyoshi-jiichan have dealt the mafia for a long time. He knows what they are up against. You can’t blame him for refusing. Tou-san surely would understand. He is too a father.

Tsuyoshi-jiichan is quiet for a quite a while. The three of them wait for his answer. And then he roused himself.

“I spent enough years running away from the mafia. I refuse to let them continue to ruin everything. Not again. The answer is yes, Setsuna-chan. I will join your cause.”

Tears run down her cheek, “Thank you.”

“No, Setsuna-chan. It should be me who said thank you,” Tsuyoshi-jiichan smiled. “Thank you for helping my son.”

Gokudera is glaring daggers at Yamamoto.
Nagi expected that, to be honest. Gokudera have a short temper and can hold a grudge like no other. His comments in fansites often flagged due to his coarse language. Nagi and the rest of the fans do appreciate how passionate he is but at this rate Gokudera will get reported. His saving grace was how detailed his analysis were (even though they are a bit dry). Her friend have calmed down considerably as of late but it doesn’t necessarily mean he will not explode.

She won’t be surprised if Gokudera explode any moment now.

Sasagawa-senpai seems to have drawn the same conclusion as her, for he leaned forward, readying himself in case a fight break out.

They have spent the last hour trying to convince Gokudera to forgive Yamamoto but he remained stubborn. It was this close to become a shouting match. Then a nervous Yamamoto showed up bearing sushi. Kurata-san is very happy. She announced that they will have sushi for lunch. Kurata-san brought tea and another slice of watermelon for Yamamoto and leave the teenagers once again.

And here they are now. All silent and uncomfortable as Gokudera continue to glare at Yamamoto.

“Gokudera,” Yamamoto break the silence, “I’m truly sorry for what happened yesterday.”

“I’m not the one who you should apologised to.”

Yamamoto turn to her but Nagi beat him before he can say anything, “I forgave you already, Yamamoto-san.”

“But Kudou! He-”

“Everyone in this room knows what Yamamoto-san did, Gokudera-san. And he can’t go back in time to prevent it. It happened. Get. Over. It.”

Everyone gawked at her. Nagi herself is taken aback with her own words. Did she really just said that? Still, she got their attention now. Time to use the momentum. “Yamamoto-san threw the stuffed animal and it hit me. I fell. Yes, I could’ve suffer even worse injuries. Yet I’m not. It’s not the first time I fell and will definitely not be the last. Are you going to blame Yamamoto-san for my next
“People make mistakes, Gokudera,” Sasagawa-senpai said carefully. “Sometimes friends hurt each other without meaning to. When that happened, they talk about it and resolve it peacefully. They take steps to get better so they won’t repeat the same mistake again.”

Gokudera remain silent.

“Setsuna-nee and Coach Maeda came by the shop earlier today,” Yamamoto said. “They came to discuss about my action yesterday. I was told that my fastball that I am so proud of is a weakness,” He smiled sadly. “I am still lacking in so many things. I have to stop relying on my fastballs. If I don’t fix it, I will only hurt others and myself at this rate. I need to improve. That is the only way for me to make up for my mistakes.”

“So Coach didn’t punish you?” Gokudera asked gruffly.

“He didn’t, surprisingly. I’m still in shock right now,” Yamamoto scratch the back of his head. “I think Coach Maeda tried to encourage me, in a roundabout way. He’s still scary though.”

“Don’t I Extreme know it,” Sasagawa-senpai nodded, “I still remember how scary he was when I challenged him to a fight.”

Their jaws dropped.

“You… Picked a fight… With Coach Maeda,” Gokudera looked at the boxer as if he sprouted a second hand.

“I challenged the whole family actually,” Sasagawa-senpai admitted breezily. “Coach Maeda, Nagako-baa, Takumu and Susumu-nii. I badgered them for weeks until they gave in.”

“You picked a fight with Coach Maeda,” Gokudera repeated.
Sasagawa-senpai grinned sheepishly. “I was such an Extreme mess in the past. Do you know how I got this scar? I got into a fight with a bunch of middle schoolers and they cracked my skull. I quit ballet and took up boxing afterward. I often challenged other kids and older people. It wasn’t until Kyoko-nee told me I’m like Iemitsu did I realised how Un-Extreme I was. I scared away my peers. More than half of the boxing club members joined out of fear. I was viewed as a delinquent. I was so fixated on boxing I ended up neglecting my studies. I made so many mistakes over the years,” Sasagawa-senpai take a deep breath. “I’m working on it now. Yamamoto is going to change his ways. Isn’t that enough?”

Gokudera is no longer scowling but he still look tense.

“Didn’t you seriously tried to kill Setsuna-nee in the past, Gokudera?” Sasagawa-senpai said without any hesitation.

“Turf Top!” Gokudera leap to his feet. “It was a mistake!”

“Right, it’s a mistake. And Setsuna-nee forgave you. Why can’t you forgive Yamamoto then?”

“This and that is different!”

“How come?” Nagi asked. Gokudera turn to her. A helpless expression on his face. It’s not fair to bring up Gokudera’s past assassination attempt on Setsuna-nee but the boy is just not getting it. “Setsuna-nee and I survived our ordeals. Yamamoto-san is apologetic and promise to do better in the future. Aren’t you doing the same thing in these past few months? Then you would understand his feelings.”

“Don’t lump me with the likes of him!” Gokudera point at Yamamoto.

“Like what?” Yamamoto asked him patiently.

“A Baseball Idiot who is always grinning! Who always go on and on about the health benefits of milk! Who can’t appreciate the beauty of math!”

“It’s math,” Sasagawa-senpai said as if it’s the most obvious thing in the world.
“And yet you still help him study for exams,” Nagi pointed out, “You all came to cheer me on. You still didn’t push Yamamoto-san away no matter how much he annoys you. I think you do care for him more than you would like to admit, Gokudera-san.”

Gokudera turn his back on them.

“I’m not asking you to forget what Yamamoto-san did. I’m asking you to let it go. Because friends forgive each other.”

“I think of you as my friend, Gokudera,” Yamamoto said earnestly. “Will you let me be your friend?”

“You can be such a smartass sometimes, Octopus Head, but I think of you as my friend too,” Sasagawa-senpai joined in.

“I think of you as a friend too, Gokudera-san,” Nagi said softly. “Can we be your friends?”

“....”

“Gokudera-san?”

“......”

Nagi crawl towards him. She leaned closer to get a better look.

Gokudera is crying.

He quickly wipe his tears with the back of his hand but they won’t stop. Yamamoto and Sasagawa-senpai stay where they are. They look at Nagi. She didn’t make any move for a moment before placing her hand on Gokudera’s shoulder. “I’m sorry if we were too forward, Gokudera-san-”
“It’s not that.”

“Then… What is it?”

“Friend… Is a strong word.”

Nagi nodded. “I know.”

“Are you really sure you want me as a friend?”

“Yes,” The three of them answered as one.

Gokudera didn’t say anything until… “Baseball Idiot.”

“Yes?”

“You better work your ass off to improve. I’ll even draw up statistics and analyse it for you if needed. If you still mess up, I’ll use Triple Bomb on you.”

Yamamoto smiled in relief, before a resolute look enter his eyes. “I will.”

Sasagawa-senpai clapped. “All right! Way to go, team! I’m Extremely proud with all out you!”

“Shut up, Turf Top!”

“I’m hungry to the Extreme! Let’s go eat the sushi! After that we’ll watch the videos!”

“Don’t ignore me!”

Nagi giggled.
Setsuna, Reborn and Coach Maeda make a quick detour to the bakery on their way to Nagi’s apartment. Reborn ordered his regular, a venti espresso. Setsuna bought chocolate cake for the kids.

Kurata-san welcomed them warmly. Setsuna is in the middle of removing her shoes when she hear ruckus coming from the living room.

“The kids are watching ballet and skating videos from when you were younger,” Kurata-san told them with an amused smile.

“Shit!”

Setsuna sprinted to the living room.

Lo and behold. There is a 10 years Setsuna skating to *Kaze* on the screen. She is wearing the pink kunoichi outfit. It even has the spiral pattern.

Nagi and Gokudera are in a near catatonic state on the couch.

“Stop! Stop!” Setsuna cover the television with her body.

“Setsuna-nee!” Ryohei smiled excitedly. “And Coach Maeda! Hello!”

Gokudera leap to his feet. “Coach Maeda! Good day!” He did a 90 degree bow.

“Hmph.”

Coach Maeda sit down on the armchair. Gokudera sit back down.
“Setsuna, get off the TV. We can’t watch with you blocking the screen.”

“But, Tou-saaaaan!” Setsuna whined.

Coach Maeda simply raise an eyebrow.

Setsuna sighed and move away from the TV.

“I want a copy of this,” Reborn said to Ryohei.

“Ryohei-kun, no.”

“Ryohei-kun, yes.”

Chapter End Notes

1000+ kudos?? You guuuuuuuys!!! Thank you so much!

I blame the baseball coach for Yamamoto’s injury in canon. Yes, Yamamoto is also partially to blame for his recklessness but he’s a kid. The coach should have noticed. He should have stopped Yamamoto before it’s too late.

Tsuyoshi’s backstory! It’s more of my headcannon really but we know next to nothing about Takeshi’s parents, I take the liberties (and creative license) to come up with Tsuyoshi’s history. I cried when I wrote it.

It’s been awhile since Lambo and I-pin made an appearance so here they are.

Maeda Brood is coming. Prepare your bodies.

I have started writing for the following plot bunnies; who lives, who dies, who tells your story (Xanxus and GhostWhisperer!Tsuna), a little birdie told me (AnimalWhisperer!Tsuna), a spoonful of sugar (PastryChef!Tsuna) and twinkle twinkle little star (Pissed Off Mom!Tsuna). Please be patient!

The song 10 years old Setsuna skating to is Kaze by Aya Ueto. It is the ending song for Nintama Rentarou anime. Here’s the link https://www.youtube.com/watch?
Here lies a dead man…

"Reborn! Don't start any weird narrations! And we don't even know if he's dead yet!" Setsuna scolded him.

"He's going to die fast," Reborn said without any hint of remorse.

Setsuna looked back at the man lying on the ground. It's clear from the bruises and cuts on him that he was beaten. He must have broken bones as well. Of all things they would encounter on their morning jog, Setsuna never thought to find an unconscious man. She already called for an ambulance. Since it's still early, there shouldn't be too much traffic… But what if they couldn't get him in time?

Something is not right with him. That much is obvious, but Setsuna can't shake off this feeling of utter wrongness.

The man groans in pain.

"Can you hear me?" Setsuna lowered her body so she can catch his words. "Help is on their way. Everything is going to be okay."

"..."

She grasp his hand. "Talk to me, please."

The man mumbled something she couldn't make out… And then he fell silent.

Setsuna cursed under her breath. And then… She felt it.
Is this man a mafioso? Yakuza? Setsuna is still grasping for the subtle difference between Locked and Dormant Flames. She glanced at the two swords strapped on his waist. Definitely a combatant.

Her Flame is now activated. She will be able to feel it better now that her Flame is Activated-

"Oh no."

There are Storm Flames in his system. The property of Storm Flame is Disintegration. If left in the system any longer than this, this man's body will decay from the inside. Stuffs of horror that wouldn't be out of place in Stephen King novel. So that's why Rebon said what he said.

She turn to the not-baby. "You have Sun Flame. Please heal him."

"No."

Setsuna glared at him. "Reborn! He's dying!"

"I don't just use my Flames on anybody, be it killing or healing."

"The hospital won't be able to save him! Even if he make it there!"

"Setsuna… All human are destined to die someday," Reborn said in wise tone.

Does he think any of these is funny? Is he so desensitized a stranger in front of him didn't move him one bit? Is this what mafioso is like?

Setsuna steeled herself. "Tell me what to do so I could help him."

Reborn smirked.
'You bitch,' Setsuna thought venomously. So Reborn would even use a dying man as a lesson tool. She shoved down the that line of thought. This man need her to focus.

"While your control is better these days, there are no guarantee that you can pull this off. You might accidentally burn him instead."

She shot him a challenging look, "Do you think those words ever stop me?"

"Very well. We are going to purify the Storm Flames in his body. Place your hands above him."

Setsuna did as she told. She put her hands just above the man's back. Her palms start to get hot from her Flames… No, she must not manifest it lest she accidentally hurt the man. Reborn will tell her if she need to manifest her Flames.

"Try to get a feel on the entire Storm Flames left in his body. Then exterminate them with your Flame. Don't miss anything. One single trace left will only prolong his suffering."

Setsuna take a deep breath and focus.

It's… Terrible. There are Storm Flames here and there, including in the lungs. It must have hurt to breathe.

Setsuna closed her eyes. Sky Flame reaching out to the Storm Flames. She must not touch the Mist Flames much. Just the Storm ones. The man whimpered. "I'm sorry but I need you to endure this. It will help, I promise."

She promised… So she must keep her word.

Her Sky Flames grab hold of the Storm Flames. It struggled feebly against her before her Flames overpower it- not too much that it could hurt the man- and gradually consume it. Consume. There is no other word she can use to describe the feeling at the moment. This is a delicate work. Think of it like removing elements that clog the system. Like scrubbing dirt from a plate!

Did she just draw a comparison between a human body to a dirty plate?
This is wrong. All of this is wrong. Setsuna want to stop but she couldn't afford to. She has to do this. Reborn won't do it. She is the only who can help this man. She can feel his Mist Flame... She can feel everything. She can burn him inside out if she want to. And it will be so easy. Like blowing up a candle, or rip apart a leaf, or stepping on an ant. This much power- It's terrifying.

*It's not right.*

Her Flames is now covering her hands. It's pulsating along with her heartbeat. Setsuna gasped and call off her Flames.

"Did…," She swallowed. "Did I succeed? Was I able to save him?"

Reborn knelt next to the man. He cast over a critical gaze on him. After what felt like an eternity, he turn to her. "There are no trace of Storm Flames left in his body. He'll live. You did a good job."

Setsuna's shoulders slacken in relief. "Thank goodness."

The man groaned.

Setsuna hold his hand in hers in an instant. "I-I fixed the damage. Not the broken bones- But you'll live. You will survive this. You're going to be okay."

The man opened his eyes, revealing yellow eyes.

"Hey," Setsuna lower herself so she can take a better look. "The ambulance is coming. Hold on until then, okay? Can you tell me your name?"

He squeeze her hand. "Gen-" He rasped. His eyes begin to water. "Gen-

"Your name is Gen? Nice to meet you, Gen," She smiled kindly at him. "I'm Setsuna. Everything is going to be okay."

Gen try to say something but his eyes start to roll.
"Gen?" Setsuna start to get anxious. "Gen!"

...Gen has fallen unconscious again.

Setsuna's head shot up when she hear the siren approaching. The ambulance! They're here! She straightened her back to see the ambulance heading towards them from the distance. "Over here!" She wave at them.

The ambulance stop before them. Three paramedic jump out. Two take out the gurney while the third crouch next to Gen. "We were jogging. We found him on the street like this," Setsuna try to keep her voice level. "We talked just now. He said his name is Gen."

The paramedic nodded. "Thank you. We will take over from here."

Setsuna move away to give these men space. On the count of three, they lift Gen up to the gurney. Setsuna and Reborn watch the ambulance drove away.

"What do you think, Setsuna?" Reborn asked.

"I think you're a jackass."

"Part of the job description," Reborn hummed. "I'm talking about Gen."

Setsuna watch the ambulance turn at the T-junction. Gen was attacked by someone with Unlocked Flame. Gen maybe a mafioso or a Yakuza, or someone completely unrelated to the Underworld. But you don't just get attacked by Flames out of nowhere. Gen must have some kind of a connection. Her Hyper Intuition didn't sense any sort of malice coming from him... But still. They are missing something.

"I think we need to visit Gen at the hospital later," She said carefully.

"I want Lambo-chan to move in with us."
Kazuki looked at his wife carefully. Nagako has a serene expression on her face but her gaze is determined. He set down his tea cup.

He expected this, to be honest. His wife wanted to have more children around. He is surprised Nagako waited this long to ask the question.

"I believe this is a discussion we should have with the entire family."

Nagako smiled, "Then it is a good timing that everyone is coming then. We can fill them in with Setsuna-chan's recent development. They are in for a big surprise."

That is a big understatement. Their daughter-in-laws knew what they are signed up for them they joined this family. But mafia? It is a whole other kettle, so to speak. Even his sons would be taken aback. And they are raised to deal with the Hibari clan, since their clan is a loyal vassal of theirs.

"I hope they will allow it. I miss having children around." Her voice grew quieter and quieter. "I wish I was able to give you more children."

"Nagako," He wanted to admonish her but couldn't bring himself to.

"I know, I know. We are blessed with two healthy sons, one daughter, two lovely daughter-in-laws and four precious grandchildren. I should be thankful."

"Nagako," He reached for her hand. "You can't help with what you want."

Nagako stay silent.

His wife grew up with many siblings. That's where she got this dream to have as many children as possible. Or to be more accurate, she wanted to be a mother so badly. But fate don't agree with her. It come to the point that the people around them suggested that they should adopt a distant cousin as heir. But Nagako stayed stubborn. She is determined to have a child of her own. After so many heartbreak and pain, they are gifted with Susumu and Takumu. Nagako devote her everything to be the best mother for their sons. She even mother other people's children.
They are too old to have any more children, obviously. But sometimes the memories and the melancholy that accompanied it can be a trap. He don't think Nagako is simply lonely. It's more like… Regret? Guilt?

Nagako still feel the loss. The pain never truly go away. They learned to live with it but…

Everything about this is complicated. Nagako, Setsuna, Lambo, I-pin… Even so…

Lambo is a brat. He is noisy, selfish, loud and prone to crying. He has unhealthy amount of knowledge about weapons. The Ten Year Bazooka confuses the hell out of Kazuki. By the end of the day, he is still just a kid who need love. Setsuna and Nagako can provide him that love. With his track record, Kazuki will come around with Lambo as well.

"Are you sure about this?" He asked her.

"Yes." No hesitation. No tremble in her voice. Nagako had made up her mind.

Kazuki adopted Setsuna and later on the rest of the FS Club as their numbers grew. He had no room to talk. If his wife want to take Lambo in, who is he to stop her?

"Very well. We still need to discuss this with the rest of the family, but I will support you. Lambo will move in with us."

Nagako throw herself into his arms. Kazuki barely catch her in time. She kissed him right on the lips. His cheeks start to heat up. 'You are not a teenager anymore,' Kazuki scold himself in his mind.

"You will be so good for I-pin and Lambo," She whisper to him.

Kazuki rest his forehead against hers. "No, my dear, you're the incredible one here."

Nagako let out a peal of laughter.

Kazuki can't help but smile.
As soon as they get home, Setsuna head straight to the bathroom. She scrubbed herself clean until her skin is raw, hoping it will wash away that feeling of wrongness.

It didn't.

She feel horrible. She managed to save him, instead of killing him. She should be happy but she's not.

Dying Will Flame is supernatural. She knows that. Reborn explained it to her already. But knowing and wielding it is a different story altogether. And she used it on a living person. It felt like she is meddling with the laws of nature. Messing with something she doesn't understand. Setsuna and Gen are lucky that the most desirable scenario happened. Gen is saved. But what if she had failed? Reborn admitted to her that there are still lots they don't know about Sky Flames.

Lucky indeed.

It didn't change the fact that she had done something… Unnatural. It felt like she just stick her foot to a forbidden territory. Setsuna is positive the only reason she is not shaking at the time is due to the urgency of the situation at hand trumped her fear.

This is not the first time she used her Flames so what make this one different?

Setsuna step out from the bathroom. Reborn stood there, watching her with that empty black eyes of his.

"I thought you were trying to drown yourself in there," He says.

"I'm not." She is not in the mood of Reborn's games today. Not after the morning she had.

"What happened earlier troubles you."
"How observant of you," She can't help but be sarcastic. Setsuna walk past him...

"You're afraid of your own power."

Setsuna halt on her steps.

"Today you saw a glimpse of how far you can take it with your Flames. What you are capable of. And you wonder where the limit lies or if there's any at all. It scares you."

"Everybody should be scared," It come off as a hiss. "There is basically a society of superpowered human living amongst us, hiding in plain sight, operating in the shadows. These people figured out time travel enough to build what is essentially time machine and weaponise it. They hunt down innocents who had the misfortune to Unlock their Flames. They turned you, an adult man, to a baby. And you still yet to explain what the fuck Leon's deal is. Of course I would be fucking scared!" Setsuna shouts. "Your kind could enslaved us civilians if you want to. Or wipe us all out to make way for the next human species with Unlocked Flames."

"Someone been watching too much sci-fi," Reborn quipped.

"The mafia have too many secrets. Too much power," Setsuna glared. "No wonder you are so illogical. That much power would make anyone go mad."

"You're afraid that you will turn mad as your power get stronger," Reborn concluded.

Setsuna didn't say anything for a moment. Her bangs shadowed over her eyes. When she lift her head up, her eyes are wide with fear, "I don't want to become a monster."

"Having Dying Will Flames doesn't make you a monster," Reborn told her.

"What is the mafia then?" Setsuna asked him. "What does that make you?"

"I am your tutor and you are my student," Reborn answered. "If you want to be a monster, that's for you to decide. Now, put your existential crisis to a pause. We have a lot to do."
And with that, Reborn step inside the bathroom.

Today is Sunday, which means Tsu-nee is coming!

Tsu-nee cannot come everyday to play with Lambo because she is an Adult and have Adult stuff to do. But on Sunday she will definitely come! It would be even better if Reborn don't show up. Whenever Tsu-nee goes, Reborn tag along. They even live together! That's not fair! Reborn got to hog Tsu-nee all to himself! If Lambo kill him, Tsu-nee will play with Lambo more often. Unfortunately, Tsu-nee needs Reborn… So Lambo must wait for a little longer. When Tsu-nee get stronger, Lambo can try to kill Reborn again and thus able to go back to Italy.

Lambo don't want to go back to Italy.

He want to stay here with Mama and Tsu-nee!

Lambo don't have a Maman until now. His actual Mama died when he was a baby. His Papa died not long after in an accident. The adults were experimenting with new prototype when it malfunctioned. Papa was one of the casualties. Not all children in the Bovino Famiglia have full set of parents. Some of them only have a mother or a father. But Lambo don't have any parents. He don't even know them.

Out of all the adults, Boss is the one Lambo is closest to. He took him to places, praised his skills and let him use the latest weapons.

Lambo called him Papa once. Boss didn't like that. He never call him that again.

When Boss told him that he must go to Japan in order to kill Reborn, Lambo was hesitant. Not the killing part but being so far away from home. This is the first time Lambo left European soil.

He didn't like remembering the part when he must travel to Japan on his own.
As expected of the Great Lambo-san, he overcame every obstacles in his way. He managed to reach Namimori and found the house Reborn staying at not long after. Mama is really nice. She prepared tea for him. And then Reborn showed up. Reborn's counterattack hurt so much.

And then Tsu-nee found Lambo. She gave him grape juice, listened to Lambo's story and took him home. Mama's cooking is delicious! After dinner Tsu-nee gave him a bath. She tucked Lambo to bed and sang him lullaby and stroke his hair.

When Tsu-nee asked him to swear to protect Mama, Lambo readily agreed.

Mama and Tsu-nee are his family after all.

With Tsu-ne and Reborn only visit once a week, Lambo have lots of free time. He can do whatever he want as long as he don't make a mess in the house. He don't want to make Mama angry after all. Come to think of it, Lambo don't think he ever see Mama get angry. Which is a rather nice change for Lambo. The adults back home like to yell at him.

Lambo spend his days playing and exploring. The children in this neighborhood are civilians so Lambo make sure to play gentle with them. But they don't like him and often ruin playtime crying! And the other adults got angry with him! It's not his fault if these civvie kids can't take it!


Mama never play with Lambo.

Mama never read stories to Lambo.

Mama never sing lullabies to Lambo.

Mama never take Lambo anywhere.

Mama never hug or kiss Lambo.
Mama never look at Lambo.

Did Lambo do something wrong? Is it because he got ice cream spilled on his shirt the other day? Or is it because he's too loud sometimes? Is it because he don't eat his vegetables? Lambo will do better from now on! Lambo will show Mama that Lambo is worthy of love!

"We're here!" A female voice called out.

Lambo perked up.

"Tsu-nee!"

Lambo rushes to the front door.

Tsu-nee smiled at the sight of him. She crouch low to the ground, arms stretched out.

Lambo jumped to her arms.

"I miss you, Lambo," She stroke his head.

Lambo hugged her neck, "Lambo-san missed Tsu-nee too."

"Kaa-san? We're going to go play with I-pin again today. It might take a while. There is no need to cook dinner."

"Okay, Tsu-chan~"
Said newcomers are family members, their sons and wives and children.

I-pin has seen them from pictures. Grandmother showed I-pin the photo albums the other day when she asked about the clans in Namimori.

Grandmother and Grandfather have two sons, Susumu and Takumu. Susumu is the current president of Maeda Corporation. He recently just received his Doctorate degree in Germany, where he and his family live at for the last few years. His wife is named Akemi. She has beautiful long jet black hair and red lips, living up to her name. Their children are Aya and Yuuya, eight and four years old respectively.

Takumu work as a researcher in Tokyo. I-pin's Japanese is still not that good but he know engineering? I-pin is not sure. Takumu himself don't give out many details. His wife is Tomoe. She wear a kimono like Grandmother Nagako. Their children are Rikiya and Isaya, six and five years old.

Susumu and Takumu have the same short crop black hair. They inherited their father's grey eyes, which he in turn inherited from his Hibari mother. The kids have grey eyes as well.

"Oh, hello you," Takumu looked her way. "Did you adopt another one, Otou-sama?"

"This is I-pin. She is originally a guest to the Hibari clan. Certain circumstances led her to stay here instead," Grandfather beckon her to come closer.

I-pin step inside the room. She take a bow to the newcomers, "Hajimemashite. My name is I-pin. I am originally from China."

She got a chorus of 'Hello' and 'Nice to meet you' in return.

"My family and I will live here starting from today. Let's get along," Uncle Susumu smiled kindly at her.

I-pin smiled, "Yes, Uncle."
"Kids, why don't you play with I-pin?" Grandmother Nagako suggest to her grandchildren.

Aya, the oldest of Maeda grandchildren, stand up. "Yes, obaa-sama," She take the hand of her younger Yuuya. She offer the other one to I-pin, which she accepted. Rikiya and Isaya got up to their feet. The children walk out of the room. Two servants following them.

For a moment there, all of the adults there have this serious look on their faces. Master Fon would have the same look from time to time again. Something is happening. I-pin don't know what though.

Once they can no longer hear the pitter-patter of the children's footsteps, the twins turn to their parents.

"Tell us the situation," Susumu asked.

"We will. We just need to wait for Setsuna to get here."

"Setsuna-chan?" Takumu blinked. "How in the world Setsuna-chan got involved with the people from China?"

"It's complicated."

"Oh no," Takumu's face ashen, "Not complicated!"

"Complicated," Kazuki repeat the word. "Setsuna is on her way now."

"Don't tell me her sponsors drop her," Akemi frowned. "Or another stalker?"

"Oh, it's nothing like that," Nagako smiled. "It's way worse."

"Well, that did little to reassure us," Takumu drawled.
"It's related to Iemitsu," Nagako's smile became less soft and more sharp.

There was a collective intake of breath.

"Oh my," Tomoe covered her mouth with her kimono sleeve.

"Indeed," said a female voice.

They all turned around to see Setsuna standing at the door, holding a toddler.

"Setsuna-chan!" Takumu got up to his feet. "Long time no see! You got a kid now! How come you never told us?"

"Hello to you too, Takumu-nii," Setsuna rolled her eyes but grinned anyways. "Must have slipped my mind."

"You look well," Susumu joined his brother. "And hello there," He smiled at Lambo.

Setsuna balanced Lambo in her arms, "Lambo, this is Susumu-nii and Takumu-nii. They are Tou-san-Nagako-baa's and Kazuki-jii's sons. Everyone, this is Lambo and Reborn."

"Ciaoossu," Reborn greets the newcomers.

They peered down at the baby with fedora curiously.

"Lambo-chan, why don't you go play with I-pin-chan outside? Our grandchildren are there too," Nagako suggests.

Lambo perked up at that. "Lambo-sama will take revenge on I-pin!" He declared. A servant escorted him away.
"So," Takumu clicked his tongue as they all sit down. "What's been happening?"

Setsuna shot him a strained smile.

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The younger generation take it better than Setsuna thought. They can hear the gears turning in Takumu's head when Setsuna showed them her Flame. Susumu put on careful mask of blankness. His wife Akemi is the opposite. The fierceness in her eyes remind Setsuna that of a tigress ready to pounce. Tomoe hide her scowl behind her kimono sleeves.

"It's not too late if you want to go elsewhere before the storm hits," Kazuki said to his sons and daughter in laws. "We have the little ones to think about too."

They hold their breath, listening to the sound of children's laughter in the distant background.

Takumu snorted. "Men and women of Maeda are no cowards. You beat that into us since we were kids. Literally."

Susumu turn to Setsuna. "You're our little sister, Setsuna. Family don't abandon each other. It's just the mafia. We can take them. It's not like we're talking about a galactic force hunting you down for being an alien experiment on the loose. We'll fight those too, should the possibility arise."

"Lilo and Stitch?"

"It's Disney," Susumu smiled. "Those who won't say no to fight alien, raise your hand?"

Susumu raised his hand, followed by Akemi. Takumu and Tomoe raised their at the same time. Nagako raised her hand too. Setsuna and Reborn as well. They all look at Kazuki. He sighed and raise his hand.

"I love this family," Takumu wipe a fake tear. "Except you. You can go get trampled by a moose." He said in saccharine tone towards Reborn.
"I survived a moose already," Reborn smiled condescendingly at Takumu. "It will take more than that to kill me."

"Good thing you will be sticking around then," Susumu smiled. "Namimori is a place like no other."

They talked a bit more about Setsuna's mafia training before Nagako changed the subject.

"I want Lambo to live with us."

"Lambo… The kid Vongola wanted to be Setsuna's Guardian?" Takumu tilted his head.

"He has no one but Setsuna-chan here. His family basically abandoned him. Lambo is living with Sawada Nana… And I bet my left hand she pretty much let him do whatever he wants without supervision or discipline. I don't want Lambo to spend time more than necessary at that place. I want him to move in with us so we can take care of him. Your father already agreed. We want to know your opinion about this."

Setsuna took a deep breath. She is partially responsible for Lambo's situation. She wanted to be there for him… But not right now. Not with this kind of mess. At least, not all by herself. "I think it's a great idea. Lambo will be safe here. And happy."

"This is a massive decision here, Okaa-sama," Susumu said in serious tone. "We're talking about a child's welfare here. Lambo is a different case from I-pin."

"I know."

Susumu studied his mother for a moment before nodding. "I know you know what you're doing. We already adopted Setsuna. What's one more? I have no objection."

Takumu clapped his hands together. "That settles it then! We have a new sibling!" He threw up his hands in the air. Tomoe chuckled at her husband's antics. Susumu and Akemi joined her. Setsuna let out a sigh of relief. The corner of Kazuki's mouth quirked.

Nagako thought, not for the first time, how blessed she is to be in this family.
Before she can call it a day, Setsuna has one last thing to do.

She and Reborn head to the hospital. Setsuna won't be able to sleep easy tonight until she learn of Gen's condition.

"Have you figure out what you will say to him?" Reborn asked him.

Setsuna doesn't know. There is a chance that Gen barely remember her or how he got to the hospital, but surely he would remember how his system got infested with Flames in the first place. What if civilian doctors notice something is amiss? What if they decided to dig deeper? Will the mafia silence them? Or drag them into their mad, mad world?

It made her shudder.

"I'm going to tell him that I'm glad that he survived," Setsuna answered instead. And that is the honest truth.

"We still must not discard the possibility of him being a threat," Reborn said. "Remember, we know nothing of this man. Stay alert."

Setsuna thought back of Gen's weak squeeze on her hand, the tears threatening to fall from his yellow eyes and she can still vividly recall the fear in them.

'He is not a threat,' Setsuna decided, 'He's scared. Like me.'

They enter the hospital building. People stop and stare at her. Setsuna marched on, used to this.

She stop at the receptionist desk. "Excuse me. There was a man admitted this morning, yes? He was found collapsed at the street. His name is Gen?" She tell the woman at the receptionist.
The woman's eyes widened, a sign that she recognised who Setsuna is, and faked a cough. "Yes, there is a man that matches your description. Are you a relative?"

"No but I was the one who found him and called the ambulance. Is it alright if I see him?"

"Oh! It's fine!" The receptionist proceed to tell her which floor Gen is situated and his room number. Setsuna thanked her and head to the elevator. Reborn keeping up with her easily.

"Are you ready?" He asked her once they are inside the elevator.

Setsuna suppressed a shudder. Reborn never asked her if she is ready. Ever. He is the lion who thrown its cub off a cliff. If those words is not the sign that something big is about to go down, Setsuna don't know what is.

She purposely didn't answer him. She don't want to jinx it.

They arrived in front of Gen's assigned room. Setsuna take a deep breath and knock. She slowly turn the knob. Reborn right behind her.

The curtain is drawn. Setsuna keep her footsteps soft in order not to agitate Gen. Slowly, she reach out for the curtain and pull.

Gen lie motionlessly on the bed, heavily bandaged and IV attached to his hand. When Setsuna get closer, his eyes are closed. It's obvious that he is sleeping. The hospital gave him proper care, patched him up as best as they could… But what about his Flames?

She could try to reach out to him via Flames… Find out if his Mist Flames are damaged But she had enough Flames for one day.

Instead she reach for his hand.

At that very moment, Gen's eyes snapped open.
"Hey there, Gen," Setsuna smiled at him.

Gen squeezed her hand. "...," He tried to say something but his voice is too raspy for her to catch anything.

"Easy there, Gen. It's been a rough 24 hours for you."

Gen try to speak again. Instead he choked up. Whether it's from the tears that start to build up or his lungs, Setsuna is not sure.

"I'm so relieved that you made it," She said instead, returning his squeeze. "You gave me quite the scare this morning. Just take it easy now. I don't think the hospital will release you anytime soon."

'Or Namimori, for that matter.'

Gen make another valiant effort to speak again. This one is a fighter all right. Setsuna leaned in.

"K-Kami-sama...," Gen managed to croak.

Setsuna's eyebrows knit together.

What the actual fuck

Not one feet away from the duo, the World's Greatest Hitman watch them. The gears start to turn in his mind, causing him to smirk.

Chapter End Notes

Dundundunduuuuuuun! Guess who's here?

The Maeda Brood is here! Well, a bevy to be more accurate, because Kazuki is a Swan.

I think anyone born/married into the Hibari clan is either eccentric, strong or the
combination of both. Honestly, I won't put it past them to be Namimori's own Addams Family. The Maeda and Kusakabe clan are considerably more normal but even they have their own brand of quirkiness or otherwise they won't be able to keep up with their overlord.

We'll learn more about the wives and kids in the next chapter. And how Hibari Kyouya fit into the equation.

Dying Will Flame is a life force. Canon shows that Cloud and Sky Flames can absorb other Flames and add it to their own. Gola Mosca can be powered by Flames at the expense of the human being stuck inside. Kikyo's plants can drain one's life force (and DWF? I don't remember Future Arc much). Theoretically speaking, this means a Cloud or Sky can literally sap away someone's life. I won't be surprised if there is a vampirisque mafia hanging around waiting for an opportunity to suck dry some poor chap's DWF.

I am still figuring out my own Flame Lore and the phlebotinum involved. I strongly suggest you do not use it as reference. Because I might change it and making y'all confused even more. You've been warned.

We don't know much about Bovino Famiglia but I get the sense that Lambo genuinely have something akin to respect/affection for the Boss. Lambo in Future Arc really get to me. Amidst all the crap thrown at them, by the end of the day, he is a a five year old kid who just want his mom.

I can't remember if Nana ever been physically affectionate to the kids. I remember I-pin sleeping on her lap but that's it.

The timeline slash technology in KHR didn't make any sense. The First Guardians' fashion is confusing. They should be wearing neck ruffs instead of dress shirts. Boxing existed in the 16th century? It will be more fitting if Knuckles is a wrestler or mercenary. Alaude could be a spymaster or something. In Daemon's flashback the enemy somehow made an explosion? So… Gunpowder? Alchemy? What?

Reborn has time from time again show that he is perfectly willing to use others as education tool for Tsuna. Remember the entrance exam for Yamamoto? Reborn have Leon. Gokudera have real grenade. Lambo have real weapons. Russian Roulette with Kyouko? Switched the real bullets with Dying Will Bullet. Not much of a difference really. He even use the entire battle royales in Arcobaleno Curse arc to train Tsuna.

And… Plot Bunnies! I never seem to run out of them. And as usual, it features Fem!Tsuna. Fem!Tsuna is my jam. Hopefully I won't run out of possible names soon.

when you require a miracle, trust in a witch

A warlock transformed Ryohei to a bear after the latter offended him. Kyouko, Hana and now a bear Ryohei left their hometown in hopes to find witch or warlock to change Ryohei back. Who would have thought that the first witch they encountered will be their childhood friend who they thought missing? Featuring Tsuzuri as the witch.

once upon a dream

A girl with orange eyes come and goes in Xanxus' dreams throughout his imprisonment. Meanwhile, Reborn arrive at Namimori only to find his student have been in a coma for
years now. Featuring Sawada Jitsuko as the Dreamwalker.

from the ashes she became

Flame Sealing on a child is a recipe for disaster. Even after the Seal is destroyed, Tsunami still feel the effect. In a world where Skies are Betas, Tsunami yet subvert everyone's expectation. And she had enough. A/B/O Dynamics - Omegaverse AU. Featuring Sawada Tsunami who is more than ready to burn everything.

I want to apologise for the long update. Recently my depression start acting up again... And I have suicidal thoughts. Not to mention university stuff. I'm managing it as best as I can.

End Notes

Thank you for reading

Please leave a comment below!

NO FLAME

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!