# Urban Legends

**by** Kanius_Takeru_Cage

## Summary

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Urban Legends
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**Rating:** Mature

**Archive Warning:** Graphic Depictions Of Violence

**Category:** F/F, F/M, Other

**Fandom:** Persona 5, Code Vein (Video Game), 賭ケグルイ | Kakegurui (Anime & Manga), NIOH (Video Game), crossover - Fandom

**Relationship:** Amamiya Ren & Takamaki Ann, Protagonist (Code Vein)/Togo Hifumi, Kitagawa Yusuke/Sakura Futaba, Niijima Makoto/Okuruma Haru, Niijima Makoto/Okuruma Haru/Louis (Code Vein), Sakamoto Ryuji/OC, Oda Shinya/OC, Niijima Sae/OC, Yakumo Shinonome (Code Vein)/Emily Sue (Code Vein), Mia Karnstein (Code Vein)/Suzui Shiho

**Character:** Amamiya Ren (Persona Series), Takamaki Ann, Protagonist (Code Vein), Togo Hifumi, Niijima Makoto, Okuruma Haru, Kitagawa Yusuke, Sakura Futaba, Sakamoto Ryujii, Morgana (Persona 5), Louis (Code Vein), Mia Karnstein (Code Vein), Io (Code Vein), Jabami Yumeko, Saotome Mary, Suzui Ryota, Oda Shinya, Nicola Karnstein (Code Vein), Jack Rutherford (Code Vein), Eva Roux (Code Vein), Nekomata (NIOH), Karen (Code Vein), Emily Sue (Code Vein), Niijima Sae, Sakura Sojirou, Yakumo Shinonome (Code Vein), Takemi Tae, Iwai Munehisa, Rin Murasame (Code Vein), Davis (Code Vein), Coco (Code Vein), William (NIOH), William Adams, Hattori Hanzo, Okatsu (NIOH), Date Masamune, Sanada Yukimura, Ikishima Midari, Nishinotouin Yuriko, Momobami Kirari, Momobami Ririka, Igarashi Sayaka, Gregorio Silva (Code Vein), Cruz Silva (Code Vein), Juzo Mido (Code Vein), Igor (Persona Series), Lavenza (Persona Series), Kawakami Sadayo, Mishima Yuuki, Suzui Shiko, Sumeragi Itsuki, Lady Chacha, Oda Nobunaga, Hattori Mina (OC), Hanami Reiko (OC), Tokugawa Ieyasu, Edward Kelley (NIOH), John Dee (NIOH), Fuku (NIOH), Yomozuki Runa, Yumemite Yumemi, Manyuda Kaede, Li-Ming Xiuying (OC)

**Additional Tags:** Multiple Crossovers, Crossover Pairings, Alternate Universe - Persona Fusion, No Metaverse (Persona 5), Vampires, Human/Vampire Relationship, Blood and Gore, Japanese Mythology & Folklore, Japanese Culture, Fate, Alternate Reality, Romance, Threesome - F/F/M, Cosplay, Pokemon Battle, Human Experimentation, Conspiracy, Secret Organizations, Vampire Sex, Monster of the Week

**Stats:**

- Published: 2019-01-01
- Updated: 2019-07-15
- Chapters: 11/?
- Words: 135093

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**Summary**

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"It's coming. It's here." Said the female Revenant. A man with no memories and a Shogi woman meet again. Thieves and Revenants cross paths. Fates intertwine when dark entities manipulate and tweak the timeline. Mysteries of the dark entities will be unraveled. [A Persona 5 and Code Vein crossover with Kakegurui and Nioh elements. A sequel to Ford1114's Persona Vein.]

Notes

Here's a link to the Fanfiction.net version and for those who want the original version, which will include detailed author notes.

Fanfiction.net link: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/13165382/1/Urban-Legends

As a catch up, here's Persona Vein, whose events take place before Urban Legends. This story has already been completed by Ford1114.

Persona Vein
AO3 link: https://archiveofourown.org/works/14300190/chapters/32991414
Fanfiction.net link: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/12829659/1/Persona-Vein
The Arrivals (到着)

Haneda Airport (羽田空港)/ Ōta, Tokyo (大田, 東京)/September 26th, 2020 (2020年9月26日)/7:30 AM (JST)

Sitting alone in a three airline seat, a young brown-haired man dressed in a long-sleeve white shirt, black pants, and dark shoes had all the room to himself. The man had an unkempt hairstyle with hair locks curving out and some hanging down his face. Some hair was parted for his red eyes to be seen.

His eyes stared at the window as many thoughts raced inside his head. It was a homecoming of sorts for him. He previously lived in Tokyo taking university courses. He was due to arrive and meet with three friends. Naturally, he was excited to hang out with these three colleagues, but in the back of his mind, there was a nagging thought that told him there would be more to this return than seeing old acquaintances again.

He scanned a beautiful view of Tokyo from his window. He discerned Tokyo Tower situated in a sea of buildings and metropolitan venues. He also saw the Rainbow Bridge. He scanned for the isles across mainland Tokyo. One thing he didn't miss seeing were the smokestacks near the factories he spotted. He was frequently reminded how much he hated Tokyo's pollution, but on the bright side, at least he wasn't going to Shanghai.

Then, he immediately thought. Are there others anticipating my arrival?

"We are about to approach Haneda Airport. Passengers, please fasten your seat belts and remain seated. Please also turn off or put electronic devices to sleep as he make our landing. Thank you."

Once the airplane pilot announced the plane's landing, the young man took off his headphones. He fastened his seat belt and closed his eyes. Although this wasn't the first time he's flown to Tokyo, he felt anxiety being unaware what to expect for his return. He expected some things to stay the same, but he also anticipated changes for better and for worse.

He opened his eyes as the plane landed.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have landed in Tokyo Haneda International Airport."

"Finally, I'm back in Tokyo," he said in a relaxed manner.

As everyone started getting up, the man opened up his compartment and pulled out his carry-on bag. On his way off the plane, he greeted a stewardess with a polite bow. He made his way into the International Passenger Terminal's arrival lobby. He checked his phone for the time. It was currently 8:20 AM (JST).

"It'd already be 20 minutes past midnight where I came from," he noted the time zone differences.

On the way out of the terminal, he saw three familiar faces, who had been waiting over an hour. He coolly smiled when they noticed him.

"It's been a while, hasn't it, guys?" He addressed the three individuals.

He scanned the first of the three. Standing on the right was a young male with an even more unkempt hairstyle. He had dark brown hair; from a distance, one could mistake his hair for being black. Some locks of hair covered his right eye. The eye that wasn't covered was red. He wore a long-sleeved and buttoned white shirt with a black waistcoat over it. He also had on gray slacks and
black shoes. One notable accessory item was his silver necklace.

"How's it been, Louis?" He asked the young man with the barely visible right eye.

"We've been waiting for this day. Glad you made it safely, Sion." Louis replied in collective manner.

"Thanks, but c'mon, call me Skyler."

"No way, we like Sion better!"

"Ah, yeah, I missed you, too, Mia."

"That's Mia Karnstein to you, Sion!" A short-statured, green-eyed young woman with long blonde hair tied in pigtails tried her best to lecture Skyler.

"Then, you should call me Skyler Jones."

"Humph, as if!"

Mia didn't exactly come dressed to impress as she only came in a navy blue summer dress, purple-and-black long stockings, and black boots.

"Sheesh, who woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning?" Skyler shrugged off Mia's domineering attitude.

"Heh, don't mind her. She's really happy to see you again, Skyler," Louis said.

"Right…" Mia muttered as she hugged Skyler. "Welcome back, Skyler!"

After returning a hug to Mia, Skyler turned to the third party member: a tall red-haired, brown-eyed man wearing a green shirt, blue jeans, and brown shoes. His red hair was so long he wore it in a small ponytail. He had two large hair bangs hanging on both face sides.

"It's great to have you back, Skyler," the tall red-haired man acknowledged his colleague's return.

"Thanks, Yakumo. It's great to see you again, old friend. Even better that we're all together again."

"Mind if I carry your luggage?" Yakumo offered Skyler.

"Sure." Skyler handed Yakumo his luggage.

"Is that all you brought?" queried Louis.

"Nah, there's one more luggage. Let's go get it," Skyler said as they went to get his belongings.

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(Cue SOOB - Beneath the Sky (Original Mix) Playing on the Radio)

Upon leaving Haneda Airport, Skyler and his three colleagues cruised into Tokyo. They rode in Louis's black and silver 2015 Lexus IS C. As the driver, Louis sat on the right side of the front. Mia sat on the left side of the front after calling first dibs. Both Skyler and Yakumo sat comfortably in the back; Yakumo leaned back on the right side of the back and Skyler sat on the left side.

The four enjoyed their peaceful cruise on the Rainbow Bridge. Skyler leaned back and relaxed as light wind blew against his face.
"So, how long are you staying in for, Skyler?" Yakumo asked his friend.

"Who knows? However long I need," Skyler plainly answered.

Louis smirked as he briefly eyed the composed Skyler. "Things have gotten interesting since you left. We've met some intriguing group of people."

"Is that so?" Skyler's curiosity piqued with interest.

"Yeah, we can't wait to introduce them to you. I think you'll like them, Skyler," Louis said.

Turning around in her seat, Mia curiously asked Skyler. "Got any plans today or maybe tomorrow?"

"Well, today we're heading to the new apartment I've just rented," Skyler stated. "As for tomorrow, I might go for some sightseeing. It has been a while since I've lived here. But, enough about me. Let's talk about you guys." He stared toward the sun rising and beaming down its morning rays over Tokyo.

"Heh, we don't want to bore you with the details," Louis half-chuckled while keeping an eye on the road.

"Try me. You first, Louis."

"Well, you know I'm already a college graduate," Louis said. "I just graduated from the Tokyo Institute of Technology with an engineering degree. I've already talked to you about me wanting to be a researcher with leadership skills."

"Right. And any lady friends I should know?"

"Maybe one or two," Louis chortled.

"Wait, what?!"

Mia rolled her eyes. "Oh yeah, Sion. Apparently loverboy here has already garnered the attention of two girls. FYI, Sion, don't turn out like him."

Skyler shrugged. "Right, I'd barely handle one girl. Speaking of girls, what about you, Mia? You want to introduce me to your boyfriend?"

Mia scoffed and folded her arms. "Yeah, right. I'm still being the responsible big sister looking out for her little brother."

"Little brother? More like big brother these days," Louis poked fun at Mia's short height compared to her taller younger brother.

"Hey, shut up! I wasn't expecting Nicola to sprout so fast!"

Yakumo smiled genuinely. "He's about to finish his last year of middle school. I believe the entrance exams are coming up soon."

Mia sighed. "Yeah, and I hope he does well."

Skyler smirked. "You're still that overprotective sister now, Mia. I'm glad you haven't changed in that regard."

"Yeah, but I often wonder if he needs me to look after him with the friends he's made."
"He appreciates you being there for him, Mia."

"Thanks, Skyler." She dropped Skyler's nickname while being genuine to him.

"And as you know, I'm a mercenary for the Japan Self-Defense Forces as part of the Special Assault Team," Yakumo revealed his current occupation.

"Now that's cool. Have you met anyone, Yakumo?"

"Yeah, there's someone I met in the forces. I'd be happy to introduce you to her."

"And then there's my sister Karen. She works at a hospital and is a researcher. She'll be happy to see you again, Skyler," Louis said.

"Looks like I've got lot of new and old faces to meet. This will be exciting," Skyler said. However, he wondered if he'll possibly meet someone during his Japan stay.

(End theme)

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Chiyoda, Tokyo (千代田区 東京)/September 27th, 2020 (2020年9月27日)/11:20 AM (JST)

(Cue Thomas Bergersen - Remember Me)

The next morning, a beautiful dark green-eyed young woman with long black hair and bangs walked down a semi-busy street. The woman wore a casual white dress with orange, navy blue, and white checkered designs, sans the sleeves that were free of such designs. She also had on long black stockings and dark shoes. This woman still wore her red hair accessory that resembled a three-leaf clover, which she's worn since high school.

Togo Hifumi has since retained the youthful beauty she's had since her high school years. As she walked by, a few bystanders recognized her as the Female Shogi League champion and as the "too beautiful Shogi player". She coyly smiled, recognizing and accepting the fact few still recognized her celebrity Shogi status.

She pressed on walking across the streets of Chiyoda. This was the exact area that distorted during the final battle against Yaldabaoth's successor, Saklas. The Chiyoda area returned to normal following that battle.

Civilians and tourists passed by the lone Shogi woman. It was another daily and mundane life in Chiyoda.

Just then, Hifumi noticed a young brown-haired man with red eyes. It was the same man who arrived in Tokyo the other day after his friends picked him up at the airport. He wore a teal blue shirt, light gray pants, and black shoes. Upon seeing him, her eyes widened in shock.

Could it be him? She wondered.

Hifumi then walked up and approached the young man.

"Excuse me?" Hifumi asked.

He turned around and curiously faced Hifumi.
"Hey there, do I know you from somewhere?" The young man asked, actually speaking fluent Japanese.

Hifumi casually answered. "I apologize. You remind me of someone else, but you look similar to him." She blinked and realized he spoke to her in her native tongue. "Wait, you know Japanese?"

"Of course. I learned the language fluently in one of my many college courses. It's been a while since I've lived in Japan during my university years. I actually came back from Wales in the United Kingdom, my home country. I was picked up by my friends at Haneda Airport. I'm staying here with a diverse job. I'm considering getting a citizenship if I'm working here for an extended term." The young man explained his situation.

"I see. Yes, Japan is a great place to live, yet it is rather difficult to maintain a standard living, too." She reminded him of the country's living conditions and laws.

"It sure is. By the way, I didn't get your name, miss?"

"My name is Togo Hifumi."

"That's a beautiful name. You can call me Skyler Jones, but my friends sometimes call me Sion. It's a cool nickname I've gotten used to."

"I see."

"Say, do you mind if we walk around the area just to get to know each other?" Skyler asked.

At this moment, Hifumi was reminded of the previous experience showing Sion around Tokyo and Osaka. One day, she knew this young man might gain a similar connection like the previous Revenant and renew the bond with the Shogi girl. With that, Hifumi gave her answer.

"I'd be happy to." Hifumi smiled.

With that, Hifumi and Skyler walked across the streets together and explored Tokyo.

Unbeknownst to Hifumi, however, an image of a female white-haired, pale-skinned Revenant with golden eyes flashed behind Hifumi and smiled ambiguously. This mysterious white-haired Revenant quickly disappeared inside Hifumi's body.

Not even noticing, Hifumi didn't know something entered her. She continued showing Skyler a few of Chiyoda's landmarks.

Needless to say, life moved forward. However, there was a wonder what new urban adventures awaited for these two and the other ordinary civilians.

(End theme)

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Urban Legends (都市伝説)

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Chapter I

The Arrivals (到着)
Hello, friends. I'm Amamiya Ren. I'm also Joker, leader of the Phantom Thieves, Japan's greatest urban legends.

Can you believe it's been over a month since me and my friends stopped Saklas and the second coming of Yaldabaooth? The fated battle was fought in Chiyoda, Tokyo. It turned out to be an even bigger battle than the one against the original Yaldabaooth four years ago. The God of Control resurfaced as it merged with a soldier who lived through Japan's social and economic status growth and decay across the ages. This soldier, who we came to know as Saklas, merged with Yaldabaooth's essence to become Yaldabaooth ΩZ.

In the middle of the battle with Saklas, Hifumi, Sion, and Yumeko fought alongside us. In an act of selflessness, Hifumi took a fatal blow for Sion and seemingly died. Then, to our shock, Hifumi was resurrected by a divine power, originally a part of Yaldabaooth, and became Sophia. Sophia's aura was so powerful she granted us the magnificent power called Persona's Ascendancy. With the power of Persona's Ascendancy, I became Satanael ΩX. After me and my friends vanquished our dark Lost counterparts, we aided Sophia, Sion, and Yumeko against Yaldabaooth ΩZ.

It was a harder fought battle than the one with the original Yaldabaooth. In the end, me, Sophia, and Sion were the last ones to stand against Yaldabaooth ΩZ. Once we defeated Yaldabaooth ΩZ, Saklas gave his parting words and reminded us of the harsh reality that there were still some corruption out there to deal with. As Saklas ceased to exist, the spirit of the old soldier he used to be faded with him. Both were freed from a corrupted Amrita.

Shortly after Saklas passed, our friend, Sion, ceased. While we mourned for Sion, Sophia stayed resolute. In response, Sophia used the last of her powers to get rid of Yaldabaooth ΩZ's distortions and restored the world to normal. Because of this, we lost our Persona's Ascendancy forms and returned to our normal selves. It makes sense since those forms were tied to Sophia's power. After that, Hifumi lost the powers of Sophia, but her memories of Sion never ceased.

Following these events, Hifumi and Yumeko sent their Guardian Spirits back to the spiritual realm. Yumeko bid us farewell and promised she'd bring her high school acquaintances to meet with us one day. Akechi Goro, who returned to fight with us again as a Phantom Thief, left and disappeared.

Shortly after our last urban adventure, I married the love of my life, Takamaki Ann. All the friends and acquaintances we made came to our wedding. Although only us Thieves can see them, Igor and Lavenza were there to witness our wedding. This was one of the best and fulfilling days of my life. With the last adventure behind us, Ann and I feel we could effectively retire being Phantom Thieves and just enjoy the rest of our lives peacefully. I think we've earned much needed rest.

Then again, there's barely time for rest in the adult world. While I've been finishing up college, I've been working a part-time job at Toranomon Hills, a 52-storey high building and the second largest landmark in the Tokyo area. I've been doing pretty well all things considered, though balancing school, a part-time job, and my married life can get busy.
But, enough about me. Let's see how the other Thieves have been doing with their lives lately."

(End theme)

Amamiya-Takamaki Residence (奄美・高崎 レジデンス)/Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区，東京)/September 28th, 2020 (2020年9月28日)/5:30 PM (JST)

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Beneath the Mask)

The front door opened and in walked the man who used to go by Joker. A far cry from how he used to be, Amamiya-Takamaki Ren came still dressed in his work clothes. Ren looked nearly the same as he did four years ago. He still wore the same glasses, which he often took off. Even Ann wondered why he still needed them. His normally unkempt black hair was neatly groomed, although as the day wore on his hair regained some of its scruffiness. He had on a white long-sleeved dress shirt, though he had already unbuttoned the sleeves and pulled them back to make for a comforting short-sleeve shirt. He had on dark gray slacks, black shoes, and a black waist belt. Having removed it on his way home, he had a gray blazer hanging over his right shoulder.

"Ann, I'm home," Ren announced, taking his shoes off and putting on in-house slippers.

"In the living room!" Called out Ren's wife.

As he went into the living room, he saw his beautiful wife sprawled on their sofa. The platinum blonde-haired woman got off the sofa dressed in her latest modeling wardrobe. She had on a black sleeveless and backless halter top, which also exposed her full midriff. She also wore black leather pants to match her halter top. Ann's other accessories included red lipstick, red painted nails, and a pair of red bracelets on her right wrist. She also had on a red trench coat that she left on the couch. Having embraced womanhood, Ann no longer wore her pigtails. She freely let her wavy blonde hair loose down to her lower body.

Ann's alluring blue eyes fell on Ren's dark gray eyes. The couple approached and kissed each other.

"So, how's your day, Ren?"

"Busy if you couldn't already tell. I sure as hell know you've been since you were crashing on the couch."

"What can I say? I've been in demand," confidently smiled the former Panther.

"Want to talk about it?"

"How about over dinner? There's this place I want us to try out!"

"Alright, well I guess we don't need to get dressed?"

"Nope, we're fine the way we are," Ann took her husband's hand.

"Let's go then." Ren smiled and eyed the scarlet wedding ring she's worn since the wedding.

It's already been two weeks since their wedding. The young Japanese man and his one-quarter American wife have had a good start to their wedded life. They've allowed themselves to become a working couple. Realizing Ann wasn't the stay-at-home type of wife, Ren was more than happy to let his wife expand her horizons in modeling. As long as they were both working, they'd at least have
enough to pay their monthly apartment rent.

Conspicuous by his absence was Morgana, who used to hang with and live with Ren. Now that Ren and Ann moved into their own place, Morgana decided to let them live independently. Though it was hard for Morgana to see his 'Lady Ann' married to Ren, he was fine to let go of his former crush. However, that didn't stop him from sometimes dropping by to visit Ren and Ann. They were more than happy to let Morgana see them.

"Before we go, guess who just got on the front cover of that magazine I was shooting for?" Ann winked, picking up a magazine from their dining table. She revealed the cover, which had her dressed in the same attire but her fully unbuttoning her red trench coat. "Ta-da!"

"Yep, that's you alright. You look great, Ann," he smiled proudly for his wife's latest success.

"Aren't I always hot-looking? Let's eat dinner to celebrate my success!"

"Sure, anything you want, Ann," Ren smiled as he and Ann headed out the door.

They lovingly held each other on the way out.

As they walked out of their apartment, a black cat with a yellow collar, blue eyes, a white muzzle, paws, and tail tip, watched them from afar. Morgana smiled and nodded before turning to leave.

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Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department ( 警視庁)/Kasumigaseki ( 霞が関)/Chiyoda, Japan ( 千代田区 , 東京 ) /6:00 PM (JST)

"Ms. Niijima!" A young male officer garbed in the Tokyo Metropolitan officer uniform, consisting of a long-sleeved light blue dress shirt with a black tie, a dark blue vest overlapping the shirt, dark blue pants, and a blue police cap. "Thank you for supervising my first day on the job!" He saluted his superior.

Turning to face the rookie officer, a young woman garbed in a female police uniform, consisting of a similar colored dress shirt but short-sleeved, saluted him back. She also wore a black tie, dark blue pants, and a blue police cap. She had her now long brown hair pulled up into a hair bun style.

"Good job today, rookie. You're doing good, but keep it up. The department can't have any slackers and I'll make sure you don't get off task." Makoto commended the rookie officer.

With that, Niijima Makoto turned to leave and hopped on her department issued motorcycle. She checked the time, which was now five minutes past six.

"Still got time to pick you up," she muttered, referring to her significant other.

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Shujin Academy Field Track ( 修人学園のフィールドトラック )/Aoyama-Itchome ( 青山一丁目 ) /Minato, Tokyo ( 港区 , 東京 ) /6:15 PM (JST)

Revisiting his old high school's field, Sakamoto Ryuji stretched his legs and completed his warm up exercises. He got into a runner's stance and crouched over, staring intently at the distance he was preparing to run.

Ryuji's outward appearance was a stark contrast to what he used to look like during his high school
days. Gone was the blonde dye that made him stand out from the crowd. Having stopped coloring
his hair, it had gone back to its natural black. He grew out a black goatee on his chin that completed
his transition into a young man. Ryuji's build was more muscularly built after a few years of physical
training. He wore a white t-shirt, red sweatshorts, and white tennis shoes. He also wore a small
fitband, which he used to time his runs.

"Ok, man. You've got this. You're gonna kick your previous record's ass!" Ryuji focused, psyching
himself up for another sprint. "Go!" He roared and sprinted like there was no tomorrow.

As he picked up the pace, he pictured himself fulfilling his passionate dream of becoming a runner
and becoming a sports instructor.

I can do this! Ryuji internally shouted in his mind.

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Roppongi (六本木)/ Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/6:45 PM (JST)

Having just left from a grand opening of a local Okumura Café, Okumura Haru waited for her ride to
pick her up at a designated spot.

Haru retained her chin-length curly auburn hair. She wore a lavender blouse with a long-sleeved
white shirt underneath. She also wore a black and white polka-dotted skirt, knee-length black
stockings, and brown dress shoes. She carried a red purse. Other accessories included a pair of silver
earrings and light red lipstick.

Haru checked her watch and smiled. "Just a little longer…"

And with that, she heard the sound of a motorcycle coming near her. Haru pivoted toward the
direction of the motorcycle driver.

A playful smile adorned Haru's face as she eyed her driver. "Took you long enough."

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Tokyo Institute of Technology (東京工業大学)/ Futaba's Dormitory / Meguro, Tokyo (目黒区, 東京)/7:15 PM (JST)

The loud sound of fingers frequently tapping on computer keys filled the entire room. The dormitory
room of Sakura Futaba resembled a typical otaku's.

Sitting with her feet on a her chair, Futaba intently stared at her computer monitor browsing for
information on her favorite 'interwebs' searching for confidential information and online shopping for
more otaku merchandise. All while doing this, she was on a phone chat with an 'old friend'.

"You just got back from presenting your art gallery at Tokyo National Museum? That's neat, Inari! I
wish I could've been there, but y'know classes…" Futaba said while munching on some hot chips.

Futaba wore a short-sleeved gray shirt with a green Hatsune Miku character design embellished on it,
an orange beanie, and white & gray cargo pants. She had her feet planted in a pillow cushioned
under her buttocks. The most notable difference in Futaba's appearance is her hairstyle and color.
Her hair was now short and neck-length like her mother's. She ditched the orange hair she had when
she was younger and allowed her natural dark color to resurface.

Futaba's dorm room perfectly represented her otaku passions with accessories like posters, action
figures, and video games, which decorated her dorm. Her action figures consisted of Kamen Rider (Den-O, Decade, Double, OOO, Fourze, Gaim, and Zi-O), Pokémon, Doraemon, Mawaru Penguindrum, Little Witch Academia Nendoroid figures, Retsuko (Aggretsuko), Ultraman (the Netflix Anime version), Super Smash Bros. and Amiibo figurines. However, these paled in comparison to Futaba's prized possessions: her action figures from the Phoenix Ranger Featherman R series, which blended in with her Kamen Rider collection.

"It's quite alright, Futaba. There's always other presentations of mine you can come see."

Futaba clamped her hands overhead. "I'm so sorry! I'll make up for it!"

"You needn't apologize, Futaba. Your studies come first, which by the way..."

Futaba lifted her glasses above the bridge of her nose. She evilly smirked. "Hm, it's going according to plan."

"Is that your way of saying 'my grades and studies have been going well'?"

"Exactly right, Inari!"

Yusuke's exasperated sigh was heard on the other line. "Do you need to still keep calling me that, Futaba?"

"Yeah, because it still suits you, Inari!" Futaba opened up a cup of hot ramen. She felt the ramen juice burn her finger. "Ow! Oooo, that one stung!"

"Ramen again?"

"Yeah? What I'm lazy to cook my own meals."

"Eating too much instant ramen will make you gain weight."

"Hey, don't talk about a girl's weight! Geez, Inari!"

Yusuke chuckled modestly. "My apologies. Perhaps I can make you dinner sometime."

"Your place again?"

"Yeah, if you're ok with that?"

Futaba smirked coyly. "Sure, why not? Even I can get tired of instant ramen and chips. And I do need to worry about my intake."

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Yusuke's Apartment (ユースケのアパート)/Taitō, Tokyo (台東区, 東京)/7:20 PM (JST)

Kitagawa Yusuke, now wearing a ponytail, sat in a comfy recliner chair inside a well furnished apartment. He wore a long-sleeved violet shirt with a gray vest over it. He also wore black pants and a graduation ring, which he earned after graduating Kosei High School.

While listening to Futaba, the former Fox sipped some warm cocoa.

"Then, it's a date then, Futaba. We can meet at Tokyo National Museum."

"Yep! See you tomorrow!"
"Good night, Futaba," Yusuke said as they simultaneously hung up. He smiled. "Who knew we'd end up dating?"

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**Makoto and Haru's Apartment (マコトと春のアパート)/Roppongi (六本木)/Minato, Tokyo (港区，東京)/7:45 (JST)**

Haru walked into a two-person apartment she shared with her significant other.

"Home sweet home, Mako-chan," Haru smiled, referring to her preferred nickname for Makoto. She turned around and faced Makoto, who walked up and kissed Haru's lips.

"Enjoy the drinks we had?"

"Yes, but you'll need to cut down, Mako-chan."

"Can't help it after another day of training another rookie? That seems to be my job lately."

Haru smiled. "Don't worry, Mako-chan. Just keep at it, sweetie, and you'll rise up the rankings to get promoted. You just need to take one step at a time."

Makoto smiled and nodded. "Right, what am I even complaining for? I'm living my dream for my father's sake."

"That's the spirit, Mako-chan. Now, let's get you washed up."

"I'm long overdue for a hot bath. Make sure to massage those shoulders like last time."

Haru took off Makoto's tie and watched her begin to undress. "You got it, Mako-chan."

xxxxx

Leaning back inside their bathtub, Makoto relaxed in a hot bubble bath that helped relax her body. She let her hair down. The foam of the bath soap bubbled up to the surface, covering nearly all of Makoto's naked body. She had her feet sticking out on the other end of the tub. With her sleeves pulled up, Haru leaned outside the bathtub and massaged herbal oil across Makoto's shoulders.

"Mm, that's more like it! Right there!" Makoto let out a deep, relaxed sigh.

"Need me to unwind those strained back muscles, Mako-chan, my love?" Haru whispered into Makoto's right ear.

"That'd be great," the police woman smiled, blowing bubbles from her hands. She winced when Haru pressed a little hard. "Maybe soften a bit on that spot."

Haru genuinely smiled. "Sure, Mako-chan." With that, she applied a softer pressure on her lover's right shoulder.

"Thanks, Haru-chan. I know it hasn't been long, but I can really feel our relationship going somewhere. I know it's going to work out between us."

"I was thinking the same thing, Mako-chan. I really do mean that." Haru said, rubbing her face against Makoto's hand and kissing it.

"So, care to join me? I've made some room in the tub," Makoto patted the bubbly water while pulling
her legs forward. She coyly invited Haru to enjoy the warm bubble bath.

Not one to let down her new lover, Haru accepted and disrobed her clothing. She stepped in fully naked and covering her breasts.

"What's wrong, Haru-chan? It's just us. No one's going to see us."

"Right," Haru relaxed, feeling the warm water soak her body. She and Makoto ever so casually and lovingly held each other's hands.

The long-haired brunette and the curly auburn-haired woman exchanged passionate looks. They leaned over and kissed each other.

xxxxx

*Café Leblanc* (純喫茶ルブラン)/Yongen-Jaya, Tokyo (四軒茶屋, 東京)/8:00 PM (JST)

After dinner, Ren and Ann stopped by to visit Sakura Sojiro, who still ran his successful Café Leblanc. Sojiro was surprised but happy to see the young man he was a caretaker to for about a year. He was happier to see Ren married to one of the ladies out of his circle of friends.

Though, even to this day, Ren wondered how Sojiro's business has been able to survive primarily on its two major selling items: coffee and curry.

"Your coffee is still good stuff, but you could work up spicing up the curry menu," Ren critiqued his adoptive father's curry items.

"Nah, your curry is still pretty delish!" Ann gave her seal of approval.

"Oh, stop you two," Sojiro chuckled modestly. The man looked relatively the same he had been four years ago. However, signs of more gray started to show his age. There were tufts of gray showing up on the sides of his hair, within his hair and in his beard. He wore a long-sleeved pink shirt to complement his white pants and shoes. "I'm happy you two could drop by on such short notice. I'd thought you'd forget all about this old man who continues selling coffee and curry, the oddest dish combination, I know."

Ann giggled. "We'd never forget you, Sojiro! You stuck with us when we told you we were the Phantom Thieves. You were even there for our wedding. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being supportive of us."

Sojiro smiled and nodded.

Ren raised a coffee cup to Sojiro. "And why would I forget about you, old man? After all, you put up with me and my crap for a year."

Sojiro tried stifling a chuckle. "And still the smart alec like I remember you, Ren." He couldn't feel prouder to see Ren grow up into a responsible adult and marry into a stable relationship. He poured himself some coffee and raised it in the couple's honor. "Here's to a strong and healthy relationship, you two."

Ren and Ann, too, raised their coffee cups. "And to an everlasting relationship."

"And here's to a successful first year for Futaba's university life," Sojiro drank to Ren and Futaba's next stages in their lives.
Ren and Ann faced each other.
"To my foreign angel."

"And to my Joker."

They drank their coffee to honor their marriage.

(End theme)

xxxxx

Ueno Zoo (恩賜上野動物園)/Taitō, Tokyo (台東区, 東京)/ September 30th, 2020 (2020年9月30日)/10:45 AM (JST)

( Cue Kakegurui Opening SoundTrack : Deal with the Devil - Tia )

Jabami Yumeko invited her two former Hyakkaou Private Academy classmates and best friends, Saotome Mary and Suzui Ryōta, to the Ueno Zoo. Yumeko decided now was more than the perfect time to visit the Phantom Thieves. Yumeko couldn't wait to introduce her two former classmates to them, but with many of the Thieves leading busy lives she had to wait.

To kill some time, Yumeko took Mary and Ryōta to see Ueno Zoo's animals.

"Heh, look at those funny-looking birds," the long black-haired Yumeko pointed to some shoebill storks. Yumeko came dressed in a cute white t-shirt with a black cat on it. She also wore a blue jean skirt and red tennis shoes. She carried with her a white fluffy purse. Her red eyes intently stared at the birds like a cat would with its prey.

"They are kinda weird-looking. They look like something straight out of a fantasy story," Mary assessed the shoebill storks. She kept her blonde hair in the same twin ponytailed style. She wore a long-sleeved black shirt with a red coat. She also wore a white skirt, white thigh high socks, and black heeled shoes.

"They look like dinosaurs if you ask me," Ryōta pointed out the long debated connection between birds and dinosaurs. No longer a Hyakkaou Private student, the brunette-haired Ryōta could now freely go out in casual wear. He wore a green hoodie with a yellow t-shirt under it, a dark blue baseball cap, blue jeans, and white tennis shoes.

"Huh, now that you mention it. They kinda look like dinosaurs? But, how come? Aren't dinos long gone?" Yumeko curiously asked Ryōta.

"There's been long discussions and their skeleton structures are similar to birds, especially the hips and breast bone areas," Ryōta explained to the best of his knowledge.

"I wonder if birds could make great gamblers?" Yumeko eagerly pondered.

Mary sighed. "Geez, get a grip. You know birds can't gamble."

"How do you know? Sure, they don't gamble for money, but who's to say they don't bet on food?"

"Well, birds can be highly intelligent. A crow can utilize tools like rocks to break open nuts and build their nests. They even use tools to carry objects. It's true!" Ryōta revealed a fascinating discovery about bird behavior.
"Wow, that's cool. Well, still don't think they can gamble, Mary?" Yumeko got right up into her friend's face.

"No, and even if they could, none of us have ever seen them gamble!" Mary snapped back.

Yumeko turned and called out to the shoebills. "Hey, can you guys gamble or not?!" She got what she expected: no response from the shoebill storks. "Geez, Ren and his pals are so busy lately. None of us have gotten our gamble on lately. I'm so bored."

"Better than all the stuff that went down when you were hanging with the Phantom Thieves," whispered Ryōta.

"Yeah, I can't believe you were hanging with them! The Phantom freaking Thieves!" Mary whispered aloud. "I'm still insanely jealous. I remember the one named Queen saving me and Ryōta from a monster."

"You mean Mako-chan? Yeah, she's pretty strong. I really can't wait for y'all to meet them. I feel like it'll be an epic meetup. You guys won't be disappointed." Yumeko stated optimistically about their meeting with the Phantom Thieves.

(End theme)

xxxxx

Outside the Public Prosecutors Office/Tokyo District Special Investigation Department/Roppongi (六本木)/Minato, Tokyo (港区，東京)/5:15 PM (JST)

Preparing to leave her office, a woman with long gray hair parted to the right side and reddish eyes finished signing the last piles of paperwork. She then got up. Her stern gaze meticulously eyed her office clock.

"It's about time. I never thought I'd be done," Niijima Sae sighed out of exasperation. Sae stood dressed in a black business suit with a matching colored turtleneck and dark gray heels. She grabbed her black blazer; the blazer's cuffs and the lower area have clamshell-like designs. Her accessories include her necklace of a section sign, silver earrings, and the black hair clips above her right ear. Her fingernails are violet.

After grabbing her black purse, she headed for the door and opened it, only to be taken by surprise when a white bouquet was pushed in front of her.

"Hojo? Could you not surprise me like that?" Sae addressed the man holding the bouquet in front of her.

Hojo was equally as tall as Sae with her heels on. He has short dark hair and brown eyes. He came dressed in a light gray blazer with a white shirt underneath, black pants, and dark brown dress shoes. He wore a pair of thin framed glasses, giving him a sophisticated and educated presentation.

"Sorry, Sae dear, I should knock first. After all, my wife is now the SIU Director," Hojo acknowledged Sae's recent promotion to the director's position.

"But, thank you, dear," Sae smiled, taking the bouquet from her husband. She and Hojo then kissed.

"I made sure to reserve a seat for two."

"Perfect," Sae smiled.
As the couple walked out of the public building, they came across a young woman. The woman had short neck length black hair with fringe bangs hanging between her red-colored eyes. She came dressed in a long-sleeved dark red shirt, black pants, and black high-heels. Sae and Hojo immediately recognized the woman.

"Karen? This is a surprise. I thought you'd still be working?" Sae addressed the woman.

"I'm taking my break now. Shouldn't Mrs. SIU Director be handing out and working on new cases?" Karen eyed Sae with a sardonic smirk.

"I finished the last of today's paperwork," Sae stated.

"Until you have to do it all over again first thing tomorrow, huh?" Karen reminded her.

"Me and Sae are about to head for dinner," Hojo plainly stated.

"Well, I hope you two enjoy yourselves. Not all of us have that luxury of getting off periods, especially in my line of work."

"I know you didn't come here to talk about yourself, Karen. Did something happen?" Sae queried.

"Oh, not me. Just letting you know my brother, Louis, already graduated from the Tokyo Institute of Technology. You know he was working on his engineering degree?"

"Oh yes, that's right. Send him my congratulations, Karen."

"Thanks, Sae. I'm so proud of him. Just as much as you're proud of your little sister Makoto."

"Well as you know, Makoto is not little anymore. She's following in our father's footsteps."

"Of course, she's become an officer in his memory."

Sae added. "Is there anything else you'd like to say?"

"That's all I've got to tell you," Karen checked her cellphone for the time. "Oh, I've got to get going! My assistants can't work long without my supervision! We'll have to do lunch, dinner, or something another time to catch up! See you later!" She bolted off leaving the couple.

Hojo chuckled. "She can be quite strange."

Sae sighed. "Well, that's Karen. Sometimes I think she gets consumed with her work more than I do, which is already stressful enough."

"She could use some rest. So, are we ready?"

"Yes, let's not delay."

xxxxx

**Skyler's Apartment/Hamamatsuchō (浜松町)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/6:30 PM (JST)**

Since their encounter, Skyler and Hifumi started frequently seeing each other. The previous connection Hifumi had with Sion became reignited. With Hifumi graduating from Sophia University soon and just exams to study for, she had free time to spend with Skyler.

They now chatted outside on Skyler's apartment balcony.
"Don't you think it's a coincidence we're both graduating at almost the same time?" Skyler asked Hifumi. "Well, almost for you. I'm already a college graduate."

"Yes, I'm not technically a graduate yet until I have my degree. I've buckled down and studied hard these past two and a half years," Hifumi stated her university progress.

"I'm glad you've been coming over a lot, Hifumi. Since my friends have been all over the place, it's good to have some form of company at my place."

"No problem. I'm glad I can help out cleaning your apartment."

"Sorry if I asked you to put in some time. You probably had other things you wanted to do?"

"It's not a problem. I had no other plans besides playing Shogi and study for exams."

Skyler turned to Hifumi. "You're going to have to show me some Shogi."

"Sure, next time I'll bring my board and pieces. I'd be happy to teach you. Every person I've taught have been winners."

"Then, I know I'll have a good teacher in you, Hifumi."

Just then, Skyler and Hifumi leaned over as if they're about to kiss. It had only been a few days since they first met, but it was the 'Sion' in Skyler that drew Hifumi toward him. Skyler somehow sensed a familiarity being near the Shogi woman. Hifumi and Skyler held each other's hands.

Unbeknownst to Skyler and Hifumi, the white-haired female Revenant barely materialized and appeared next to Hifumi. She watched the two bond and turned toward the sun starting to set. She quickly vanished and entered Hifumi without the Shogi woman's knowing.

"I do wonder how your friends are doing."

"I'm sure they're fine, Hifumi."

xxxxx

**Roppongi (六本木)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/October 2nd, 2020 (2020年10月2日)/3:30 PM (JST) 

(Cue Guilty Crown - Friends)

Three middle school students had gotten out of Roppongi Junior High School and walked together toward their homes. They would walk together almost daily. These three friends consisted of two boys and a girl.

The two boys first met as kids during their first year of middle school. Their names are Oda Shinya and Nicola Karnstein. The latter is Mia's younger brother.

It had been four years since Shinya met Ren and become a follower of the Phantom Thieves. The little gamer boy had grown into a teenager. His dark hair was shorter and now cut several inches above the back of his back. He still had his hair unkempt with locks of fringe bangs hanging over his face and between his eyes. He had longer bangs on the sides of his face. He, like Nicola, wore a standard middle school uniform, consisting of a black buttoned uniform shirt with a standing collar, straight-legged black pants, and sneakers. Shinya had grown from a mere 4'10 to 5'7 feet tall.
Nicola had shoulder length blonde hair and clear blue eyes. Unlike Shinya's hair style, he had two thick forehead bangs intertwine, hanging over his face and between his eyes. Mia's 'little brother' couldn't even possibly be called 'little' anymore as the teenager had sprouted to 5'7 feet tall from his previous 4'11. Despite his physical growth, he retained his feminine boy facial features.

The girl of the trio, Hanami Reiko, is much shorter being 4'11. She felt like a child beside her two friends. She has shoulder-length black hair and amber eyes. She wore a dark red bow at the end of a twisted braid. She wore her school's girl uniform, a short-sleeved blouse with a black sailor-style collar and a black pleated skirt. She wore a red ribbon tied at the front and laced through a loop on her blouse. Her legwear consisted of knee-length white socks and brown loafers.

Reiko was born in Nagoya before she and her family moved to Tokyo just in time to start middle school. She had hardly anyone to interact with until she started hanging with Shinya and Nicola. Since then, they had been close friends. Although in the past year, Shinya and Reiko got more close in their relationship. Reiko became Shinya's girlfriend.

"So, who's up for some arcade time?" Shinya asked his two friend, his voice changed after hitting puberty.

"Over at Gigolo in Akihabara?" Reiko queried.

"Well yeah. That's one of our usual hang out places. Why did you have something else in mind?"

"No, of course not, Shinya."

Nicola added with a composed smile. "Sure, I'm up for it. Did you make sure to bring your cap, Shinya?" His voice also changed following puberty.

"Hell yeah I did!" Shinya opened his backpack and pulled out his favorite red cap that read "GET SMOKED" on the front in yellow. He put it on. "Some players are getting smoked today!"

Reiko giggled. "You're so silly, Shinya."

"Alright, we're off to Gigolo, guys!" Shinya announced.

"Let's just make sure we're all at our homes early," Nicola reminded them.

"Yeah, yeah, I know."

"And you know how Mia gets if I'm not home before 6:00."

"Dude, you're taller than your sister."

"You've seen how scary she gets, Shinya. She's my sister and legal guardian."

Shinya shuddered. "Yeah, true. For someone small, she can scare tall guys like us."

Reiko sighed. "C'mon, Nicola's sister isn't bad."

"Because she likes you for being responsible."

"I'd be responsible, too, if you didn't make me lose track of time," chuckled Nicola.

"Oh, so it's my fault, man?!"

"We're already losing track of time. Let's get on the train to Akihabara," Reiko suggested. "Did we
make sure to bring money?"

The teenage boys nodded. With that, the trio arrived at Roppongi Station (六本木駅) and took the routes that ultimately took them to Akihabara.

(End theme)

xxxxx

**Odaiba Seaside Park (お台場海岸公園) / Odaiba (お台場) / 4:30 PM (JST)**

Yakumo had the day off from his duties, giving time him to invite his girlfriend. During his time in the Japan Self-Defense Forces, he met a woman named Emily Sue. Shortly after getting acquainted with each other, Yakumo and Emily started dating.

Yakumo and Emily stood on the coast as they faced the Rainbow Bridge's direction.

Emily was a modest-sized woman with neck length dark brown hair and amber eyes. She wore a sleeveless green shirt, beige pants, and tennis shoes. Her other choice accessories consisted of a necklace and a blue beret cap.

"I'm glad you got off just so we can see this scenery," Emily said.

"It's not often I get days off during the week. I'm glad you like it," Yakumo replied, breathing in the warm and moist air from the water.

"This is relaxing," Emily smiled, putting an arm over Yakumo's left arm.

"Maybe we should come here to meditate."

"That'd be great."

Yakumo and Emily started walking across the coast to enjoy their outing together.

xxxxx

**Shujin Academy (秀尽学園高校) / 5:00 PM (JST)**

"And this is where I went to high school," Ryuji showed a young woman the school he graduated from four years ago.

"This is Shujin Academy? Wow, it's quiet-looking," the girl observed Shujin as she spoke with an Osakan accent. She had shoulder-length light brown hair with shades of natural orange, which she wore in a ponytail. She wore a strapless white tube top, capri blue jeans, and tennis shoes. Her accessories consisted of a silver necklace with a peace symbol, purple bracelets on her wrists, pink fingernails, and silver earrings.

Tokiha Miyako is an Osakan woman who Ryuji met while he and the Thieves recently visited Osaka. Miyako's easygoing attitude meshed well with Ryuji. Ryuji knew he found the right woman. Needless to say, she's been able to enjoy his humor.

"Heh, seriously this place looks and feels pretty restricting to me," Miyako pointed out.

"Yeah, well, it's a prep school and when I went there, rules were pretty strict. Dunno how Shujin is
'like nowadays,' Ryuji said.

"I'm glad I went to school that wasn't so restricting."

"Well, our high school days are behind us."

"And amen to that! Now we can loosen up all we want!" Miyako hollered, grabbing Ryuji's arm. "C'mon, show me around the places you and your friends used to hang out at. Where did ya like going?"

"Well, there's a track where I still train at?"

"Show me! And maybe take me to that café that sells coffee and curry. Kinda a weird combination, but whatever it sounds inviting. And maybe we can check out that arcade in Akihabara y'all used to hang out at."

"Sure, but c'mon one place at a time."

Miyako quickly nodded. "Sure, ok!"

Ryuji scratched the bridge of his nose. "Right, first stop the track."

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Miyako watched Ryuji racing around the track. She took photos and videos of her boyfriend from her phone. Miyako tried running a lap with Ryuji but fatigued halfway through the track.

"You need to get in shape, Miyako!"

"Haha, you know a good place to run and workout?"

"Yeah."

"Then, let's stop there, too."

Ryuji chuckled. "Sure, I can get you a free guest pass since I'm a gym member."

"I'm so going to get my stamina up so I can beat ya in a race, Ryuji!"

"Yeah sure, give it all you've got!"

Miyako poked Ryuji's chest. "Challenge accepted." She and Ryuji then kissed.

(End theme)

xxxxx

Skyler's Apartment/Hamamatsuchō (浜松町)/Minato, Tokyo (港区，東京)/5:15 PM (JST)

(Cue Underground (Final Remix) - The World Ends With You: Final Remix)

During their escapades, Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta managed to run into Hifumi and Skyler. When she got a good look at Skyler, Yumeko was taken aback by how similar he looked to Sion. In order to calm the gambler down, Hifumi reminded her that Skyler has no knowledge of anything related to Sion.
"So, you three are Hifumi's friends?" Skyler asked.

"Just me," Yumeko answered. "This is the first Mary and Ryōta will get to know you and Hifumi."

Mary addressed Hifumi and Skyler. "Nice to meet you. I'm Saotome Mary."

Ryōta added. "Yes, and I'm Suzui Ryōta."

"Nice to finally meet you two. Yumeko told me about you two," Hifumi modestly said.

"Wow, I can't believe I'm talking with the Shogi goddess herself!" Mary tried to control her excitement.

"Believe me. I'm just a normal person who doesn't cling to fame."

"And you're her boyfriend?" Ryōta asked Skyler.

"Well, I just moved here and we just happened to see each other. Hifumi showed me around and helped my move into my apartment here. She's just a friend for now."

Yumeko gave a sly smirk. "Uh-huh." She internally thought. *Hehe, I know better. You two will be sleeping together before you know it!*

"So, have you been in contact with Ren and the others?" Hifumi asked Yumeko.

"Sorta? I came into town with these two to meet with them, but no luck. Looks like they've been busy lately."

"So, we've been mostly sightseeing, which wouldn't be bad if that was our original intention," Mary grumbled over Yumeko's lack of communication with the Thieves. "Thankfully we've been staying at one of my relatives' place."

"Don't worry, we'll find them!" Yumeko tried reassuring her irked friend.

"If you need help, I can accommodate?" Hifumi offered.

"Oh, thank you! You're a lifesaver!" Yumeko squeed.

"And this would be a great opportunity for you to meet my other friends, Skyler."

"Funny you mention them, because my friends happen to know some of your friends, Hifumi," Skyler said.

"That works out even better. Alright, I'm going to see if Ren's number still works," Hifumi took out her cell and put in Ren's number. "Hello, Ren? Yes, it's Hifumi."

"What's going on, Hifumi? How's everything?"

"Everything's fine. Listen, do you remember I said I have a surprise for you and the others?"

"Yeah? What about it?"

"Well, I think it's time I show you that surprise. That and Yumeko's in town with two friends who've been meaning to meet you."

"That's great. When do you want to meet with us?"
Hifumi briefly scanned Skyler, Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta. "How does Sunday the 4th sound? We can meet at Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden."

"That sounds like a plan. I'll ask the others and see what they think."

"Great, we'll be looking forward to it. Tell Ann I said hi."

"I will. We'll see you there with the others, Hifumi."

"Take care," Hifumi turned off her cell. "We're all set."

"Awesome, thanks, Hifumi!" Yumeko replied giddily.

"This is great. We'll finally get to meet the Thieves!" Ryōta said.

"Heck yeah we will!" Mary added excitedly.

"Temper your expectations, you two. They're just normal folks like us nowadays. The Phantom Thief days are behind them," Hifumi forewarned them.

"Probably for the best, but I still look forward to meeting them," Skyler added. "And since we have guests here, why don't we go out and get something to eat? It'll be my treat."

"Yeah, we're starving!" Yumeko shouted with gleaming eyes.

"Ok, let's get going. We have much to catch up on," Hifumi chuckled.

(End theme)

xxxxx

Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden (新宿御苑)/Shinjuku, Tokyo (新宿区, 東京)/October 4th, 2020 (2020年10月4日)/11:30 AM (JST)

That late-morning, Hifumi took Skyler, Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary to see the Phantom Thieves. Skyler's friends were also there with the Thieves. For Yumeko and her friends, this was the first meeting with the Thieves and Skyler's friends.

As for Skyler, this was his first overall meeting with the Thieves. Sion had known them before, but not Skyler. As far as Skyler was concerned, he doesn't know Ren and company.

(Cue Tokyo Xanadu OST - Usual Morning )

"You're Amamiya Ren?" Skyler asked as Hifumi introduced him to the former Joker.

"Yeah. And you're Skyler…?"

"Skyler Jones. I just moved back here and met Hifumi. She told me about you."

"Really? How much?" Ren asked with his attention on Hifumi.

"I know you were one of the Phantom Thieves. Relax your secrets are safe with me," Skyler reassured Ren.

As Ren turned and faced Skyler, he looked at him as if he had just seen a ghost. He couldn't believe he was seeing someone who looked identical to Sion, but had no recollections of the Revenant. He
wondered if Sophia's rewriting of history revived Sion with a new identity but with no memories of being the late-Revenant, his past interactions with the Thieves, and his bond with Hifumi.

"Your friend has been so kind and helped me settle in my new place," Skyler said, holding the Shogi woman's hand.

"I'm glad to hear that. You can depend on Hifumi if you need anything and now you have us as friends," Ren replied kindly, genuinely happy to see Hifumi and 'Sion' together again. He looked behind him as his wife, Ann, approached him. "Ann, this is Hifumi's friend Skyler Jones."

Upon seeing Skyler, Ann almost gasped. Ren helped calm his wife and smiled at her. Ann nodded and faced Skyler.

"Sorry, you just looked like someone I knew and you surprised me," Ann apologized for almost freaking out.

"It's ok. So, you two are married?" Skyler asked, noticing the couple's rings.

"Yeah, we recently got married," the former Panther said, lovingly folding an arm over Ren's arm.

"It was a wonderful wedding," Hifumi commented being present for Ren and Ann's event. "I think you would've enjoyed being there, Skyler."

"Maybe I would."

Ren smiled as he meticulously scanned Skyler. *I know that's not you Sion and this is someone else, but I'm glad to see your face again.*

"So, I understand some of your friends apparently know mine," Skyler noticed Louis conversing with Makoto and Haru.

(End theme)

(Cue Tokyo Xanadu OST - Common Sight)

In another area in the garden, Louis interacted with Makoto and Haru.

"Ladies, you're both looking fine on this beautiful day," Louis elegantly tried winning the two women with his charms.

"Did you call us fine? Yeah, sure we're both fine. We don't need you using your bad boy charms to make us go heads over heels for you." Makoto replied in a playfully sardonic tone.


Haru cleared her throat. "By the way, congratulations on your graduation. I'm sure your sister must be proud of you."

"Of course, now I'm ready to enter the professional world much like you two. Please do wish me luck on my endeavors."

Makoto smirked coolly. "Yeah, sure. Let's all do well in our professions."

"And I know your sister, Sae-san, is deeply proud of you, Mako-chan. And I think she'd want us to be close friends much like she and my sister are now." Louis said. "Anyway, may I offer you two to walk with me?"
Before Makoto could retort, Haru whispered to her friend's ear. Makoto relaxed her stance and nodded. They walked along with Louis around the garden scenery.

Skyler continued scanning the garden. He saw Yakumo and Emily talking with Yusuke and Futaba. Ryuji and Miyako are seen on an opposite way talking to Mia, Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary. Suddenly, Morgana surprised Mia and hopped over next to her.

"Well, look who decided to show up," Ann remarked.

"And here Morgana said he had other things to do, but not surprised he's here," Ren chuckled, but was genuinely pleased to see the cat with them.

"Yes, and it seems Morgana has taken a liking to your friend, Skyler," Hifumi noticed Mia petting Morgana's soft black fur and stroking his white-furred maw.

"I think it'd be nice if Mia could take Morgana in. What do you think, Ren?" Ann asked him.

"Maybe, but that's up to Morgana to decide," Ren said.

Skyler added. "Mia is good with animals. She could use the company at home. Her brother's spending more time with his friends at school and during leisure hours."

Hifumi nodded. "I can concur with that."

"I don't disagree, but that's up to Morgana to decide what he wants to do," stated Ren.

"Anyway, let's go and explore the gardens? They're so pretty!" Ann suggested to her husband and their friends.

"I agree. It'll help take our minds off the whole week we've been through," Hifumi said, taking Skyler's hand.

"Sure, this place seems soothing. A walk would be nice," Skyler concurred with the idea.

With that, the couples explored Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden. As they walked around, all of their concerns from the past week were rinsed away by the relaxing vibes from their environment.

Now having met the Thieves, Skyler knew he was in good company with people he can depend on. His friends already became acquainted with the Thieves. Now, he could become acquainted with them just like Sion did.

(End theme)

xxxxx

Skyler's Apartment/Hamamatsuchō (浜松町)/Minato, Tokyo (港区，东京)/7:20 PM (JST)

"I had a good time, Hifumi."

"Me, too, Skyler. Want me to check in with you tomorrow?"

Staring into each other's eyes, Skyler and Hifumi held hands while refusing to let the other go.

"I was wondering, Hifumi…"

"Yes?"
"Have… have you considered moving in with me?"

Hifumi stayed quiet, unsure how to respond to this question.

"It's up to you, Hifumi. You can take as much time to think about it. I'm just throwing it out there."

"Do you feel lonely at your place?"

"No…” Skyler muttered, veering away a bit and hiding his expression.

However, Hifumi could read him like an open book. She smiled. "I'll consider it, Skyler."

"Really?"

With that, Hifumi leaned on her tippy toes and kissed Skyler's lips. Skyler quickly returned the favor and kissed her. Hifumi then turned around with a smile and waved to Skyler.

"Goodnight, Skyler."

"Yeah, you, too." Skyler replied with a smirk. "Wow, so that's a yes then?"

xxxxx

Amamiya-Takamaki Residence (奄美・高崎レジデンス)/Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京)/December 4th, 2020 (2020年12月4日)/6:05 PM (JST)

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Encounter)

While holding hands outside on their balcony, Ren and Ann faced the sun setting down in the distance.

"I wish this marriage between us can last forever," Ann softly muttered near her husband.

"Me, too, Ann." Ren added during the sun setting. "I hope it lasts."

xxxxx

Skyler and Hifumi's Apartment/Hamamatsuchō (浜松町)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/9:30 PM (JST)

Having moved in over a month ago, Hifumi settled in Skyler's place just fine. Her presence was enough to alleviate Skyler's solitude. Their relationship blossomed since Skyler moved back in late-September.

Skyler and Hifumi were outside on their balcony, gazing toward each other and holding hands.

"Hifumi, thank you."

"For?"

"For deciding to move in. You didn't have to."

"You're right I didn't have to. I wanted to." Hifumi lovingly whispered to the young man she longed to be with once again.

(End theme)
Suddenly, unbeknownst to the couple, the white-haired, pale-skinned female Revenant came out of Hifumi and materialized in an ethereal form. Her yellow eyes stared out into the distance and felt something amiss.

"It's coming. It's here."

xxxxx
The sound of their alarm clock awoke him. Turning over on his back, Ren opened his eyes. He pushed a button and shut off the annoying ring of the clock. He awoke to another day of his daily work routine.

Although he didn't mind going to work, he dreaded waking up from bed. Nonetheless, he got up and put his glasses on. He turned and noticed his wife Ann wasn't in bed.

Did she wake up? He wondered as he washed his face. He wiped his face with a towel and brushed his teeth. He headed into the kitchen to find Ann staring horrified at the television.

"Good morning, Ann." He leaned over to kiss her, but he paused and noticed her apprehensive state. "Ann? Is something wrong?"

"Ren. Take a look at the date."

"Um, ok?" Ren turned and eyed the TV broadcast, which displayed not just the time but today's date.

6:50 AM.

December 5, 2018.

( Cue Persona 5 OST - Tension )

What?! Ren internally thought. He rubbed his eyes thinking he still asleep.

The date was still December 5, 2018.

"You did see the date, right?"

Ren nodded, almost baffled by this. "Yeah, but how? Tell me it's not a mistake."
"It's not. Look!" She turned her laptop to show them the date on the browser's bottom right corner. There was no mistaking it. It was December 5, 2018.

"December 5th, 2018, but that's impossible! Isn't it?" Ren shouted while trying to grasp this strange occurrence.

"I wish I knew what this means," Ann expressed her own deepest concerns over this dilemma.

"Were we just thrown back in time?"

"I don't know. I don't feel any different."

"Me either."

Ren and Ann checked their daily schedules. Everything was set according to their schedules. Ren still has work for half the day. Ann still has her scheduled modeling appointment. Ren and Ann checked and were relieved to find their wedding rings still on. The couple deeply sighed with relief. They turned to each other and considered contacting the others.

xxxxx

Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (警視庁)/Kasumigaseki (霞が関)/Chiyoda, Japan (千代田区，東京)/7:45 AM (JST)

Having been instilled with the shock of the sudden time reset, Makoto sat in her chair while feverishly tapping her foot. She maintained an intense glare at her monitor screen, not taking her eye off the date displayed on the bottom right screen.

"2018? No, that can't be right," Makoto mumbled, biting her bottom lip. She reflected on Haru's terrified shriek early on the morning. Makoto instinctively readied her gun to use as a security measure in their household, but found that Haru simply cried at the realization of the sudden date change. Makoto ruled out the possibility of Yaldabaoth or Saklas manipulating time and space. Both were already eliminated by the Thieves.

Suddenly, she heard a couple of co-workers having a conversation about two fellow officers. To her surprise, she overheard the names Tsunemori Akane (常守 朱) and Asada Shino (朝田 詩乃) mentioned as if they've been working in the department for a while.

Makoto carefully picked out the two names. "Wait, but there's no one named Tsunemori Akane and Asada Shino working here. Where have I heard those names before though?" She wondered until she realized. "They're names of characters from shows." She wondered if this was mere coincidence. "Excuse me."

"Yes, Ms. Niijima?" The rookie officer that Makoto had been training quickly responded.

"Since when have a Tsunemori Akane and an Asada Shino been working here?"

"Um, I believe since you first started here, Ms. Niijima."

That can't be, realized Makoto. She knows every officer in the department. She has never seen or met those two aforementioned individuals.

"Is something wrong, Ms. Niijima?"

"No…" Makoto forcefully lied through her teeth. She sat down to recollect her thoughts. "Get it
together. They're just playing you… or what if? That would explain the sudden year reset." She also realized every other officer and worker in the department failed to notice the year change. They're diligently working as if it were a normal work day. "Today's Wednesday the 5th when it should be Saturday the 5th. Something is definitely not right!"

xxxxx

_Tokyo Institute of Technology (東京工業大学)/Futaba's Dormitory/Meguro, Tokyo (目黒区, 東京)/8:30 AM (JST)_

"So, it's not just me, Inari?! I thought I was the only one losing their mind!" Futaba cried out, glancing over the date on her computer monitor. "Me thinks we're caught in some kind of time loop. No, more like a time reset."

"What else could it be? Were we thrown back two years in the past?"

"No, because everything is still playing out exactly as it were today. We're still living in 2020. I haven't changed a single bit."

"And I remember our last phone conversation from a few nights ago."

"Yeah, and I still remember going to that art show from a couple months back!" She glanced over her figures and collectibles during the phone conversation. She stared awkwardly at the Ultraman (Netflix) figurine. "Hmm, I don't remember how I got this one. And I don't recall which version of Ultraman this is… did I get some rare collectible?"

"What's that? Futaba?"

"Oh, it's nothing. Never mind. Look, I can start contacting the others since we're that concerned."

"That would be wise."

"It's strange that no one else seems to notice the year is wrong."

"Then, it's just affecting us. Could this be the workings of Saklas? Yaldabaoth?"

Futaba sighed. "I wish I knew, Inari. It's all so confusing right now! I'll contact Ren and see if he notices…"

Just then, Futaba's cell phone rang and she checked the caller ID.

"Well speaking of…" Futaba mumbled. "Hey, Inari. I'll call you back."

"Is it Ren?"

"Yeah, I'll call you back."

xxxxx

_Toranomon Hills (虎ノ門ヒルズ)/ Toranomon (虎ノ門)/ Ren's Cubicle (レンのキュービクル)/Minato, Tokyo, Japan (港区, 東京)/8:45 AM (JST)_

"I see. So, the students there haven't even noticed it's 2018?" Ren asked Futaba on the other line.

"Not a single one! It's crazy! They think I'm losing my mind. My roommate just told me I need to stop staring at my screen all the time and get some more sleep, but I know what I saw!"
"Well, I'd agree you shouldn't stare at your computer screen all day and you do need good rest."

"Ok 'Sojiro'."

Ren chuckled being compared to his former caretaker four years ago. "Well, he'd say the same thing."

"Yeah, but anyway... I just wanted to relay this to ya. I just talked with Inari."

"So, he's noticed the sudden time reset?"

"Yeah. He thought maybe it's Mementos coming back, but I doubt it."

"I would agree, but what else could it be? Ann's been freaking out since this morning."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Don't worry. We'll get to the bottom of this, Ren!"

"Right," he said, determined to find out the source behind this time reset.

xxxxx

Protein Lovers Gym (プロテインラバーズジム)/Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京)/9:05 AM (JST)

"There's no freakin' way it's 2018. I know it's still 2020!" Ryuji grumbled.

"Hey, Ryuji!" Miyako cried out, quickening her pace on the treadmill.

"Huh? Yeah?"

"You're spacing out for some reason. Is everything ok?"

"I'm alright. Say, can you tell me the year?"

"The year we're in?"

"Yeah."

"Sily, it's 2018. Almost 2019."

Hearing this from Miyako greatly disturbed him. He didn't know what to make of this unusual situation. He swore it was 2020.

What the hell's going on here? Thought Ryuji.

(End theme)

xxxxx

Café Leblanc (純喫茶ルブラン)/Yongen-Jaya, Tokyo (四軒茶屋, 東京)/9:30 AM (JST)

Morgana dropped by to visit Sojiro. With no customers in at the hour, Sojiro invited him in to feed him leftovers. Morgana observed Sojiro's behavior and carefully noted that he, like every other civilian, hadn't noticed the time reset.

Looks like ordinary civilians haven't noticed it's 2018 when it should be 2020. I've got to find the
Thieves and see if they've been affected! Morgana thought until he noticed misshapen black shadows passing by the window. He sprinted toward the window and checked outside.

"Hey, what's wrong with you, Morgana? What did you see?" Sojiro asked the cat as he looked outside the same window. Not noticing the black shadows, the man merely shrugged. "Don't know what spooked you."

Morgana frowned. Of course he wouldn't see it. They looked like some kind of black matter to me… like shadows. Surely, this can't be the workings of Saklas or Yaldabaoth. They're gone. Or, are they?

xxxxx

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Butterfly Kiss)

Once customers started coming into Café Leblanc for lunch, Morgana scoured Yongen-Jaya for anymore peculiar events. He noticed more weird shadows materializing in various places. To his surprise, no one else seemed to notice these shadows.

How is no one seeing them?! Morgana wondered. Just then, he noticed a familiar face not far from where was sitting. Ah, the hot doctor!

He spotted the famous (or infamous to some) owner of Takemi Medical Clinic. Even after four years since meeting Ren, Takemi Tae was still very attractive with her pale complexion and dark blue hair tied up in a messy bob cut. She wore other accessories, including a black studded necklace that connected with several necklaces around her neck. Her brown eyes scanned her black leather watch, which she wore on her right wrist. She wore casual attire consisting of a short black jacket, a blue dress with an emblazoned white spider web design, black ripped leggings, and black heels. From first glance, she appeared more like a punk rocker than a registered professional doctor.

Morgana meticulously waited for a response from Takemi.

As expected, she elicited the same response like Sojiro. She didn't evoke any look of shock when she checked for the time and date on her watch. 

That confirms my suspicions. Ordinary civilians aren't affected, but what about the Thieves? Morgana wondered, hoping his friends knew what was going on.

(End theme)

"They're Yami Matter… they've finally manifested…and are growing from humanity's darkness." A woman quietly whispered in an ether behind Morgana.

What?! Morgana panicked as he turned around and saw nobody behind him. "Yami Matter?"

"They're the side effects of the darkness left in people's hearts. They're products of Saklas's former presence and the remaining essence of Yaldabaoth currently residing within Togo Hifumi."

"That's what's causing this time reset?"

"If you wish to know more, follow my voice."

Morgana frowned. "I don't know…"

"The Thieves are aware of the time reset caused by the Yami Matter."
"What?" Morgana looked around and sprinted into an alleyway. "You mean, Ren and the others are ok?!

"They're confused, but rightfully so. Not just them, but Skyler and the others have noticed the time reset."

"Them, too?"

The voice responded. "Yes, and very soon Skyler and his colleagues are about to be reawakened."

"Reawakened?"

"With the Yami Matter manifesting, Skyler and the others' natures are about to be revitalized. Their memories must return."

"Whatever that means. Do they have Personas, too? Wait, Skyler was Sion before! That means his memories might return?"

"The Thieves and the Revenants must be reawakened to neutralize the Yami Matter overtaking this city. You noticed the shadows?"

"Yeah, I did! No one else noticed them!"

"It's the Yami Matter. They're becoming active and spreading through this city."

"Then, I better get to Ren and Lady Ann. I have to let them know!"

"And I will reach Skyler, Hifumi, and the other Revenants. My presence will be all that's needed to reawaken Skyler and his group."

"I'll take your word you'll do just that and you're not just some Yami Matter trying to trick me."

"You can trust me.‖ The voice revealed a herself to Morgana. She appeared as a ghostly image of the white-haired, pale-skinned and golden-eyed Revenant. A demure smile adorned her pale face.

"Leave them to me, Morgana."

"And you know my name, Freaky…" Morgana gaped at the sight of the mysterious Revenant. He watched her vanish into thin air. "I've gotta get going and tell them what's been going on!‖ He turned to leave to convene with the former Joker and Panther.

xxxxx

(Cue Shin Megami Tensei IV OST - Tokyo -)

The black essences spread over Tokyo undetected by the general public. However, they were soon being felt by the Thieves and Revenants.

xxxxx

Toranomon Hills (虎ノ門ヒルズ)/Ren's Cubicle (レンのキューピクル)/Minato, Tokyo, Japan (港区, 東京)/2:30 PM (JST)

As Ren prepared to leave for the day, he felt the disturbing aura released by the Yami Matter. He palmed his own face and gritted his teeth hard. His face became unnerved after sensing the spread of these dark essences.
This feels familiar but yet so different... is this what's been causing this time reset? Thought Ren.

Roppongi (六本木)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/Okumura Café (奥村カフェ)/2:40 PM (JST)

Haru also sensed the disturbing aura that's been manifesting across the Tokyo districts.

"Mako-chan..." Haru whispered, feeling a cold shiver spreading down her body.

Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (警視庁)/Kasumigaseki (霞が関)/Chiyoda, Japan (千代田区，東京)/2:50 PM (JST)

"Sis, I've called and checked in with Haru-chan. She can vouch for me that it's 2020. How can it be 2018?" Makoto quietly argued with Sae over the phone. "No, we're not working too hard! And we haven't lost track of time!"

"Mako-chan, get as much rest as you can. I know you're hoping it's 2020 so you'll have enough experience under your belt, but take one step at a time."

Makoto sighed hard. "Thanks, sis, I needed the talk." She hung up and lied back in her seat. Before she can get up to get water, she felt the same disturbing vibes like Ren and Haru. She wore a petrified expression. "...what the hell was that?"

Tokyo National Museum (東京国立博物館)/Taitō, Tokyo (台東区，東京)/2:55 PM (JST)

Yusuke grasped his head like he had gotten a headache. He noticed dark essences spreading through the museum. Unbeknownst to him, an essence crept over a painting. The eyes on the painting twitched and shifted toward Yusuke's way. When Yusuke turned, the eyes were back to normal.

"That disturbing feeling just now… odd…" Yusuke muttered.

Tokyo Institute of Technology (東京工業大学)/Meguro, Tokyo (目黒区，東京)/3:00 PM (JST)

Taking advice from her roommate and Ren, Futaba walked outside to give her eyes some rest. Since it was a beautiful day, she opted to get some fresh air outside on the campus.

Her relaxation time abruptly ended as she felt the dark essences nearby. She folded her arms around her as if she were cold.

"I don't like this feeling." She shivered and grabbed her head. "What's doing this?"

Shinjuku Toho Building (新宿東宝ビル)/Kabukichō (歌舞伎町)/Shinjuku, Tokyo (新宿区，東京)/3:02 PM (JST)
Ann was in the middle of finishing her photoshoot. She turned around showing off her red belted overcoat, which covered up whatever else clothing she had underneath. The only accessories she was able to show off were her black high heels as they complemented her long legs. Her long blonde hair waved back and forth as she turned her head and body in a seductive pose.

"Great pose, Amamiya-Takamaki!" The photographer yelled out, snapping several quick photos of the model.

Suddenly, Ann noticed the dark essences spreading over the vicinity. Before she can anything, the essences spread past the photographers and reached her. She covered up and shuddered as if cold air breezed by her.

"Ms. Amamiya-Takamaki, are you ok? You just dropped out of your pose."

Ann was baffled the photographers and the film crew hadn't noticed the dark shadows that went by them. There was an ounce of apprehension on their faces. Only Ann saw the shadows.

"Ann?"

She shook her head. "...yeah?" She snapped out of her brief trance. "Yeah, sorry. Let's do it again." She rubbed her left temple. How did they not see what I just saw? I know what I saw!

Ryuji's House (竜二の家) / Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京) / 3:15 PM (JST)

As Ryuji walked out of his home, he waited for Miyako to get her belongings. He heard his cell phone ring as he went to answer. It was Ren trying to reach him.

"Yo, man," Ryuji answered.

"Ryuji, have you noticed strange lately?"

"Dude, define strange." As he said this, Ryuji noticed dark essences spreading across the area. His mouth dropped at the sight of these disturbances."...uh...

"I take it based on that sudden silence and delayed response."

Ryuji replied. "...yeah, I definitely saw it. What the hell was that?"

"You're not the only one. Apparently, only we can see them. The general public can't."

"So, just us Phantom Thieves?"

"Possibly. I'm going to call Hifumi and Skyler to confirm if they've seen any shadows."

"Good call, man. You do that..." Ryuji muttered as Miyako walked out and noticed her boyfriend on the phone.

"Who're calling, Ryuji?"

"Listen, buddy. I'll call you back. If you're planning a get together about this, I'm in."

"Sure, I'll text you."

"Cool. Later," Ryuji turned off his cell as he turned and addressed Miyako. "That was just my buddy
Ren.

"Oh, how is he?"

"He's just getting off work, but don't worry there's no plans that'll cut into our time now."

"I don't mind. Ren's a cool guy..." As Miyako rambled on, Ryuji noticed the black essences spreading past her. He wanted to say something, but the shadows didn't seem to affect her nor did she notice them.

Ryuji noticed this and confirmed Ren's warning. These essences were spreading citywide and so far all of the Thieves have confirmed sightings.

(End theme)

xxxxx

Skyler and Hifumi's Apartment/Hamamatsuchō (浜松町)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/3:30 PM (JST)

Skyler and Hifumi received an unexpected surprise when Louis, Mia, and Yakumo came to visit them.

"Hey, guys. Didn't expect you all to come?" Skyler opened the door for his three friends.

"What? We can't come and visit anymore?" Mia sardonically remarked.

"No, you're more than welcome to see us," Hifumi said.

"The reason why we came here," Louis then turned to Skyler. "Did you notice the year?"

Skyler nodded. "It's all so strange. Why is it 2018? We're in 2020."

Yakumo deduced. "My thought was we've been caught in some time loop. No one else seems to notice this but us."

"Hifumi, you know what we're referring to, right?" Mia asked the Shogi woman.

"I do. I thought something was playing tricks with us, but I'm glad we're not the only ones," Hifumi stated. "We just got a quick call from Ren. It appears we're not the only ones."

"The Thieves, too?" Louis queried while tapping his chin. "There has to be a reason why we and the Thieves are only noticing this sudden time reset and these black shadows."

"You noticed those, too?" Skyler asked him.

"What were those anyway?" Yakumo wondered.

"They're called Yami Matter." The same disembodied voice that reached Morgana was heard.

Skyler, Hifumi, and the others sensed a presence within the room. Suddenly, a white aura materialized over Hifumi's body. All eyes quickly turned toward the Shogi woman. She glowed in white light from head to toe. Skyler instinctively reached for her, but Hifumi's eyes opened and turned gold. Hifumi raised her head and seemingly released an essence from her own body. Hifumi collapsed into Skyler's arms. The essence released from Hifumi solidified and shifted into a humanoid form.
Louis and Yakumo readied stances. They prepared to fight off whatever came out of Hifumi. Mia stayed beside Skyler and Hifumi's side.

"Revenants, I've not come here to fight you." The figure addressed them in a soft-spoken voice. As they were able to discern her appearance, she became the pale-skinned, white-haired and golden-eyed Revenant woman. She appeared in a worn and torn article of white clothing akin to the top half of a dress; her voluptuous breasts poked out through the top most part of her dress. Her entire right leg was heavily bandaged up to the thigh.

"What the hell are you?" Skyler snarled toward the mysterious Revenant. "And why were you inside Hifumi?!

"It's true I've been living within Hifumi for these past couple of months. I came into contact with Hifumi when you two first met." She revealed her initial merger with Hifumi. "Hifumi, I'm sorry I've had to use you as a vessel, but I required a body to restore my form."

Hifumi nodded. "No, you don't need to apologize. All you needed to do was ask…"

"And you couldn't come forward to begin with?!" Skyler shouted.

"You're right, but there's no time for us to argue, Sion."

Upon hearing this, Skyler froze. "Only my friends call me Sion."

"Well, starting today, we can be considered friends. In fact…" The Revenant scanned the others in the room. "All of us are friends."

"Says who?!” Mia rebuked.

"Hang on, Mia. We don't know what she's capable of," Yakumo warned.

"This will be much easier once I restore the bulk of your former memories that have been suppressed by Sophia's power." The Revenant said as her yellow eyes glowed. "As the Persona Vein, I break the chains binding your memories, Revenants!" The healthy white glow leaked from her and resonated with Skyler and his friends. Even Hifumi was enveloped in the Persona Vein's aura.

( Cue VAMPS - Underworld )

Skyler was the first as he collapsed on his knees and howled in pain. Louis, Mia, and Yakumo quickly followed as the white light's energies burned through their bodies. Louis was on the floor writhing. Yakumo rolled on his left side while folding both arms over his chest. Mia was on her knees holding her head. Hifumi witnessed Skyler and the others being converted by the Persona Vein's light.

"Skyler!" Hifumi cried as she reached for him, but the mysterious Revenant got between the two. The Persona Vein gently grasped Hifumi's hand.

"Have no fear, Hifumi. It'll be over soon for them."

"What's happening to them?"

"I'm reawakening their true selves. Sadly, it doesn't appear I've restored their full memories, but this will do." She whispered reassuringly, keeping Hifumi from interfering with Skyler and company's conversion process. She looked at Hifumi, who clamped her own mouth with a hand and let tears
fall. She pulled Hifumi close, even letting her lean on her ample-sized breasts.

Clutching his own carpet, Skyler wheezed and grunted hard. His face, dampened with sweat, contorted with pain showing on his face. His head reared back as faint memories of someone resembling him clarified in his mind. Initially confused, Skyler then recognized himself wearing a metallic mouthguard. He had another vision; one that showed the Revenant calling herself the Persona Vein.

Likewise, Louis, Mia, and Yakumo saw visions of themselves. Each wearing similar metallic mouthguards. In Louis's vision, he saw himself leading a group also consisting of people resembling Skyler, Mia, and Yakumo. Mia saw herself with a child aged Nicola. Yakumo witnessed a vision of him walking over a post-apocalyptic environment devoid of human life.

As he came to, Skyler turned toward the mysterious Revenant. "I...I…” He raised his eyes, furrowing both his brows. "I remember, Io." He addressed the Persona Vein with familiarity as a flood of memories poured into his mind. He finally revealed the Persona Vein's identity as her body started to materialize and solidify out of her intangible form.

"It's been a long time, Sion," Io replied genuinely. Her voice was no longer distorted and she could speak much clearer.

"Yes, that's who I am..." Skyler nodded, slowly pivoting his view on Hifumi.

"She actually has a name?" Hifumi looked at both Skyler and Io.

"It's thanks to Sophia's power why we were brought here," Skyler said as Louis, Mia, and Yakumo awakened in similar fashion. "Here in this reality I'm Skyler Jones, but where I came from, my codename was Sion."

"Yes, we remember nearly everything before being brought here," Louis stated. "Though, there's still some missing fragments from our collective consciousnesses."

"With time, I'm sure fragments of our memories will return," Yakumo plainly said.

"Io? I don't know what to say, but thanks for restoring most of our memories. I wonder if you're able to restore Nicola's memories?" Mia asked the Persona Vein.

Io said nothing.

"I see. Well, I guess I'll find out. If not, then it's probably for the best if Nicola doesn't remember anything."

"Likewise for Karen," Louis added. "Though, I am concerned. If you restored our memories, then we've been turned back into Revenants." He sensed a slight difference in his physiology than before Io's white aura converted them.

Io nodded. "I was only able to restore some of your memories and Revenant abilities."

"I believe you, Io. For some reason, I don't seem to have the thirst for blood," Skyler noted the vampiric-like trait was noticeably missing from when he was full Revenant.

"Wow, now that you mention it. I don't feel the need for blood!" Yakumo realized.

"Personally, I'm glad Io helped quench our thirst! We might not even need to drink blood! God, am I relieved!” Mia was thrilled to have such a hinderance possibly suppressed.
"Thirst for blood?" Hifumi whispered. "You're all just like Sion."

"That's right, Hifumi," Io answered the Shogi woman. She offered a hand to Hifumi. "Thanks to you and Sophia's power, you altered reality so much you willfully brought Sion, myself, and our friends to this time."

Hesitant to take Io's hand, Hifumi stared at the pale Revenant. Io tilted her head and softly smiled, trying to convince Hifumi to trust her. Hifumi reached over and pulled back. Then, after a few tries, Hifumi grabbed Io's hand and let the Persona Vein to prop her back on her feet.

"So, what are you? A Revenant or some kind of Persona?" Hifumi asked Io.

"A Revenant, but I am known as the Persona Vein. So, I can be considered a type of Persona. I used your body as a vessel for these past few months, so I could be considered your Persona now, Hifumi."

Hifumi stared at Io as they put their hands together. Once their hands contacted, they wrapped fingers around each other's hands.

"I do apologize for not asking you to let me occupy your body, but my essence required a vessel to maintain my form."

Hifumi nodded and smirked calmly. "It's ok. You only needed my body to survive. It wouldn't hurt to ask first though."

"So, you're back with us for good this time, Io?" Mia asked the pale Revenant.

"For the time being."

"Ok, so our thirst has been suppressed. That must mean the B.O.R. parasites are not living in our bodies?" Louis asked.

"BOR?" Hifumi asked.

"It stands for Biological Organ Regenerative. They're parasites planted into Revenant's hearts," Skyler revealed, pressing a hand on the chest area where his heart beat. "They're what keeps us alive and keep us stable, preventing us from becoming Lost."

As he said this, he turned to Hifumi. "And thanks to you, Hifumi, you kept Sion under control and helped facilitate his emotions. I trust you'll do the same for me."

"But, wait. If we don't have those parasites in us, won't we go berserk and become Losts?" Yakumo conveyed deep concern of this scary scenario.

"Ugh, yeah! Please tell us nothing bad is gonna happen!" Mia expressed her fears of changing into a monster.

"No. Not only have I removed your thirst for blood, but I removed the Lost curse from each of you," Io calmed their fears. "You're perfectly still human in your civilian forms. However, your Revenant powers will come to surface when a threat emerges."

"That's reassuring," Louis said.

"Although, you will require some blood internally while in your Revenant states. And so long as I exist in this realm, my reality warping influence will give you all the necessary recharge to prevent your powers from weakening, or worse turn into Losts. What's more, without the parasites within
your bodies, you no longer have regenerative and superhuman traits. However, you still should be able to invoke your Blood Veils."

As Io explained her ability to augment and suppress the Revenants' abilities, Skyler and his friends took this all in, accepting the curses and blessings of becoming Revenants again albeit with certain limitations to their abilities.

"Thanks, Io. We appreciate you telling us what we need to know," Skyler smiled to the Persona Vein. "And thank you for reviving our Revenant abilities."

"But, you wouldn't have revived our Revenant powers and memories without a good reason," Louis firmly said, folding both arms. "Tell us what enemy we're facing?"

"Is it a Lost?" Yakumo queried.

"Whatever it is, we're ready," Mia nodded.

"The main threat we face are Yami Matter…" Io relayed everything she already told Morgana to the Revenants.

"So, they're essences created from the darkness of people's hearts?" Louis asked. "And yet none of the masses have noticed."

"Only us select few have," Skyler replied. "That even includes the Phantom Thieves."

"This is starting to sound awfully like Saklas and Yaldabaoth again," Hifumi expressed her deepest concerns. This managed to get Io's attention.

"Hifumi, since you've been a vessel for me, I've assessed your abilities. Your powers are derived from Yaldabaoth, but specifically the light half of the God of Control: Sophia." Io took Hifumi's hands and pressed her head against Hifumi's forehead. A white aura surfaced and enveloped Hifumi. "You seem to not have access to Sophia's powers now. I know you wish to help Skyler and his friends."

"I do, but what can I even do to help?"

"Since your body doubled as my vessel, my Revenant powers resonated with you. You may not physically become a Revenant, but as long as we're bonded, you'll have access to Revenant abilities."

"Is that so? Then, I'm ready to accept the Revenant powers you bestow me."

"Are you sure, Togo Hifumi?"

Hifumi turned over to Skyler and genuinely smiled. "Yes, I am."

( Cue Muramasa: The Demon Blade OST - Dim Twilight A )

With that, the white aura enveloping Hifumi transformed her clothing. Her black dress and long-sleeved shirt vanished; in place of her casual clothing, Hifumi's new wardrobe consisted of a cyan sleeveless dress. The centermost section of her dress cut into a v-shape, revealing some of her bosom. Thick white straps intersected each other and covered the v-shape section where her bare bosom was exposed. Layers of white bandages covered her waist coupled with a black waist belt. Two forearm-length arm warmer accessories formed on her arms, revealing her bare shoulders and her hands. Her hands, coming out the mouth of the arm warmers, showed off cyan fingernails. Two tufts of white
feathered accessories came down her back. Her bare feet gained new footwear: a pair of white sandals with cyan straps that intersected over her feet. Her pedicure nails became the same color as her fingernails and dress. Her new outfit resembled her Sophia wear but with Revenant-like elements to differentiate from the previous wardrobe.

"Hifumi…?" Was all Skyler could manage to say, finding himself in awe of the Shogi woman's new outfit.

"Yes, so this outfit is derived from the Revenant power passed over to you, Hifumi," Louis examined Hifumi's new form.

Hifumi scanned her new wardrobe, turning around and checking the white feathered accessories hanging behind her. She examined her dress and arm warmers. She wiggled her toes inside her sandals.

"Your outfit isn't the only thing that's changed," Skyler noticed Hifumi's eyes turned yellow.

Hifumi turned toward the nearest mirror and gasped upon seeing her yellow eyes.

"Now, we've got matching eyes," Io smirked. "I even have the perfect codename for you, Hifumi."

"You mean like a Revenant codename?"

Io nodded. "How does Tennyo sound?"

"Tennyo?" Hifumi blinked, taking a moment to mull and let the new codename sink in.

"I like it," Skyler approved. "Sion and Tennyo sound like a great duo name."

"Tennyo is a pretty cool name," Mia smiled and nodded approvingly.

"Unless you have another one in mind, Hifumi?" Louis curiously wondered.

Hifumi blushed happily. "No, I like it." She then turned to Skyler and Io. "I accept the name Tennyo."

"If we're giving out codenames, why don't we give ourselves titles?" Louis suggested. "Engineer is fitting for me."

Yakumo added. "People say I'm loyal like a dog and my Blood Veil are giant canine beasts. So, I shall be Hound."

Mia pushed her long blonde hair back and poked her buttocks. "I remember having a tail like a scorpion as my Blood Veil. Sooo, call me Stinger!"

"Sion, Tennyo, Engineer, Hound, and Stinger. Yes, perfect," Io nodded. "And my codename shall be Ivy, named after my Blood Veil." She veered toward Hifumi and grabbed her hand. "Tennyo, since you wield my power, you'll be able to access my Blood Veil: Ivy." With that, Hifumi watched as a halberd as long as her own body materialized in her right hand. "This is proof of our new bond, Togo Hifumi."

Hifumi stared awestruck at the massive halberd in her grasp. She lifted it, only to stop herself as the halberd was inches from poking through the apartment ceiling. She set it down. To her surprise, the halberd was light as a feather in her hand.

"I think Tennyo is accepting of her new power," Louis chuckled.
"We should give ourselves a group name. Since Ren and his friends are the Phantom Thieves. Skyler, you got anything in mind?" asked Mia.

"Well..." Skyler mulled while being given the responsibility of establishing a new team name for them.

"Just calling us Revenants is just too plain," Louis shrugged.

"Hmmm, Blood Revenants?" Yakumo suggested another name.

"Eh, that make us sound like an emo goth band," Mia disproved.

"Well, we are leftovers moved from another timeline. You know, remnants." Louis said until a lightbulb flared in his head. "That's it. Remnants."

"Needs a little more," Skyler interjected. "Vein Remnants. What do you think?"

"An excellent choice, my friend," Yakumo nodded.

"Yep, I can go with that!" Mia concurred.

"Whatever you choose, I'm fine with it. Just remember I get partial credit for the name," Louis coolly smiled.

Skyler turned to Io and Hifumi. "Does Vein Remnants sound fine?"

"Yes, it's good," Io replied.

"It's a great start," Hifumi smiled. "Ren and the others will be surprised to see us like this."

"Speaking of the Thieves, it should be a matter of time before my power reaches them," Io said. "Very soon, the Vein Remnants will unite with the Phantom Thieves."

Skyler muttered. "I am curious, Io. There are others from our time who've been moved here. That includes Nicola, Karen, Emily, and a few others. Have their memories been partially restored like us?" He internally thought about the possibility of others who could be sleeping Revenants, who've yet to reawaken.

xxxxx

Inokashira Park (井の頭恩賜公園) / Musashino, Mitaka, Tokyo (武蔵野市, 三鷹市, 東京) / 4:15 PM (JST)

Elsewhere, a tall and slender man in full body black clothing quietly stared over a still pond. This man had a grisly scar carved over his left eye. He has short whitish platinum blonde hair; the back of his hair was wild and disheveled. Locks of longer hair covered his right eye. His left eye had an intense look. Despite being fully clothed in dark clothing, his black dress shirt had an unopened spot revealing a white shirt.

Standing beside the dark-clothed tall man, a tall woman, although not as tall as the man, faced the same body of water near them. Her hair was neck length and also platinum blonde, though appeared more silver. She wore a long-sleeved white shirt, black jeans, and coffee brown boots.

Suddenly, both collapsed at the same time. They dropped to their knees and seemingly went through a similar phenomenon the Vein Remnants just undergone.
The man grimaced as a hot sensation filled his body.

"Jack…! What's happening to us?!

"I don't know…!" Jack tried not to yell out so much to cause a commotion.

It took a few moments, but images of their former lives resurfaced in their minds. Jack grabbed his head as his left eye glowed pale blue. He slowly turned over to the woman, who stopped doubling over in pain.

"Eva?"

The woman responded. "Jack, I remember…"

"Yeah, me, too." Jack said as he and Eva stood together with Jack's eyes glowing pale blue, while Eva's eyes briefly glowed red. "And that must mean, they've awakened and become aware."

(End theme)

xxxxx

Yaksha Weaponries (ヤクシャの武器) / Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京) / 5:15 PM (JST)

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Layer Cake)

The sound of a bell rang as the shop door opened.

"Welcome to Yasha Weaponries! Please, have a look… oh, hey, Iwai," a young woman's voice spoke up, cordially greeting a tall, slender middle-aged man with gray hair and sideburns. He let his old stubble of facial hair grow out into a goatee. The sideburns perfectly aligned with his new goatee. He wore the same light gray cap. His clothing consisted of the same black turtleneck sweater, a long gray coat with a red peace symbol emblazoned on it, blue jeans, and dark boots. He wore earrings and bit on a lollipop stick.

As Iwai Munehisa walked into the weapon shop, a pale-skinned, short dark-haired woman styled in a concave-cut, and sporting a white medical eyepatch covering her left eye noticed Iwai's gecko tattoo on the left side of the neck near the back. She wore dark punk rocker clothing, comprising of a sleeveless violet shirt with a black skull and crossbones emblazoned on the front. She also had on a black jeans, dark boots, and black bracelets covered with spiky studs. Her face has several piercings; two under her mouth, on the left side, one piercing on both ears, and when she opened her mouth a tongue piercing.

The female shop owner, who greeted Iwai, stood behind a counter. For a shop owner, she appeared very young, almost appearing to be in her early 20s. The youthful woman has tangerine-colored hair tied back into a ponytail. She wore black t-shirt with an army camouflage hoodie coupled with blue jeans and brown boots. She also wore other accessories; black fingerless gloves and a silver belt around her thin waistline. Her dark brown eyes scanned Iwai and the punk rocker-clothed woman, who were the only customers present.

"Were you expecting Shinonome Yakumo? Sorry to disappoint you, Rin," Iwai addressed the young shop owner.

"No, I'm glad you're here, Iwai. It's been a while, hasn't it?" Rin widened her smile.

"And how is it when I come here, you're always here?" Iwai turned to the punk rocker. "Well,
"Ikishima Midari?"

"And why is it I come here, you arrive? You been stalking me?" scoffed Midari.

"Why would I waste my time stalking you? Besides, I always see you in my shop, too. Looking for something particular?" Iwai offered to help Midari.

"Iwai! That's our customer you're dealing with!" A heavy voice belonging to a man hollered from a backroom behind Rin.

Rin chuckled nervously as she backed off, letting two individuals step out of the backroom. A large brown-skinned bald-headed man with thick black eyebrows and a goatee walked out with muscular arms folded. He wore a form fitting light blue dress shirt with a black tie, khaki pants, and brown dress shoes. The man was so large he needed to tuck his head slightly to get through.

Standing opposite from the large man is a smaller fair-skinned woman with shoulder length blonde hair. She wore a sleeveless orange shirt, dark gray leather pants, and black boots. She had on a rose-colored cap. She wore thick black eyeliner and seemed to have thinned her eyebrows. Other accessories included a black neck choker and dark fingerless gloves.

"Davis and Coco," Iwai's scowl turned into a smirk. "Don't worry about her. She stops by my shop, too."

Flicking strands of her blonde hair off her shoulder, Coco rolled her eyes. "Whatever you say, Iwai. Remember I'm the merchant of this shop. You wouldn't be here if you were looking to buy something or sell a piece of merchandise to us. What'll be, Iwai?"

"You better be quick, Iwai, because what she says goes here," Davis said.

"Right, I'll make this quick," Iwai approached the counter.

(End theme)

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(Cue Persona 5 The Animation - Infinity - Lyn (1:20 - 1:42))

Passersby started taking notice of a group of six walking past them. These six walked together with purpose and scanned their urban environment. The Vein Remnants and Hifumi walked down the street and faced the front of Yaksha Weaponries.

"What do you think, Skyler?" Louis asked his colleague.

"One way to find out."

(End theme)

xxxxx

Skyler pushed open the shop door. The Vein Remnants and Hifumi entered as everyone turned toward their direction.


"See? Told you Yakumo would show up, Iwai," Rin gloated.
"Hey, guys. Hope we didn't interrupt business?" Yakumo asked them.

"Well, we kinda were…" Davis stated as Iwai closed a box of bullets being shown to the merchants.

Just then, Rin turned and noticed Io standing between Skyler and Hifumi. Her mouth gaped and face paled as if she had seen a ghost from the past. In fact, it wasn't just Rin, but Coco and Davis as well.

"...it's you! Io?!" Rin cried out in shock.

"What is Io doing here? How did you find her?" Coco asked the Vein Remnants.

Louis mumbled to Skyler. "Looks like Io restored their memories if they recognize her."

"It's going to take a bit to explain, but Io's found us," Skyler plainly said.

As silence befallen the room, Iwai picked up his box and headed out the door.

"We can talk about this later, Coco and Davis. Seems y'all have some catching up to do here," Iwai waved to the shopkeepers and headed out.

Midari finished scouring the shop and took this cue for her to leave.

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Restlessness)

Skyler took a deep breath. "I take it you three felt some kind of weird jolt spark up some memories not too long ago."

"That's exactly what happened. I was in the middle of minding the shop and then I get this weird headache. Then, my memories came back. I started remembering things," Rin explained while pivoting over to Io. "And as soon as I saw her, I knew I wasn't being delusional."

"Io, did you have something to do with this?" Coco asked the pale Revenant, who looked away almost feeling guilty for restoring the memories of the people closely associated with Skyler and his friends.

"Don't blame her. She did it because she needs us to deal with an enemy presence," Skyler defended Io's reasonings.

"Please, I ask you not to be upset with Io," Hifumi bowed, standing up for Io's position. The Shogi woman's polite gesture was able to appease the shopkeepers.

"We're not upset with Io," Davis replied.

"We were just worried if we were losing our minds when we saw all those lost memories coming back to us. Now that we know Io was behind it, there had to be a good reason," Coco stated.

"Yeah, and since you guys have your memories back, then we can depend on you all to supply us weapons," Louis said.

Davis grumbled. "Just know we're not a charity. You'll need to supply the money so we can give you the goods."

"Supply and demand is our store motto!" Rin cheerily said.

"We understand. After all, you have a business to run," Yakumo nodded.
"And don't worry, we've got plenty of cash to spend," Mia said.

"Mind telling me what kind of enemy y'all are facing? Are there Lost that followed us in this time?" Coco asked the Vein Remnants.

"There aren't Lost as far as we're aware for the time being," Skyler said.

Io finally spoke up. "The enemy we face are far more ambiguous. They're known as Yami Matter." As she explained what has happened to this point, the shopkeepers were flabbergasted to learn that time reset by two years.

"It's 2018? It doesn't feel like it," Rin nodded in confusion.

"The calendar year is still clearly 2020. It'll be 2021 soon."

Skyler nodded dismissively. "Believe us when we say it's 2018. As far as regular folks go, they're still living in 2020, but we know better."

"And you're going to find and team up with the Phantom Thieves to get to the bottom of this?" Davis said. "I find it mind-boggling you know the Phantom Thieves."

Coco smirked as she leaned on the counter. "Well, Vein Remnants, it'll be pleasure to do business with you." She said winking to them.

"Yeah! If y'all need some arsenal to take down whatever these Yami Matter things are, don't be a stranger! We'll supply with anything y'all need!" Rin gleefully shouted. "And besides, it'll be great for us to talk about our memories… however much was restored."

"Io wasn't able to restore everything, but with time we'll remember everything crucial that happened to us," Louis said.

"So, are you going to meet the Phantom Thieves?" Rin asked the group.

"Yeah, we'll be heading out to meet them," Skyler replied.

Hifumi asked the Persona Vein. "Io, you said your presence should be able to restore their Persona abilities, including their Persona's Ascendancy forms?"

Io nodded. "I conversed with the being named Morgana. He said he'd reach them. By now, my presence should've reached and reawakened their dormant Persona powers."

"There's only way one to find out," Hifumi took out her cell and dialed Ren's number. "Hello Ren?"

"Hifumi? Are you and Skyler ok?"

"We're fine," Hifumi made sure the others heard Ren. "I'm with Skyler and his friends. Listen, I need to ask…"

"Morgana came by our place. He told us about the irregularities causing this time reset are called Yami Matter. He asked for the others to come and meet with us. When we did, something came over us…" Ren explained over the phone. "And then…"

"And then what?"

"Our Persona abilities have resurfaced."
Upon hearing this, Hifumi briefly fell silent.

"Hifumi?" Skyler whispered. "Hey, you're spacing out."

"Ren just said he and the Thieves' Persona abilities have returned."

Io smiled. "So, it worked."

"Hifumi, are you still there?"

Hifumi came to and answered her phone. "Yes, I'm sorry for that, Ren."

"It's ok. So, our Persona abilities have resurfaced. Did Sophia's powers return to you?"

"No, but I gained something else. In fact, I'm not the only who've had their abilities restored."

"You mean Skyler?"

"And his friends."

"Can you put Skyler on?"

As Hifumi gave her phone to Skyler, he spoke with Ren.

"Ren, are you ok?"

"Just a little overwhelmed, that's all, but we're fine. Listen, we need a place to meet."

"Good idea. By the way, we've decided to call our group the Vein Remnants."

"So, the Phantom Thieves and the Vein Remnants will meet. I know the perfect place for us to convene."

Skyler nodded. "Name it."

(End theme)

xxxxx

Meiji Shrine (明治神宮)/Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京)/6:45 PM (JST)

(Cue Muramasa: The Demon Blade OST - Seasonal Beauties A)

Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta resumed their sightseeing. They were in the dark regarding the Yami Matter spreading. However, Ryōta was the first of the trio to notice the weird time reset. When he told his two friends, they couldn't believe it. Yumeko's thought this was a practical joke and took it at face value. Once they ventured out into Tokyo, they saw it was the year was '2018'.

To take their minds off the weird time reset, the trio visited the majestic and historical grounds of the Meiji Shrine. They scoured through the famous Shinto shrine.

"Isn't this place so pretty?!" Yumeko passionately cried out, spinning around and throwing her hands into the air.

"So, you're telling me spirits live here, Yumeko?" Ryōta asked the long dark-haired compulsive woman.
"Yep! Though it was night when they came out."

Mary arrogantly snorted. "You don't honestly expect us to believe there's spirits of warriors here?"

"It's true! There's even a cute and old cat spirit named Nekomata!"

"When you told us you wielded the power of the legendary Nine-Tailed Fox, I wondered how you got it," Ryōta curiously speculated.

"Besides, you and Ryōta were apparently there to see Ren and his friends fighting those monsters at Osaka!" Yumeko turned around and shot an irked glare at Mary.

"Yeah, but ancient spirits?" As Mary said this, a cold wind blew by and caused her to shiver.

"Now, that's awfully rude to speak of us spirits from the past. The foundation of your country wouldn't be here without us!" A voice belonging to an old sage called out, causing Ryōta and Mary to freeze in place.

"Nekomata! How's it going?! It's me Yumeko!" The compulsive gambler called out to the seemingly disembodied spirit.

"Ah, yes. It's good to see you, Miss Yumeko. I see you've brought colleagues." The source of the sagely grandfather-like voice materialized in front of the three.

A sphere of divine light floated above them. The sphere opened as a small white twin-tailed cat emerged. He wore a right black eyepatch and a purple scarf. This is the aforementioned cat spirit named Nekomata.

"Greetings, young ones. I am Nekomata."

"Good evening, Nekomata!" Yumeko casually greeted him.

"That cat's talking…" Mary awkwardly muttered.

Ryōta whispered. "What? You haven't seen enough fantasy and magical girl shows?"

Mary rolled her eyes. "Of course, I just didn't think I'd meet one."

Nekomata turned to Yumeko's friends. "Friends of Yumeko. Do you have names?"

"Huh?" Ryōta and Mary blinked.

"Well, do you? Or, would you rather I call you Friends of Yumeko?"

"Oh! Yes, I have a name!" Ryōta cried out. "I'm Suzui Ryōta, Mr. Nekomata!"

Mary bowed. "Please excuse me for doubting your existence, sir. I'm Saotome Mary."

Nekomata gave an approving nod. "You have nice friends, Yumeko."

"Thanks, I was hoping to come by here and introduce my friends to you."

"Well, you couldn't have arrived at a better time, Miss Yumeko."

"Really? How do you mean?"
Mary quietly watched Yumeko and Nekomata interactions. *It's like seeing one cat talking to another.*

"Before I start, I didn't come alone. In fact, Yumeko, you'll remember them well." With that, Nekomata beckoned several other spheres of light materialize before Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta.

(Cue Nioh 季王 OST - *Tokai Region Map Theme*)

These spheres of light transformed into spiritual energies. These energies formed and took on human forms. Mary and Ryōta watched in awe as the spirits of the Sengoku Era's historical figures appeared. Four of them appeared.

The first of the four is an non-Japanese man. He is an blonde-haired Irish man; his hair was tied in a ponytail. He wore Japanese gray samurai armor coupled with a blue cape.

"Whoa, I can't believe it!" Ryōta flabbergasted by the appearance of the samurai armor-garbed Irish man.

"Who is that?" Mary dumbfoundedly asked.

"Are you kidding?! That's William Adams! One of the Sengoku Era's historical figures!"

The second of the four appeared to be a black and gray uniformed Jounin ninja.

"Wow, Hattori Hanzo!" Ryōta yelled out.

The third historical figure was a kunoichi in a blue ninja uniform and a black shirt underneath the uniform.

"The kunoichi Okatsu!"


The last historical figure was revealed as a blue and black armored warrior. This warrior wore a helmet with a yellow crescent and a right eyepatch.

"And that's Date Masamune!"

Yumeko gleefully clasped her hands. "It's great to see you all here, ancient spirits." She bowed politely to the famous historical figures.

Mary was taken in by the important figureheads. "So, the Thieves have interacted with these spirits?"

"Yep! I received the Nine-Tailed Fox thanks to me!" The dark-haired gambler happily smiled and nodded.

"I can't believe I missed out on all this! I remember reading about them in our history books!" Ryōta yelled out, revealing his obvious fascination with Japan's historical figures.

"You sure have made some interesting friends, Yumeko." Mary remarked.

"Hmm, we're missing a few others," Nekomata just noticed.

"Don't worry, my friend. They're coming." William reassured the nekomata spirit.

As William acknowledged this, two more spirits appeared. One is a man garbed in crimson armor and wearing a red helmet with antlers. The other is a long dark-haired woman wearing a red and
purple kimono, and a black fur coat.

"That's Sanada Yukimura, who's also known as Sanada Nobushige! And the beautiful woman is Lady Chacha!" Ryōta pointed out the new spiritual arrivals.

"Miss Jabami Yumeko, it's good to see you again. You appear to be doing well. Yes, and it appears you've brought company. This couldn't have come with better timing." William greeted the Compulsive Gambler and acknowledged her two friends.

"I'm Suzui Ryōta…!" The young man shook anxiously. "Sorry, but I've never interacted with spirits before. So… if I sound like I'm shaking…"

"It's quite alright, young man. You're taking our spiritual presences much better than I thought." Hanzo plainly stated, taking noticing of Ryōta's willingness to accept the supernatural's existence.

"You're taking it better than your other friend there." Okatsu eyed Mary, who was seen twiddling her thumbs.

"...what? I'm sorry but ghosts give me the creeps," Mary mumbled.

"They're good ghosts not vengeful spirits, Mary. Relax, they're on our side!" Yumeko casually patted her friend's right shoulder.

"Well, of course a crazed weirdo like you can take it better than I can!"

"Sounds like someone is on edge," a calm-manner woman's voice interjected, causing the trio to turn around.

"Wait, that voice sounds familiar!" Yumeko cried out. "Can it be?"

"Nishinotōin Yuriko?!" Ryōta called out.

Standing several yards from them is a former fellow student of Hyakkaou Private Academy. She is a long dark-haired modest shrine maiden. Her eyes remained closed as they were before; although she is not blind. She wore the traditional shrine maiden garb.

"Well, if it isn't Yuriko?" Yumeko purred, giving a sardonic grin. "How's life been losing to me?"

"My manipulative days are behind me," Yuriko formally stated, revealing her changed attitude post-graduation. "I'm now a tour guide and one of the maiden keepers of Meiji Shrine."

"So, you've been in contact with these spirits, too?" Mary asked the shrine maiden.

"Yes, in fact not too long since working here, we've been in communications with each other." Yuriko said as her smile faded. "There's a weird disturbance going on lately. I sensed an evil aura spreading over the city."

"What kind of evil aura?" Ryōta curiously queried.

"Essences of darkness are being released from people's hearts and have been slowly overtaking Tokyo." Nekomata warned them. "I've been in contact with Miss Yuriko. I knew simply defeating Saklas wouldn't resolve the issue of people containing darkness in their hearts. Now the darkness is manifesting into entities. These entities will take shape and assume the appearance of iconic figureheads. Historical, cultural, or fantasy otherwise."
"Iconic figureheads?" Ryōta mulled.

"Thanks to Nekomata and his colleagues, they gave me two Guardian Spirits I can use to guard this shrine from these malicious entities," Yuriko revealed much to Yumeko's curiosity.

"You have two Guardian Spirits?! Wow, show us!" Yumeko gleefully squeaked. "But, can they top the Nine-Tailed Fox?"

"Why don't I show you then?" Yuriko smirked as she raised a hand. "Come forth Izuna and Kara-jishi!"

(End theme)

With that, two beams of spiritual light emerged on Yuriko's opposite sides. On the shrine maiden's right, Izuna, a white-furred, long-bodied fox spirit, appeared. The tips of its ears and long bushy tail are covered with red rigid hair. On the left side, a red and white shisa beast appeared bellowing. This is Kara-jishi.

"Wow, a fox spirit and a shisa!" Ryōta cried out in shock.

"Whoa, ok this is something else!" Mary exclaimed.

"Not bad, Yuriko," Yumeko smirked coolly. "Granted, you have your own fox spirit, but it's still small compared to my Nine-Tailed Fox."

Yuriko chuckled. "Well, you don't have the Nine-Tailed Fox now. Don't worry you'll have a chance to summon her again."

"Really?!"

"Indeed. And your two friends will each receive Guardian Spirits." Nekomata proclaimed.

"Wait. Us two with our own Guardian Spirits?" Ryōta asked the nekomata.

"What kind of spirits would we be commanding?" Mary wondered. "I'm kinda torn on this."

"Relax, this'll be a learning experience for y'all," Yumeko smiled to her friends.

"Since Miss Togo Hifumi's new powers have manifested, she won't require a Guardian Spirit." William stated, hinting to the Shogi woman's recent Revenant power and link with Io.

"Hifumi's former Guardian Spirit, Janomecho, will require a new handler." Hanzo said.

Nekomata pivoted over to Mary. "Won't you be Janomecho's new summoner, young miss?"

"Me? Well, I don't know the first thing about…" Before Mary could finish, Yumeko took her hand and massaged her trembling hand. "Relax, you've got this." She leaned in her friend's ear and giggled playfully. "Treat this like you were playing a game."

Shivering from Yumeko's seductive tone, Mary relaxed and sighed.

"Right, I've got this."

"Will you accept becoming Janomecho's new summoner?" Nekomata once again asked the blonde woman.
"I-I…" Mary sucked it up. "I will!"

With that, a spiritual ball conjured in front of Mary. The ball formed into a female long-haired, two pigtailed wearing humanoid with butterfly-wings for limbs, antennas, and a kimono.

"Miss Saotome Mary, I presume?" Yukimura acknowledged the blonde woman. "Janomecho was once wielded by Otani Yoshitsugu and myself."

"And Togo Hifumi," Yuriko interjected. "You should be honored to command such a beautiful Guardian Spirit, Mary."

Mary walked up and touched Janomecho's wings. "Wow, you were once Hifumi's partner? Well, I hope I can live up to her expectations."

"But, that's not all. You'll have a second Guardian Spirit." Nekomata pointed to a second spirit ball being conjured next to Mary.

The sphere opened and released a red-bodied Kirin with antlers and a draconian face. The creature shook its head and neighed. This is Enku.

"Whoa, I get two Guardian Spirits just like Yuriko?!"

"Most handlers normally get two Guardian Spirits unless one receives a high-tier spirit like the Nine-Tailed Fox," the shrine maiden said.

"Now, it's your turn to receive your Guardian Spirits." Nekomata turned toward Ryōta.

Two spiritual spheres appeared in front of Ryōta. The first one turned into a white wolf with a black-beaded neck collar and flames burning from its back, hide, and tail.

"Incredible! What a beautiful wolf," Ryōta said as he reached to pet the wolf.

"This is Kato, the fire-eating hound." Masamune said.

The other spirit sphere released Ryōta's second Guardian Spirit. The essence formed into a clear-colored turtle carrying what looks like a mountain on its back. Its back tail doubled as the long snake's neck.

"Wow, that's Genbu, isn't it?!" The young man became flabbergasted.

"That's great! You have one of the four beast guardians!" Yumeko cried out delightfully.

"Not only is Genbu one of the four fabled guardian beasts and the guardian of the north, but it was the Guardian Spirit of Tenkai." Nekomata clarified. "Suzui Ryōta, treat Genbu well and he will grant you great wisdom."

"Of course," Ryōta said, kneeling before Kato and Genbu.

"And you, Jabami Yumeko. Are you ready to reclaim the Nine-Tailed Fox as your Guardian Spirit?" Yuriko asked the Compulsive Gambler.

"Are you kidding?! Yeah, bring her back to me!" Yumeko shouted.

(Cue Kakegurui OST - Kakegurui)
As she made her demand, a bigger sphere of spirit energy floated in front of Yumeko. The dark-haired woman grabbed the glowing ball and caressed it like a cat wanting to play with a ball of yarn.

"Yes, that's right, my lovely nine-tails. I hear you. Your handler is here again," Yumeko whispered as she let the sphere release the legendary nine-tailed beast. She then kissed the sphere as its mystic energies resonated with her.

The sphere exploded into a pillar of white smoke mixed with fiery mist. The legendary fox emerged with her body covered with white fur. Three onibi embers surrounded her. Her nine bushy white tails waved around and then opened up behind her back in peacock-like fashion. Her eyes gleamed red and gave a terrifying glare that scared Yumeko's friends and Yuriko. Even as the Nine-Tails breathed into Yumeko, the Compulsive Gambler's found herself turned on by the beast's aura. Her red eyes gleamed and face contorted with ecstasy.

"Welcome back, my Nine-Tailed baby. Mommy's ready to take you back," Yumeko stared deeply into the Nine-Tailed Fox's eyes.

Mary, Ryōta, and Yuriko each shuddered being even remotely close to the legendary fox's presence. However, they, especially Mary, learned to venerate the spirits, whose stories have been passed down from generation to generation.

"Seems Miss Yumeko and the Nine-Tails' bond hasn't wavered despite their brief separation," William said. "What do you think Lady Chacha?"

Lady Chacha nodded, smiling over the fact someone's managed to tame the Nine-Tailed Fox better than she ever could. "Miss Yumeko has the fox well on a leash. If she can learn to temper her emotions better, the Nine-Tails will become a great asset for her and her friends."

"Listen up, you three," Yuriko addressed Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary. "I thought I should let you know that some of the other graduates from Hyakkaou Private came here and received their own Guardian Spirits."

"Really? Like who?" asked Ryōta.

"Remember Ikishima Midari and Sumeragi Itsuki? They've each gained Guardian Spirits." The shrine maiden reminded them.

Masamune spoke up. "Yes, that woman with the eyepatch received my Guardian Spirits."

Okatsu calmly added. "The one named Yomozuki Runa received my Guardian Spirit."

"Whoa, you hear that, Yumeko?! Sounds like some of our former classmates have their own Guardian Spirits!" Mary called out to the Compulsive Gambler.

Devilishly smirking, Yumeko replied. "Yeah, things are starting to liven up again. At least I won't get bored."

Nekomata interjected. "And I'm glad you and your friends returned here. With the dark entities preparing to resurface, the Guardian Spirits are required more than ever. I have no doubt your collective groups can find and team up with the Phantom Thieves and their new allies headed up by Hifumi and the new Sion."

"Oh yeah. Skyler and Hifumi," Yumeko was quickly reminded of her friends. She turned wearing a serious glare, not one to take her friendship with Skyler and Hifumi for granted. "Will you two with
your spirits help me fight with Hifumi, Skyler, and the Phantom Thieves?"

Hearing this, Mary and Ryōta turned to each other. They exchanged serious looks and nodded.

"It's best you find the Thieves and their allies. All I can say is be vigilant. My intuitions tell me tumultuous events are about to effect Tokyo in these coming months," Yuriko gave them a vague foreshadowing of what's to come in the future of Tokyo.

"With these awesome Guardian Spirits aiding us, we're ready for anything. Right, you two?" Ryōta asked his two friends.

"You bet your ass we're ready," Mary smirked.

Yumeko concurred with her friends. "Oh yeah, things are bound to get very interesting. Just don't any of you start getting cold feet now."

(End theme)

xxxxx

Yoyogi Park (代々木公園) / Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区，東京) / 7:30 PM (JST)

The Phantom Thieves and the Vein Remnants arrived at their arranged meeting spot. If one could describe this moment, it was consequential. Ren and Skyler walked up to each other and gave each other firm handshakes.

"So, we're doing this? Thieves and Remnants working together?" Skyler asked him.

"Consider this a beginning of a new alliance," genuinely smiled Ren.

"I'm all for this," Ann said as Hifumi nodded in agreement.

"Hey, who's the new face?" Futaba noticed Io noticeably standing next to Hifumi.

"Oh yeah. You guys haven't met her, but this is Io. She's the one responsible for restoring me and my friends' memories and some of our Revenant abilities. She's also responsible for reviving your Persona powers, Phantom Thieves," Skyler introduced Io to the Thieves.

"Hi, nice to meet you!" Ann greeted Io.

"She's very pale. Has she always been like this?" Haru noticed Io's skin condition and also noted her yellow eyes.

"Yeah, this is how she's always looked," Skyler replied.

As Io walked up, she bowed politely to the Thieves.

"It's an honor, Phantom Thieves." As she bowed, her large breasts bounced a bit, causing the male Thieves to blink and turn away.

Being a married man, Ren did his best to ignore Io's well-endowed chest and made sure Ann didn't suspect anything. Likewise, Yusuke looked away so Futaba didn't notice. Ryuji's cheeks slightly became pink, but he quickly averted his view from Io's chest.

The female Thieves gave annoyed glares toward Io's large breasts. Futaba, especially, shot an irked look reminding herself of her small, modest chest.
Hifumi, on the other hand, blushed over Io's chest. She already got a close-up of Io's chest. This happened when the pale Revenant held her close and calmed her down while Skyler was undergoing his Revenant conversion.

"...anyway, I wanted to thank you for restoring our Persona powers, Io," Makoto stated.

"You're welcome," modestly replied Io.

"Hey, at least you now have a physical presence!" Morgana chimed in, greeting Io again.

The Remnants quickly realized the black cat just spoke.

"Whoa, did Morgana just speak?!" Mia exclaimed.

"A talking cat, huh? We've seen weirder from our time," Louis coolly smirked.

"So, you guys really were from another time?" Ryuji asked. "Dudes, that's crazy."

"Yeah, and thanks to Sophia's power, we've been brought here for a purpose. We were probably meant to team with you to stop these Yami Matter entities," Skyler plainly stated. "And now thanks to Io, we can fight with you, Thieves."

Ren nodded. "So, have you given yourselves codenames?"

"We have. I'm Sion."

"Like our friend," Ann smiled, quickly reminded of the original Revenant they've met before.

"You could say I'm the reincarnation of the Sion you knew," Skyler said. "Thinking about it, I'll be honoring his name."

Mia chimed. "Call be Stinger. My sting will put you in a world of hurt!"

Louis added. "I'm Engineer. What can I say? It's fitting considering my career path."

Yakumo nodded. "Call me Hound. While my undying loyalty lie with the Remnants, I won't hesitate to fight on your behalf, Thieves."

Hifumi spoke up. "I'm Tennyo."

"That's a nice codename, Hifumi," Ren nodded approvingly.

"And my codename is Ivy," Io said.

"So, Joker, Panther, Skull, Queen, Fox, Noir, Oracle, and Mona," Skyler accounted the Phantom Thieves.


"Not too big, but it would help to split into smaller groups for some missions," Makoto suggested in case of certain members' lack of availability.

"How about a 17-person alliance?" A woman's voice belonging to one Compulsive Gambler chimed in, causing the Thieves and Remnants to turn around. They saw Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta.
"Yumeko?" Hifumi was taken aback by the gambler and her friends' arrivals.

"Guess what? Not only do Mary and Ryōta have their own Guardian Spirits, but I have my Nine-Tails back!" Yumeko boasted as the aura of the legendary fox materialized next to her.

As Mary and Ryōta revealed their Guardian Spirits, Hifumi quickly recognized Janomecho appearing with the blonde-haired woman.

"Hey, she has Hifumi's old Guardian Spirit!" Haru pointed to Janomecho.

"So, Nekomata has chosen a successor to handle Janomecho," Hifumi smiled toward Mary. "Please, handle her well."

Mary nodded. "Yeah, don't worry. I will."

"Ok, if Hifumi doesn't have a Guardian Spirit anymore, how will she be able to fight?" wondered Ann.

Hifumi turned to Io. "I've been bestowed the power of a Revenant and I also serve as Io's vessel when she wants to lend me her powers and weapon."

"Oh, well that works… wait, you're a Revenant now?!"

"No, Ann. She only has the powers of a Revenant. She didn't get converted into one like me and my friends have," Skyler clarified on Hifumi's behalf.

"So, you three are in, too?" Ren asked Yumeko and her two friends.

"No… we're totally in this," Ryōta interjected.

"Yeah, what he said," Mary nodded.

Hifumi smirked. "Welcome to our alliance, you two. And welcome back, Yumeko."

"If we're going to fight these these Yami Matter entities, I suggest some side training," Mona said.

"That's a good idea," Ren concurred. "More importantly, when we're out there fighting, we have to mind our surroundings and prevent any collateral damage if we can help it."

"Since our enemies might not be distortions and we're not fighting in Mementos, I agree with those concerns. Good thinking, Ren," Mona agreed with his sentiments regarding civilians being put in danger and public property damaged in the midst of heated battles.

"Oh, if you guys are looking for a place to train, we can use the Meiji Shrine. We just met the spirits
there. Our shrine maiden friend will even let us use the grounds to train,” Yumeko offered to the Thieves and Remnants.

"Is that so? We accept then," Skyler said.

"Alright, we've got our bases covered so far," Makoto added. "One more thing, none of us fight these Yami Matter things alone. We fight in groups. We don't know what kind of aberrations we're fighting here."

"This is a team effort. There's absolutely no I in this alliance," Ren declared as he finalized their alliance.

Skyler smirked as he and Ren put their hands on top of each other. "Thieves. Remnants. And now Guardian Spirit gamblers."

Then, every Thief and Remnant put their hands on top of Ren and Skyler's. Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary joined in, too.

( Cue Owari no Seraph Opening FULL - 「 X.U. 」〜終わりのセラフ OP)

A new alliance was born. Not only that, but a new urban adventure awaited for the Thieves with their new vampiric and spirit gamblers.

xxxxx

Skyler and Hifumi's Apartment/Hamamatsuchō (浜松町)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/8:30 PM (JST)

Later that evening, Skyler, Hifumi, and Io returned to the apartment. Before arriving home, Skyler had gotten calls from Mia, Louis, and Yakumo about Nicola, Karen, and Emily's memories possibly being restore. According to those three, Nicola, Karen, and Emily haven't recovered anywhere near as much of their memories from the events based from their original timeline. They only have inklings of their past memories and don't know much about their friends and family being Revenants. In Mia's case, she hoped to show Nicola her Revenant abilities, but decided to not rush things too soon. The cases are the same for Louis and Yakumo's situations with Karen and Emily.

Io looked around the apartment for a sleeping spot.

"You know, Io. I could lend you some of my clothes instead of walking out looking like that," Hifumi generously offered to give her unused wear for the pale Revenant.

"Thank you, Hifumi," Io kindly accepted.

"Sorry there's not a place for you to sleep. We only have a room for two," Skyler apologized. "There's our couch."

Io merely nodded. "No, I don't think that'll be necessary." She turned to Hifumi. "It appears I can't stay outside for too long, so I'll still need you as a vessel to conserve my energy. Is that ok with you, Hifumi?"

The Shogi woman smiled and grasped Io's hands. "Of course, take as much rest inside me as you need."

"In that case, goodnight…” Io closed her eyes as she leaned on Hifumi and accidentally knocked her to the floor.
Hifumi fell with Io on top of her. She got a faceful of Io's large breasts as the pale Revenant faded and reentered the Shogi woman's body. Hifumi once again blushed, but quickly came to. Skyler helped Hifumi up.

"I'd say she exhausted herself restoring our memories and lending you some of her power, Hifumi."

"Yes, I just hope my body being her vessel will sustain her."

"Don't worry. She'll be fine as long as you're here, Hifumi."

"Perhaps, but I fear if something happens to me. If I were to die, she would as well."

"Let's not worry about such dire situations, Hifumi," the Revenant kissed Hifumi. "We should focus our concerns on these Yami Matter entities."

"Yes, of course. By the way, how's your hunger? Can you control your thirst?"

"I'm good now."

"I see. But, should you ever require anything to quench your thirst, I'd be happy to give you some blood."

"Hifumi, I'd never ask…"

Hifumi silenced him with a kiss. "Will you accept if I voluntarily give you my blood?"

The Revenant was quiet for a moment until he gave a straight answer. "Yeah, but only your blood, Hifumi."

(End theme)

xxxxx

Shinjuku Toho Building/Toho Cinemas Shinjuku/Kabukichō (歌舞伎町)/Shinjuku, Tokyo (新宿区，東京)/December 14, 2018 (2018年12月14日)(Reality: December 2020)/7:20 PM (JST)

With the recent time reset, the only facets of their memories they seemed to have lost was anything related to pop culture. Everything pop-culture related they've seen, read, or experienced after December 5th, 2018 was purged from their minds. This include big movies they had previously seen. However, the Thieves aren't self aware of that. As far as they're aware, they'll be experiencing these movies for the first time.

Tonight was the wide release debut for the 20th film in this particular evergreen franchise: Dragon Ball Super: Broly. The hype was particularly strong for this film following the end of the Dragon Ball Super show several months ago and the pre established popularity of Broly.

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Tokyo Daylight )

The Phantom Thieves and the Vein Remnants were in line for the movie. Just outside of the theater, the Godzilla statue head is seen casting its gaze from the top of the Toho Cinemas Shinjuku building.

"Dude, my hype levels for this movie since they announced Broly's coming back!" Ryuji gleefully shouted.
"I never thought they'd bring him back," Ren concurred.

"By the way, we're glad you three decided to join us," Ann said to Shinya, Nicola, and Reiko, who were also in line.

"Hell yeah. Ren invited me and I then asked these two if they wanted to come," Shinya said.

"Thank you for the invite!" Reiko nodded.

"And if Nicola was going, I, being his big sister, have to come," Mia added.

"Oh, sis. You don't need to be chaperoning me and my friends. Besides, we're with others here, too," Nicola sighed.

"Well, what if I also wanted to come and see the movie?"

"Look, the line's starting to move along," Skyler pointed out.

"Yeah, about time!" Futaba shouted. "Let us through!"

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Once they entered their theater, the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and the three teens took their seats. Most grabbed snacks and drinks from the concession stands. The group noticed the packed theater and it's not surprising considering there have been sold out screenings.

"Man with these crowds, this movie is sure to make a shit ton of money," Ryuji noticed.

"Typically I only go out of my way to watch high quality art films, but since we were planning an outing together and since Futaba asked me…" Before Yusuke can finish, Futaba cut him off.

"Trust me, Inari. Yeah, these type of movies aren't art films, but the animation and style is gonna be off the chain! They got Shintani Naohiro as animation director on this movie! It's supposed to be the best Dragon Ball has ever looked!" Futaba adjusted her glasses as a bright gleam shined off her lens. "Heh, and it's probably the closest the series will ever replicate the aesthetic look of the manga! On top of that, they have Nagamine Tatsuya directing this! Talk about an upgrade!"

"Is he someone well-renowned?" queried Yakumo.

"Hell yes!" Futaba shouted.

Makoto shrugged. "Our resident otaku knows her stuff."

"But, let's enjoy this action-packed art piece together, my dear Mako-chan." Haru leaned against Makoto, taking a handful of popcorn from their bucket.

As Makoto reached for some popcorn, her hand touched Haru's. Before the couple could say anything, Louis leaned in.

"Would you ladies care to share? I seem to have scattered mine on the floor," Louis smirked coolly.

Mia rolled her eyes. "Please, you didn't even buy popcorn, liar."

Munching her popcorn, Makoto hesitated. "...eh…"

"Sure, help yourself," Haru replied.
"Why thank you, Haru-chan. Y'know, Mako-chan you could stand to be more generous like your partner here," Louis placed of their popcorn into a napkin.

"Riiiight," the brunette scoffed as she turned and noticed Skyler too busy talking with Hifumi. She remembered Sion used to call her Mako-kins. She thought, *I wonder if he'll ever consider calling me that nickname again.*

Ren leaned over and watched Ann opening her hot dog bag. She noticed her husband leering over her hot dog.

"What? Oh, did you manage to bring the ketchup and stuff?!" Ann had forgotten to grab the condiments.

"Yep, right here," Ren flashed her some ketchup and mustard packets.

"Thanks, I'd hate to eat a dry dog," the model said, opening a ketchup packet. "Though, I have to watch what I eat. The modeling agency is suggesting I be on a semi-strict diet."

"But, you've been eating well lately. One cheat night won't hurt."

"Yeah, I guess, but hey we're in a theater… although I could've gotten one of those salad bowls," Ann sighed.

"Who the heck eats salads in a theater?" Shinya chimed in, slurping his soda.


"Shinya, be nice," Reiko chastised him.

"Sorry, Ann."

"Heh, don't worry, Shinya. I don't eat salads in a theater… though, those burgers they had looked good," Ren considered.

"A burger sounds about good now," Ryuji licked his lips. "Hey, Miyako. I'm going with Ren to grab a burger. Want something else?"

"No, I'm fine. You go on!"

"You know you can place an order for burgers here in your seat, right?" Futaba reminded Ren and Ryuji.

"Oh yeah… how did I forget that?" Ryuji said as he sat down and wrote down his order.

Skyler wrote an order for pizza for him and Hifumi. "Anything else you want?"

Hifumi just nodded. "No, pizza's fine."

"Ok. How's Io feeling inside?"

"She's resting well. I can imagine she'd want to physically be here with us now."

"I guess you'll be eating for two?" Skyler joked with her.

"For two? Skyler Jones! You say like I'm pregnant with Io," Hifumi coolly chuckled.
"Well, she is inside you."

"I know, but still… that's not quite the same."

"She has to come out, Hifumi. We should let her experience this world since it's alien to her. She's only ever lived and experienced a post-apocalyptic period. We're in a time of peace. She's still naive to a lot of our daily life activities."

Hifumi smiled. "Yes, when you put it like that, she is like a child. We can teach her things not seen in your time. We can teach the different kinds of food she can eat and I already said I'd lend her some of my clothes."

"Getting her some new clothing will be good, too."

"She'll make a great companion to tag along with," Hifumi said as she suddenly had the urge to use the restroom. "Pardon, I'll be right back."

"Are you ok?" Skyler asked her.

"Yes, I'll be right back!"

(End theme)

xxxxx

As she closed her bathroom stall, Hifumi finished her business. Before turning the handle to leave, her body glowed with white light. Then, the next Hifumi knew she was laying on the floor with Io on top of her.

"Hey, you were talking about me?" Io asked as she noticed Hifumi on the floor. "Oh, I'm sorry! Did I come out at a bad time?" She helped Hifumi up.

"Not all."

"I heard you wanted to take me places and see things. Where we can start?"

Hifumi turned her eyes to the bathroom exit. "Why don't I show you?"

xxxxx

(Dead Can Dance - East Of Eden  Heard in Sound Devices)

"Whoa! Io's here?!" The group noticed Io walking beside Hifumi.

"So, I see you've rested enough. It's been over a week, Io," Skyler acknowledged Io's presence.

"Wait, so Io's been sleeping inside Hifumi?" Mia whispered to Louis.

"Yeah, it appears so. Hifumi is now Io's personal vessel to conserve her power and sustain her current form. For the time being, she's not able to last on her own outside."

Hifumi sat Io beside her. "Thankfully I purchased the last remaining seat for Io."

"You guys just arrived in time. The flick's about to start!" Ryuji said.

"Hell yeah, get ready to see Goku and Vegeta get smoked by Broly!" Shinya cheered.
Io leaned over and noticed the pizza dish Skyler ordered for him and Hifumi. Her golden eyes seemed to gleam over the savoring cheese. Hifumi picked up a slice and handed it to Io.

"Go ahead and take a bite. I think you'll love it," the Shogi woman offered the pale Revenant a slice.

Nodding, Io took the slice and took her first bite. As she swallowed, Io gleamed with joy. Her eyes lit and her cheeks flushed with pink spots. She gave the most adorable face the Revenants had ever seen. An uncharacteristic child-like response from the usually shy and calm Persona Vein.

"Soooo good!" Io then quickly munched it and devoured the pizza in one gulp. She gave a small burp.

"Yes, but next time chew your food, sweetie," Hifumi said, wiping Io's mouth with a napkin.

"Pizza's one of the best foods you'll find in this time, Io. Glad you like it," Skyler smiled.

Nicola eyed Io. "Sis, who is that?"

Mia answered, realizing her brother hasn't fully recovered his memories. "That's Io. She's a friend of ours."

Shinya curiously watched Hifumi feeding Io. "That chick's got bandages on her. Is she ok?"

"Maybe she came in cosplay?" Reiko wondered.

"Nah, not like that in a Dragon Ball movie…" Before Shinya could finish, the previews were set to start.

The group then quieted down through the previews.

Moments before *Dragon Ball Super: Broly* started, a group of 16 distorted figures appeared but none inside the theater noticed them. The figures took on the shapes of familiar characters from the *Dragon Ball Super* series. These Urban Myths were Son Goku (孫そん悟ご空くう), Vegeta (ベジータ), Bulma (ブルマ), Jaco Teirimentenpibosshi (ジャコ・ティリメンテンピボッシ), Freeza (フリーザ), Beerus (ビルス), Whis (ウイス), Cabba (キャベ), Hit (ヒット), Caulifla (カリフラ), Kale (ケール), Jiren (ジレン), Future Trunks (未来のトランクス), Future Mai (未来のマイ), Android 17 (人造人間１７号), and Broly (ブロリー). The figures stayed out of sight and watched the movie alongside the audience.

*(End theme)*

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As the movie progressed, the group watched Bulma calling Trunks on screen talking about the stolen Dragon Balls. Also on screen with Trunks were Goten, Pilaf, Mai, and Shu.

"Kinda obvious who send those guys to steal Bulma's Dragon Balls," Futaba whispered.

"Please don't spoil," Yusuke muttered.

"And no talking. Not even whispering. Shhh!" Makoto put a finger to her lips.

"Man, all that Saiyan and Bardock stuff was surreal," Ryuji whispered.

Upon seeing little Mai on screen, Futaba just realized. "Hey, you know if Hifumi were drawn in Toriyama-sensei's art style, she'd look like Future Mai."
"Really? Hmm, there is a bit of a resemblance," Ren turned to Hifumi.

"What are they talking about?" Hifumi asked Skyler.

"Something about you looking like a character. I think that Mai character from Dragon Ball."

"Oh."

Io sat with her feet on her chair. Without budging an inch from her seat, she became deeply invested in the movie. In fact, this is the first feature film she's ever seen. In her and the Revenant's time, cinematic films died following the collapse of modern society. To see a feature film, even an animated one, was alien and surreal to the pale Revenant.

Hifumi giggled. "I think she's really into it, Skyler."

"Good, Let her."

The next scene showed Freeza on screen talking about his desired wish.

"It's Freeza," Futaba munched on her popcorn. "Nakao Ryūsei still sounds legendary after all these years."

"That reminds me. There's a famous Youtuber and social media guy with an avatar of Golden Freeza, only with glasses and holding a red lightsaber," Shinya whispered.

"Oh, I think I know who you're talkin' about, but I forgot the guy's name," Ryuji whispered.

"Guys, quiet. We're watching a movie now," Ann hushed them.

The group went back and watched the movie.

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The final battle sequences showed the spectacular blend of art style and animation, which enhanced the movie experience for the audience. Everyone became captivated by the new style that could potentially be used for future Dragon Ball releases.

The group were immersed and awestruck. Jaws almost dropped. Even Yusuke came to appreciate the animation techniques and the manga-like art style brought to life.

But none were more invested than Io, who was immersed with her first theatrical experience. As far she was concerned, this would be the film she'll remember the most since it's the first one she's ever seen.

The climax came when Super Saiyan Blue Gogeta prepared to finish off Broly.

xxxxx

(Blizzard ~ Daichi Mura Heard in Sound Devices)

The movie ended and the audience politely clapped for the immersive Dragon Ball film they've ever seen.

(End theme)

(Hyperfast~ Lacuna Coil Heard in Sound Devices) (0:00 - 0:14)
The group came together to briefly discuss the movie. Most of them were trying to get over the animation spectacle they've just witnessed.

(0:15 - 4:57)

"Holy shit, guys! That was worth the wait!" Ryuji passionately voiced his content for the movie. "I definitely need to use that paralysis technique Goku used on Broly!"

"That movie was something else," Miyako added, being humored by Ryuji's fanboy reaction.

"I'm not a big fan of this series, but that was an exhilarating experience. That fight choreography was awesome to watch. I may even apply some of their fight techniques when I'm Queen." Makoto nodded.

Haru winked and patted Makoto's shoulder. "Perhaps this might entice you to read the manga, Mako-chan?"

Louis concurred. "That's the best way to get introduced to an older long-running series."

"I can't believe even after 30-something years this series still has this much life," Ren stated.

"Yeah, I'll say. I do dig Broly and Cheealai together. They're so cute." Ann admitted her new favorite shipping.

Futaba turned over to Yusuke, grinning from ear to ear. "Well, what'ca think, Inari?"

"...well for a movie whose selling point is just brutal fighting and screaming…"

"Well, true, but how about Broly's development? The old Broly was just a raging monster who called himself the freaking 'Devil'! I had sympathy for this new take on Broly. But, WOW, how about that Gogeta vs. Broly fight?!

"I must give the animators their due. They brought their best efforts," the art major nodded in approval.

"Yep! The actors even still have it. Hats off to Nozawa Masako, Horikawa Ryo, and Shimada Bin, especially Shimada! Goddamn!" Futaba praised the legendary Dragon Ball veteran voice actors.

"Hell yeah! Best Dragon Ball movie ever!" Shinya yelled out.

Nicola chuckled. "Well, it was a blast. I had a good time."

"As someone who's not into this kind of stuff, it was not bad. I liked it," Reiko smiled, putting an arm over Shinya. "But, it was better watching with you guys."

Feeling Reiko snuggle up to him, Shinya blushed with glee.

Mia gave a knowing glare to Nicola. "So, where's that girl, little brother?"

Nicola coughed. "Whatever do you mean?"

Mia leered. "Uh huh. You can't lie to me."

"She's just a friend and she couldn't make it."

Reiko cheered up Nicola. "Don't worry. There's always next time!"
Both Skyler and Hifumi glanced over to Io, who looked like she fell into a trance. The couple shared a laugh.

"Io? How did you like the movie?" Skyler asked the pale Revenant.

Io blinked thrice as she finally came to and got up from her seat. She turned around and faced the group, who awaited a response.

"Wonderful!" Io shouted and clapped. "Is every movie like this?"

Upon hearing this, Skyler chuckled. "Well, I suppose me and Hifumi can bring you to see more movies. Right, Hifumi?" He lightly elbowed his girlfriend.

Hifumi nodded, giggling. "I suppose we should."

"Can we see this again?" Io asked Skyler and Hifumi.

"I guess we can and maybe have some of that delicious pizza you've enjoyed so much."

"We'll enjoy it together," Hifumi kindly smiled at Io, whose eyes gleamed happily.

"So, it looks like they're going to teach Io about the modern world. I say we all chip in and take her around the city," Ann suggested to Ren.

"That sounds like a great idea. This way she can get accustomed to our way of living. She has to feel like a small fish in a big ocean," he gave an analogy, comparing Io to a small fish. "And thanks to Hifumi using Sophia's power, she's been far removed from a post-apocalyptic world." He adjusted his glasses. "Which reminds me."

(End theme)

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The Velvet Room (ベルベット・ルーム)

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Aria Of The Soul)

Opening his eyes, Ren scoured the familiar surroundings of a dark ceiling, the bars of the jail cells, cinder block walls. This place brought back some memories to the Phantom Thief. He spotted the exact cell he once occupied during his 'rehabilitation' with the fake Igor, who later turned out to be Yaldabaoth.

He turned away from the bars and spotted a rotting wooden desk. A single bulb hang over the desk and illuminated the spot. He spotted two familiar figureheads.

"Welcome back, Trickster," greeted the man sitting in a chair in front of the desk. Although, one could wonder from first glance if this 'man' was really human. He had features uncharacteristic for a human. He had the physical features of an elder man but a long beak for a nose and wide bulging eyes that appeared bird-like. He had tufts of gray hair around the back of his head and thick black eyebrows. He wore a black suit and white gloves. He raised his head to Ren's level, grinning wide.

"We've been expecting you in light of the recent events happening," chimed the long platinum-haired young girl in a logical manner. She wore a blue dress and a matching headband decorated with white butterflies and yellow roses. Her golden eyes scanned Ren, who approached the desk as the bulb's light unveiled his presence.
"What do you know about these Yami Matter entities, Igor? Lavenza? They're apparently responsible for this weird time reset," he asked, removing his glasses so the duo can look him in the eyes while giving the most straightforward answer they can reasonably come up with.

Igor and Lavenza both fell silent, leaving Ren in the dark for a moment.

"Is it some essence of Yaldabaoth responsible for this? Of Saklas? Or, something else entirely?"

Igor answered as best as he possibly could. "Well, as you and your colleagues have already surmised, this darkness has been manifesting from human hearts. These entities have not only surfaced, but have begun altering people's perceptions. The lines of fantasy are being blurred with reality."

"Fantasy are being blurred with reality?" Ren meticulously picked out the last part of Igor's response. He recalled Makoto mentioning two names belonging to nonexistent characters and people casually talking about them as if they were real people.

"Be vigilant of your surroundings. You and the Phantom Thieves must be prepared when these Yami Matter entities materialize," Lavenza warned Ren. "Also understand the nature of these entities will be more physical than abstract."

"So like those Yokai and Lost we've fought not too long ago," Ren referred to he and his friends' battles with the Yokai and Lost at the time Sion arrived. "Except now, we won't be fighting these Yami Matter entities alone. We've formed an alliance with the Vein Remnants and the Spiritual Gamblers."

"Which will be very beneficial for you, Phantom Thieves."

Igor added. "Even now, you've acquired the trust of new confidants, including these Revenants from another timeline. I can't give specifics of the nature of these Yami Matter abnormalities. However, I can say the source from what I can gather is darkness that has no origins in this reality."

"No origins in this reality? Like what? These Yami Matter entities came from something that's never existed in our world?" Ren was perplexed. "Wait, but you did hint at lines of fantasy and reality somehow being intertwined. Well, since we are fighting physical entities again, we'll have to be mindful of our surroundings. People will get hurt if they get caught in our battles. Incidentally, that means I'll have to be careful not to go King Ghidorah in Tokyo full of people."

"We trust you and your colleagues can assess and handle the situations. Return to us if you need or we'll summon for you if we've found anything more related to the source behind the Yami Matter," Lavenza logically stated.

"Until next time," Igor nodded as Ren closed his eyes and the Velvet Room started to distort away.

(End theme)

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(Roppongi Hills Mori Tower (六本木ヒルズ森タワー) / December 17, 2018 (2018年12月17日) (Reality: December 2020)) / 6:45 PM (JST)

(Cue Kakegurui OST - One Who Wields Authority)

In a spacious luxurious room, a group of five individuals turned as a door opened. A large coffee brown-skinned man with a long white mane-like hair. The man had a face that showed his age,
including wrinkled skin around his eyes. Thick white eyebrows and goatee made up his face. He wore a dark blue civilian uniform that is governmental and business-like for a foreign politician.

"Mr. Silva, we've been waiting for you," a bespectacled middle-aged man with a receding hairline, sans the faded dark hair covering the back of his head. His choice clothing is a white lab coat and black shoes.

A young woman with long dark violet hair styled in a ponytail got up from a seat. She garbed in a light pink women's business suit with a red tie, a matching colored business skirt, and white high heel shoes. Her dark violet vacant-looking eyes greeted the large man. "Good evening, Gregorio Silva."

"Mido Juzo. Igarashi Sayaka," Gregorio addressed them. He glanced to the opposite side of the room and noticed the other two guests.

The other guests are identical twin sisters. The women have similar pale skin and long gray, more like platinum, hair. They share similar facial features right down to the same blue eyes and lipstick.

The sister on the left wore her long platinum hair loose. She's garbed in a white business suit with a blue tie, matching colored dress pants, and azure-colored high heel shoes.

The other sister on the opposite wore her hair in knotted rings with intertwining ribbons. She wore a white business suit with a red tie, matching white dress pants, and red high heel shoes.

"Good evening, Mr. Silva," the loose-haired twin sister greeted him in a collective tone.

"You're looking sharp this evening, Mr. Silva," the knotted-haired sister smoothly spoke.

Gregorio gruffed. "Yes, I can same to you, Momobami Kirari and Momobami Ririka."

"Father," a young woman spoke up, garnering Gregorio's attention from his colleagues.

Gregorio quickly turned to the sound of his daughter's voice. Standing in front of him is an alluring young woman with long white hair and cerulean eyes. Her skin complexion is similar to her father's. She wore a light blue political dress and white high heels.

"You look beautiful as ever in that dress, Cruz," Gregorio acknowledged his daughter's presence.

"Oh, father, you flatter me," Cruz smiled coolly, giggling.

"Now that I've called you here. I've decided on our organization's name," Gregorio announced. He paused, taking notice of three Guardian Spirits appearing next to Kirari, Sayaka, and Ririka.

The Tengen Kujaku, a transparent white and bluish green peacock, materialized next to Kirari.

The Usura-hicho, a swarm of frost-colored butterflies excreting hazy ice air, surrounded Sayaka.

The Atlas Bear, a large black bear covered with golden garments, stood near Ririka.

Seemingly unfazed by the Spirit Guardians, Gregorio cleared his throat. "Sorry. I've chosen a name for our organization."

Kirari calmly smirked. "Oh? And what name have you chosen for us?"

"We will be known as The Consortium."

(End theme)
Chapter III

Reunions; Mythological Waves (再会; 神話の波)

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Shujin Academy (秀尽学園高校)/January 12, 2019 (2019年1月12日) (Reality: January 2021)/12:30 PM (JST)

It was the new year. Christmas and the holidays have already gone by fast. The Thieves, the Remnants, and the Gamblers enjoyed the festivities and used the extra time to search for any signs of reality distortions created by the Yami Matter. As of late, no Yami Matter activity has been noticed. Nevertheless, the teams cautiously stayed alert.

With 2018 (in reality 2020) behind them, the group anticipated the new year for better and worse.

(Cue Final Fantasy VIII - Balamb Garden)

Today marked the first major event for the Phantom Thieves. For Ren, Ryuji, Ann, Makoto, and Haru, it was their school reunion at Shujin Academy.

Each dressed for the occasion, the former Shujin Phantom Thieves invited their other friends as guests. Since it was still the winter season, the group much like an sane-minded guest came dressed in winter attire to keep warm.

Ren came dressed in business casual. He wore a long-sleeved black buttoned dress shirt, dark jeans, dark brown dress shoes. He wore a dark gray coat.

Standing beside her husband, Ann wore a zip-up white sweater with a black coat over it, a white scarf tied around her neck, red dress pants, and black boots. Wearing white gloves, she held a tall cup of hot chocolate as warm steam seeped from it.

"I can't believe it's been that long since we were students here," Ann walked down the hall she used to roam between classes. She turned to Ren, who was in the middle of recollecting memories during his one year transfer into Shujin. She softly smiled and patted Ren's shoulder. "Hey, I know there was some bad memories here, but don't forget all the good that outweighed the crap."

"Yeah, I'm remembering us sharing the same class with Kawakami-sensei."

"That's right. We were in the same class. Oh, how could I forget Ryuji sending us annoying texts in the middle of class?" Ann chuckled.
"Hey! Who's texts were freakin' annoying?! They happen to mean a lot to me!" An annoyed tone belonging to one Sakamoto Ryuji interjected.

Ren and Ann turned around as Ryuji appeared before them. Ryuji came dressed in a black dress shirt with a yellow tie, khaki dress pants, and white shoes. He wore a black coat over his dress shirt. His hair was well-groomed for the occasion and his goatee was neatly trimmed, almost thinned out.

"Whoa, looking sharp, Ryuji," Ann complimented his neater appearance.

"Thanks. I mean, it is our school reunion," Ryuji grinned.

"So, we need to go find the others. Hifumi and Skyler just arrived," Ren showed them the text he got from Hifumi just now.

"Yeah, we need to remind them they have to sign in as guests since they never attended our school," Ann pointed out.

"Oh yeah, good call!" Ryuji nodded.

"Where's Miyako, Ryuji?" Ren asked him.

"She's checking around the east hall that way," Ryuji pointed to the direction he left her. "We better go and get her."

"How does she like our school so far?" Ren asked him.

"She thought it looked too restricting on the outside, but looking around inside seems to have changed her mind."

"Hey, we finally found you guys!" A voice belonging to Niijima Makoto drew their attention away from their ongoing conversation.

"Makoto! Haru! Hey!" Ann called to them.

"Aren't we all looking good?" A voice belonging to Niijima Makoto drew their attention away from their ongoing conversation.

"Yes, looks like we interrupted some chat you were having?" The polite tone of Okumura Haru chimed in.

Ren, Ann, and Ryuji turned to see Makoto and Haru standing side by side. Makoto wore a long-sleeved blue dress coat with a brown winter shirt underneath, black dress pants, and brown boots. Haru came dressed in a turquoise dress sweater with collared white shirt under it. A dark green tie hanging out of her collar. She also wore a pink skirt, long white leggings, and brown shoes.

"Yo, glad ya two came!" Ryuji waved to the young ladies.

"Makoto! Haru! Hey!" Ann called to them.

"Aren't we all looking good?" Makoto smirked as she and Haru approached their fellow Shujin friends.

"Or, should we call you Mrs. Student Council President once again for this one day?" Ren gave a witty remark, which got earned an eye roll from Makoto.

"Oh please. Those days are behind me, but if you guys want to humor me. Sure, why not?" Makoto shrugged, letting them rib on her former prestigious school title.

Haru giggled. "You're our Student Council President, Mako-chan. Us being here together in Shujin takes us back, doesn't it?"
"Anyway, where are Hifumi, Skyler, Yusuke, Futaba, and the others?" Makoto asked the three.

"Let's see if they're outside the school. Maybe they're in the halls?" Ann said.

"Well, Hifumi and Skyler just arrived. Those two will be past the school entrance," Ren recalled from the text. "Let's head outside and greet those two in."

With that, the Shujin Phantom Thieves headed for the front side of their school. When they came out on the front, the group discerned Skyler, Hifumi, Mia, Louis, Yakumo, Yusuke, Futaba, Morgana, Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta in the crowd.

"Check it out! Look who found us!" Futaba turned and acknowledged the Shujin Phantom Thieves. She stood opposite from Yusuke. She came in a long-sleeved black and white striped shirt, green khaki pants, and white tennis. A black women's beret cap adorned her head.

"Let's give it up for our favorite Shujin Academy friends," Yusuke declared as he started a clap as the others joined in and clapped. The artist came dressed in a black coat with a dark blue long-sleeved sweater underneath, black jeans, and dark brown dress shoes.

"We're happy we can make it for your school reunion," Hifumi genuinely added. She came wearing a dark green coat with a white sweater under it, a black skirt with dark gray knee-length stockings, black boots and a white winter cap. She carried a black purse.

"Maybe you can show us around your school?" Skyler asked. The Revenant came garbed in a dark gray coat with a black long-sleeved shirt, black jeans, and dark brown dress shoes.

"Yeah, give us a tour of Shujin Academy!" Yumeko howled, and judging by her tone sounded demanding. She came dressed in a dark red buttoned coat, black knee-length socks, dark brown shoes, and a red women's beret cap.

"This is a really nice school," Ryōta scanned the Shujin grounds. He came wearing a brown coat, a long-sleeved blue sweater, dark blue jeans, and brown dress shoes.

"Eh, ours is much better looking," Mary nonchalantly shrugged. She wore a dark purple coat with a long-sleeved red shirt, a long gray skirt, black leggings, and brown boots.

"So, ladies. How about the tour of your school?" Louis approached Makoto and Haru. He came dressed in a brown coat with a black dress shirt and a blue tie underneath, dark gray pants, and black dress shoes.

Upon hearing this, Makoto and Haru exchanged looks. Makoto appeared hesitant, but Haru encouraged her with a smile.

"Right this way," Makoto said as she and Haru escorted Louis into Shujin.

"We'll even show you where the student council room is at! You do know Mako-chan used to be this school's student council president?" Haru added, which made Makoto give out an exasperated sigh and hang her head.

"Yes, I've only heard you both mention it in passing, but yes I'd like to see where Mako-chan's old office space," Louis said, playfully teasing Makoto, who turned away.

"Are we done? Right this way or you'll find yourself lost," the brunette-haired woman chuckled as she and Haru led Louis down the main hall.
"Hey, Louis got to go in first! Show us into your school already!" Yumeko excitedly cried out, grabbing Ryōta and Mary's arms.

"Yeah, I didn't bring my brother and his friends here for nothing," Mia added. She came dressed in a sky blue winter dress coat, black leggings, black knee-length boots, and a black Ushanka-styled hat.

"Aren't Nicola, Shinya, and Reiko already inside?" Yakumo asked Mia. He was dressed in a black winter coat, dark gray pants, and brown boots.

"Yeah, and they might so lost in there! And to think they'll probably be going to Shujin!"

Skyler half-chuckled. "Guess we need to find them and let Ren show them around. Right, Ren?"

"Yes, we very much want to see your classrooms and any of your former teachers if they're still here," Hifumi said.

Noticing Morgana near Mia, Ren nodded. "Yeah, we don't want to keep you all waiting. Welcome to Shujin, friends. Just a heads up, the halls look the same, so don't get lost." He showed them the way into Shujin's front doors.

As the grouped wandered into the main hall, the Shujin Phantom Thieves divided them to groups and showed them around the first floor. Ryuji found Miyako, who was seen in a white winter coat, dark blue jeans, knee-length brown boots, and a white winter cap, scouring the first floor hall.

Miyako noticed Ryuji and his friends. "Oh, hey! There you are, Ryuji!"

Ryuji smiled and walked up to his girlfriend. "What do you think so far?"

"It's not as bad as you seemed to describe it."

"Now that you mention it, they did make some changes to the school since we graduated," Makoto observed.

"You're right. It does feel less restrictive," Haru pointed out.

"So, why don't we look around? The last we came here, we didn't see all of the school," Yusuke suggested.

"Where's the first place we can start?" Futaba asked.

"C'mon, we'll show you," Ann kindly offered to tour them around Shujin. "Hifumi, Skyler, Mia, Louis, Yakumo, Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary; since this is your first time here, we want to you see as much of the school as we can."

"Fair enough. We're in no hurry," Hifumi smiled.

"That's right. Just show us the places you used to hang out," Skyler said.

"There's one place we'd like to show you," Ren vaguely referred to the Phantom Thieves' favorite old meeting spot: the school's rooftop.

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Ren and Ann showed Hifumi, Skyler, and Mia around the first floor. Morgana followed them from a distance, avoiding been seen by faculty members.
As the couple showed them up the stairs, a couple of random former students noticed Ren and Ann. Needless to say, they were shocked Ren and Ann bothered to come for the reunion, much less be seen together. They remembered Ren as that 'one student' with the criminal record. Others, including a few girls, remembered Ann being accused of slut-shaming and heard about the rumors related to Kamoshida.

The group of the former students approached Ren and Ann. Almost preparing themselves for a heated confrontation, the students bowed their heads and offered apologetic remarks, especially the girls who once believed in the alleged Kamoshida rumors. They also offered congratulations to Ren and Ann being a married couple.

"So, these were former students from your class year?" Hifumi asked Ren and Ann.

"Yeah, they were afraid of me and accused Ann of being in a relationship with that asshole Kamoshida," Ren answered.

Ann furrowed her brows. "But, that's behind us. Kamoshida's long gone. The students have already apologized." Her frown turned into a smile, reflecting her change in mood. "Anyway, there's still our old homeroom classroom we have to show you."

"Show us the way," Skyler nodded.

"Those people did seem weirded out to see me, though," Mia heard the former students commenting and referring to her as a 'blonde foreigner'. She scoffed. "Whatever, I've been called a gaijin already by a few folks since living here."

"We're so sorry, Mia," Ann apologized. "I can sorta relate, though I'm just one-quarter American myself. I did get similar looks from kids back then."

Mia sighed. "Yeah, but I'm over it. I don't give a shit what they think of me."

"Sooo, how about taking us up to y'all's homeroom classroom?" Skyler suggested, quickly interjecting and trying to lighten the mood.

"You aren't bothered when people call you a gaijin, Skyler?"

"Well, Mia, to be honest… a little, but I don't let it bother me. We are technically foreigners."

"Yeah from another timeline. Not another country."

Skyler sighed. "Look, we can just forget about that? Ren and Ann are being kind enough to show us around their old school."

"You're right. Sorry about that, guys. I'm just here 'cause I want to find my brother and his friends."

Ren smiled. "Don't worry. We'll find those three."

Hifumi grasped Skyler's hand. "Shall we get going?"

Skyler nodded to his girlfriend. "Yeah, let's keep moving."

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(Cue Mnemosyne OST - 02 - RIN's Morning)

Elsewhere, Makoto and Haru showed Louis to the old student council room, which looked
"They really did change this room," Makoto was taken aback by the office space being cleaned up.

"The school's been mostly cleaned up. Some areas look almost unrecognizable," Haru pointed out as they toured Louis around.

"You know, I did hear that Shujin has a new principal. Apparently, it's someone very young," Makoto astutely realized.

"Ah, so this is where you used to hold office, Mako-chan?" Louis scanned the student council room.

Makoto cleared her throat, responding in a practical tone. "Why yes, this was my office. Granted, it's different than how I remember it. Whoever is the new Shujin principal, I'd like to thank him or her for renovating parts of the school."

"Man, just walking around here makes me wish I were a Shujin Academy student right now," Louis smirked as he turned to the ladies. "Imagine if the three of us were students."

Haru chortled. "Well, I think it's too late for that."

Makoto nodded. "Yep, I'm happy those days are behind me."

"Oh, c'mon, don't tell me there's a little part of you that misses those Shujin days?" Louis asked them.

"Well, only the good things and that's mostly seeing each other everyday," Haru openly confessed.

"My only nostalgic memories are my friendships, which we still carry with us to this day," Makoto firmly stated. "There was some bad that I'd rather keep in the past."

"Whoa, hey I can understand that," Louis apologetically replied. "So, where else would you like to show me?"

"Well, there's the rooftop where our Phantom Thief meetings used to be and where I took care of my plants," Haru said.

"Oh, your old Phantom Thief hangout? Now this I gotta see."

Makoto hid her annoyance behind a fake smile. "Please, we'll show you the way."

As the trio headed for their destination, a few former students noticed their old student council president paired with Haru and the young male foreigner. Louis heard the gossip among the former students.

"Hey, you want to speak up? I'm afraid my hearing's gone bad lately," Louis overheard their gossip.

"It's good to see you again, Niijima-san. You're looking well," one of the former male students bowed to Makoto.

"Likewise, it's good to see you again, Okumura-san," a female student bowed to the new Okumura company owner.

Haru bowed back. "Good day to you."

Makoto pulled Louis back. "Forget them. Just walk off." She walked him away from the former students.
"Look, I just hate when some folks around here like to shit stir with foreigners," Louis muttered.

"For an awfully cool-minded guy, I'm surprised you let that bother you."

The Revenant shrugged. "Guess I'm not as calm and collective all the time like I seem to be."

"Don't worry, Louis. They're just not used to seeing people outside the norm," Haru said. "You're our friend no matter your background."

"Why thank you, Haru-chan."

"Just stick with us, Louis. That way you don't get lost and we won't have to scramble looking for you."

"And I can count on you to make sure I keep my temper in check, Mako-chan."

The long-haired brunette gave an exasperated sigh. "Sure, whatever you say."

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Outside near the track field, Ryuji showed Miyako, Futaba, Yusuke, and Yakumo around his favorite training spots.

"So, this is where you used to practice and run?" Yakumo asked Ryuji.

"Yep! I've brought Miyako here a couple times already. Heh, and she got tired out after trying to run a lap."

Miyako scoffed. "Yeah, but I've gotten better. I can run a couple of laps thanks to Ryuji."

"That gym membership sure paid off, didn't it?"

"Hey, Ryuji!" Futaba garnered his attention. "There's a couple of guys over there calling for you."

"Who?" Ryuji turned as he recognized his former track team members, Nakaoka and Takeishi. "Oh, it's them."

"Friends of yours?" Yusuke asked Ryuji.

"They were old buds and former track team members of mine," he answered as he approached Nakaoka and Takeishi. He beckoned Miyako over to meet his old track mates.

"So, how do you like Shujin so far?" Yusuke turned to ask the Revenant.

"It's a nice school, but a few students were giving me discomforting looks," Yakumo sighed.

"Oh, ignore them. They thought you were a foreigner despite being Japanese, but who cares what they think? Right, Inari?" Futaba scoffed over the sharp-eyed looks they gave him.

"Yes, no doubt."

"Even though I'm Japanese? Well, whatever. I won't let them get under my skin."

After Ryuji finished introducing Miyako to his old track mates, he took Futaba, Yusuke, and Yakumo back inside the school. Once they walked in from the back, Ryuji stepped in and walked right into someone.
"Ow!" Ryuji yelped as his head collided with another guy's forehead.

"Ouch! Excuse me, but watch where you're going!" A young man yelped as he nearly fell back.

"Well, you shoulda watched where you went! You…!" Ryuji snarled as he faced the guy he bumped into and recognized him. "Mishima?!

Now several years older, the once timid Mishima Yuuki was a young man dressed in casual business wear. He picked up his gray winter coat he dropped. He wore a long-sleeved white shirt, gray khaki pants, and brown dress shoes. His blue-tinted black hair, once spiky around some areas, was more groomed and trimmed than before. He still had the 'ordinary' face he was known for and no facial hair.

"Huh? Ryuji, is that you?" Mishima blinked upon realizing he bumped into.

"Yo, Mishima! How's it going?" Ryuji got up and gave Mishima a firm handshake.

"Well, doing better now that I'm out of school."

"Man, you haven't changed!"

"But, you have. You're not blonde anymore."

Ryuji chuckled. "Um, didn't I tell ya that was my dyed hair color?"

Mishima tried to recall any instance of Ryuji telling him such. He nodded dismissively.

"Yeah, this is my natural hair color, dude."

"Hi! You're another friend of Ryuji's?!" Miyako interjected.

"Whoa, who are you?"

"This is my girlfriend Miyako."

"A pleasure!" Miyako shook Mishima's hand hard to the point of shaking his whole body.

"Hi! Pleasure to meet you, Miyako!"

Upon realizing how hard a grip she gave him, Miyako apologetically withdrew her hand and watched Mishima rubbing his hand.

"Oh, sorry, dude. I forgot to mention Miyako's got a strong grip on her. Surprises the hell outta me, too," Ryuji chuckled as Mishima caressed his own hand.

"Yeah, sorry about!" Miyako openly apologized.

"Right," Mishima half-chuckled and then internally thought. And here I thought it's because I still have a weak hand grip! "You got a strong lady friend, Ryuji."

Ryuji laughed. "Aw, c'mon man!"

"I'm not that strong," Miyako giggled.

"So, where's Ren? I've been looking all over for him," Mishima mentioned their friend.

"Oh, he's here. Dude, come with us and we'll find him! He'd be happy to see you again!" Ryuji
insisted.
"Yeah, I'll do just that."

Ryuji then realized. "Hey, ya know what? They probably went to the rooftop. Why don't we see if they're there?"

"That old meeting spot you used?" Futaba asked.

"Yeah, c'mon I know where it is!" Ryuji led the group toward the uppermost level of the school.

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Meanwhile, Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary scoured the third floor. They spotted Ren's group heading up stairs leading to the rooftop.

"Hey, Ren, Hifumi, Skyler! Wait up!" Yumeko called out as she and her friends followed them to the stairs.

(End theme)

Once Yumeko's group joined Ren's, they started up the stairs and ended up on the rooftop. Ren and Ann once again became familiar with their former Phantom Thief meeting place. To their surprise, Makoto, Haru, and Louis had beaten them to the location.

"Hey, what kept you all?" Louis asked the group.

"So, I take it this was the former Phantom Thief headquarters spot?" Skyler asked Ren.

"Yeah and normally we used it after school to discuss plans," Ren replied.

"And I remember stopping you from coming up here. Thankfully, that was before I wised up and joined you al for those meetings," Makoto said as she watched Haru admiring the flower garden, now completely covered under blankets due to the cold weather, that was being maintained by the current student body.

"This was your old meeting spot? Tell me, did y'all have a password or something to permit entry?" Yumeko obsessively asked Ren as her eyes seemingly glowed red, which creeped Ren out.

"Well, uh not really," Ren blinked, veering eye contact from Yumeko's obsessive gaze.

"This makes for a nice and peaceful spot for meetings," Hifumi admired the scenery as she sat down on a chair.

"Yeah, and you can get a nice breeze here," Skyler said.

"So, have we figured out who this new principal is?" Ann asked the other Thieves.

"Not yet," Makoto replied. "We just know it's someone very young and has taken great liberties to renovate Shujin."

"I agree. The school feels a lot more wholesome than it used to be," Haru concurred with her partner's sentiment.

Just then, the doors opened and Ryuji escorted his group into the rooftop.
"Ryuji, Yusuke, Futaba! Glad you can join us!" Haru said.

"Yakumo," Louis acknowledged his colleague's presence.

"Ren! How's it been?!" Mishima called over to his old friend.

"Mishima," Ren smiled and walked over to converse with him. "You're looking well, my friend."

"You sure brought a ton of company for the reunion, including a few faces I don't recognize," Mishima noticed the Vein Remnants.

"We've recently met them," Ann interjected.

"Oh, Ann. I just wanted to say I'm happy for you and Ren. How's married life been for you two?"

Ren and Ann answered by holding each other's hands, which elicited a genuine smile from Mishima.

Suddenly, the door opened again and everyone turned to see a dark brown-haired woman of moderate height. She wore her hair down, which was roughly shoulder length. Her brown eyes scanned the large group facing her. She wore winter clothing comprising a light brown buttoned coat with a long-sleeved yellow sweater underneath, a black skirt, dark gray leggings, and brown knee-length boots.

The young woman and Ann immediately recognized each other.

"Ann!"

"Shiho!"

(Cue Kingdom Hearts Birth By Sleep OST - Destiny's Union )

Upon identifying the woman, Ren, Ryuji, Makoto, and Haru were surprised to see Shiho. The last they saw her was during Ren and Ann's wedding. Ann and Shiho quickly embraced each other.

"It's good to see you again, Shiho."

"Likewise, I'm glad we can get together for this reunion," Shiho smiled. She then noticed the Vein Remnants and the Spiritual Gamblers. "Oh, you brought some new friends with you? I don't think we've met?"

The Vein Remnants introduced themselves to Shiho.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Skyler Jones."

"You can call me, Louis."

"My name is Yakumo."

"Heh, and I'm Mia Karnstein. Nice to meet you!"

The Spiritual Gamblers then introduced themselves to her.

"Hi, I'm Jabami Yumeko! Relax, I don't bite."

"Hello, I'm Suzui Ryōta."

"I'm Saotome Mary."
Shiho kindly responded to them. "It's nice to meet you all." She then turned to Hifumi. "And I remember you from the wedding. Hifumi, is it?"

"Yes. I'm Togo Hifumi."

"I'm really happy to see how many new friends you've made, Ann," Shiho said. "I hope we'll get to know each other." She veered over to Ren. "And you can't imagine how happy I am you and Ann are together, Ren. I was touched when you invited me to your wedding."

"I'm glad we're still able to keep in touch, Shiho," Ann smiled, still cherishing their friendship since their Shujin Academy days together.

"Yeah, and I'll never forget. You were one of the only few people to not buy into those terrible rumors and cheered me up," Ren said, remembering their first interaction and how Shiho was able to strike a decent conversation with him.

"Yeah, because I could tell you were a good person then. And you've proven me right by marrying my best friend, Ren," Shiho said with the sweetest smile she could make. "Oh, by the way…" She turned to Mia. "Karnstein, is it?"

"Yeah, Mia Karnstein."

"You don't happen to be from here, right?"

Hearing this, Mia prepared to defend herself from another possible slighting. "Yeah, what if I'm not?"

Shiho genuinely smirked. "That's such a pretty name. It's German, isn't it?"

Mia blinked and tried answering while fumbling over her words. "Err…um… yeah, it is." She then didn't realize her cheeks blushed soft pink, which her friends noticed.

"I like meeting foreigners. Maybe you'd like to talk about yourself?" Shiho offered. "Or, maybe you're too busy…?"

Mia quickly nodded. "…no! No, we can chat. I'm just here to look for my brother and his two friends."

"We'd be happy if you'd joined us," Skyler said.

"Yeah, after all it is our school reunion," Ann concurred.

"I thought you guys would never show after what Kamoshida had done to us, but I'm happy you made it so we have moments like this," Shiho said, facing Ann, Ren, and Ryuji. She then veered toward Makoto and Haru. "And while I never interacted with you two, I feel we're on the same page. Mrs. Student Council President and Okumura Haru, I'm glad to see you again."

Makoto replied. "I'm not the council president anymore, but thank you, your words mean well."

Haru added. "Likewise, you're in good company with us."

"So, since we have a pretty large group, we should explore the school a little more," Ann suggested. "Hey, we still haven't seen if Kawakami-sensei is still here."

"I do believe I saw her," Makoto recalled.
"We should go see her," Ren suggested to Ann and Ryuji.

"Now, that's an idea. Heh, wait 'til she sees me! She might not even recognize me with my hair the way it is now," Ryuji chuckled over her possible reaction to his natural look.

"Well, why not show us around some more?" Skyler asked. "And I know Hifumi would like to meet your old teachers, right?"

Hifumi nodded. "Yes, introduce me to your former teacher, Ren."

"Alright then, let's not keep you all waiting," Ren said as he and his friends escorted the group back inside the school.

As the group conversed, Mia and Shiho ended up interacting. Mia found herself deeply immersed into their conversation that she had forgotten all the snide remarks and weird looks the native Japanese have given her. She was happier learning Shiho wasn't a judgemental individual and treated her with the same courtesy she'd give her own friends.

The other Revenants noticed their female member interacting with Ann's school friend. They became notably curious where this new friendship would lead.

(End theme)

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(The Birthday Massacre - Without You Heard in Sound Devices)

"Go for it, Shinya! Smack that piñata into pieces!" Reiko encouraged him.

The piñata was shaped like Kamoshida's head.

Even with a blindfold on, Shinya was able to feel the piñata's movements. He turned and gave one good whack with a baseball. He hit it so hard it cracked open and candy came pouring out on the floor. Several teenagers scrambled over to snatch some candy. Nicola and Reiko gathered as much for Shinya and themselves.

Taking off his blindfold, Shinya put on a self-confident grin.

"How do ya like that?" He asked his friends. Shinya was dressed in a black winter coat with a green shirt underneath, black pants, and tennis shoes.

"That was a good whack at the end, Shinya. Almost like you split his head open and all his brain matter came spilling out." Nicola went into a unnecessarily graphic detail. Nicola wore a white winter coat with a gray shirt under it, blue jeans, and tennis shoes.

"Eww, too much details, Nicola!" Reiko remarked. She wore a rose and white winter coat with a yellow dress shirt under it, a blue skirt, white high length socks, and tennis shoes.

"Did y'all get enough for me?" Shinya asked them as Nicola and Reiko amassed the candy they were able to retrieve.

"Yep, here's yours!" Reiko gave him some of the candy. "Just make sure you don't eat it all in one sitting."

"Yeah, yeah, whatever you say, mom," Shinya sardonically replied.
"Shujin is a pretty neat looking school. I know we'll be going to Roppongi High, but it's nice to see how high school life might look like for us," Nicola said.

"Yeah. Hey, we should have a look inside. Besides, isn't your sister supposed to be here looking for us?" Shinya asked him.

"Oh boy, yeah you're right. We told her we'd meet up with her," Nicola recalled.

"C'mon, let's go find her before she has a fit," Reiko suggested.

The three teens scoured the halls of the second floor. They couldn't find Ren and the group on the first floor. They tried their luck looking for them on the second floor.

"Excuse me, you three. Where are your parents or chaperones?" A woman's voice stopped them at their tracks.

Once the three teens turned around, they met the gaze of an average-sized woman with a slender figure. She had dark brown in an unkempt style. She wore some makeup on her face, but not much where it was plainly obvious. She came dressed outside her usual teaching wardrobe; she wore a dark blue professional woman's blouse, a matching colored skirt, and white heel shoes. Her brown eyes met the gazes of the three teens.

"Um, see, miss…" Shinya tried to speak up.

"I'm Ms. Kawakami."

"Hi, Ms. Kawakami. We were just looking for my friend's sister and her friends."

"Yes, you see my sister is a friend of some people who used to attend this school!" Nicola chimed in.

"That's right! Their names are Ren, Ann, and…" Reiko spoke up as Kawakami gave a surprised look.

"Ren and Ann? You don't mean Amamiya Ren and Takamaki Ann?"

"Yeah, that's right. They invited us to see their school," Shinya replied.

"Oh my gosh, I haven't seen them in so long! I'd hoped they'd show up. Wait, I remember seeing you at their wedding!" Kawakami recognized Shinya. "You were the kid with that red hat."

"Oh yeah, I remember you were there!" Shinya recalled.

"It was brief, but this is our first actual interaction," Kawakami said.

"Were they students of yours?" Nicola asked the woman.

"I was their homeroom and Japanese language teacher in class 2-D here. In fact, I remember vividly the first time I met Ren," Kawakami recalled the very first instance when Ren came on a Sunday to register for school. "He was a second year student then." She even remembered initially not holding Ren to any high regard due to his supposed reputation, but naturally as she got to know him, her impression of her former student changed.

"Well, I'm sure he'll be happy to see you, Kawakami-sensei!" Reiko said respectfully.
"So, are you three going to become freshmen? Are you here because your families considered placing you here?" Kawakami curious asked the three teens.

"Well, we're just here 'cause Ren and his friends invited us. Also 'cause we want to see how a high school is gonna look like for us," Shinya plainly stated.

"Yes, we're actually going to Roppongi High," Nicola said.

"All three of you?"

"That's right, Kawakami-sensei," Reiko nodded. "Shujin looks like a great school, but it's an elite prep school. Nicola and I scored high enough grades to be placed here, but we didn't want to leave Shinya and decided we'd go to Roppongi High with him."

"Let's say that we want to remain inseparable," Nicola added.

"Yeah, I don't know Shinya would do without us!" Reiko said.

"The fact you two chose me over possibly coming to this school, I still don't know what to say," Shinya felt touched by his friends' words.

Kawakami couldn't help but feel happy to see two students choose maintaining friendship over qualifying for an elite school. "If you two think that's best, then I can't change your minds. I will say had you chosen to come here, you'd expect some tougher and more rigorous work than what you'd expect from your own high school. I've seen students overwork themselves too hard."

"We're sorry, but we're glad to have met you, Kawakami-sensei," Reiko bowed. "Maybe we could've been your students if we came to Shujin?"

Kawakami gave a sincere smile. "Possibly."

Shinya chuckled. "I don't know if you could handle me."

"We'll see. I've dealt with enough smart alecs in my lifetime!"

The three teens chuckled as Kawakami caught herself in full teacher mode.

"Well, anyhow, good luck to you three at Roppongi High. I hope it goes well. Treat your teachers there with the same courtesy you would with me, do your work, and study hard," Kawakami instructed them.

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Hey, there y'all are!" Ryuji was heard from across the hall.

"Welp, they found us," Shinya smirked.

"Oh boy, that means my sister is probably with them," Nicola muttered as he turned and he saw Mia glaring at him. "Hey, Mia."

"Hey, Nicola!" Mia faked a smile. "You said you'd catch with us."

"Sorry, we got caught up smashing up a piñata."

Reiko interjected and apologized on her friend's behalf. "We're sorry. We were having too much fun and we lost track of the time!"
"Relax, we're here," Ann said.

"Amamiya Ren and Takamaki Ann! You two look so wonderful together!" Kawakami approached her former students.

"Thank you, Kawakami-sensei," Ren replied.

"And thanks for attending our wedding," Ann expressed appreciation for Kawakami's presence at the wedding.

"You must be their former homeroom teacher," Skyler approached Kawakami. "They've told me so much about you. Ren especially told me how much you helped him through that rough patch of the first month or so."

"Oh, I don't believe we've met?"

"I'm Skyler Jones."

"That's a nice name. You're not from around here?"

"No, I moved here. Well, I was here before but moved back to my country and just recently came back," Skyler explained without giving away the fact he was moved from another timeline. "I've been fortunate enough to meet Ren, Ann, and their friends."

Kawakami nodded. "Yes, I see that. Ren has quite an interesting circle of friends." She recognized Mia and Louis as full-blooded Caucasians like Skyler. "Nonetheless, you all seem like wonderful people, especially if you're friends of Ren's."

"Hello, Ms. Kawakami," Hifumi approached the woman. "I've taken a look around this school and it's wonderful to know Ren had a teacher who gave him a chance that many others wouldn't have dared to try."

"I remember you from the wedding. You're also that famous Shogi player."

"Togo Hifumi, it's an honor."

"Yes, the same to you, Hifumi-san," Kawakami bowed at the same time as Hifumi. She then noticed Ryuji. "Sakamoto Ryuji? Is that really you?"

"See? I told y'all she wouldn't recognize me!" Ryuji laughed.

"But, you had blonde hair."

"That was hair dye, Kawakami-sensei. This is my natural hair. Not bad, huh?" Ryuji ran a hand through his black hair.

"Should've known."

"Kawakami-sensei," Makoto and Haru both bowed to her.

"And it's good to see you again, Nijima Makoto and Okumura Haru."

Ren smiled as good memories about Shujin returned to him. Besides the friendships he made and has since maintained, he remembered the School Festival. He recalled going into a Haunted House stall and accidentally grabbing a staff member's ghost mask as if he were ripping the face off a Shadow before Ryuji intervened.
"There's plenty of good memories here I'd like to remember," Ren said.

"Since we're here, Kawakami-sensei, who is this new principal I've heard about?" Makoto asked the Japanese language teacher. "I heard she's someone very young but just graduated from a highly prestigious academy."

"Well, yes, you see. The new principal came from Hyakkaou Private Academy."

Upon hearing this, Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary were taken aback. They couldn't believe a student from their school becoming a principal of the all-elite Shujin Academy.

"Wait, we came from Hyakkaou!" Ryōta called out.

"Wait, you three did?" Kawakami turned to the three Spiritual Gamblers.

"That's right! Whoever this person is must be someone we know!" Mary realized.

"Yeah, but who could it be?" wondered Yumeko.

"If you three know her, then you must know her name…" Before Kawakami could finish, the group heard the sound of loud footsteps coming toward them.

(Music fades)

(Cue Jurassic World Evolution Soundtrack - Small, but Dangerous )

The sound of these footsteps felt like the tapping of claws touching the floor. They almost sounded like raptor claws.

The group turned and saw four individuals walking toward their way dressed in similar fashion: black business attires and matching colored black hair. The manner of which they walked reminded them of a pack of animals, akin to Velociraptors and hyenas.

Out of this pack of four, a young man of average male height with thinly-framed glasses, shaped in an unique hexagon way, came forward. The gleam from the hall lights seemed to obscure his eyes from view. He has black neck length hair; two bangs are parted to the sides of his face, partially revealing his forehead. He has a rigid-looking jawline, which shaped the rest of his classy and mature appearance. His business attire consisted of a black suit with a white dress shirt under it and a black tie, dress pants, and black shoes. As he adjusted his glasses, his dark brown eyes became fixated on the group.

Opposite from this young man's right is taller, slender man wearing his long black hair in a ponytail. Unlike his seemingly calm demeanored colleague, this man wore a conniving smile one could describe as deceitful like a snake's. He wore a similar black business suit, but less neater. He also wore a black tie, but his dress shirt is light blue. His attire is accessories with dark brown shoes and pairs of silver earrings on both his ears. His demeanor looked anything but professional even compared to his colleague.

The two other are young women.

The young woman opposite from the tall, devious-looking man has short neck-length black hair. The front of her hair was mostly unkempt, especially the top most part of her face. Five long bangs covered most of her forehead; two locks of her bangs came together hanging between her eyes. Her business attitude consisted of a black women's business suit with a white dress shirt, which she kept buttoned except for the top most part, black dress pants, black dress shoes, and white earrings. Her
demeanor had a conniving and snooty appearance, which gave the group the quick impression she's stuck up.

The other young woman on the far left from the other three has a similar facial disposition as the sophisticated-looking man with the glasses. Like him, this woman wore glasses, but her frames are rounder in an oval-like shape. Her long black hair was tied into long twin pigtails that hung down her back. When she walked, the twin tails slightly swayed back and forth in a pendulum swing-like manner. The front area of her face had two thin bangs over between her bespectacled eyes and thin eyebrows. She wore a similar black women's business suit with a white dress shirt and a black necktie, a knee-length black dress skirt, black panty-hosed stockings, and black heels. Her demeanor was far more neutral and serious compared to the longer-haired man and the short-haired woman.


Hamada lifted his glasses with a finger. "Hn, Kawakami-sensei, surely you remember us better when we were called The Pack back then."

"Yes, I know," Kawakami replied, remaining neutral toward The Pack's presence.

"And what do we have here?" Tomoyuki chuckled, his lips curved into a leering smile at the group, but his sights were set specifically on Ren, Ann, and Ryuji. "So, you three decided to show up?"

"Yeah, that's a surprise considering Ren's 'reputation',' Minami snickered, eyeing Ren and Ann.

"Yes, quite true," Hamada smirked connivingly. He walked over toward Ren and Ann, ignoring the fact the others were there. "How could we forget about your former delinquent status, Amamiya Ren?" He got up in Ren's face. "By the way, I heard. You and Takamaki Ann are married now. I send my congratulations. Do you feel proud you've married a slut?"

Ren stepped in front of Hamada, cutting him off from getting too close to Ann. Hearing his hurtful remark irked Ann.

"I don't remember you nor have we met, but you best back off," Ren warned Hamada.

"You're talking to someone who was there while you attended Shujin," Hamada revealed. "It's true we never crossed paths, but don't think I don't know about your reputation. I don't know what you do these days, but I'm working in an office and intend to become an ambitious politician."

Tomoyuki added with a chuckle. "Heheh, yeah, and I'm a band member who looks to win over the heart of the ladies." He said this eyeing the female members of Ren's collective group, but they gave him a combination of scowls and eye rolls. "But, too bad for the ladies, I'm already taken." He said this while turning to Minami.

"Hah, and I'm aspiring to become a police officer," Minami snickered as she recognized Makoto. "Just like you Makoto-senpai." She said in a condescending tone. "When I heard that Nijijima Sae's younger sister joined the police force, I decided now was the time to take that opportunity. Hell, my annoying-ass little brother just won't shut up how happy he is that his 'big sis' is gonna become a police officer now!"

"Oh yeah? Well, make sure not to trip over your own feet." Makoto frowned, finding herself unnerved by Minami's demeanor.
Haru and Louis both were equally put off by Minami's behavior.

"And I'm a veterinarian," Kimiko neutrally answered and surprised Kawakami when she patted Hamada's shoulder. "And we're together now."

"Well, that's very swell to hear. I'm glad you four have started establishing your careers or started finding your niches. I'm sure you can give credit to the academics that helped shape you into four working-class individuals." Kawakami tried to remain as neutral as she could, not allowing herself to be intimidated by The Pack.

"Well, Kawakami-sensei, you do recall we became the school's 'rulers' once Kamoshida left. There had to be some law and order to put the student body in line with that detestable man gone. And who better than us four?" Hamada calmly stated, wearing a disingenuous smile. "I became a much 'better king' than some former volleyball teacher who awfully sounded too much like Timon from The Lion King."

"Hehehe, yeah! That perverted dickwad wasn't all that after all, especially after he confessed like a whiny bitch!" Tomoyuki cackled. "We easily took over after him!"

"Yes, and who better to agree with us than you three?" Hamada flat out mentioned to Ren, Ann, and Shiho's faces. "You three know the kind of man Kamoshida was. I bet you were happy those Phantom Thieves forced a change of heart in Kamoshida!"

Of the three, Shiho was the most affected as she backed off and covered her ears. Mia noticed Shiho's sudden uneasiness and grabbed her hand. Shiho quickly found relief when Mia calmed her.

"You don't need to remind us of that man," Ann reproved Hamada's constant reminder of Shujin's abusive volleyball coach.

"Well, so sorry for opening up old wounds. Oh, and speaking of scars," Hamada turned his attention to Ryuji, who gave him a scornful glare. "Sakamoto Ryuji, I see you've long rehabilitated that injury and you've been training." He chuckled and raised his glasses again. "Careful not to get a serious injury. That'll happen with age. Over time, our bodies will break down. Unless of course..." He walked up Ryuji and whispered. "...you get a little accident or worse someone like me slashes your leg."

Scowling, Ryuji pushed Hamada away.

"That's enough, Hamada. Please don't involve violence here," Kawakami demanded, raising her tone some.

(End theme)

The Pack not only got under the group's skin, but their actions and cruel remarks aggrieved Ann.

"Hah, too bad for that shitstain Kamoshida. He got stopped by the Phantom Thieves," remarked Minami, who cackled and leered right in Ren and Ann's faces. "How lucky us four never had our hearts changed by those Phantom Thieves! And even better, how much better life is for us as adults now that we've been free from the strict teachings of overly worked teachers." She said this, disparaging Kawakami in the process.

Hearing the former students downplay her hard work, Kawakami notably frowned.

"That's enough!" Ren quickly interjected on Kawakami's behalf. He went up to and glared Hamada dead in his eyes. "You're no big deal to me, but I won't have you disrespect Kawakami-sensei."
Hamada sneered. "Feh, whatever. As a future politician, I hold your livelihoods in my hands."

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Will Power)

"Yeah? Well, the way I see it, you're just an overblown dickhead!" Shinya protested as he stood up for Ren and Ann. "I ain't gonna let you disrespect my friends!"

The mere sight of a defiant teenager irritated him. Hamada was reminded of the rebellious kids who went against his authority several years back. As far as Shinya was concerned, he was another rebel that needed to be taught a lesson.

"You tell him, Shinya!" Reiko shouted.

"Heh, that kid's got guts. I like that," Futaba grinned over this development.

"Please, no more fighting!" Kawakami openly pleaded.

Suddenly, to the group's shock and disgust, Hamada promptly shoved Shinya away.

"Shinya!" Nicola and Reiko shouted together as he hurried over to their friend.

"Hamada, that was going too far!" Kawakami berated him.

"You've crossed the line!" Skyler prepared to grab Hamada.

Just then, Shinya quickly got up and ran at Hamada. Then, in a move that surprised everyone, Shinya retaliated with a swift kick to Hamada's groin. Hamada howled with pain and doubled over. As his face went beet red, he grabbed his crotch.

Shinya followed up by landing a few punches to Hamada's face, breaking and bloodying his nose.

"Say you're sorry!" Shinya demanded between each consecutive punch.

As Ren and Skyler both restrained him, Shinya backed away, chuckling and spitting in Hamada's direction.

"Y-You... disrespectful little shit...!" Snarled Hamada, who was coughing hard after having his groin kicked. He covered his bruised nose while trying to stop the bleeding.

"Yeah, that'll show him!" Mia cheered her brother's friend.

"Thanks, Shinya," Ann smiled to the teenage boy.

"Was the violence necessary though?" Haru wondered as she hoped they'd resolve without fighting in the school.

"Absolutely not, Okumura-san! This is school grounds and there's rules to abide by!" Kawakami protested. "Although..." She sighed. "That boy fought Hamada on my behalf."

"You should thank Shinya, Kawakami-sensei," Makoto stated.

Upon seeing his colleague being brought down, Tomoyuki attempted to seize Shinya, but Nicola and Ryuji cut him off. Nicola held Shinya back. Ryuji shot a fierce glare that forced Tomoyuki to withdraw. Minami tried to grab Shinya, but she's immediately pushed down by Reiko.

"Hah, take that!" Mishima taunted Minami.
"How sad for children to put these disrespectful adults in their place," Yusuke remarked. "On second thought, no I don't feel sorry for them."

"Got that right, Inari! You four better get packing and leave!" Futaba told them off.

Being the rational one of the group, Kimiko simply retrieved Hamada. Tomoyuki collected Minami. The Pack backed away with two of their members licking their wounds.

Having realized they were near her homeroom class, Kawakami asserted her authority and stepped in.

"You four better leave these school grounds now! And that's my direct order!" Kawakami yelled at the Pack.

"But, you're not the principal," Hamada frowned.

"I'm still an authority figure in this school. You're not my students anymore, but that doesn't give you the right to disparage me, Ren, Ann, and their friends. And by my authority, if you four ever come here and step out of line, I'll ask the principal to ban you from future reunions if you bully anymore of my former students again!" Kawakami retorted with tranquil fury enough to intimidate the Pack.

"Fine, but this won't be the last you'll hear from us," Hamada growled as he beckoned his Pack members away.

With that, the Pack walked off to lick their wounds.

(End theme)

Ren and Ann were shocked to see this side of Kawakami and going through the trouble of defending them. They've come a long way since Kawakami was initially cold and distrustful toward Ren on his first Shujin days. Since then, she's warmed up to him, Ann, and Ryuji. Their former homeroom teacher was there for Ren and Ann's wedding. They were seeing Kawakami finally stand up to a corrupt side of society.

Kawakami turned away and sighed. "Is everyone ok?"

"Yeah, we are. Thanks, Kawakami-sensei," Ren smiled. "We've never seen that side of you."

"I like this side of you, Kawakami-sensei," Ann approved.

"Glad none of us needed to step in," Yumeko said. "Still, that was so cool."

Skyler checked on Hifumi. "Are you ok?"

"Yes, I am. That was quite intense, wasn't it?" Hifumi replied. "I'm surprised Io didn't pop out since I was getting distressed."

"Probably for the best," added Skyler.

Just then, a young woman's voice chimed in and surprised the group. "Excuse me, but what's going on here? Ms. Kawakami, is it?"

"Oh, the principal!" gasped Kawakami.

"Finally, we get to see who this new Shujin principal is," Makoto said.
"But, why does that voice sound so familiar?" Mary wondered.

The group turned and saw Igarashi Sayaka, who appeared before them dressed in a violet women's professional dress shirt, skirt, and black high heels. Her red lipstick lips curved into a genuine smile.

"No way! Igarashi Sayaka?!" Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary shouted in unison; all three were equally surprised to see a fellow student from their academy.

"Principal Igarashi, I do apologize for the ruckus you've heard. There were a few disorderly guests causing problems for these people," Kawakami bowed to the principal, who could be young enough to be her student.

"Principal?!!!" Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary cried out in disbelief.

"So, this is Shujin's new principal?" Makoto whispered next to Haru and Louis.

"She looks like she could be our age," Haru muttered.

"Well, heck, if you can be the president of your late-father's company, Haru, why can't this young lady be a principal?" Louis pointed out.

Sayaka nodded to Kawakami. "I'm glad you took control of the situation, Ms. Kawakami. I know you won't let me down on my first year here once classes start up soon." She slowly scanned the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, the Spiritual Guardians, and the three teens. "Speaking on behalf as Shujin's principal, I humbly apologize for whatever incident occurred with you. Once Kawakami gives me their names, I'll have a word with them."

"Thank you," Ren replied.

Skyler narrowed his eyes toward Sayaka. Hifumi noticed her boyfriend's sudden uneasiness.

"Is something wrong, Skyler?"

"There's something off about this woman."

"Now that you mention it," Hifumi muttered as she turned to the Spiritual Gamblers. "Yumeko and her friends seem to know her well."

Sayaka quickly isolated the others and set her sights on the Spiritual Gamblers. "Since today's all about reunions, how's this for a reunion?" She closed her eyes and smiled. "How nice to see you here Jabami Yumeko, Suzui Ryōta, and Saotome Mary. What do you think? I've made quite a career jump since graduation, haven't I?"

"Congratulations, Sayaka," Ryōta respectfully commended her.

Mary scoffed. "Yeah, yeah, big congrats in order, I guess. Whatever. We'll never forget you were that white-haired, blue-eyed bitch's personal assistant."

"Yes, and Kirari-sama sends her regards to you three," Sayaka simply ignored Mary's insult and turned to face the Impulsive Gambler. "She especially sends her regards to you, Jabami Yumeko. She hopes to see you soon."

Yumeko's eyes flared red. The mere thought of facing Kirari thrilled her to no end. Her friends felt the unsettling aura she was giving off.

"Is she here in Tokyo?" Yumeko asked Sayaka.
"Why yes. She is."

"As in right now?"

"Yes, and she'll be happy to see you again."

Yumeko's smile turned into a wide grin. "Well, tell her if you see her, I'll be waiting."

"Principal Igarashi? Do you know these three?" Kawakami asked, feeling left out of the conversation already.

"Just these three. We've known each other since we've been academy students. In fact, I cordially invite all of you to my office," Sayaka invited not just the Spiritual Gamblers, but the Phantom Thieves, Vein Remnants, and their friends. "Come this way."

"Should we?" Ann whispered to Ren.

"Let's play along," Ren said.

"Yeah, this woman may or may not have an ulterior motive. Let's be cautious." Skyler muttered.

"Wait, you don't think she might know about the Yami Matter?" Yusuke wondered.

"Possible, but let's not mention it to her," Morgana muttered as he poked his head out of Mia's bag.

As the group followed Sayaka to her office, Kawakami just noticed Morgana and blinked thrice.

"Wait, they had a cat with them this whole time?" Kawakami rubbed her eyes and saw Morgana had stuck his head back in Mia's bag. "Oh boy, what a day. I need to lie down after this."

xxxxx

(Cue Persona 5 OST - Suspicion)

Sayaka stood in front of her desk as she faced the group, sans Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, Miyako, Mishima, and Shiho. Ren asked the four of them to wait for them outside the school. With the three teens, Miyako, Mishima, and Shiho removed from the situation; the Thieves, Remnants, and the Gamblers confronted Sayaka.

Sayaka wore a smirk exuding confidence. "Now we can speak in private. Yumeko, Ryōta, Mary, don't think I'm not aware of the Guardian Spirits with you."

"What?!" Yumeko gasped. "But, how…?!"

"How the hell do you even know?!" Mary shouted at her.

"Because I, too, have a Guardian Spirit. Not only me, but a few other of our fellow students who graduated from Hyakkaou have visited Meiji Shrine and each received their own Guardian Spirits."

"So, you went to see Yuriko?" Ryōta asked Sayaka.

"Indeed, she helped me invoke my Guardian Spirit. She told me I can utilize my Guardian Spirit however I wish."

"Do you intend to use your Guardian Spirit to fight us?" Skyler asked the new Shujin principal.
Sayaka shrugged. "Who's to say? There's no real moral compass how one uses their Guardian Spirit. I could fight you or I could end up being your ally."

"If Kirari has a Guardian Spirit, then I really want to fight her," Yumeko frivolously smiled.

"Don't worry, Yumeko. You'll see Kirari-sama very soon. Moreover, Phantom Thieves," she veered over to the Thieves and Remnants. "My colleagues and I know you're the Phantom Thieves."

Upon hearing this, the Thieves became distraught. No, more like shocked this woman they've never even met until today knows of their Phantom Thief identities. Everyone watched as swarms of ice-colored butterflies covered the room. The group noticed some of Sayaka's Usura-hicho appear on their clothes.

"Whoa, what the hell?!" Ryuji freaked out, shaking off some of the frost butterflies.

"These are her Guardian Spirits?!" Futaba exclaimed as she shooed the butterflies off her.

Hifumi picked an Usura-hicho off her shoulder and watched it flutter away.

"How do you know we're the Phantom Thieves?" Ren asked as he stormed right up to Sayaka's desk. He looked her dead in her dull and seemingly lifeless dark eyes. He calmly smirked, trying to play cool and collective. "You might mistaken us for other people."

Sayaka simply sat down and sipped a cup of tea. "No, we're very sure you're the Phantom Thieves. Our Guardian Spirits have pretty much told us."

Makoto frowned over this claim. "We're not convinced."

"Believe whatever you want, but our Guardian Spirits never lie," she sipped more tea. "Now, let's drop this hostility. This is my office. I don't wish to fight any of you."

"So, why did you bring us here?" Skyler demanded from the Shujin principal.

"Sooner or later, you all will meet me and my colleagues, but that's for another time. The reason, I called you here was to tell you Yuriko has requested the Phantom Thieves and their allies to handle some incursion that's set to occur at Meiji Shrine by the stroke of midnight."

"An incursion?" Louis was befuddled by this somewhat vague warning.

"Meiji Shrine is going to be attacked at midnight? But, by what?" Ann asked.

"Who knows? Yuriko will give you the details. I'm just a messenger," Sayaka plainly stated.

"When?" Ren queried.

"Tonight. So, I'd get prepared for whatever you'll have to fight by midnight. You'll also me doing me and my colleagues' a huge favor by nipping this bud and calling it a day."

"Fine, but we'll be doing it because we want to," Ren said, taking off his glasses. With he and his friends' Phantom Thief identities known, he gave his Joker-esque grin.

"Damn straight, whatever wants to come out we'll take 'em down!" Ryuji declared.

"One more thing. Your secrets are safe with me and my colleagues," Sayaka informed the Thieves, the Remnants, and the Gamblers. "This is especially the case for you, Phantom Thieves. We may have ulterior motives, but we have no interest exposing your identities to the public. That's just not
our style."

Haru sighed with relief. "Well, thank goodness for that!"

Futaba concurred. "Yeah, that saves us a lot of unwanted stress and I'm already a nervous wreck as is!"

Skyler addressed Sayaka. "Thank you for not exposing our friends' identities."

"See? We should be fine, Yumeko, Mary," Ryōta said.

"Yumeko, Ryōta, Mary, we look forward to seeing your Guardian Spirits in action," Sayaka said to the Spiritual Gamblers. "Especially you, Jabami Yumeko. We anticipate your Nine Tails."

"Right," Yumeko gave a curt smile and response.

"We should go to Meiji Shrine then," Hifumi decided on their game plan for tonight.

"I suggest we convene around 11:30," Skyler suggested.

"Good idea and all of us must come ready. If anyone is not feeling up to it, then we won't hold it against you. We don't know what we'll be up against." Ren informed every party member.

"We're all in on this!" Makoto openly declared.

"Same with us, too," Louis added.

"Hell yeah we are! Though, I've got to make sure my brother doesn't get involved," Mia immediately considered Nicola's safety.

"Right. We don't want any loved ones who can't fight back to get too deeply involved in our businesses," Skyler said as he turned to his Vein Remnant colleagues. "Looks like we'll be making a quick stop at Yaksha before we head to Meiji Shrine."

The Vein Remnants nodded together.

"Hifumi, I think we'll need Io involved if she's feeling up to it."

"I'll be sure and ask her, Skyler."

"So, 11:30 tonight near Meiji Shrine. Let's investigate what this enemy incursion could be and neutralize it," Ren clarified their midnight mission.

As she finished her last sip, Sayaka set her tea cup down. "Wonderful. We're pulling for you, Phantom Thieves and allies."

(End theme)

xxxxx

(The Birthday Massacre - Without You  Heard in Sound Devices)

Shortly after meeting Sayaka, the group stormed off the Shujin Academy grounds. Shiho, Mishima, Miyako, Shinya, Nicola, and Reiko went up to the group. They each asked what went down, but the Thieves, Remnants, and the Gamblers kept to themselves.
After exchanging numbers with Shiho, Mia informed her brother to stay home while she'd be out. Nicola tried questioning Mia, but she told him she and her friends have to take care of some late-night business.

As everyone went their separate ways, Skyler saw Hifumi lean against a pole and holding her head.

"Are you feeling ok, Hifumi?"

"I'll be fine, Skyler, but Io just informed me about the incursion that's to occur at midnight."

"What about it?"

"We might encounter a Yami Matter invasion. She feels its essence building."

Skyler frowned as he put an arm over Hifumi. "Then, we'll be there to face it. Whatever it ends up manifesting into."

(Music fades)

xxxxx

Meiji Shrine (明治神宮) / Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京) / 11:30 PM (JST)

"Welcome, everyone. I'm glad you're all here. Judging by who's here, Sayaka informed you of the event set to happen here?" Yuriko greeted the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and the Spiritual Gamblers.

"By the stroke of midnight, an incursion will occur, but what kind of enemy we might face is a mystery," Ren stated.

"We're possibly going to be fighting the Yami Matter that Io warned us about," Skyler informed his colleagues.

"So, we'll get the chance to destroy this entity and restore time the way it was before!" Mia declared.

"Let's hope that's the case and then we can put this Yami Matter thing behind us," Morgana said as he jumped out of Mia's bag.

"Just one thing, Morgana, you've been hanging around close to Mia lately," Ann quickly pointed this out.

Realizing he had been caught, Morgana sighed. "Well, I don't want to barge in while you and Ren are having intimate moments. That'd be awfully rude of me, Lady Ann!"

Ann rolled her eyes. "Suuuuure." She then did a quick double take. "Wait…?! You peeped on me and Ren having sex?!!"

"By accident! How was I supposed to know you two were making love?!"

"Well, that explains the loud noise outside that one night," Ren chuckled, not at all embarrassed during this exchange.

"And since I didn't want to disturb you, Mia found me and offered a place for me to stay," Morgana explained. "Plus, it helps Mia is a good cook."

Feeling modest and flustered, Mia put her hands on her cheeks. "Oh, you give me too much credit,
Morgana!

Are they actually talking to that cat?! Almost like the cat is talking to them? But, all I'm hearing is meowing…? Yuriko thought, looking on awkwardly from the sidelines. She immediately cleared her throat and garnered their attention. "Anyway, I should escort you all. By the way, there's a few other guests here who want to meet you. In fact, Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary, there's two former students from our academy that wish to see you." She then turned to the Phantom Thieves. "And there's someone here you've met before who requested audience with you."

"Wonder who that could be?" Yusuke pondered the individual who wished for an audience with him and the other Thieves.

"Guess we're going to find out," Makoto added.

Ren confronted Yuriko with a pressing inquiry. "So, I take it you know we're the Phantom Thieves? Sayaka was able to figure out who we were."

"Yes, I am. My Guardian Spirit has already informed me about your identities, but I vow as an honest shrine maiden, your secrets will remain secure with me. Now, this way. We don't have much time."

(Cue Nioh OST - Loneliness)

As Yuriko escorted the massive group into the shrine, they entered a forest. Unknownst to the group entering Meiji Shrine through a pathway, five tiny green humanoids wearing black bowl-shaped helmets watched them with their beady yellow eyes. These are Kodama, forest spirits that were neither deity nor Yokai. They scrambled through the trees like squirrels and hid away as if sensing an encroaching presence set to hit the shrine.

xxxxx

Inside a shrine, three individuals awaited them.

First; the former students Yuriko alluded to earlier revealed themselves. The first of which was a short young woman with blonde hair that went down her chin level and blue eyes. She wore a long red-sleeved sweater, a white skirt, dark blue leggings, and brown boots. She also wore a green hairband. It was Sumeragi Itsuki.

Upon seeing each other, Yumeko and Itsuki quickly pointed to each other.

"IT'S YOU!" Both instinctively yelled out.

"I remember you were obsessed with Yumeko's nails!" Ryōta recalled Itsuki's former desire for acquiring Yumeko's nails to add to her nail collection.

"Oh yes, and how badly I wanted your pretty nails, Yumeko," Itsuki smirked while priming her hair.

"And then I exposed your cheating ways. Sorry, hun, but I'm not betting on these nails again unless you got something else worth taking?" Yumeko purred darkly.

"Yeah, no. We have a more serious thing to take care of. That's why Yuriko gathered us," Itsuki turned to the shrine maiden.

"Indeed, and for our other guest," Itsuki motioned for the second individual stepped forward. Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta were surprised to see another fellow academy student. It was Ikishima

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"Hey, it's been a while, huh?" Midari greeted them with a sadist grin.

"Heh, how can I forget you?" Yumeko replied with a welcoming smile.

"So, do you two have your own Guardian Spirits?" Ryōta asked the two women.

"Why don't we show 'em?" Midari asked Itsuki, who nodded.

With that, Midari and Itsuki invoked spiritual connection with their Guardian Spirits.

A ring of fire formed around Itsuki as it expanded into a pillar of red light. The red spirit energy then materialized into flames. A tall, slender-necked bird with massive wings and body covered in red feathers appeared next to Itsuki. The bird turned its head to its summoner folded its wings.

"No way, that's… isn't that the spirit of Suzaku?!" Ryōta exclaimed in shock.

"And we know your Guardian Spirit is Genbu," Itsuki addressed Ryōta.

A gust of wind materialized around Midari. From this wind, a serpentine-bodied dragon appeared floating next to her. The dragon's body is mostly covered with blue scales and chains. Its light blue head had facial spikes that made it look like it has a mane. Three long white protrusions with filaments poked out from the back of its head. Two long antler-like horns protruded from its forehead. Its right eye is yellow, while its left eye is red.

In conjunction with the dragon, a second Guardian Spirit appeared next to Midari. Something resembling an old man with a bulbous head, a long white beard, and batches of white hair at the back of its bulbous head appeared. He has a pipe sticking out his mouth. His wardrobe consisted of a red silk robe, a black top, and black hakama pants. Sticking out from underneath the black hakama are four brown spindle legs.

"That's the blue dragon of the east, Seiryu!" Mary cried out.

"Actually, it's just called the Blue Dragon, but technically you're right," a deep feminine voice chimed in to inform the guests. "And this girl's second Guardian Spirit is called the Nurarihyon."

"Wait, that voice…” Ren muttered as he and the Phantom Thieves recognized the tone of this female figure, who stepped out of the dark corner.

"Yes, it's been months since our last meeting, Phantom Thieves," the woman addressed them. She appeared to them as a tall woman, whose height was taller than most of the men present. She had fair skin and wore her dark hair in a slightly loosened ponytail, which she tightened up with hairbinds. She wore a light blue buttoned sleeveless dress shirt, black pants, and brown shoes. The woman had a noticeably athletic figure. With her shirt sleeveless, she showed off her muscular arms and if she were to flex her biceps would certainly show. Her dress shirt cut off above her midriff, revealing her six pack abdominal muscles. Her blue eyes scanned the Thieves, the Remnants, and the Gamblers.

"Mina!" The Thieves and Yumeko yelled in unison.

"You're right! It's been months!" Ryuji said. "How's it been?"

"And what brings you here?" Futaba asked the descendant of William.

"My Guardian Spirit, Saoirse, resurfaced and informed me of an impending dark source set to
manifest in Meiji Shrine," Mina replied to their concerns. "I just couldn't ignore this warning. This shrine maiden allowed me to communicate with William and his colleagues. Then, these young people started showing up to receive Guardian Spirits." She said referring to Midari and Itsuki. "Now, it appears you've come to investigate this dark source, Phantom Thieves. And you've brought new colleagues..." She paused as she stared at Skyler. "Hold on."

Hifumi explained. "His name is Skyler Jones. He may look like Sion, but he's not the same one you remember."

Mina greeted the Revenants and the other two Gamblers. "We haven't been introduced. My name is Hattori Mina."

"Hi, well Hifumi already introduced me, but these are my friends," Skyler said, turning over to his fellow Vein Remnants.

"Good to meet you," Louis said.

"You definitely remember me, right?" Yumeko called over to Mina. She then pulled Mary and Ryōta over. "These two are my besties."

"So, this lady has a Guardian Spirit, too?" Mary asked Yumeko.

"Yeah, wait until she shows you."

"I think you might be seeing it very soon considering there'll be a Yami Matter incursion here," Ren said.

"Speaking of Guardian Spirits, I don't sense one in you, but I do feel a presence. What manner of nature is this entity inside you?" Mina pivoted toward Hifumi. "In fact, it's nature feels akin to Skyler and his colleagues here." She faced the Remnants.

"Yes, my former Guardian Spirit has been passed over to Mary here," Hifumi explained. "The other entity you sense is..." Before she could finish, a beam of white light came out of Hifumi and materialized into Io, much to Mina and the other Gamblers' surprise.

"Io!" Skyler exclaimed as he helped the pale Revenant up.

"Did someone call for me?" Io asked, rubbing her head. "I should stop coming out and falling on my face."

As soon as Io appeared, every Guardian Spirit, including Mina's Saoirse, appeared and confronted her. Confused by the Guardian Spirits' sensitivity by her presence, Io backed away.

"Wh-What's going on here?" Io asked Skyler and Hifumi.

"What's the meaning of this?" Hifumi asked as she noticed the Guardian Spirits also turned toward her with uneasiness. She became unnerved when even her former Guardian Spirit, Janomecho, intensely stared at her.

"Please, don't take this the wrong way, Togo Hifumi," Mina spoke on behalf of the Guardian Spirits. Just then, the spirits of William, Hattori Hanzo, Okatsu, Date Masamune, Sanada Yukimura, Oda Nobunaga, Nōhime, Yasuke, Giant Toad, Sarutobi Sasuke, and Toyotomi Hideyori appeared inside the shrine. Nekomata also appeared. Of these spirits, this the first time Yumeko and her friends had seen Oda Nobunaga, Nōhime, Yasuke, Giant Toad, Sarutobi Sasuke, and Toyotomi Hideyori.
Oda Nobunaga appeared as a white-haired man in silver samurai armor. He wore his hair in a ponytail. He wore a mustache and goatee. Nobunaga wore a serious glare befitting for a former 16th century daimyō.

Nōhime, wife of Nobunaga, appeared as a Yuki-Onna. An icy snow blue aura enveloped over her, giving her the appearance of a frigid ice maiden. Her once naturally black hair appeared white like snow. Her skin as also pale like the snow, which she now harvests as her primary power source. Her only article of clothing is a gray kimono.

Yasuke, a vassal to Nobunaga, appeared as a brown-skinned, black bearded African man garbed in black and red samurai armor. He carried with him a large axe.

Giant Toad was exactly as his name defined him as: a giant toad larger than any human in the room. His brownish-olive green skin, covered with warts in some area, is both rough and smooth on some places of his body. His belly was rotund and stuck out in a bulge. His large toad eyes are red. He wore a few article of human clothing, although limited to just a big red vest, a black weapon holster strapped across his chest that held some kunai, chainmail armor covering the uppermost areas of his chest and neck, and a white belt often seen on a sumo wrestler.

Sarutobi Sasuke, seen standing beside Sanada Yukimura, appeared as a ninja garbed mostly in black with black and red armored wear. He's seen wearing a black ninja mask and a metal forehead protector. The only parts of his face visibly seen are his eyes and ears. A sword inside a black sheath visibly poked out behind his back.

Toyotomi Hideyori appeared as a man garbed in varying lighter colors of armor. The colors consisted of gold, blue, royal purple, coffee brown, dirty yellow, white and black. He wore a silver samurai helmet with metal protrusions that pointed upward and spread in the manner of which a peacock opens its tail feathers. He's seen with two swords inside gold and white sheaths hanging on both of his side hips.

(End theme)

"The spirits are only unnerved because your powers are now derived from the same false god that nearly corrupted your society," William addressed Hifumi.

"All because my newfound abilities are similar to Yaldabaoth and Saklas?" Hifumi realized why the Guardian Spirits showed sudden hostility toward her.

"They shouldn't be hostile toward her even if she has similar powers as them. She's not going to become like them!" Skyler protested on Hifumi's behalf.

"That doesn't explain why they showed hostility toward Io," Mia said.

"Probably because they thought she was a Yokai," Hanzo stated. "Seems we and the Guardians misjudged you."

"Ok, but I'm not a Yokai," Io said.

"I don't mean to interrupt, but oh my god! That giant toad looks like Gamabunta!" Futaba pointed to Giant Toad.

"So, we should be calling him that name from now on?" Makoto wondered.

"No, Giant Toad is just fine, children," Giant Toad responded in a deep and throaty voice. He took
out a large pipe to smoke on.

"See? He has a name, Futaba," Yusuke stated.

"Well, I'm still gonna call him Gamabunta." She grumbled under her breath.

"Yes, I see a few more young people have received Guardian Spirits," Nobunaga noticed the Spiritual Gamblers with their respective Guardian Spirits. "Just recently, myself, my wife Lady Nōhime, and Yasuke passed our Guardian Spirits over to three other youth."

"Can you tell us who?" Mary asked the former daimyō.

"I can easily answer that," Yuriko interceded. "Yumeko, Ryōta, and Mary, you should know these three well. In fact, you've already met one from Shujin Academy."

The three Spiritual Gamblers gazed over the Yuki-Onna and quickly came to a conclusion. They remembered the snowy butterflies that covered Sayaka's office.

"So, you two already figured it out?" Ryōta asked the other two.

"Yeah," Mary nodded.

"Then, the other two have to be Kirari and Ririka," Yumeko concluded a sly grin adorned her face and her eyes glowed red. "Heheh, now I really wanna duel and bringing our gambling on to a whole new level!"

"So, that new Shujin principal has this Yuki-Onna's Guardian Spirit," Haru said.

"That's the least of our concerns now," Louis stated.

"But, still, Yumeko and her friends apparently know these people very well," Ann pointed out. "We're probably bound to meet them sooner than later."

"We'll be ready when that time comes," Ren added.

Suddenly, Io's yellow eyes gleamed as she grabbed her head. "No, they're coming!"

"What? Is it the Yami Matter?" Skyler asked the pale-skinned Revenant.

"It's… it's worse than I feared! There's more! It's like a flood wave about to burst through!" Io cried out.

"She's right. I'm sensing a wave of evil energies attempting to emerge in our world!" Yuriko warned them.

Nekomata then interjected. "That is why I've summoned William and the other spirits from their eternal rest in response to this impending evil essence. We will help stop the spread of this Yokai source!"

It didn't take long for the Phantom Thieves, Vein Remnants, the Spiritual Gamblers, and the spirits to sense the evil entities encroaching into their reality. Then, they heard the sound akin to a dam breaking followed by a sound similar to water bursting through. Everyone stormed from the shrine and watched a tidal wave of black energy waves spreading throughout Meiji Shrine.

"The Yami Matter… it's here…" Io muttered as Hifumi comforted her.
"Damn man, this looks awfully similar to when those Yokai things entered our world during the Olympic Games!" Ryuji shouted as he and the Thieves recalled that exact day the demonic entities invaded.

Hifumi recalled that incident being the same day she met Sion. She looked up at Skyler, who stared intensely toward the demonic entities taking shape. He had the same look Sion had when the very first wave of Yokai appeared. That same intense look scared her then and it still disturbed her now.

"We're going to fight… right, Hifumi?" Io asked the Shogi woman.

"Io?"

"We're going to fight together, yes?" Io grabbed Hifumi's hands. "Say you will."

Before she can answer, Hifumi witnessed her friends turning into their Phantom Thief forms. She then saw Skyler and the Vein Remnants' eyes turning red. She even witnessed the Guardian Spirits materialize next to their Spiritual Gambler wielders.

"You better make up your mind, Hifumi," Skyler stated.

"Because we're going in," Ren said as the black and white domino mask appeared on his face. He instantly became Joker right before Hifumi.

The Shogi woman faced Io, who nodded and smiled persuasively to get her to join the fight. Feeling no pressure, Hifumi didn't hesitate and harvested some of Io's power. Hifumi transformed into Tennyo and brandished Io's halberd.

"Glad you made the right choice," Skyler proudly regarded his girlfriend's decision.

"I'll also fight with you, Hifumi! I have enough strength to fight!" Io said, choosing not to merge with her vessel.

"*The darkness has manifested new Yokai waves to destroy this shrine. You all mustn't allow these abominations from leaving these grounds!*" Masamune reminded the heroes of their top priority.

"Yeah unless you don't mind letting these demons wreck your town and convert it into some demon city," Mina remarked.

"We know what to do. Right, everyone?!!" Joker asked, rallying his group and the other party members.

With no hesitation, the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, the Spiritual Gamblers, and the spirits headed straight into the Yami Matter infestation. As the Yami Matter essences took hold of Meiji Shrine, a dozen or so different types of Yokai appeared. The large group decided to split into smaller parties to neutralize the first wave of Hyakki Yagyō.

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(Cue Nieh OST - Battle II)

In the center of the shrine, a Onryoki, a large shaggy white-haired, red-skinned and yellow-horned oni, appeared. It was joined by a Great Centipede, a large demon centipede with a skull-faced visage and giant mandibles with enough power to crush bones. An army of undead Skeleton Warriors and Axemen, red oni in dark samurai armor named Yoki; Red Kappas, red-skinned Kappa with dish-shaped head depressions and turtle shells; and tall black-skinned Yokai with bulging eyes & long
purple tongues named Onyudo.

Joker, Fox, Oracle, Itsuki, Yuriko, William, Okatsu, Hanzo, Mina, Nobunaga, Nōhime, Masamune, Giant Toad, Nekomata, and Hideyori arrived and engaged the Yokai army.

"Heheh, not only is my hair orange again, but I may be able to get more involved combat-wise!" Oracle proudly showed off her orange hair as she entered her Persona Prometheus. After granting her party members a speed boost, she turned Prometheus around and fired a beam at several Skeleton Warriors and Axemen.

"Alright, Oracle just fired the first shot. Time for us to strike!" Joker declared as he summoned his Kohryu Persona, a giant golden scaled dragon with antler-like horns protruding the back of its head.

"And I shall aid you, my friends!" With that, Nekomata changed into a gigantic version of himself. As he grew, he gained black feathered wings. His eyepatch unveiled yellow glowing eyes. His entire facial structure became feral and beast-like akin to a big cat predator. He become his true form, the White Tiger.

The Spiritual Gamblers became astounded by Nekomata's true form reveal.

"No way! Did he just become…?!" Itsuki exclaimed.

"Byakko," Yuriko answered.

"It's not the first time we've seen this side of him, Ren and Futaba," Fox reminded them of Nekomata's White Tiger reveal. "Even now, I'm taken aback by the beauty and magnificence of Byakko!"

"Admire him later. We have a battle ahead for us," Nobunaga shifted their focus back on the Yokai army heading their way.

"C'mon! Bring it on, ya Yokai filth!" Giant Toad charged ahead with the White Tiger. He and the White Tiger clashed with the Great Centipede, leaving the others to deal with the smaller and lesser Yokai.

The Great Centipede quickly crawled on the ground, knocking over obstructions that stood in its way. The White Tiger and Giant Toad pursued the giant hundred-legged Yokai arthropod. The Great Centipede turned its head and expelled a red poisonous mist that covered the area. Giant Toad and the White Tiger evaded the mist. Giant Toad quickly brandished his giant spear and pushed it toward the Great Centipede's face. The Yokai arthropod's mandibles snapped and caught Giant Toad's spear. While the two giants wrestled, the White Tiger lunged into the Great Centipede's side and clawed its side. As the White Tiger helped knocked the Great Centipede over, Giant Toad drove his spear into its chest. The Great Centipede bellowed and instinctively spilled poisonous mist, forcing the White Tiger and Great Toad to withdraw.

Meanwhile, Joker, Fox, Oracle, Itsuki, Midari, Yuriko, William, Okatsu, Hanzo, Mina, Nobunaga, Nōhime, Masamune, and Hideyori helped reduce the Yokai armies. Itsuki, Midari, Yuriko, and Mina assisted the Phantom Thieves with their Guardian Spirits.

Amidst the heated fighting going on, Mina briefly interacted with Hanzo.

"So, you're named Hattori," Hanzo acknowledged Mina's surname.

"Yes, but I'm not part of your bloodline."
"Yes, of course, since you are William's successor."

William briefly listened to their conversation as he violently stabbed and carved up a Onyudo in two. Mina turned and made brief eye contact with William.

"Saoirse selected a worthy successor to my name." William acknowledged Mina's ability to utilize his former Guardian Spirit.

In response to William's praise, Mina gave a quiet and subtle smile.


"Keep it up, guys!" Joker commanded his colleagues. He turned as the Great Centipede rose up for an attack, but Giant Toad and the White Tiger barricaded the Yokai arthropod's way.

"Doing ok down there, Inari?!" Oracle asked from within Prometheus.

"I'll manage!" Fox called out.

"Don't get too comfortable, guys! We have the big boss to deal with!" Joker warned them of the Great Centipede's presence.

xxxxx

In the northeast side of the shrine, a Nue, a chimeric monster with a monkey's face, a tiger's body, and a snake's tail, appeared. It didn't come alone as several Yokai wheels with giant deranged faces named Wheelmonks; bipedal black-feathered, golden staff carrying Raven Tengu; umbrella-shaped Yokai named Karakusa Umbrella; a samurai-armored, sword wielding white-faced, slender-necked creature called a Rokurokubi; some Namahage, blue-skinned Yokai with two curved horns, buck teeth, wearing straw capes, and wielding either cleavers or dual hatchets, appeared.

Hound, Skull, Yumeko, Mary, Ryōta, Yasuke, Sasuke, and Yukimura arrived to intercept them.

Before the fighting started, Mary noticed Skull's hair changed to blonde.

"Hey! Your hair's not black anymore!" Mary pointed out the obvious, which got a smile from Skull.

"Yeah, this was my hair back then. Glad I can wear it when I'm Phantom Thievin'!" Skull boasted about his old delinquent hair color.

"Blonde looks cooler on you!" Mary chimed in.

"Everyone, we should be focusing on the matter at hand here," Hound snarled as his eyes turned red.

"Indeed, we have an incoming Yokai army!" Yasuke bellowed.

The Nue aggressively responded to its opposition with quick yellow lightning bolts. The party members dodged its concentrated blasts and spread out. Hound took on a defensive stance and summoned his mouth guard mask. Then, Hound summoned his Hound-Type Blood Veil, which came in the form of dark-armored, sharp-toothed dogs emerge from his back. These hounds growled and snapped their jaws fiercely at Nue.
"Alright, time to sic my boys and tear you a new asshole!" Hound openly declared hunting season on the Yokai beast. As he charged, Hound unleashed his Blood Veil hounds to inflict nasty bites on Nue.

Nue instinctively retaliated with a yellow mouth blast. Hound narrowly dodged. Skull used *Elec Break* on Nue, suppressing its electric resistance. He followed up augmenting his own electric offense with *Elec Boost* and blasted Nue with *Ziodyne*. Nue was blasted back and without its electric resistance was left open to some of Skull's lightning attacks.

Yumeko chuckled darkly. "Oh, it's my turn? Thanks, boys, for softening him up for me!" With a hand covering most of her face, she opened two fingers and revealed her glowing red eyes. "Why don't I, Tamamo, show you how it's done?" A sadistic, creepy smile adorned her face.

"So, we're really going by our codenames now?" Mary sighed. "Fine, what was my name before?"

"Brave." Ryōta reminded her.

"Oh, right! And you're Pesto?"

Ryōta corrected her. "Presto."

"Right, Presto."

As Nue steadily stood recovering, Tamamo summoned her Nine-Tails.

In the middle of all this, Brave's Janomecho, Presto's Genbu, Yasuke, Sasuke, and Yukimura reduced the Wheelmonks, Raven Tengu, Karakusa Umbrella, and Namahage numbers. Janomecho and Genbu took down a Rokurokubi.

"Oh shit, Yumeko's getting her freak on again!" Brave cried out.

"Could either be a good or bad thing, but hopefully the former!" Presto yelled.

As Tamamo unequivocally bonded with her Nine-Tails, the Guardian Spirit resonated with the Spiritual Gambler. Her clothes gained a burnt appearance and small nine fox tails, which wagged and twitched around. Tamamo then got on all fours and creepily smiled. Her still red glowing eyes pierced a menacing glare at Nue.

"C'mon, entertain me! Please!" Tamamo cackled and lunged forth at Nue.

Nue went right at Tamamo and swiped at her with its snake tail. Tamamo jumped over Nue and launched two flamed pillars shaped like dices. The fiery projectiles struck Nue head-on and knocked it back. Tamamo repeatedly blasted Nue with fiery projectiles. As Tamamo kept blasting the beast, Hound and Skull double teamed on Nue. Skull cast *Maziodyne* on Nue. Hound used his Blood Veil hound heads to bite off chunks of Nue, including biting off its snake tail. Tamamo quickly encircled Nue, unleashing fiery waves that burned the Yokai beast alive. Nue howled and collapsed in flames. The flames burned Nue alive and reduced it to a charred corpse.

Tamamo mounted the charred beast and howled in victory. Her red eyes gave off an intense glow as she licked her right hand and purred.

"We've cleared this area and got rid of these monsters!" Presto called out.

"I swear, Yumeko is enjoying herself," Brave sighed.
"I must commend you for commanding my Guardian Spirit effectively, young miss," Yukimura acknowledged Brave.

Brave modestly replied to Janomecho's former wielder. "I'm glad to make you proud."

"Excellent work, my friends, but the shrine hasn't yet been purged of Yokai," Yasuke said after chopping a Raven Tengu in half.

"Hey, Yumeko, let's get going," Skull cautiously approached Tamamo, unable to discern her current mindset.

"Yeah, we've finished this area," Hound said.

Tamamo was silent.

Brave and Presto came up to Tamamo.

"Yumeko?" Presto queried as he reached for her shoulder.

Tamamo quickly turned and smiled. She gave a sweet and innocent smile. "Sure!" She hopped off the charred corpse and loyally followed her friends.

"Whew, I'm glad she didn't flip out and go psycho on us," Hound sighed with relief.

"Dude, tell me about it," Skull scratched his head. "Sometimes even I don't get her."

xxxxx

(Cue Nioh OST - Ayakashi II)

On the northwest side, Tennyo and Ivy confronted an Ogress, a monster with claw-like nails, wearing a kimono, long yellow horns on her forehead, and shaggy black hair. Tennyo gasped seeing the abomination. She remembered this being the first Yokai she and Sion encountered, but from what she can discern, this wasn't the same one who was originally Ieyasu's wife, Lady Tsukiyama.

Waving a hand over her face, Tennyo summoned her mouth guard mask. Io did the same. Tennyo quickly lunged and swung the halberd at Ogress. Ogress dodged and fought back with her claws. Ogress cackled at Tennyo.

"You're the same monster that attacked me and Sion, aren't you?!" Tennyo charged and forced Ogress back with another swung. "Well, as you can see, I'm not the same helpless victim you can chase at your black heart's content!"

Ivy quickly came running at Ogress's right side. Ivy took a chance to side attack Ogress, but the Yokai narrowly dodged Ivy's reach. This provided distraction for Tennyo to throw the halberd to Ivy. After discarding said weapon, Tennyo summoned a ko-naginata.

"Come!" Ivy beckoned the Yokai, who flew into a berserk rage and attacked them with quick slash combos.

Tennyo and Ivy dodged Ogress's attacks with grace and agility. Both were able to read Ogress's unfocused movements. Swinging her halberd, Ivy quickly chopped off Ogress's left arm. Ogress screamed as dark blood spewed out of her wound. Tennyo followed through with multiple body strikes with her ko-naginata. Tennyo then chopped off Ogress's right arm and quickly came up behind Ogress. Tennyo shoved the ko-naginata through Ogress's chest and pulled it out, leaving a
hole in the Yokai's chest. Ivy swung her halberd down and summoned a bunch of spikes out of the ground that pierced through Ogress. Caught in Ivy's Ivy-Type Blood Veil, Ogress had nowhere to go, but become a target for Tennyo. Tennyo forged a lightning blast, known as Lightning Thorn, that whipped across and incinerated Ogress into dust.

"We did it, Hifumi!" Ivy said.

"Thanks for the assist, Io. Now let's find Skyler and give him some assistance," Tennyo suggested as she and Ivy headed for Sion's location.

xxxxx

On the southwest corner of the shrine, Sion and Panther faced a Hino-enma, a humanoid female Yokai with umbrella-like bat wings and wore tengu-geta over her feet. This vampiric Yokai gave off a very sinister and sensual aura that disturbed her adversaries.

Before attacking them, the vampiric Yokai openly teased Sion and Panther. Sion readied a Regicide Blade and attacked the Hino-enma with it. The female Hino-enma dodged a fairly slow but powerful strike, only for Panther to catch her with her whip.

"Hold her for me, Ann!" Sion called out.

"Yeah, I'm trying, Skyler, but she's pretty strong!" Panther struggled to hold Hino-enma. The red leather-clad woman cast Maragidyne to burn the vampiric Yokai. Hino-enma barely moved, dodging Panther's attack. The Yokai pulled Panther forward with her own whip and tossed her aside.

Sion headed over to tend to Panther. Taking a moment to recover, Hino-enma noted Panther's wedding ring. It chortled and assumed Panther was Sion's wife.

Realizing this, Panther angrily snapped. "No, don't get the wrong idea! He's not my husband! But, you better not get any ideas with him either!"

"She won't get the chance after I'm through with her," Sion focused his killing intent on Hino-enma. He summoned his mouth guard mask and charged at the Yokai.

Hino-enma continued seductive taunts to get under their skin. However, Sion was no longer in any mood to be manipulated. As Hino-enma unleashed a purple wave to put Sion under her control, Sion still went through the smoke. His mask protected him from the mind control wave. Taken aback, Hino-enma tried another tactic. The Yokai's face split in two, unveiling a nasty lamprey-like tongue to suck Sion with.

"Yeah, nice try!" Sion yelled, slashing Hino-enma's lamprey tongue with his Regicide Blade.

Hino-enma tried to escape Sion's critical attack. However, Panther stepped in and blasted the Yokai with Blazing Hell.

"There's no escape for you, freak!" Panther shouted as Sion summoned a katana called the Hanemukuro. He held the katana with a backhand grip and swung it to slash at the Hino-enma.

As the neutralized Hino-enma, Sion took on a swordsman stance and unleashed a powerful slash attack as if he were drawing out the sword. The attack bisected the Hino-enma and finished her off.

As the Hino-enma dissolved, Sion and Panther watched her remains scatter away to the wind.

"Ugh, she really thought we were a married couple? As if I'd ever cheat on Ren," Panther groaned.
"She even tried seducing me into making me think she'd be a better woman than you."

"Really?"

Sion nodded. "And she also wanted to see how you tasted, too."

"Eww, did you need to tell me that?!"

"Well, you wanted to know what she was telling us based on her body language."

Panther sighed. "I don't even want anymore."

Just then, Tennyo and Ivy arrived to convene with Sion and Panther.

"Oh thank god, you're ok, Skyler," Tennyo hugged Sion.

"Yeah, I'm glad you're ok, too."

Ivy eagerly nodded. "You should've seen me and Hifumi, Skyler. We took down a Yokai together!"

"We're all ok, but we need to check in with the others. I'm worried Ren and his group's got their hands full," Panther turned toward the Joker and company's location.

"Then, let's go check if they'll need us," Sion said.

xxxxx

(Cue raTEoREkiSlmeAra (Telethia Battle) - Xenoblade Chronicles X OST - Hiroyuki Sawano)

Over on the southeast side of the shrine, Stinger and Mona confronted a Joro-Gumo, a spider-woman with a woman's body as the upper half and a spider's body with armored legs for the lower half.

Joro-Gumo tried to ensnare her adversaries with webs. Mona nimbly hopped away, evading getting caught and trapped by the spider-woman's webs. Mona fired a shot at Joro-Gumo with his Sudarshana slingshot. This diversion allowed for Stinger shove a bayonet through Joro-Gumo's spider body. Hissing fiercely, Joro-Gumo shot one of her spider legs to stab Stinger with it.

"Move!" Mona cried out as he jumped over and pushed Stinger away.

Stinger grabbed Mona and barrel-rolled away from Joro-Gumo's spider foot. Joro-Gumo ran across attempting to stab them with her legs. The bayonet was out of Stinger's reach. Mona awoke in time to summon his Persona, Mercurius. Mercurius attacked Joro-Gumo with **Garudyne**. The attack burned Joro-Gumo, giving Stinger and Mona enough leeway to recover. Stinger turned around and summoned her mouth guard mask.

"Let's finish her, Mia!" Mona declared.

Nodding, Stinger's eyes glowed red, which exuded a killing intent. Stinger summoned her Stinger-Type Blood Veil, which was a metallic scorpion-like tail that was bigger and longer than Stinger's entire body. Stinger readied the metallic tail and shoved it through Joro-Gumo's human body. As the scorpion caught the spider, Mona fired **Magarudyne** to burn away the spider-woman.

Withdrawing her Blood Veil, Stinger panted hard. "Wow, that was pretty cool."

"Hold on, we're not done yet," Mona heard the movement of multiple legs behind them. "There's
another one this way! Remember we can't let any one of these things leave the shrine, Mia!"

"Let's go and exterminate this freak!" Stinger said as she and Mona headed for the other Joro-Gumo.

xxxxx

On the east side of the shrine, Queen, Noir, and Engineer faced an Onmoraki, a four-winged Yokai bird with a body made up of horrific ghastly faces, a yellowish-orange forehead horn, and a cadaver-like face. The Yokai bird let out a terrible screech similar to a demonically-possessed elephant.

"Oh great, I'm fighting this big birdbrain again," Queen remarked, recounting the previous battle she had with the Onmoraki. At that time, she, Joker, and Sion fought hard against it when Yokai and Lost attacked Osaka.

"I remember you three went after this monster and brought it down," Noir gawked at the Onmoraki as it already flew up to prepare for an aerial attack.

"Here it comes!" Engineer called out as Onmoraki flew above them and unleashed tornados at the trio.

Once summoning her Anat Persona, Queen converted her Persona into its motorcycle form and hopped on. She, while riding Anat, escaped the tornado attack directed her way. Noir fired on Onmoraki with a grenade launcher and tried to clip its wings with projectiles. When all else failed, Noir beckoned forth her Persona, Astarte. Noir commanded Astarte to blast Onmoraki with Cripple, shooting off Onmoraki's upper left wing. While not enough to bring down the Yokai bird, the attack affected its flight mobility.

"I think we can bring this thing down faster!" Engineer declared, summoning his mouth guard mask. He quickly produced his Ogre-Type Blood Veil. Engineer's right arm changed into black-armored Revenant's arm. His fingers turned into long sharp black and red claws.

Queen and Noir witnessed Engineer's right arm transform into something straight out of a monster film. However, this Revenant's hand would be used against the Yokai bird. Engineer yelled out and goaded the Onmoraki to attack him. Taking on Engineer's challenge, Onmoraki dove and unleashed a tornado attack. Engineer chanced close quarters combat and rushed ahead. Engineer barely evaded Onmoraki's tornado attack and jumped on its left face. Engineer punched and ripped at Onmoraki's face with his Revenant hand. Then, Engineer shoved the same Revenant claws into the Yokai bird's left eyeball and ripped it out. Engineer ignored the fact blood sprayed all over him.

Queen rode Anat on top of a shrine and launched herself straight into Onmoraki's head. As the motorcycle crashed into Onmoraki's head, Queen hopped off and mounted the back of the Yokai bird's head. Onmoraki tried pecking at the two, but Engineer and Queen punched its face. Engineer continued tearing at its face. Queen landed consecutive punches to its beak and broke off sections of it. As Onmoraki opened its beak and released poison, Queen instinctively covered her mouth.

"Makoto!" Engineer instinctively transferred his mouth guard mask to Queen, which protected her from the poison.

Sacrificing his well-being for another, he breathed in some of the poison. Engineer quickly shoved his hand through Onmoraki's forehead and went to crack its skull open.

"Mako-chan! Louis! Hang on, I'm getting you two and that thing down!" Noir beckoned Astarte to blast Onmoraki with a One-shot Kill. This highly critical shot blasted the Yokai bird's head, causing half of its face to explode, and took out two of its wings.
Onmoraki came crashing down. Engineer and Queen jumped off the flying beast. As Onmoraki struggled to stand, Engineer and Queen charged for a double finishing blow. Engineer shoved his Revenant claw through its vital spot and ripped out its heart. He then tossed it to Queen, who crushed the Yokai bird's vital organ. Onmoraki collapsed and died.

"Mako-chan, Louis! We did it!" Noir called to them.

"Haru, hurry! Louis needs some healing! He got caught by that thing's poison!" Queen shouted for medical aid.

Upon noticing Queen wearing Engineer's mouth guard mask, Noir urgently used Astarte to use *Amrita Shower* to remove the toxins affecting Engineer. She even used Astarte's healing to treat Queen.

"Ah, that's much better!" Engineer breathed out as the toxins were purged out of him. "Geez, I was starting to lose breath. Guess this is how being more human than Revenant feels like."

"Here," Queen handed Engineer his mask. "Thanks, Louis. I don't know what to say."

Smiling, Engineer took the mask. "Your welcome. And don't worry, you don't owe me."

"I feel like I do."

"My bond with you and Haru is all the thanks I need."

Hearing this, both ladies weren't sure how to respond to his selfless action. Queen, especially, was shocked he had no witty remark, but given the situation they're currently in it shouldn't be. Queen gladly accepted Engineer's willful gesture and helped him up.

"Why don't we go check in with the other groups? Ren and Skyler might need a hand," Engineer suggested, clenching his Revenant hand. He sighed. "I know this hand looks pretty freaky."

"We were a little spooked, but we've seen scarier," Noir said.

"Yeah, that thing does come in handy in situations like ours," Queen nodded. "How about use it to help Skyler?"

"You can count on it."


While the intense fighting took place at the shrine, three uninvited guests snuck through the forest area. It was Shinya, Nicola, and Reiko, who walked through the forest.

"I still can't believe you two convinced me to come!" Reiko chastised the two boys.

"Nicola said he heard his sister would be coming here to meet with Ren's group. For what, I don't know," Shinya said.

"I overheard Mia talking on the phone while I pretended to mind my own business in my room. I found it peculiar because Mia rarely ever has 'midnight' plans," Nicola said. "So, that aroused my suspicions."

"What do you think they could be meeting at Meiji Shrine for?"

"Your guess is as good as mine, Shinya."
Just then, the three teens heard the sound of combat inside Meiji Shrine.

"You guys hear that? Sounds like some fighting!" Shinya exclaimed. "Maybe the Phantom Thieves are fighting something out of the ordinary!"

"Like what? Monsters?" Reiko asked.

"Maybe?" Shinya shrugged.

Just then, the three teens turned and watched as a Joro-Gumo raced past them. The Joro-Gumo quickly stopped and noticed potential food to prey on.

"Um… guys…" Reiko's face went blue as she pointed at the Joro-Gumo.

"Oh shit… it… it saw us," Shinya muttered.

"Run!" Nicola shouted as he and his two friends turned to escape, but the Joro-Gumo pursued them.

Then, the Joro-Gumo lunged at the three teenagers. They screamed together. Shinya threw himself in front of his two friends.

"You want my friends?! You'll have to get through me first, you spider bitch!" Shinya defiantly shouted.

"SHINYA!"

Suddenly, a metallic stinger shot out of nowhere and pierced through Joro-Gumo's spider body. The three teens spotted Stinger and Mona. Stinger used her metal tail to tear the Joro-Gumo in two as heavy amount of the spider-woman’s blood rained over the vicinity. After discarding the Joro-Gumo, Mona burned the Yokai's remains.

"Are you three ok…?!" Stinger asked, but as she turned and faced Nicola, her face contorted with shock.

Likewise, Nicola was stunned to see his sister not only save him and his friends, but practically tearing the Joro-Gumo like wet tissue paper with a metal scorpion's tail.

"Nicola?!"

"Mia?!"

(End theme)

Shinya and Reiko were shocked to see Nicola's older sister with super abilities. However, none were as shocked as Nicola. This was the first he had seen his sister using super abilities.

Stinger growled as she ran over and shook Nicola's shoulders. "What the hell are you doing here, Nicola?! I thought I told you to stay home!"

"Well, you… you hardly if ever go out for midnight activities! You're always being the mom and telling me to come home early! Now you expect me to do the same!"

"You don't understand…" Stinger shook her head. She then pulled him into a hug and cried. "You scared me to death! What if something happened to you and your friends right now? What if I wasn't here to save you all?!"
"I'm sorry, Mia!" Nicola cried out, hugging Stinger.

"Excuse, Mia, but that tail… are you like…" Reiko tried to describe Stinger's super abilities.

"No, first off, I'm not like one of those superheroes you see on TV," Stinger tried to explain.

"Are you fighting with the Phantom Thieves?" Shinya asked her.

"Well…" Stinger turned to Mona, who walked up to her.

"I knew it!" Shinya pointed to Mona. "I remember him with the Phantom Thieves! So, you are in league with them!"

"Is it true, sis?" Nicola queried to Stinger.

Before Stinger could deny these claims, Mona simply nodded and encouraged her to tell the truth. Stinger felt conflicted to give away her affiliation.

Stinger just smiled. "Guess the cat…" She covered her mouth remembering Mona was present. "I mean… guess it can't be helped. Yep, it's true I've been fighting with the Phantom Thieves."

"And you're fighting against some demon things like that spider-lady freak you just tore up!" Shinya exclaimed as his eyes brimmed with excitement.

"Yeah…" Stinger acted coy, rolling her eyes back.

"Oh, please show us!" Shinya pleaded.

"No! It's too dangerous!" Stinger shut him down.

"Awww… c'mon!"

"Sis, I think you owe us that much. We want to see the Phantom Thieves and whoever else you're fighting with," Nicola used persuasion against his older sibling. "I'm tired of being kept in the dark! Lately, I've been having dreams. A few with a younger me and you. And I remember an instance of you with some kind of metal tail…" He pointed to Stinger's Blood Veil. "Something like that."

Upon hearing this, Stinger concluded this was a sign her brother's memories are beginning to resurface. These dreams Nicola has been describing couldn't be a coincidence.

"Nicola…" Stinger bit her bottom lip. "I only wanted to protect you."

"I appreciate you being protective of me, sis, but don't completely shut me out of your activities. I want to see my sister in action as a hero. I can at least see more of your heroics? Like you just did saving me and my friends?"

Stinger turned to Mona, who nodded neutrally.

She sighed. "Ok, but you three stay close to me and we're staying out of the fighting. After this is all done, I'll let you meet the Phantom Thieves." She grumbled in thought. *I'm so going to regret this.*

The three teens wore enthused smiles and already got giddy over meeting their favorite urban heroes. Stinger regretted doing this, but deep down she felt this was probably the right thing. She wouldn't be able to keep lying to her brother and hide her sisterly activities.

"You three! This way!" Mona barked at the three teens.
"Hey, you can talk!" Reiko freaked out.

"Yeah? So what? You three gonna stand there or are y'all coming?" He scoffed as he headed through the forest path into Meiji Shrine.

"Well, you heard him. Follow us!" Stinger beckoned the three teens.

"C'mon, let's go!" Shinya rallied his two friends toward the Yokai battles.

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(Cue Persona 5 OST - Last Surprise )

The Great Centipede bellowed and went for a poisonous breath mist. However, the White Tiger retaliated with a yellow laser from his right eye that tore through the giant Yokai arthropod's underside. This helped cripple and bring down the Great Centipede.

Before Joker, Fox, and Oracle went for an All-Out Attack, the other Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and Spiritual Gamblers arrived to give assist.

"Need a hand?!" Sion called to Joker.

"Let's bring that big bug down!" Panther declared.

"Go for it!" Mona openly shouted and rallied the Thieves.

Without delay, the Phantom Thieves struck the Great Centipede with their All-Out Attack. The Great Centipede was on the receiving end of lightning fast piercing and combustible attacks that dealt critical damage to it.

However, that wasn't enough to put away the Great Centipede.

Sion gathered Tennyo, Io, Stinger, Engineer, and Hound.

"Let's deal the finishing blow, Vein Remnants!" Sion called out.

As the Great Centipede weakly rose, the Vein Remnants unleashed their variation of the Thieves' All-Out Attack. The Revenants summoned their Blood Veils. They tore into the arthropod's body, ripped off its appendages, blasted holes through its body, and bombarded it with varied blasts.

Joker and Sion landed beside each other. Joker pointed his Tyrant Pistol at the same time Sion readied his Regicide Blade.

"Ready, Ren?"

"Finish it!"

(End theme)

Suddenly, the Great Centipede's head exploded in gory fashion and collapsed. Everyone were taken aback by this startling outcome.

"Who the hell just blew its head off?!" Skull exclaimed.

"Aww man! Who stole your kill?!" Tamamo whined.
"Up there!" Queen quickly pointed up to two figures standing on the closest shrine rooftop.

The party members caught wind of the two figures responsible for killing the Great Centipede.

The Vein Remnants quickly recognized the opportunistic duo.

"Jack Rutherford and Eva Roux?!!" balked Sion, remembering their names with clarity.

Io gasped upon seeing the aforementioned couple.

Both Stinger and Hound conveyed sudden disdain for Jack for some inexplicable reason. This can be discerned and based off their memories.

"Skyler?" Tennyo approached Sion.

Sion and Jack had a quiet stare down.

"It's been a long time, hasn't it, Sion?" Jack asked him, calmly smiling.

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Second Mythological Waves; Divine Interactions (第二の神話の波; 神との相互作用)

Chapter Notes

Here's a link to the Fanfiction.net version and for those who want the original version, which will include detailed author notes.

Fanfiction.net link: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/13165382/4/Urban-Legends

Chapter IV

Second Mythological Waves; Divine Interactions (第二の神話の波; 神との相互作用)

Meiji Shrine (明治神宮)/Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京)/12:30 AM (JST)

"Jack?!!" Sion exclaimed as he and Jack intensely stared down.

"Heh, how long has it been, Sion?" Jack smirked as he and Eva hopped off the roof.

The Phantom Thieves, the Spiritual Gamblers, and the spirits weren't sure how to assess Jack and Eva, having never seen them before. However, the Vein Remnants, especially Stinger and Hound, were seemingly not pleased to see them. Joker noticed the tension between the Remnants and the newly arrived duo.

"Dude, what's up with Skyler and the others?" Skull asked Joker.

"They just helped us bring down that centipede, but Skyler and the others don't look too thrilled to see them," Queen muttered.

"I've never seen these two before. I wonder if they know each other," Noir said. "Louis?" She tried to call to Engineer, who ignored her and attentively faced Jack & Eva.

"I wonder if these two are anything like Skyler and his crew. Maybe more Revenants?" Oracle speculated.

"That's a good guess, but maybe they'll confirm that," Panther added as she walked up to Joker. "What do you think, Ren?"

"We're about to find out," the Phantom Thief leader meticulously watched the exchange.

Tennyo found herself between the heated face-off between the Remnants and the duo. Before she try to reason with both parties, Ivy grabbed her arm and pulled her back.

"Io?"

"Don't get between them, Hifumi. For your good," Ivy advised Tennyo. She had enough strength to jerk Tennyo away.
"Skyler, do you know these two people?" Tennyo asked him.

As Jack and Eva stepped forward for a closer interaction, Stinger and Hound quickly cut them off. Mia readied her bayonet. Yakumo summoned a great sword and raised it toward the duo. Jack and Eva stopped their advancement.

"You're the last faces we'd hoped to never see," Hound growled intensely like his codename.

"Hey, we just saved your lives, mongrel. A 'thank you' is an order," Eva rebuked against Hound's remark.

"We had that monster where we wanted it," Sion interjected as he walked up to Jack and Eva. He beckoned Stinger and Hound back. "You two didn't need to interfere."

"But, how would we make a grand entrance, Skyler?" Jack calmly chortled, shifting between Sion and Stinger. The latter had a fierce look that could kill. "Listen, Skyler. Eva and I's memories have returned to us. It's been that way for a few months now."

"The same has happened to us," Sion confirmed Jack's suspicions.

"It's no coincidence some ambiguous forces at work is behind this. Not only have we been pulled away from our timeline, but now our previous memories have returned. Up until a few months ago, we've been leading new and seemingly normal lives. Eva and I ended up as a couple in this timeline. Jack explained his situation before the Yami Matter started muddling their reality. "Then, something happened. An abnormality appeared and restored our memories." He then turned his attention toward Ivy. His eyes glowed blue. "She is responsible for our memories returning."

Ivy responded with quiet intensity and brandished her halberd.

"So, you're aware of the Yami Matter?" Skyler queried to Jack.

"Eva and I committed to some investigating. We've realized time has been reset to 2018-2019. Even though we should be in 2020-2021. No one else seems to have noticed the time reset and the masses continue to lead normal lives as if nothing's wrong." Jack informed them. "But, we know what's wrong. Do we, Skyler?"

Sion frowned as Jack calmly smirked in his face.

"Don't get so heated, Skyler. We're not here to fight you. Believe me, blood would be spilled right now if we wanted to hurt you and your friends," Eva finally spoke up. "We have a common foe we must vanquish."


"So, this enemy has a name? Then, you and your friends must've been fighting some form of this Yami Matter," Jack said.

"Yeah? So, you want to team up with us?" Engineer interjected as he confronted Jack and Eva.

"Why do you think we're here?" Eva said.

"Like hell we'd ever team up with you two!" Stinger protested. As her blue eyes glowed red with fury, she veered toward Jack's way. "Especially you! I don't have all my memories, but I do remember what you tried to do to my brother!"
As Mia raised her bayonet, she forced Jack to back off. Likewise, Hound pointed his great sword toward Jack.

"I told you if you ever lay a hand on him, I'll carve out your heart!" Mia heatedly warned Jack. Brief flashes of her protecting a young Nicola, who appeared sickly with dark veins, from Jack, whose cold eyes glowed blue. More of these memories from their original post-apocalyptic timeline resurfaced in Mia and Jack's minds. "And don't think just because we're now living in a less harsh timeline, it doesn't change a thing between us!"

"Mia," Sion stepped in to play peacemaker between them. "I know you've had your issues with Jack, but we can't afford to let personal grudges get in the way of our mission." He quickly turned to Hound. "Same with you, Yakumo. We need to let cooler heads prevail."

Hearing this, Hound conceded to Sion's wishes and lowered his great sword.

"You made the right call," Eva stated. "You're right we have more serious issues to contend with."

"If I may, I hope we're not interrupting anything," Joker interjected as he, the Phantom Thieves, and the Spiritual Gamblers entered the Revenant conversation.

"So, we finally meet, Phantom Thieves of Hearts. Eva and I have heard all about your legendary reputations," Jack addressed the Thieves.

"Just so you know, we're with Sion. You two try anything to hurt them you also deal with us," Queen warned them.

"Mess with our vampire bros and babes, you mess with the rest of us. Got that?" Skull growled.

"Thanks, but we're not full vampires, Skull," Engineer corrected the now blonde-haired Thief.

"Well, technically speaking," Jack said, wearing a composed smirk. "Every now and then, Eva and I must feed on some blood to sustain our hunger."

"So, have you been feeding on humans?" Sion asked them.

"No, we're not so barbaric, Sion," Eva nodded. "Jack and I pick up bags of animal blood from a butcher. Mostly blood from swine."

"Although we won't hesitate for human blood should one threaten our lives," Jack smirked. "Will you stop us should there ever be such a situation, Skyler?"

"Just don't go on a needless killing spree. Then, we won't have to stop you two," Sion forewarned the duo should they ever cross the line.

"But, why are you two together? Last I remember, you and Eva weren't on friendly terms in our original timeline," Engineer pointed out the big elephant in the room.

"It's true. She and I weren't fond of each other before. However, since we were moved here, I've seen our relationship in a new light. Before our memories returned, we arrived in a new reality. Our lives could start fresh. We were different people. Thus, when we met, we became acquainted and formed a relationship. We then became a couple," Jack explained their new relationship. "How were we supposed to know about any recollections of our previous livelihoods?"

"Being a couple in this time allowed our rivalry to waver. Yes, now you can say we're both business and personal partners," Eva plainly stated.
"Will you two help us then?" Joker queried to Jack and Eva.

"If you'll permit us. Your new enemy is ours," Jack said, looking between Joker and Sion. "But, tell me. What is this Yami Matter? Where did it come from?"

"We have no idea, but Io here has told us that they are byproducts of an enemy the Phantom Thieves have defeated twice before," Sion revealed without so much revealing Yaldabaoth and Saklas's names.

"Is that so?" Jack frowned, pivoting toward Ivy's direction.

"Having observed the whole battle against these creatures, I can guess these creatures are Yami Matter monsters? They don't seem to be Lost," Eva assessed the first wave of Yokai the group vanquished.

"They are Yokai. This mysterious Yami Matter summoned them here," Nekomata, who shrank back out of his White Tiger form, interjected into the conversation.

"A talking cat?" Eva gawked at Nekomata.

"And presumably these are Yokai the Phantom Thieves have already slain," William stated.

"That's right! In fact, the creature me and Io just slain was the same monster that attacked my home months ago!" Tennyo confessed, to which surprised the Phantom Thieves.

"You mean to say, that was the exact monster that attacked you and the previous Sion?" Asked Panther.

"Yes! That Yokai's aura was very similar. There's no mistaking it," Tennyo stated, drawing from both memory and her Revenant ability to detect specific sinister energies.

"So, this Yami Matter is not only unleashing monsters on us, but reviving the dead somehow?" Fox speculated.

"Sounds kinda far-fetched to me," Queen remarked.

"Perhaps not. It's not uncommon for the slain to return from the underworld to seek vengeance," Hanzo stated.

Having heard enough entail about the Yami Matter, Jack turned to Joker and Sion again.

"Well? What say you, two?" Jack asked them.

Before Joker and Sion could say anything, Jack quickly became alarmed. Everyone sensed an unsettling aura that shrouded Meiji Shrine. The Revenant's, minus Jack, eyes glowed red. Jack's glowed pale blue. The Phantom Thieves and Spiritual Gamblers felt the disturbance through their Personas and Guardian Spirits.

"There's another evil source encroaching and preparing to surface on sacred ground!" Yuriko warned everyone.

"Great, just what we need…" Presto muttered.

"Heh, bring them on I say!" Tamamo have an opposite reaction to the forthcoming dark entities preparing to surface.
"Of course, you'd be excited," sardonically whispered Brave.

"Where are they coming from now?!" Joker scanned the shrine's vicinity. "Futaba?!

"Yeah, they're... materializing behind us! 6 o'clock!" Oracle pinpointed the exact location of the Yami Matter emergence.

The entire group turned the direction Oracle confirmed. Black smoke seemingly leaked out of the ground and formed a wall. Within this wall, a wormhole resembling a purple whirlpool opened up. William, Hanzo, Nekomata, and the other spirits felt chilling and familiar presences emerging out of the wormhole.

"It can't be... Not him!" William yelled out apprehensively.

"Who is he?" Mina asked William.

"One of our greatest enemies. You should be aware of Edward Kelley?"

"You mean... the alchemist?" Mina referred.

A quiet but maniacal laugh came out of the wormhole. Everyone held their ground as a figure slowly walked forward.

"Ah yes, it's been so long since you destroyed me, William," the quiet tone coming from the alchemist was heard, enough to send chills down the spines of some of the party members.

Edward Kelley stepped through the dark void of the Yami Matter wall. He appeared to be a sickly pale-skinned man. His body, notably his chest and arms, covered in alchemic symbol tattoos, including a hexagon embellished directly on his chest. His clothing consisted mostly of black; a black vest covering his sides with black feathers covering the shoulder areas, black pants, and a black hood covering his head. As he pulled down his hood, the man was bald headed, completely clean shaven. There is an alchemist symbol tattooed on the right side of his head. His eyes are blood like red.

Kelley's red eyes scanned his opposition. He recognized William, Nobunaga, and the other spirits. A calm, conniving smile adorned his pale features.

"Wow, talk about creepy," Panther shuddered at the ghastly sight of the alchemist.

"That's Edward Kelley. According to texts, he abused the power of alchemy. Having mastered the power to converting lead to gold, he discovered Amrita to turn people into monsters and reanimated corpses to carry out his evil biddings!" Fox recalled from research from his Japanese art history studies.

"He doesn't look and speak our language," Noir realized.

"He's an Englishman, but we don't even need to understand him to know what kind of person he is," Fox said.

"Yeah, and judging by how William and the others are looking at him, he's totally the bad guy," Oracle frowned. "Wait, I'm detecting more!"

"There's more coming out of that portal?!" Skull exclaimed.

"So, we're now fighting evil humans. This should be interesting," Jack smirked.
Emerging next to Edward Kelley is John Dee, an aged Englishman with a thick white beard with a mustache and long white hair that seemed to flow down the back of his neck. He had a receding hairline over the top of his bald head where not a speck of white hair was seen. Rather than hair, there were four sickly-looking red eyes that opened up on both sides of his forehead. He wore a black heavy coat over his matching colored robe. Tufts of white fur covered the upper area of his coat. He carried in his left hand a metal staff with a bright Amrita crystal. Around his neck, John wore a necklace with a pendant hanging from it. His left blue eye is a stark contrast to his right eye. The old man's right eye is red.

"That's John Dee!" Fox exclaimed.

"And who's he, Inari?" Oracle queried.

"He's the mastermind of the Amrita's production and aimed to ascend England as a global power. He worked behind the scenes and created Kelley as his own homunculus to not only kill his opposition, but harvest every trace of Amrita. He like Kelley was ultimately stopped by William and his entourage."

"We sure needed to know that," Queen stated.

"John Dee, so you've returned with Kelley!" William exclaimed.

"You didn't think you'd be rid of us that easily," Kelley chortled. "But, that's not all."

Walking next to John is a ten-foot tall pale-skinned man, Derrick the Executioner, dressed in a black executioner's garb, including mask. However, the clothing seemed to mesh with his body as if becoming a layer of armor. He wore metal chains over his shoulders. Red alchemist symbols glowed over the dark skin. Numerous red glowing spikes poked out of his shoulders and back. Two massive red horns adorned the executioner's head. His eyes gleamed bright red. He carried a gigantic axe, which he used to execute over 3,000 people in his lifetime.

Kelley cackled. "I've brought with me the Executioner as well!"

John smiled wickedly. "Yes, but there's more. The dark forces that have revived us have bestowed us formidable warriors. The perfect Yokai to do our bidding!"

With that, two ten-foot tall armored Yokai warriors appeared opposite from both John Dee and Kelley. The pair are Magatsu Warriors. They were garbed in samurai armor and have four arms; each arm armed with blades. These Yokai warriors invoked the image of demon gods similar to Asura. They have long white hair and bangs. Their faces also invoked fear as they appeared ghastly and skull-like with red glowing eyes. A pair of black Yokai horns poked out of their helmets. Poking out of their golden Amrita back are layers of highly concentrated Yami Matter energies, which not only revived them but transformed them into the Yokai abominations they've become.

Kelley proudly introduced the Magatsu Warriors. "Among the opponents you'll be fighting is the Akadean duo. I've individually christened them with names. Talpa and Arago. I'm sure they'll entertain you before slicing you all into pieces!"

"Oh great, look at the size of those two!" Presto freaked.

"Now, this is what I've been craving for!" Tamamo shouted gleefully.

"They remind me of the Lost," Engineer observed the Magatsu Warriors.

"Perhaps the Yokai are the earliest forms of Lost?" Eva wondered out loud.
"Maybe, but right now it won't matter because I'm going to tear them apart," Jack's grin widened and his eyes turned pale blue.

"By yourself? Sure, go ahead and get yourself killed, arrogant dick," Hound remarked.

"Wouldn't bother me in the slightest if they tore you apart. I sure won't save you," Stinger added with her continued disdain for Jack.

"You two, enough. This is all of our battle now." Sion silenced them.

"Indeed, we've returned to not only seek vengeance on our old enemies, but to destroy those who stand in our way. You all just so happen to be in our way," Kelley meticulously scanned the new faces among the heroes. "I see some of you are familiar with my name, so that should save time for any introductions." His malevolent smile faded and his eyes glowed red. "John, I do believe these youth are standing in the way of our vengeance. How shall we deal with them? Quick and painless? Or, slow and excruciating?"

John chuckled darkly. "Why not both. Then, William and his cohorts will be left alone to deal with us."

"No, we will fight with these youth to send you back to the underworld where you came!" William boldly declared, taking his stance to defeat Kelley and his entourage.

"And I'll be sure to end you myself if I have to!" Mina pointed to Kelley. She quickly summoned Saoirse, which Kelley immediately recognized.

The pale-skinned bald alchemist slyly grinned, chuckling under his breath. "So, you've found a worthy successor for Saoirse, William. Now this will be quite interesting. I can't wait to challenge your successor, William."

"Be wary of his alchemy, Mina. Kelley is a treacherous one and he'll attempt to absorb Saoirse's power." Hanzo warned the woman.

Mina nodded. "Yeah, I'll keep that in mind once I shove my fist in his face."

Undeterred by their evil energies, Joker confronted the evil men and their Yokai warriors. He was then joined by the other Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and the Spiritual Gamblers.

"Wait, considering there's a large number of you, we're severely handicapped," Kelley realized. He closed his eyes and focused. Red energies of light flowed through the alchemical symbol and lines embellished on his body. He then sent the energies into the ground.

A giant red alchemical symbol materialized on the ground. A pillar of dark light poured from the symbol and dumped throughout the area. The black wave quickly spread, causing harm to the spirits. In response to the disturbance, Nekomata transformed back to the White Tiger.

"Shit, what now?!" Skull shouted.

Tennyo felt the immense evil energy shrouding the area and became sensitive to it. Io held onto Tennyo.

"Hifumi…!" Io grabbed a hold of her.

"Hifumi?! Io, is she ok?!" Sion called out to them.
"I'm... ok!" Tennyo willfully resisted the dark energies disturbing her. "I can still go." She firmly held her ko-naginata.

"Thank god," Sion sighed with relief.

Jack noted Sion's obvious connection with Tennyo and scoffed. So, you've found someone to care for, Sion. He internally thought.

"Come forth and destroy our enemies, our legion!" John declared, lifting his metal staff. The Amrita crystal inside the staff glowed and unleashed its powers to infuse with the dark wave spreading throughout the shrine.

As the opposition declared war on the Thieves, Remnants, Gamblers, and the spirits, the Yokai Second Wave emerged from the dark clouds.

The first to emerge is a giant 20-foot tall Yokai skeleton with six arms. Its head was freakishly bulbous with spiky Amrita crystals poking out of its center and right area of the skull area. There's even more Amrita inside its ribcage. A huge amount of steam seeped out of the bones, which is a sign of the Amrita's influence. This is the Gasha-dokuro.

An army of horned and stronger variations of the Yoki. They have long white hair and bangs. Their flesh are dark gray and bright red; and covered Amrita spikes driven into their shoulders, backs, and heads. The Amrita energies not only have augmented their powers, but have driven them into berserk states. Huge amounts of steam seeped through their pores, which is a sign of the Amrita's power ravaging their bodies. Their only clothing are dark pants. These are Discord Amrita Fiends.

Some Namahage appeared, but these are dark-skinned variants and wore crimson light armor. More Raven Tengus materialized ready for battle.

Some other new Yokai appeared, including female Yokai called Flying Bolts. These creatures wore a long bolt of cotton cloth draped over their half-naked bodies. Their pale-skinned figures were mostly naked with certain areas covered, namely around their bosoms, crotch & waistlines, and heavy bandaged layers all over the right leg. They had long black hair, black teeth, black sharp fingernails, and black long nails. White ethereal auras formed over them. They let out otherworldly sensual moans and giggled evilly.

More new Yokai appeared in the form of revolting, bulbous creatures covered with needles and broken blades. These are Harinobo. In addition to these, white furred Yokai foxes, having been exposed to spirit stones, appeared. These are Fox Spirits.

"These monsters have been imbued with Amrita! They will be much more difficult than the Yokai you've just slain," John chortled wickedly.

The English Alchemist's hands and body glowed with a bright red aura. Something resembling a serpent materialized from this red glow. The serpent's skin became black like ash. Fragments of its skin peeled off as the same red light rippled through and surfaced across the serpent's body. The serpent circled over Kelley's body and turned around on his left side. The serpent opened its mouth, hissing and baring its fangs.

"My Guardian Spirit, Ouroboros, is hungry for spirits to feast on," Kelley chortled evilly. He scanned the Spiritual Gamblers. "Yes, and your spirits will do nicely."

"My friends, we must defeat and send these fiends to the underworld! They cannot be allowed to harvest the Guardian Spirits!" William cried out.
Nodding, Joker and Sion rallied their friends.

"Take them down!" Joker and Sion fiercely yelled.

With that, the party divided into smaller groups and took on segments of their opposition.

The four founding Phantom Thieves: Joker, Skull, Panther, and Mona, confronted and initiated battle against Gasha-dokuro. Towering over the Thieves, Gasha-dokuro roared and stomped toward them. The Thieves evaded Gasha-dokuro's giant feet.

"Go for its legs!" Skull shouted, smashing the back of Gasha-dokuro's left knee with his Ruyi Jingu Bang mace.

Aiming for the right leg, Joker fired consecutive rounds with his Tyrant Pistol. Panther helped Joker by tying up Gasha-dokuro right leg with her Naraka Whip. Mona launched himself into Gasha-dokuro's left knee and was on the verge of collapse. Then, the giant skeleton Yokai retaliated with a powerful foot stomp, unleashing a fiery wave that swept the four Thieves back.

Joker conjured his Persona, Arsène, into the battle. The dark red garbed aristocratic thief, named after legendary thief Arsène Lupin, emerged from a pillar of blue pyre that wisped around him. He conjured a black tall hat and put it on his head. The Persona's face was concealed in a black mask with ghoulish red eyes and a ghastly mouth. Two long black horns trimmed with red pointed forward. A long cape stretched out from his back and split into two massive dark feathered wings; each with a wingspan as long as Arsène's own body.

"Call upon me, and now release thy rage!" Arsène growled as he towered behind Joker and stood bathed in blue flames.

"Destroy this abomination!" Joker yelled as he and Arsène charged head-on with Gasha-dokuro.

As he jumped forward and blasted the giant skeleton Yokai with pistol rounds, Gasha-dokuro swung down its left hand, almost backhanding Joker far from the Meiji Shrine property. However, a pillar of blue flames intercepted Gasha-dokuro, saving Joker at the last possible second. Joker watched as Arsène conjured chains imbued with bluish flames and them at the giant Yokai.

Gasha-dokuro roared and struggled to fight against Arsène. Skull, Panther, and Mona summoned their Personas to aid Arsène. As Seiten Taisei and Hecate attacked from the left of Gasha-dokuro, Mercurius helped Arsène unleash a frontal assault on the giant Yokai.

"Our Personas should keep it busy! C'mon!" Mona called out to the Thieves. As he said this, he converted himself into a train roller coaster car. The front of the train has Mona's eyes and face with his smile widening. A long rail line materialized around Gasha-dokuro as it continued to engage the Personas.

"Holy crap! He's turned himself into that train from the Big Thunder Mountain ride we rode on a few years back!" Skull exclaimed, recalling riding the aforementioned roller coaster attraction at Tokyo Disneyland.

"Except, our train can fly," Joker plainly stated.

"Get on!" His voice rang out from the train he had become.
"Right! Into Mona, guys!" Panther shouted as she, Joker, and Skull got on.

Joker and Panther sat together at the front car. Skull was a car behind them.

"Hang on!" Mona cried out as he flew the three Thieves around Gasha-dokuro and evaded getting caught in the crossfire between the giant Yokai and the Persona fiery blasts.

Hecate cast **Fire Boost** and augmented her Persona colleagues. Mercurius caught Gasha-dokuro with a **Miracle Punch**, which cracked the side of Gasha-dokuro's face. Seiten Taisei quickly blasted the Yokai with faceful of **Ziodyne** as the electric attack damaged the Amrita side of its face. Having enough of their attacks, Gasha-dokuro swung its right hand down, smacking Hecate and Seiten Taisei down. As Mercurius attempted to swipe the Yokai, he was swatted away by a long skeletal tail, which came shooting out of Gasha-dokuro's back.

As Gasha-dokuro clumsily turned around, Arsène flew right into its face and planted **Dream Needle** to immobilize the Yokai. Stumbling about, Gasha-dokuro became disoriented.

"Now's our chance, guys!" Mona announced as he flew head-on with Gasha-dokuro's head. Pushing fast, Mona's tracks sparked with fireworks. More streams and explosive fireworks exploded out from Mona's train chimney, which was a new attack he called **Phantom Hanabi**.

The explosive fireworks and sparks bombarded Gasha-dokuro. Sparks and fire exploded from the Yokai's body.

"Hell yeah! Hit him again, Mona!" Skull hollered, flailing his hands into the air like a giddy kid.

"Blast him!" Panther cheered him on.

"Here we go!" Mona shouted as he flew over Gasha-dokuro's head and swerved around behind the giant's back. He repeated his attack to disorient and bring the Gasha-dokuro down.

"Hahahah, take that you big bastard!" Skull laughed.

Suddenly, Gasha-dokuro regained its bearings and reached for Joker.

"JOKER!" Mona, Panther, and Skull shouted in unison.

As the Yokai's hand closed on him, Joker quickly jumped upward and evaded its grasp. Arsène swooped down and caught Joker. Raising his Tyrant Pistol to his face, Joker recalled his Persona into his body.

"I am thou, thou art I…" The voice of Arsène muttered darkly inside Joker's mind. Just then, blue flames flared behind Joker as Arsène's wings formed from his back. Having gained his Persona's wings, Joker fully utilized Arsène's wings to glide around Gasha-dokuro's head.

"Hey, check it out!" Panther pointed out to her husband gaining his own Persona's wings.

"This is result of the passive abilities our Persona's Ascendancy left us. We're able to use these attacks even when not in our ascended states!" Mona reminded them of their strongest Persona forms they used a few months ago.

"Does that mean we can do what Joker just pulled?" Skull's asked with a sadistic grin. "Seiten Taisei, come back to me!"

"Hecate!" Panther recalled her Persona.
As the Persona returned to their respective Thieves, Skull and Panther each gained significant boosts. Skull's entire body lit up with electrical surges. A red aura enveloped over Panther.

The Three Phantom Thieves' eyes glowed with fiery energy. Empowered with their Personas, the Thieves tapped into their Persona's Ascendancy passive abilities and utilized them in full.

Panther conjured her machine gun and fired Agni Bolts at the Gasha-dokuro's head. These charged blasts blasted away sections of the Yokai's Amrita crystals. As for Skull, he charged up his whole body as a yellow glow covered him.

"Heh, now have a taste of my Electric Kaio-ken!" Skull boasted as he vanished and shot across like lightning bolt at the Gasha-dokuro.

As if wanting to say "Kaio-what?", the Yokai's head recoiled from Skull's thunderous punch. The electric-powered Phantom Thief quickly unloading a combo of consecutive punches and kicks that shattered Gasha-dokuro's body. The power behind Skull's electrical blow cracked Gasha-dokuro's jaw into pieces and caused the giant to stumble back. Unable to fly, Skull fell back into one of Mona's train carts.

"It's time to seal your fate, abomination!" Joker declared as his feathered wings unleashed blue flames, which coalesced with his Persona's Ascendancy power. Doubling as his own Persona, Joker summoned Satanael. The visage of the rebellious demon lord shot a menacing gaze as its presence towered over Gasha-dokuro. "Satanael, pillage him!"

Before Gasha-dokuro could attack, Joker finished the Yokai with Satanael's Riot Gun. The immense blast destroyed the skeleton Yokai and reduced it into a graveyard heap of bones.

Joker descended and turned off his wings. He turned as Mona turned back to normal. Mona recalled his Persona. Skull and Panther ran over to high five Joker.

"Yeah! I can't believe we can actually tap into our Persona's Ascendancy abilities!" Panther yelled out in elation.

"Hell yeah! The bad guys we're fighting now won't know what'll hit 'em!" Skull boasted.

"Let's not celebrate right away, guys. We've got to see to the others and aid them!" Mona stated.

Ready his pistol, Joker nodded. "Right, we can't let this go any further."

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Queen, Noir, Engineer, Mina, William, Hanzo, and Okatsu headed off Kelley, Magatsu Warrior (Talpa), Raven Tengu, and Namahage.

"We'll take the big guy," Engineer said to Queen and Noir. "Makoto, let's see those fists of yours pound some Yokai into pulp."

Queen balled up and readied her fists. "Let's get this over with."

"Then, we shall take Kelley, Mina," William suggested to his successor.

Mina summoned Saoirse and turned toward Kelley, who beckoned them to fight him.

"Then, we'll handle the remaining Yokai," Hanzo proposed as he and Okatsu engaged the Raven Tengu and Namahage.
As William attacked Kelley, the English Alchemist defended with an alchemic barrier. A fiendish grin formed on the alchemist's pale face as his glowing red eyes stared at William's fierce and determined gaze. Mina dashed around Kelley and sent Saoirse to destabilize his barrier from the rear.

"Let's see if this works," Mina used a talisman to power-up her Guardian Spirit. She directed Saoirse to attack Kelley's barrier.

Saoirse summoned and unleashed a large water blast. As the large splash crashed into the barrier, a small crack was formed. Seeing this, Mina put on a fighting glove on her right hand and punched the crack, causing the barrier to start cracking. Saoirse unleashed another water blast that shattered the barrier, sending a small tidal wave toward Kelley.

Kelley called upon Ouroboros to create another barrier to stop the wave. However, William came forward and hit him with a Ki-imbued sword. Kelley was struck by William's blade, leaving him open for Mina to deliver an elbow to his jaw. Mina then followed up with consecutive jabs and a roundhouse kick for good measure. Kelley tried to counter these moves, but got leveled quickly. As William and Mina went for another attack, Kelley teleported behind them. He unleashed Ouroboros to bite Mina and take Saoirse. However, William quickly sliced Ouroboros' head.

"Damn! Almost had Saoirse again!" A miffed Kelley cursed and teleported a great distance from his adversaries. He healed Ouroboros as it grew a new head.

"Are you ok, Mina?" William asked his successor.

"Yeah, thanks to you," she fiercely gazed Kelley, making sure she doesn't drop her guard again. "I see why you hated this bastard. Just the sight of him repulses me."

Kelley hissed. "One way or another, I will have your Guardian Spirits."

Opposite from the Kelley battle, Queen, Noir, and Engineer went straight for Talpa. The Magatsu Warrior charged at the trio and attacked them with its Blades of Avīci. They dodged getting sliced up by Talpa's blades. Queen quickly sidestepped and punched the ground hard, causing the earth to shift under Talpa. Nearly being taken off its balance, Talpa swung its blades at Queen.

"Makoto!" Noir and Engineer called out to warn her.

In response to Talpa's attack, Queen invoked her Ultimate Persona, Anat, who helped force back the Magatsu Warrior. Drawing power from Anat, Queen lunged and punched Talpa's face with her Sabazoi's Knuckles. After dazing Talpa, Queen landed a kick that sent the Yokai stumbling back. The Yokai threw a blade, which Queen punched and broke into pieces with her weaponized knuckles.

Engineer came up from Talpa's right and readily invoked his Ogre-Type Blood Veil. He also had a sword already drawn in his right hand. He dashed and evaded Talpa's blades. He turned and countered the Yokai's remaining three blades with his sword. With an intense look, Louis snarled and thrust his Ogre-Type Blood Veil through Talpa's abdomen. He started tearing and ripping out the Yokai's organs as heavy amounts of blood poured.

However, Talpa kicked Engineer back and utilized its Amrita to heal itself. Unbeknownst to the Yokai, Noir climbed a tree behind Talpa and waited in the wings. She took out her Fleurs du Mal axe. She jumped off and mounted Talpa's back. She clinged onto the Yokai and smashed her axe several times, breaking off Talpa's Amrita crystals.

"Haru, hang on!" Queen raced over to her partner.
"It's ok! I've got this-!" As she chopped off enough crystals, Talpa tossed Noir off its back. Noir quickly summoned her Ultimate Persona, Astarte. Astarte saved the Phantom Thief and fired a **Triple Down** to subdue the Yokai.

Anat blasted Talpa with **Freidyne**. Following Anat's attack, Queen amassed power from her Ultimate Persona and equipped them to her fists. She sprinted head-on with Talpa. The Yokai threw another blade at her. Queen jumped up, evading Talpa's blade. Diving into the air, Queen swooped down and delivered one-two punch combo with **Nuclear Fists**, pounding and breaking all the Amrita off Talpa's back.

"Nice takedown, Makoto! Allow me to join in!" Engineer quickly slashed Talpa with his Revenant hand. He then unleashed consecutive slashes with his sword, slicing and stabbing Talpa's body. He managed to cut off two of Talpa's arms, leaving him with two arms and a blade left.

While defending himself against William and Mina's assault, Kelley witnessed his Yokai minion numbers diminish.

"Are you just realizing the heroes of this period aren't the pushovers you assumed them to be? Oversight cost you then and it will cost you now, Kelley." William openly chastised the alchemist.

"Do you give?" Mina asked Kelley.

Kelley snarled in response. "This battle isn't over yet."

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Sion, Tennyo, Ivy, Jack, Eva, Nobunaga, and Nōhime confronted John Dee, Magatsu Warrior (Arago), Flying Bolts, and Harinobo.

"Heheh, shall we begin then?" John invited the opposition to attack him.

Sion, Tennyo, Ivy, Nobunaga, and Nōhime charged ahead and attacked the encroaching Yokai. Jack and Eva stayed back, biding their time.

Sion brandished his Regicide Blade. A pair of Flying Bolts tossed cloth to ensnare him, but the Revenant slashed through the Flying Bolts with ease. Ivy backed Tennyo up by taking down a couple of Harinobo. A Flying Bolt sneakied up behind Tennyo and tossed a cloth, catching her right arm. Tennyo tried fighting back with a **Lightning Thorn**, but the Yokai seized and tossed Tennyo around before launching her for the nearest shrine.

"Hifumi!" Sion called for Tennyo. As he ran to save her, John fired a beam through his Amrita staff.

"Going somewhere, boy?" John taunted Sion.

"Io! Go check on Hifumi!" Sion ordered Ivy, growling toward John.

As Ivy hurried over to retrieve Tennyo, more Flying Bolts and Harinobo appeared and surrounded them. Ivy prepared to attack with her Ivy-Type Blood Veil, but a haze of cold air surrounded the Yokai and froze them. Nōhime saved Tennyo and Ivy.

"Thank you for saving us," Tennyo said, quickly retrieving her ko-naginata that she dropped. She and Ivy proceeded to destroy the frozen Yokai, shattering them to pieces.

Sion briefly clashed with John, who countered the Revenant's attacks with barriers forged by his staff. Growing ever more agitated, Sion summoned his Hanemukuro katana. He brandished both
weapons in a dual-wielding fighting stance. John fired another beam from his staff. This time, Sion evaded and quickly shuffled over to the left. John threw more blasts that Sion sidestepped. Sion was able to discern and predict John's attack patterns. He jumped over another beam from John and swung both weapons. Preparing to counter Sion's dual-wielding attack, the Revenant tapped into Io's Ivy-Type Blood Veil and hit the ground, summoning spikes that came out of the ground behind John. The spikes went through John, who got caught by Sion's trap.

"Augh! Damn you…!" John cursed, gargling blood as Sion rushed over to finish him. "But, not nearly enough, boy!" He invoked the Amrita powers from his staff and destabilized Sion's Blood Veil. Then, he formed a barrier that stopped Sion's path. "Here's something that'll surely terrify you. William, I hope this invokes memories when the last time we crossed paths!"

Upon hearing his name called from afar, William realized what John referred to. William attempted to intervene, but Kelley stopped him.

"Be careful, young warrior! He's going to invoke his true grotesque form!" William yelled out to Sion. He watched as Sion paced himself and attacking John's barrier. Seeing Sion wielding a Japanese weapon like Hanemukuro reminded William of his past adventures as a foreign hero liberating Japan of the evil that plagued it ages ago.

With a barrier protecting him, nobody could stop John now. John raised his staff as the crystal gave off a bright orange glow. The orange aura enveloped the older man and transformed him. His human form distorted and mutated into something grotesque. He transformed into a 15-foot high bulbous walking mass of gray flesh with long tentacles. Each tentacle had demonic orange eyes. The disgusting blob of mass, which comprised of his whole body, was covered in similar demonic eyes. The creature had approximately a hundred eyes based on observation. His left hand retained the metal staff he used to transform himself with. Nothing remotely resembling the old man was present. He had become Hundred Eyes.

Nobunaga ceased his battle with Arago and became horrified by John's revolting transformation into Hundred Eyes. Seizing advantage of the distracted spirit, Arago swung its blades over Nobunaga. Nobunaga barely sidestepped getting bisected by Arago's blades. As Nobunaga went for a sword dash at the Yokai, two Shogi pieces materialized on Arago's opposite sides. These Shogi pieces unleashed divine sparks and stunned Arago.

"Good save, Hifumi! I've got him!" Ivy came up toward Arago's swung her halberd. She quickly carved through Arago's back and broke off sections of Amrita crystals. As she went for another halberd swing, Arago turned and slashed her repeatedly with its blades.

"Io!" Tennyo cried out, witnessing Ivy being critically maimed. Filled with anger, Tennyo blasted Arago with Lightning Thorn. After taking down the Magatsu Warrior, she dove in and caught Ivy. "I've got you, Io!"

"Hey… nice catch…" Ivy tried bringing light to a serious situation. She winced with the wounds Arago gave her.

"Hold on, Io. I'll treat you," Tennyo said, using Panacea Essence to heal Ivy and cure her of any ailments she might receive from the wounds.

Moaning lightly, Ivy felt renewed after her treatment. "Oooh, yeah. That's better. Thanks, Hifumi."

"You're welcome," Tennyo stood up with Ivy. "And just for safer measures." She cast Regenerator on them, improving the self-regenerating abilities of Ivy and herself.
As Nobunaga held Arago long enough for the female duo to recover, Tennyo and Ivy charged at Arago. Arago threw two of its blades at them. Tennyo and Ivy quickly sidestepped Arago's blades. Both got behind and targeted the Amrita clump on Arago's back. With their halberd and ko-naginata, they took turns tearing off Arago's Amrita. Arago turned around, defending its life source and blocking their attacks with its remaining two blades.

Having gained enough observations of the battles, Jack slowly marched forward. Eva accompanied him.

"You're finally making a move?" Eva asked him.

"I have a good grasp of the opponents we're fighting, but I don't intend to drag things out. I'm going for the straight kill!" Jack declared, unbuttoning his shirt to reveal a small orb necklace. "Sion, you and your friends better pay attention now, because I'm entering this fray!"

"No, you wouldn't go for that right away!" Eva gasped, knowing the nature of this orb and observing its power utilized by Jack before.

While dodging Hundred Eyes' tentacles, Sion overheard Jack. For a second, he watched a shimmering spark of white light envelop Jack. Everyone else stopped and witnessed the event occur.

"I invoke Drake-Type Blood Veil!" Jack passionately shouted as he grasped the glowing orb.

"Drake-Type…?!" Sion exclaimed.

"Jack!" Eva screamed as the force from the orb's light pushed her away.

The other Revenants, still embroiled in their battles, briefly sensed Jack's Drake-Type Blood Veil materialize. Like Sion, this was the first instance they've ever heard of a Drake-Type Blood Veil.

Having utilized the power of his orb necklace, Jack took on an unfamiliar dragon form that baffled the Japanese natives around him. He became a 13-foot tall white-scaled, four-legged dragon of non-Japanese origin. He resembled a long-necked monster. Its skin was tough and lacking soft features. Six bony protrusions jutted around its long snouted head; three protrusions on each side. Jack's notable facial scar still runs over his left eye. The dragon's eyes retained their pale blue color as it fixated on his opposition. His underbelly is full of hard garnet armor. Crescent-shaped garnet wings sprout from his back to complete the Drake-Type Blood Veil's complete form.

Everyone else, even those involved in the other clashes, briefly ceased fighting and gazed upon Jack's completed dragon transformation.

Of the group, the Japanese natives, such as the Phantom Thieves and Tennyo, were not just flabbergasted, but dismayed by Jack's dragon form. The mood in the air was also filled with dread and confusion. This is the first they've seen a dragon resembling that of European folklore rather than the traditional Far Eastern mythologies they've been accustomed to.

"Oh god, Jack… how…?" Sion was baffled by this baffling event.

Of the heroes, William became more intrigued seeing a dragon in this day and age. He recounted of alleged encounters with dragons in England. Seeing a dragon of European influence just seemed like something out of place and out of time during this contemporary age.

"I've never seen such a beast even during my time with all the Yokai running amok," Hanzo observed the white dragon.
"It's because it's a dragon with an appearance closer to those of the legends from my homeland," William stated. "Dragons like this aren't supposed to be around in this day and age."

"But, this cannot be a real monster. It's a human that used an orb to transform into one!" Okatsu pointed out.

"Heheh, that man used an artifact to grant himself the form of the dragons of antiquity times," Kelley meticulously eyed the dragon heading its way to attack Hundred Eyes. "I don't know how he's acquired this artifact. It may very be akin to Amrita. Therefore, we shall acquire it!" As he prepared to confront the dragon, Mina quickly cut him off and went for a roundhouse kick that Kelley evaded.

"You're not going anywhere!" Mina shouted, sending Saoirse to attack Kelley.

As the dragon slammed head first with Hundred Eyes' barrier, it slightly stumbled back. However, the grotesque being's defensive wall didn't stop the dragon from headbutting it.

"Jack!" Sion called out to the dragon.

Facing Hundred Eyes, the dragon opened its mouth and let out a terrifying roar that started with a bellow. Then, the bellow became a deep, low growl. There was a loud bone-chilling screech coming out between the loud bellow and deep growl. It sounded like the combination of varying animals combined into one unique vocalization fitting for a mythical-looking beast. Some of the combatants froze with terror having felt the dragon's roars emanating from the center of the shrine.

"I never even knew a Drake-Type Blood Veil even existed?" Sion watched the dragon clawing into Hundred Eyes' barrier.

"That's because it didn't where we come from," Eva interjected as she walked beside Sion. "Neither Jack nor I knew until we awoke in this period. Once we met in this time, he's had that orb necklace. He's never had any recollections where he found it and just assumed it was given to him for whatever reason. Then, once our memories returned, that orb came to life and gave Jack a new ability in conjunction to his already existing Hound-Type Blood Veil."

"So, this ability is new to Jack?" Eva revealed the very first stance of Jack utilizing the orb's power. "I was terrified for my life… and for Jack's. He had lost control of himself. I had to use my own Blood Veil to subdue Jack before he caused collateral damage to the wilderness we were in. Thankfully, I was able to stop him before he could attack a nearby town."

Listening to Eva's account, Sion was silent for the most part until he finally spoke. "Well, judging by Jack's behavior now, it looks like he has some semblance of control."

"It's taken him time to tame the monster that's taken him over. He's still not quite fully in control."

"You did the right thing stopping him, Eva," Sion said. "Heh, to think you two hated each other in our original time, but here you've grown to care for the guy."

Eva blushed. "Oh stop."

Just then, the dragon ceased its repeated headbutting and commenced with a new strategy to bring down Hundred Eyes' barrier. The white-scaled beast's wings flapped hard as they morphed into two metallic hound heads, becoming akin to Jack's Hound-Type Blood Veil. The hound's necks grew
long like the dragon's. The dragon used all three heads to unleash a triple bite force called *Slavic Fangs* to finally break open the barrier. Hundred Eyes quickly defended and unleashed tentacles to ensnare the dragon. As Hundred Eye dragged the three-headed beast forward, the dragon let out a pained but a chilling screech.

"Jack needs our help!" Eva called out as she called on her Ivy-Type Blood Veil.

As Sion summoned a Hound-Type Blood Veil, he and Eva jumped in to save the dragon. Sion sent his hound heads to tear off a tentacle that bound Jack's hound heads. Eva's Blood Veil unleashed spikes that gutted through Hundred Eyes and cut off the tentacle holding the dragon's head.

Once the dragon was freed, the hound heads became wings again. The beast then breathed blue flames and blasted Hundred Eyes with *Fafnir's Breath*. Blue flames enveloped and burned Hundred Eyes' soft body. Many of its eyes started popping like disgusting zits as the flames spread over. Hundred Eyes launched horizontal lasers that went straight for the dragon. In response, the beast forged his own defensive barrier, in the form of a veil of white light, and stopped the lasers with *Otr's Concealment Wall*.

"Yes, you've got him, Jack!" Eva called to him.

Hundred Eyes tossed three crystal spikes that the dragon stopped with a swung of a tail. The dragon quickly flew into the air and breathed more blue flames on Hundred Eyes. Hundred Eyes didn't stay stationary for long and jumped up, swinging its staff at the dragon. The dragon responded with another barrier to protect from Hundred Eyes' attacks. The creature released its remaining eyes to attack the dragon. These miniature eye minions fired multiple red lasers repeatedly, hitting the dragon and shattering its defenses.

"Jack!" Sion had seen enough and conjured a Stinger-Type Blood Veil. He shot the metallic scorpion's tail and pierced through Hundred Eyes. He grabbed a hold of the abomination and pulled down.

As Hundred Eyes set sights on Sion, this distraction enabled the dragon to burn away the eye minions with *Fafnir's Breath*. The beast then turned its fiery blast on Hundred Eyes and burned it, dealing enough damage to burn its whole body. As the burning creature fell, it turned back into John and hit the ground. The dragon grabbed the staff the man wielded and snapped it in two in a front claw.

Sion and Eva hurried over to finish John off. John got up and turned to escape, but the dragon flew down and blocked his way.

"No, this cannot be…!" John cowered as the dragon raised its foot and crushed the old man like the vermin he is.

"And that takes care of him," Eva remarked. "Jack! Are you ok?"

Sion approached the dragon, who turned and cast an intense glare at the Revenant. Unfazed, Sion smirked.

"You're bigger, but still the bad boss I remember," Sion complimented him.

Growling, the dragon's body glowed with green light. This green aura washed over the winged behemoth's body and healed him. He used his *Reginn's Heart Recovery* to treat his bodily wounds, including all wear and tear from the fight with Hundred Eyes.
"Rest up, man. You earned it," Sion said as the dragon scanned the other battles.

Elsewhere, Tennyo and Ivy helped to bring down Arago. Tennyo blasted Arago with **Lightning Thorn**, allowing Ivy to bind him with her Ivy-Type Blood Veil. Tennyo broke off the Yokai's remaining Amrita, which greatly diminished its power. Nobunaga finished the Yokai by driving his sword through and finishing it off. Blood spilled from the Yokai's mouth and wound as it collapsed.

Having witnessed John's demise, Kelley grow even more wary about their adversaries. He and his group had greatly underestimated the modern day heroes' wealth of resources that William and his entourage lacked.

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Fox, Oracle, Stinger, Hound, Tamamo, Brave, Presto, Itsuki, Midari, Yuriko, Masamune, Yukimura, Yasuke, Giant Toad, Sasuke, Hideyori, and the White Tiger fought Derrick, Discord Amrita Fiends, and Fox Spirits.

"Since you three have codenames, I might as well tell you mine. It's Firebird," Itsuki said as she stared over Suzaku.

"I'm Azure," Midari declared, naming herself after her Guardian Spirit, Blue Dragon's color scheme. She beckoned Blue Dragon and Nurarihyon to defend her.

"And I'm Miko," Yuriko firmly stated as her Guardian Spirits, Izuna and Kara-jishi, reappeared for another battle.

"Those aren't half-bad codenames! Probably better than mine," Presto complimented modestly.

*Probably better? How cute.* Brave chuckled in thought.

"**Here they come!**" White Tiger bellowed as he blasted away two Amrita Fiends.

"Let's focus on getting rid of these Fox Spirits!" Fox directed his sights on the bothersome spirits. He shot a few of them with his Heaven's Gate gun.

"Right on it!" Oracle called out from within Prometheus. She started by targeting and firing beams at Fox Spirits from Prometheus.

Stinger and Hound helped to take down a few Discord Amrita Fiends. Swinging his great sword, Hound unleashed consecutive slashes on Discord Amrita Fiend. Coming up behind another Discord Amrita Fiend, Stinger gutted it with her bayonet. Another Fiend tried to sneak up behind her, but Stinger invoked her Stinger-Type Blood Veil and stabbed it with her metallic scorpion tail.

"So, he can turn into a big dragon? Big freaking whoop, I'm not afraid of him," Stinger disparaged Jack.

"I don't like him either, but let's focus on the matter at hand, Mia," Hound reminded her.

"Yeah, yeah," she shrugged. "I'll just pretend these freaks are *him.*"

Suddenly, the Fox Spirits expelled dark ghost light called Kitsunebi. The Kitsunebi spread out and targeted several of the heroes.

Tamamo's Nine-Tails fought back and fired a Kitsunebi to counteract the Fox Spirit's own.
"That should clear it, Yumeko! Let's go forward!" Presto called out.

"Yeah, let's play with that big executioner guy! Bet he's a lot of fun!" Tamamo gleefully declared, finding herself a new playtoy to challenge.

The Spiritual Gamblers and the spirits fought through the Amrita Fiends. Only a few managed to get by to reach Derrick. Tamamo, Firebird, Azure, and White Tiger confronted Derrick. With a swing of his giant axe, Derrick nearly took off the heads of his opponents. Firebird defended with Suzaku's flaming shield. Azure's Blue Dragon unleashed a wind blast that pushed Derrick every slightly back.

"Shit, we're just slowing him down!" Azure cursed at Derrick's superhuman durability. She sent Nurarihyon to attack Derrick with water attacks.

Derrick swung down his axe, cleanly cutting through some water and stopping Azure's momentum.

White Tiger rushed and slammed into Derrick, knocking him back. White Tiger expelled a lightning mouth beam at the executioner. Derrick countered the beam with his axe.

Having witnessed Derrick in action, a dark smile adorned Tamamo's face. She has been presented a new challenge. This delighted her. She turned to her Guardian Spirit.

"What do you say, my lovely fox? Wanna play with our new plaything?" Tamamo purred as she pressed a hand against Nine-Tails. As the two merged, they transformed into a different kind of Nine-Tails entity.

The group fighting Derrick, including the executioner, witnessed Tamamo's abrupt transformation. Firebird and Azure's Guardian Spirits started to cower. Fox, Oracle, the Spiritual Gamblers, and the spirits veered and sensed the dark mystic power emanate from the spot where Tamamo used to be.

"No, that young woman's managed to merge with Lady Chacha's Guardian Spirit!" Sasuke exclaimed.

Yukimura became stricken with shock as a familiar demonic visage appeared over Tamamo. The ghostly aura of a demonic fox roared in front of Tamamo. As the ghostly fox's face faded, a mist shrouded Tamamo. Tamamo's red eyes glowed behind the thin veil of mist. A sadistic giggle came out of the mist, sending unsettling vibes toward her own allies. Tamamo stepped out of the smoke and emerged. Most areas of her body is covered with black fur. Underneath the tufts of black fur, surges of blazing crimson energy resonated through her body. Nine bushy black tails materialized, poking out of her back like peacock feathers. The fox opened her mouth; a long red tongue was hanging out. The fox's eyes became Tamamo's unsettling eyes.

"Oh shit…" Azure backed off, unhinged by Tamamo's new 'Nine-Tails' appearance.

"That can't be Yumeko…" Firebird muttered in horror.

Both Presto and Brave were taken aback by their friend's transformation into a demonic variation of the Nine-Tails.

"Y-Y-Yumeko…" Presto stammered, feeling a lump and dryness in this throat upon seeing Tamamo in her new form.

"She combined with her Guardian Spirit to become this?!" Brave shouted.

White Tiger growled toward Tamamo's direction. "That woman's merged with her Guardian Spirit and transformed into the infamous Nine-Tailed Fox! Only Lady Chacha has managed to acquire
"This form." He watched the Nine-Tailed Fox stalk toward Derrick like a predator.

The Nine-Tailed Fox let out a horrific beast roar and charged head-on with Derrick. Derrick prepared to bisect the nine-tailed beast. However, the Nine-Tailed Fox quickly evaded contact with Derrick's axe and swung her nine tails from the rear, knocking the executioner back. All nine tails lit up with glowing red energy. She flung nine fiery rocks at Derrick's way and bombarded him. Derrick had no time to react to defend himself against the Nine-Tailed Fox's unhinged assault. The beast also seemed to grin and cackle at Derrick's, as if Yumeko was the one in the driver's seat.

Oracle yelled out from Prometheus. "Hey, Inari! Are you seeing this?!!"

"Indeed! Yumeko… she seems to be in the one in control of the Nine-Tailed Fox!" Fox responded, baffled by Tamamo's transformation into the Nine-Tailed Fox.

"I know, right?! But, y'know Yumeko's always been the unhinged lunatic!"

"Which worries me if she's controlling the Nine-Tailed…" Fox suddenly spotted Fox Spirits dive bombing onto Prometheus. "Heads up, Futaba! You're being attacked from above!"

"Aw, crap! Get the hell off me, you little jerks!" Oracle shouted

When the Fox Spirits pelted Prometheus with Kitsunebi, this prompted Oracle to step out and fight them. Oracle jumped over and drop kicked a spirit. She pressed a button on her wrist, opening up slots on her hands and activated a yellow laser sword. She stabbed one Fox Spirit. She turned firing blasts from her laser sword to take out another. More poured in and piled on top of her. However, the orange-haired Thief madly swung her laser sword and sliced up the impish foxes.

"Alright! Who else wants some?!" Oracle furiously screamed. "Come out and face my nerd rage! Mess with my Persona and you'll regret it!"

Fox summoned his Ultimate Persona, Kamu Susanoo. By Fox's command, Kamu Susanoo unleashed **Bufudyne** on the Discord Amrita Fiends. The Fiends' crystals gleamed red and seemingly became immune to the ice effects. When ice elemental attacks didn't work, Kamu Susanoo tried **Heat Wave**, which overloaded and destroyed them. Observing their attack and behavioral patterns, Fox assessed the Fiends' Amrita spikes contained the various elements, including fire, ice, wind, lightning, and earth. He also assessed that one of his Persona's elemental attacks must match the attribute of the Fiend to destroy them.

"Did you take care of those Fox Spirits, Futaba?" Fox asked her.

"Problem solved up here, Inari!" Oracle flashed him a big grin and a hand to head salute.

"And we've cleared this area, too," Miko chimed in as she and her Guardian Spirit neutralized the remaining Fox Spirits.

"And we've beaten the rest of those Yokai," Stinger added as she and Hound finished the remaining Fiends.

"All that's left is Yumeko taking care of that executioner guy," Presto said, observing the Nine-Tailed Fox headbutting Derrick.

As he was pushed back, Derrick slammed his axe to the ground, which the Nine-Tailed Fox nimbly dodged. Creating a distance between them, the Nine-Tailed Fox flung fiery rocks from her nine tails. Raising a hand, Derrick tried blocking the rocks pelting him. The Nine-Tailed Fox dove at Derrick.
and bit down on his left arm. Derrick roared angrily and pounded on the Nine-Tailed Fox's head repeatedly. She refused to release her bite hold. Derrick tugged at her and twirled his arm around, trying to pry her off.

"Stay on him! Bite off his arm if you gotta!" Azure cheered her on.

"At least she's got him away from that axe now!" Firebird commented on the Nine-Tailed Fox smartly preventing Derrick from retrieving his axe.

The Nine-Tailed Fox wrestled Derrick and swung her tails forward. She knocked Derrick far out of the shrine and gave chase to him. As Derrick got up to recover, the nine-tailed beast unleashed and bombarded him with assorted fiery blasts. Each blast pounded and knocked Derrick flat on his back. The Nine-Tailed Fox landed atop of Derrick and snapped her jaws at him. Derrick tried fighting back and grabbed the beast's snout. She burned her flaming tails into Derrick, delivering burns to him. As Derrick tried to push the Nine-Tailed Fox, the beast unleashed flames that burned the the executioner alive.

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Having sensed Derrick's demise, Kelley teleported away using an alchemic spell. He left his adversaries to wonder where he went.

"Damn it! He got away!" Mina cursed as she quickly scanned for the alchemist's whereabouts.

"He's relocated this way!" William pointed toward the direction of the shrine's front gate.

"Then, that's where we're going!" Mina declared. "Hey, follow us if you're finished here!" She saw Engineer, Queen, and Noir preparing to finish off Talpa.

After taking a blow from Talpa's punch, Engineer fell and cracked his back on the pavement. Noir came to Engineer's rescue and shot both of Talpa's eyes with her Yagrush gun. With its eyes gushing with blood and disgusting puss, Talpa grabbed its face and stumbled back blindly. However, it didn't stop its relentless attack and kept swinging its blade around, hoping to slice his victims.

"Say goodbye!" Queen roared as she hopped off Anat while gliding off the shrine's rooftop. She performed a somersault and charged powerful energy in her right fist. She fell on Talpa and smashed its head into pulp with a Nuclear Fist.

Queen reared her fist back and shook off the Yokai's gore from her knuckles.

"Ugh, gross," Queen looked away from Talpa's head remains scattered over the floor.

"Beautifully done, Makoto," Engineer praised Queen's decisive finishing blow.

"William and Mina just left and pursued that alchemist," Noir informed them.

"Yeah, but let's get me healed… that last blow might've cracked a rib or two," Engineer's face contorted painfully, feeling intense stabbing pains in his left rib area.

Noir noticed the bruised area on his left rib side. "Oh god, don't move, Louis."

"That looks nasty, but you probably should've fought him at close quarters," Queen said as she checked Engineer's injury.

Noir summoned Astarte to heal Engineer with Fast Heal.
"You three, we've finished clearing this area of Yokai," Okatsu informed the two Thieves and the Remnant.

"Looks like one of them went down to injury. Let them treat me. We, on the other hand, need to convene with William and the others." Hanzo suggested as he and the kunoichi headed off toward the direction William and Mina took.

Queen knelt down and grabbed Engineer's hand. "C'mon, let's get you up, but you're taking it easy. No more fighting for you for the rest of this."

"Aww, you really do care, Mako-chan," Engineer playfully quipped, which earned him a light jab to his shoulder from Queen. "Ow! C'mon or you'll aggravate my injury. Be gentle."

"Ready, Haru? Let's get him up," Queen said as she and Noir put arms over Engineer.

"Up you go!" Noir said.

"Thanks, but I think now I can walk on my own. The healing's working fast."

"I hope Ren and the others are ok, Mako-chan."

"You and me both, Haru-chan."

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Standing over the grisly and charred remains of Derrick, the Nine-Tailed Fox howled, declaring her victory.

"Impressive showing vanquishing the executioner, but you've dropped your guard," the alchemist chortled behind her.

Turning to face Kelley, the Nine-Tailed Fox roared and lunged at him. More than prepared for the beast's advance, Kelley trapped the Nine-Tailed Fox inside an alchemic circle. Pillars of red alchemic energy popped out of the circle and binded the nine-tailed beast. Having neutralized her, Kelley used Ouroboros to suck the Guardian Spirit's power out of the Nine-Tailed Fox. The Nine-Tailed Fox roared, resolving to break loose from her bindings. Using her strength to break free, Kelley sealed her again and continued to use Ouroboros to sap away the nine-tailed beast's power.

Presto, Brave, and their group ran over to witness Kelley extracting the Nine-Tails and leaving Yumeko a defeated mess.

"Look!" Brave pointed to Yumeko's prone and unconscious form laying inside Kelley's alchemic circle.

"Yumeko!" Presto cried out.

"She's not moving!" Firebird exclaimed.

"Damn you!" Azure vehemently cursed at Kelley.

"Yes, I'll harvest the Nine-Tailed Fox's power and make it my own!" Kelley boasted, collecting the divine energy from the beast. He managed to collect enough, causing the Nine-Tailed Fox to regress as her fur receded and her form became smaller. She changed back to Yumeko, who lied on her side and writhed in pain.
"The power that transformed Yodogimi and now this girl into the Nine-Tailed Fox belongs to me!" Kelley boasted, preparing to harvest the legendary beast's divine power.

Suddenly, a shot from **Riot Gun** blasted the ground near Kelley and alarmed him. The English Alchemist quickly shifted his sights on Joker, Panther, Skull, and Mona as they assembled with Fox's party.

"You vermin!" Kelley snarled, vehemently facing his opposition.

"He has Yumeko and taken her Nine-Tails power!" Presto called out. "**YUMEKO!**"

"Oh god..." Brave gasped, seeing her friend lying motionless on the ground.

"**Kelley cannot be allowed to incorporate the Nine-Tails into himself! If he harvests it, no... I don't even want to imagine the destructive power he'll wield!**" Yukimura apprehensively warned the group.

"**We must stop him!**" White Tiger declared as he charged forward at the alchemist.

"We'll help, too!" Presto called out as he, Brave, Azure, and Firebird followed White Tiger.

"You guys hang back," Joker insisted the other Phantom Thieves to hold their ground. He summoned Kohryu to accompany him.

"Be careful, Ren!" Panther watched him fly off to engage Kelley.


"Give Yumeko back her Guardian Spirit!" Presto shouted defiantly at the malicious alchemist.

Cackling evilly, Kelley swung down all nine-tails and flung fiery rocks at his five adversaries. Kohryu swiftly moved and attacked from the far right. White Tiger continued his forward charge. Genbu, Blue Dragon, and Suzaku attacked from the far left. Kohryu unleashed **Psycho Force** to temporarily stun Kelley, allowing White Tiger to fire a thunder mouth blast. The electric beam slammed into Kelley and electrocuted him. However, the nine-tails also provided a barrier diminish White Tiger's attack. Kelley healed himself and cast an alchemic circle over White Tiger, reversing his frontal attack and sending him crashing into forest undergrowth.

"I will not be defeated!" Kelley boasted as he conjured another alchemist circle to nullify Genbu's water blast, Suzaku's fiery wave, and Blue Dragon's wind attack.

"It's no use! He's countering our Guardian Spirits!" Firebird cried out.

"No, don't give up! We can't let this guy get away with Yumeko's spirit! That Nine-Tails means a lot to her!" Presto openly vowed to save Yumeko's Nine-Tails.

"Well, you ain't gotta worry about me giving up to this freak!" Azure yelled.

Just then, William and Mina arrived to see the group fighting Kelley.

"**No, has Kelley managed to capture a Guardian Spirit?!**" William gaped. As he noticed the nine-
tails features on Kelley, the Englishman became appalled and saw Yumeko lying unconscious. "You monster!"

"Heheheh, worry not for Saoirse will be next after I'm through with these youth!" Kelley boasted as he unleashed a seismic-like wave that pushed Joker and the Spiritual Gamblers away.

"Ren!" Panther cried out as she saw Joker fall and hit the ground.

"That's it!" Mina growled as she sprinted ahead with Saoirse guiding her. "You're not getting away with the Nine-Tails that easily!"

"Hn, and pray tell how you'll stop me?!" The alchemist set his sights to attack Mina next.

"William stopped you before, so as his successor, I'm duty bound to send freaks like you to the underworld where you belong!" Mina declared as she came close within Kelley's reach.

In response to Mina's front attack, Kelley shot all nine-tails forward to ensnare her and Saoirse. Seemingly preparing to throw her own life away, Mina beckoned her Guardian Spirit to release healing Ki to restore Joker, White Tiger, and the Spiritual Gamblers.

"Wait, what are you doing…?!" Kelley balked at Mina's strategy.

"Letting the wielders of the Four Symbols handle you! Who said I'd be crazy enough to fight the Nine-Tails?!" Mina rebuked as she dove in and grabbed Yumeko, throwing the girl over her right shoulder and running off with her.

Seeing Mina run off carrying Yumeko, Kelley knocked Mina aside with one tail.

"You were only going for the girl! You tricked me!" Kelley watched as Saoirse healed and restored the aforementioned five.


"I've got your friend!" Mina called to the Spiritual Gambler.

Presto sighed with relief. "Thanks."

"You will all die!" Kelley shouted as his anger fueled the Nine-Tailed Fox's power. A red cloak enveloped him transforming him into the Nine-Tailed Fox. He raised all nine tails and charged each tail with glowing red orbs. These orbs converged and formed into a burning alchemic circle.

Joker intently faced down with the alchemist's impending destructive force. Then, he heard Arsène's voice in his mind. "Show this heathen the strength of Kohryu's will and send him back to be chained to Hell once more!"

"Kohryu! We will finish this!" Joker declared as he commanded the golden dragon to unleash a finishing blow to Kelley.

At the same time, White Tiger, Suzaku, Genbu, and Blue Dragon each prepared to expel their elemental powers to defy and overcome Kelley's Nine-Tailed Fox perversion. Kelley quickly summoned an immense red beam of light that ripped out of the alchemic circle and headed straight for his opposition. Kohryu, White Tiger, Suzaku, Genbu, and Blue Dragon released spiritual beams to push back Kelley's alchemic beam.
"Hey, where's Mary?" Presto noticed Brave was nowhere to be seen.

"Yo! Don't lose focus and screw this up for us!" Azure snapped at him.

"Wait, now that you mention it. Where is Mary?" Firebird, too, realized their colleague's absence.

"Perish in defeat and allow to take all your Guardian Spirits!" Kelley's voice hollered from the Nine-Tailed Fox. "Now say farewell!"

"Farewell!" Brave seemingly called out as she jumped out of some bushes. She already summoned Janomecho as it blasted the Nine-Tailed Fox with a powerful wind blast.

The Nine-Tailed Fox got caught by the wind attack and knocked over to its side. Everyone were taken aback by Brave's surprise attack. However, Kelley was baffled he let his guard down and that ended up costing him.

"Surprise, jerkass!" Brave responded with an overly crazed smile and a middle finger to add insult to injury.

The Nine-Tailed Fox roared and prepared to ensnare Brave, but the Four Symbols and Kohryu's beams converged and engulfed the nine-tailed beast. A mixture of the Nine-Tailed Fox and Kelley's pained screams filled the area. The body of the Nine-Tailed Fox burned away, leaving Kelley naked without the beast's body to protect him. Ouroboros dissolved, too. Kelley hit the ground as his body burned. The remnants of the Nine-Tails regenerated into a spiritual orb and flew over back inside Yumeko's body.

"Mary!" Presto cried as he ran over to tend to her. "That was crazy what you did!"

"For all that guy's bravado, I bet he feels dumb for overlooking someone like me," Brave smirked. "Shows him never to overlook small fry."

"That's not true. You were a difference maker!" Presto hugged Brave. "Thanks!"

Taken aback by Presto's genuine sincerity, Brave smiled. "Yeah, so will that save Yumeko?"

"I think you two better take a look for yourselves," Firebird pointed Brave and Presto toward Tamamo, who was seen awake in Mina's arms.

Seeing their friend awake, Brave and Presto rushed over to embrace her. Tamamo was initially confused until the others explained what happened during her brief unconscious state.

"Yo, Ren! That was awesome what y'all did!" Skull ran over and slapped Ren a high five.

"I honestly was worried you wouldn't have pulled it off, Ren," Panther approached Joker and kissed him. "Am I glad you're ok."

"We're all ok now that we've gotten rid of the Yokai," Sion chimed in as he, Tennyo, and the Vein Remnants convened with the four founding Phantom Thieves, Spiritual Gamblers, Mina, and the spirits.

"We saw the whole battle. I'm glad everyone is ok," Tennyo nodded.


Kelley coughed black mucus from his mouth. "...well done... the youth of this time have shown to have proficient mastery of the Guardian Spirits... they've managed to vanquish the Yokai waves..."
"What force revived you, John, and the Yokai? Tell me. Was it the Yami Matter they've mentioned about?" William demanded a clear and concise answer.

Unfortunately, what he got was no response. Instead, Kelley's body dissolving away and this time no surprise Ouroboros desperation attack. William walked away and returned to the group.

"I couldn't get an answer from him. I apologize," William humbly referred to the Thieves, the Remnants, and the Gamblers.

As White Tiger turned back to Nekomata, the wise cat sagely chimed in. "Worry not. I'm confident these youth will discover the origins of this force that revived our enemies, William."

"So, the Yami Matter can revive dead bad guys like those Yokai? That just sounds delightful," Panther sardonically remarked, sounding unenthused to fight possible old enemies.

"And maybe not even revived foes, but possibly create distortions and completely new enemies from scratch," Mona conjectured.

"But, how do we know we didn't just defeat the Yami Matter?" Brave asked.

Ivy spoke up. "No, it won't be that easy. The only way to know for sure if we've removed the Yami Matter presence is if time has been restored."

Joker checked his phone and saw the date was still 2019. He confirmed everyone's fears with a quiet nod. The festive mood quickly became dour for the simple fact this was merely a battle. They have yet to restore time to the way it was before the Yami Matter distorted their world's temporal flow.

It wasn't long as the other Phantom Thieves and Remnants reconvened with the others.

Suddenly, the group were surprised by the appearance of more spirits. The most notable is a short Japanese man with receding dark gray hair and a small ponytail. He has a thick dark gray mustache and goatee. He's garbed in a brown robe over a purple garb, eloquently designed dark gold pants, and sandals. The man carried a samurai helmet resembling beetle's horns, which were notably gold. On the left side of the robe, there was a Tokugawa Clan symbol. Nearly everyone recognized this man from their history books.

"My word, that's… Tokugawa Ieyasu! Founder of the Tokugawa Clan!" Fox acknowledged the important historical figure.

"These guys are like historical celebrities to you, aren't they, Inari?" Oracle playfully teased.

"There's more!" Hound scanned several other new figures materializing around them.

Then, a beautiful pale-skinned Japanese woman with long black hair emerged. She had two long strands of hair tied and left hanging in front of her chest. She wore black royal robe covered with white feathers covering the top areas. Her primary clothing is a red kimono underneath the robe. This is Yodogimi (Lady Chacha), mother of Toyotomi Hideyori.

"I know her! That's Lady Chacha!" Presto exclaimed.

"Yeah, she's the one who had the Nine-Tails before you, Yumeko," Brave reminded her.

Yumeko stood and faced Lady Chacha, who bowed to her successor. The Compulsive Gambler
returned the favor with an etiquette bow.

A youthful Japanese woman emerged. Her wardrobe consisted of a tall black mage's hat, sleeveless black dress tied by a red waist belt, black and purple arm warmers with red balls attached to them, purple baggy leggings that revealed her bare legs in the back, and red sandals with black socks. This woman is Fuku, an Onmyo mage.

The next spirit to appear is a rotund monk garbed in black garb and wearing a purple robe with gold ornate symbols and designs. He wore a black veil that obscured his whole face sans his bespectacled eyes. This is Tenkai, a monk of the Muryoju-ji-kita'in Temple.

The next spirit is a man garbed in samurai wear. His helmet had a dirty gold ring that adorned the top of it. This is Tachibana Muneshige, one of the greatest samurai of western Japan of his time.

Then, an older man with a grizzled gray beard garbed in black, red, and gold samurai armor appeared. His helmet notably had two small golden horns and even larger black deer-like antlers. This is Honda Tadakatsu, one of Tokugawa Ieyasu's Four Heavenly Kings.

Then, a young woman garbed in lighter dark samurai armor wear appeared. She also wore a small white cape hanging down her back and wore her black hair in a ponytail. She carried with her a sword in a hilt that was as long as half of her own body. This is Tachibana Ginchiyi, daughter of Tachibana Dōsetsu.

The next spirit is a man with faded black beard and garbed in black samurai armor. He also wore gray shoulder armor, a white belt, and ornately-designed lower battle armor. He wore a black samurai helmet with a red armored protrusions pointing vertically. This is Shima Sakon, a Japanese samurai of the late Sengoku period and later joined the Toyotomi Clan under Ishida Mitsunari.

 Appearing next to Shima is Ishida Mitsunari. He appeared in gold, blue, and yellow samurai armor. He wore white garment trimmed with blue and layered over his samurai armor. He also wore a samurai helmet with golden horns.

The next spirit is a man wearing a white mask and sheet, shrouding all but his eyes. He wore black armored wear and a small purple robe. This seemingly calm and cool-headed individual is Otani Yoshitsugu, general of the Toyotomi Clan.

The final spirit is a man with short black hair. He wore a red headband. His face had a thinned mustache and goatee. His wardrobe consisted of a black overcoat with a black robe underneath and a red undershirt. He also wore belt holster with bullets, which he had on strapped over his chest. This is Saika Magoichi, head of the Saika Ikki and famous for leading bands of traveling mercenaries.

"Venerable ancestors, we're humbled to be in your presence," Miko dropped to both knees and bowed to the historical figureheads.

"Check out their badass armor! They're samurai!" Skull pointed out to the samurai-garbed individuals.

"That's Honda Tadakatsu, one of Ieyasu's Four Heavenly Kings," Joker turned to the older samurai man with the golden horned and black antler helmet. "I remember seeing him in our history books in school."

"Good catch, Ren," Fox added. "We're in the presence of some important figureheads in our country's history."

"Hey! Is it safe to come out?!" Shinya's voice called out.
The entire party turned to see Shinya, Nicola, and Reiko come out of a shrine that Stinger hid them in.

"Hey, Shinya! Nicola! Look!" Reiko pointed to the spirits.

"Wh-What the heck?! G-Ghosts?!" Shinya stammered almost out of fear.

"It's ok, you three. These are benevolent spirits," Mina nodded.

"Even that flying cat and the big toad?" Reiko queried, eyeing Nekomata and Giant Toad.

"Are we supposed to believe you're spirits of some dead people?" Shinya remarked while scanning the spirits.

Nobunaga walked up to the three teenagers. "Perhaps if I were to tell you I'm Oda Nobunaga."

"Wait! You're the Oda Nobunaga?! As in the original?!" Shinya reacted in disbelief. He was utterly flabbergasted.

"Why are you so shocked? We've heard about him in history class," Nicola said.

"I don't care much about that history stuff, but damn! Who doesn't know Oda Nobunaga?! He's had characters named after him in TV shows, manga, and video games!" Shinya went into full fanboy mode, causing Nicola and Reiko to facepalm and nearly face fault. "I'm Oda Shinya."

"Oda Nobunaga and Oda Shinya. What a funny coincidence," Nobunaga noted their surnames being similar.

"Yeah, but my family have no connections to you. Sorry to say," Shinya said.

"Yes, I figure you weren't. Likely your surname was a homage to me."

Most of the spirits chuckled over Nobunaga's interaction with the teenage boy. Then, Lady Chacha cleared her throat and garnered everyone's attention.

"On behalf of myself and my colleagues, we're grateful for protecting the sanctity of this beautiful shrine, young heroes," Lady Chacha expressed gratitude to the Thieves, the Remnants, and the Gamblers.

"We're honored, venerable ancestors," Joker bowed.

"Consider our shock that malevolent alchemist and his cohorts would return with a Yokai army. Thankfully, we have warriors of this modern time who can vanquish them," Ieyasu proclaimed.

"However, they couldn't have left the underworld without an outside force at work to free them from their eternal prisons," Yoshitsugu alluded to the outside force, which the Thieves, the Remnants, and the Gamblers figured out was the Yami Matter.

"We know full well of the forces we're already fighting. We will investigate its origins," Sion vowed to uncover the Yami Matter presence.

"Now there remains one issue to resolve," Hanzo said as he and the historical spirits faced Tennyo. As if she couldn't feel anymore awkwardly, she found herself in the gaze of the many historical figureheads.
This awkward positioning prompted Sion to stand in front of her.

"What's the meaning of this?" Sion asked.

"Togo Hifumi. Do you not remember when the Guardian Spirits sensed traces of the entity that nearly control of this world? The being that called itself the 'God of Control'?" Nobunaga reminded the Thieves. "In fact, wasn't your group that engaged and fought that malevolent entity twice?"

"Yes, we defeated Yaldabaoth," Joker confirmed.

"We kicked his ass twice!" Skull boasted.

"Technically we beat Yaldabaoth and Saklas," Queen clarified. "The first time we beat him it was the whole being."

"Saklas was the vessel of Yaldabaoth's dark half," Noir stated. "Hifumi took in the light half when Saklas killed her. As a result, she awoke into Sophia and used the last of her power to reverse the damage Saklas was doing to our reality."

"Then, with her reality warping power, she affected time and space, and pulled us to your time without our initial memories," Sion said. "I effectively replaced the Sion that died before I came here in this time, but no one remembers the previous Sion."

"Except for a select few like the Phantom Thieves and Hifumi," Engineer said.

"And me. I remember the first Sion," Mina interjected. "Which was why I was surprised to see this one. I thought he returned to life."

"In a way, I kinda did," Sion said.

Lady Chacha frowned. "We're digressing, my friends." She shifted her stern gaze toward Tennyo. "Young miss, consider this a council meeting as we consider your position in this ongoing conflict." She beckoned Ieyasu, Masamune, Yukimura, and Nobunaga to gather with her.

"Young miss, do you understand you contain the lighter half of that malevolent entity?" Ieyasu asked Tennyo.

"According to Chinese philosophy, I would be the yin to Saklas's yang. When Yaldabaoth separated, we became his vessels."

"You two became the inseparable and contradictory opposites of Yaldabaoth's whole being. Moreover, you took that half, purified it, and made it your own." Masamune assessed. "You converted the half into the goddess known as Sophia."

"With that power, you altered this world's reality and seemingly purged Yaldabaoth's dark half into the ether. However, that doesn't seem to be the case," Yukimura said.

"It can't be concluded if this Yami Matter is anyhow linked to the God of Control, but understand you're using a power that once belonged to that malevolent being. With the goddess Sophia apart of you, you'll be directly helping your allies here deal with the new threat," Lady Chacha stated.

Tennyo nodded. "I understand the risks. I know full well Sophia's power lies within me. I don't intend to invoke her power in every battle. As you plainly saw in this battle, I required no assistance
from Sophia's power."

"Yes, but what will happen should a Yami Matter akin to Yaldabaoth should appear? What if the God of Control is revived by these forces?" Ieyasu inquired to Tennyo, who fell silent and was unsure of her future destiny.

"It'll be alright," Sion took Tennyo's hand. "You have me, my friends, the Thieves, and the others."

"And me! We're in this fight together!" Ivy interjected as she hugged Tennyo from behind. She unintentionally pushed her large breasts against Tennyo's back.

"Thank you all," Tennyo felt appreciated in the company of her friends.

"And we bring to another individual. Jabami Yumeko." Lady Chacha veered over to Tamamo. "You've managed to merge with my Nine-Tails and released the Nine-Tailed Fox into the battle."

"Yeah, I kinda… got a little excited fighting that executioner guy," Tamamo nonchalantly said. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that."

Yukimura sighed deeply. "Lady Chacha was the last to invoke the Nine-Tailed Fox's power and bring her into this world. However, you've been able to tame the beast better than Lady Chacha could ever dreamed of."

"That's partly why I'm allowing you to use Nine-Tails. However, please do not get careless in that manner again, because that nearly cost you. If your friends hadn't stopped that alchemist, he would've harvested all of the Guardian Spirits and we'd be still fighting Edward Kelley." Lady Chacha informed the group.

"Well, guess what? We kicked his butt and there's nothing to fear!" Tamamo reassured her.

"Yeah, with a little help from me," Brave scoffed. "Geez, give me just a teeny ounce of credit here!"

"We haven't forgotten, Mary. You're a lifesaver," Presto said.

"We shall permit you to go forth and continue solving these Yami Matter cases. However, a condition must be met," Yukimura proposed to the group.

"What is it?" Joker asked.

"You will train here to hone your warrior prowess." Nobunaga issued. "Having assessed your combat abilities, some of you need refining."

"Some of us will supervise your training," William stated.

"If you're training these kids, then I want in," Mina sadistically grinned. "I swear I'm gonna whip most of y'all into shape!"

"Training, great..." Panther muttered hesitantly.

"How bad can it get?" Skull shrugged.

"I think some of us will need the extra training, especially us," Presto said.

"Sounds exciting! Won't you be my training partners, you two?" Tamamo asked Presto and Brave.
"Eh, why do I need training?" Azure sighed in an annoyed tone.

"Practice makes better, right?" Firebird added.

"Don't you mean 'practice makes perfect'?' Azure blinked.

"No, because perfection doesn't exist."

"Could've fooled me."

"There's no room for complains, right?" Sion turned and asked the other Vein Remnants.

"Nope," Hound replied.

"If they're letting us continue finding the Yami Matter, we should take in the training to get better," Engineer said. "After all, we need to strengthen our bodies since we're not full Revenants and have human vulnerabilities. Look what happened to me today."

Stinger shrugged. "Sure, I guess. I'm in."

"What about Jack and Eva? Shouldn't they be here?" Ivy asked Sion.

"They left after we beat all the bad guys," Sion said. "They're definitely not the social types."

Stinger scoffed. "So, those two left? Big whoop, no skin off our backs!"

"But, they did help us, Mia," Sion said.

"That's right. Io and I were there to see it happen," Tennyo replied.

"So, you expect we'll see them again?" Engineer asked Sion.

"I have no doubts. We haven't seen the last of those two."

"Excellent, then it's settled. You'll train here on the shrine when you all have freetime, but I'd suggest you make good use of it." Nekomata addressed the groups. "We're humbly pleased you've accepted our request. Become stronger warriors through these teachings. As of today, you have forged your names as legends."

"We will. Thank you, ancestors," Joker bowed.

"And I'll be sure to grant you all access to the shrine during the late-evening hours," Miko offered.

"Thanks, Yuriko," Presto said.

Tamamo went over and shook Miko's hands compulsively. "Yeah, thank you so much! We won't forget your kindness!"

"Y-Yes, now will you please let go?!" Miko cried out.

"By the way, Mary," Tennyo approached Brave. "I heard what you did and how you utilized my former Guardian Spirit to turn the tide of that battle."

"Yeah?"

"I'm proud of you. Thank you for being my successor," Tennyo shook Mary's hand.
"I-I… sure. I'm honored, Hifumi," Brave humbly accepted Tennyo’s kind handshake.

"Wait, you're Togo Hifumi?" Shinya asked Tennyo, who removed her mask.

"Since my name's already been revealed," Tennyo revealed her identity to the three teens.

"Whoa, cool! The Shogi champion!" Reiko gleamed happily.

"And I already know my sis is among you," Nicola turned to Stinger.

"You three need to keep some of our identities secret, got it?" Stinger frowned at the three teens.

"Of course! We're not that careless!" Shinya rebuked.

Nicola rolled his eyes. "I don't know. Sometimes you tend to speak before you think, Shinya."

"Oh, what?! I know how sacred it is for a superhero to keep their identity a secret!"

Reiko sighed. "Don't worry, I promise to not let him slip up."

"Shinya," Joker addressed Shinya. "We trust you and your friends. Maybe one we'll trust you enough when we reveal our identities to you."

"Whoa, really?" Shinya blinked thrice.

"But, first you three need to get home," Queen spoke like a policewoman would. "Your families must be worried sick."

"Well, I'm Nicola's only family," Stinger said. "I can call Shinya and Reiko's parents to let them know they're sleeping at our place."

"Always the responsible big sister type, Mia," Engineer chuckled. "That's a quality that'll never change."

"Since Jack the jackass and Eva are here, I'm not about to drop my guard with the former roaming around," Stinger said.

Hound concurred with Stinger's sentiments. "Same here."

"Well, we shall leave you then. Heed our advices and train when you're able," William said. "For now, get some rest. You deserve it, especially after the battle here."

With that, the historical spirits vanished. Stinger took the three teens to her home. Soon after, the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and the Spiritual Gamblers departed. Only Sion, Tennyo, Joker, Panther, Ivy, Mina, and Miko stayed behind. Tennyo used low-level reality warping to clean the damages done to the shrine caused by the Yokai battles. She also purged the dead Yokai carcasses scattered all over the sacred grounds.

Miko sighed deeply. "You have no idea how much this means to me. Now I don't have to explain what happened to the shrine to the caretakers."

"No thanks are necessary. We're happy to clean up our mess," Sion said.

"Will you staying here, Mina?" Panther asked her.

"No, I have a place close by, but I will be monitoring this area. I hope to see y'all here for training!"
It's gonna be fun!" Mina snickered.
"Riiiiight," Panther shuddered. "I'm ready to go, Ren."
Nodding, Joker walked with Panther. He stopped and briefly turned toward Sion, Tennyo, and Ivy.
"Skyler, Hifumi, Io. You three know to talk to us if you need anything," Joker offered. "Hifumi, that
goes double for you. We're all here if you have any problems about that talk we had with the spirits
about Sophia, Saklas, and Yaldabaoth…"
Nodding, Tennyo calmly smiled. "It'll be fine, but thank you we'll call."
Sion patted Tennyo's shoulder. "Let's get going home. We're going to need to recharge after
tonight."
"Yeah, I'm tired," Ivy yawned. "Someone carry me." She tipped over, only for Tennyo to catch and
piggyback carry her. "And a good bedtime story, too. Tell me one, Hifumi."
"I...I'll find a really good one," Tennyo chuckled.
xxxxx
As all members left the Meiji Shrine grounds, Jack, now back to normal, and Eva watched everyone
leave. They watched Sion and company depart the shrine.
"That was a tough battle for you, Jack."
"Yeah, but it just proves I'm slowly mastering Drake-Type Blood Veil. You noticed I didn't go
feral."
Eva nodded. "Yes."
The platinum-haired man chuckled ever so calmly. "We helped Skyler, his Revenant friends, the
Phantom Thieves, and those spiritual summoners this time, but next time, I intend to fight him with
this new Blood Veil. I must know if my new Blood Veil is enough to destroy these aberrations that
have infiltrated this world. And I must know…" He looked down at the necklace orb. "...I must
know how I acquired this orb."
"I overheard them talk about that Hifumi woman using some reality altering power and as a result her
power brought us here in this time."
Jack deduced. "Could her goddess power have granted me this orb? For what purpose besides fight
my enemy and Skyler?"
xxxxx
Chapter Soundtrack:
96-:rip (Cauldros Night) - Xenoblade Chronicles X OST - Hiroyuki Sawano - First song of Ch. 4
of the protagonists' interactions with Jack and Eva.
Nioh OST - Alchemists II- Edward Kelley, John Dee, Derrick, and the second wave of Yokai's
arrival.
Kingdom Hearts III OST - Titan - Joker, Mona, Panther, and Skull vs. Gasha-dokuro, and on the
Mona train. Slaying the Gasha-dokuro.
z37b20a13t01t08le (Minor Boss Battle) - Xenoblade Chronicles X OST - Hiroyuki Sawano -



**Nioh OST - Main Theme** - Defeating Kelley.  
**Nioh OST - Edward Kelley’s Death** - Kelley's final words after being defeated and William questioning him before Kelley dissolves. Song ended after William apologizes to the group with no answers and following up with Nekomata's statement.  
**Nioh - REGION III -Kinki-** - The aftermath of the first YM event and the appearance of Yodogimi (since Ch. 2) and the other historical figures. Interacting with the spirits of the historical figures.  
**Nioh OST - Mysterious** - Interacting with the spirits of the historical figures. The spirits debating like in a council meeting/courtroom regarding Hifumi's goddess status.  
**Nioh Soundtrack OST - The Way of the Warrior** - The spirits' encouragement for our protagonists on their adventure to solve the Yami Matter case.  
**Owari no Seraph Nagoya Kessen-hen OST 02 - 4-a** - Last song of Ch. 4. The end of the song describes the environmental feeling of the story's setting.

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Spiritual Trainings; Akihabara Explorations (スピリチュアルトレーニング; 秋葉原探検)

Chapter Notes

Here's a link to the Fanfiction.net version and for those who want the original version, which will include detailed author notes.

Fanfiction.net link: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/13165382/5/Urban-Legends

Chapter V

Spiritual Trainings; Akihabara Explorations (スピリチュアルトレーニング; 秋葉原探検)

Meiji Shrine (明治神宮)/Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京)/February 11, 2019 (2019年2月11日) (Reality: February 2021)/12:30 AM (JST)

It was another night of training at the Meiji Shrine. As arranged with the historical spirits, the Thieves, and the others, they would receive side training to better prepare for the next Yami Matter event. Io warned that there may be another relatively soon. Taking matters seriously, Ren and Sion proposed they'd train three days a week at the shrine.

It was nightfall. Past midnight to be specific. The Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and the SpiritualGamblers arrived to meet with the historical spirits. The was the first night all that all the groups showed up to train. The first couple of training sessions have only involved certain individuals in each group. For example, Joker, Panther, Sion, and Tennyo would show up one night. On another night, Queen, Noir, and Engineer would show up. Other nights have had just the Spiritual Gamblers show up for training.

Mina was present to help supervise with the training. Among the historical spirits present: William, Hanzo, Okatsu, Giant Toad, Muneshige, Honda, Yukimura, Masamune, Nobunaga, and Nōhime voluntarily came forward to train their subjects.

Along with Yuriko, the other spirits, Nekomata, Fuku, Sasuke, and two newcomers sat out to watch the training sessions commence.

One newcomer was a middle-aged man with a rugged beard. He was garbed in a full-bodied black and gold embellished samurai armor. This is Date Shigezane, former general of the Date family and long time friend to Masamune.

The other newcomer was a black-haired young woman with a white cloth covering her left eye. She was fully garbed in white clothing, consisting of a short-sleeved baggy shirt and a hakama dress. She also wore two bells hanging on red strings tied together like a necklace. Around her waist was a red-and-black rope belt. Two balls, red and white, were seen attached to her left hip. This is Senji Tome, granddaughter of the legendary swords smith Senji Muramasa.

In order to improve their fighting, Mina previously proposed the Thieves train without utilizing their
Personas. Likewise, the Remnants have been asked not to use their Blood Veils. Even Tennyo was instructed not to use her special abilities. However, the Spiritual Gamblers were allowed to use their Guardian Spirits since they had the least combat experience.

To make use of the spacious area the shrine had, the spirits split the three groups up into smaller units. Everyone moved from the shrine and into the Meiji Shrine forest. Joker, Panther, and Skull ended up sparring with William, Hanzo, and Okatsu.

Having drawn out his katana, William beckoned the Thieves. "Come! Let's hone your skills, young warriors!"

Joker charged forward as he readily drew out his Paradise Lost Dagger. Skull came prepared with his Ruyi Jingu Bang mace. Panther had her Naraka Whip in hand. They sprinted around the trees and headed off the three spirits.

Joker slashed William with his dagger, but the Englishman countered with Joker's strikes with his katana. William was impressed with how well Joker kept up pace. The Phantom Thief's quick strikes were easily being countered by William's katana blows.

Panther tossed her whip at Okatsu, who hopped over and landed on a tree branch. The red-clad cat woman threw her whip to break the branch, but Okatsu jumped off and threw several mid-air kunai. Panther barrel-rolled and took cover, letting the kunais fly over her. Panther stood up only for Okatsu to swiftly get behind her and put a kunai to her throat. Panther then conceded knowing she required more work on her speed.

Skull charged head-on with Hanzo, swinging his mace around like mad. Hanzo humored the blonde-haired Thieve and lured him to fight him close quarters. Hanzo dodged Skull's unfocused swings. As Skull swung and went for Hanzo's gut, the ninja vanished and slipped behind Skull. Hanzo swiftly chopped the back of Skull's back and knocked him back. Fuming, Skull roared and went for a punch, but Hanzo conjured a cat from his garments and held it out in front. Skull withdrew his fist and watched the cat meow at him. With his guard completely dropped, the Hanzo holding the cat vanished and the real one came up behind Skull. The crafty ninja pulled Skull back and slammed him down.

Watching his two friends being outmatched by the ninjas, Joker lost focus as William smacked his dagger away. With the Englishman pointing his katana at him, Joker backed off.

"Ugh, how was I supposed to know he'd trick me with that cat?!" Skull snapped.

"It's called deception, young one," Hanzo smirked. "Never drop your guard around ninja."

Panther picked up her whip. "I'll say. I'm still having trouble keeping up with Okatsu."

"You should try blocking my kunai with your whip. You keep ducking like that and I'll easily come up behind you." Okatsu advised Panther.

"You should never keep your eyes off your opponents, especially if they're ninja," William stated.

"We're still getting used to fighting without our Personas," Joker took a few heavy breaths, wiping his forehead.

"That's because you kids have gotten too comfortable letting your Personas protect you," Mina interjected into their conversation. "I know how it's like to have a spiritual manifestation guard you against enemy attacks, but there may come situations where you can't call on your Personas. It's why
I implemented fighting skills and trained my body to its physical peak to better resist physical attacks. Remember just like those Yokai you fought months ago and last month, you'll be dealing with physical beings."

"Hey, she's got a good point, guys," Skull sighed. "We're not fighting some weird ass cognitions. They're real monsters that can do serious ass damage."

"Right, and we can get really if we're not careful," Panther stated.

"Well, that's why we're here. To hone our own fighting skills so we can better guard ourselves and conserve on using our Personas," Joker concurred with his colleagues.

Mina popped her neck and stepped in. "I hope you don't mind if I cut in. Besides, Miss Panther here could use a oomph in her physical training." She called Panther to train with her.

"Why me though?"

"Because I'd rather you than train with that unpredictable Yumeko."

Panther chuckled. "Oh right. Can't say I blame you." She brandished her whip and followed Mina. Okatsu went to watch their spar match.

"You two. Let us continue," William said as he and Hanzo beckoned Joker and Skull.

Joker watched Panther leave.

"Hey, dude. She'll be ok. Let's just focus beating these two," Skull assured his friend.

"Right, thanks," Joker picked up his dagger and faced William.

"And as for you! No more of those kitty tricks!" Skull pointed his mace toward Hanzo.

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In another section of the forest, Sion and Tennyo sparred against Engineer and Queen. Sion and Queen went head to head while Tennyo and Engineer contested each other.

Sion stopped Queen's Sabazoi knuckled right hand with his Regicide Blade. Amazingly, the blade didn't break against her devastating punch. As Queen went for a left hook, Sion withdrew his blade and tucked his head from her earth-shattering blow. Sion saw an opening and shot an elbow into her abdomen. Queen saw it coming and kneed his face, knocking him back.

"Slick move, but you're gonna have to do better than that, Sion!" Queen harshly chided him.

Sion coolly smirked, wiping the blood from his lip. "Sheesh, loosen up, Mako-kins. We're just sparring."

Hearing the nickname the old Sion used to call her irked Queen. This was the last name she ever wanted to hear again. Sion knew he was hitting the right emotional buttons, but reminded himself to be cautious of her devastating punches. Sion and Queen circled one another, both waiting for the other to attack. Queen watched Sion turn his blade and clenched her fists. Sion took the chance and swiftly lunged at Queen, who charged him. Sion swung his Regicide Blade and Queen countered with a punch. Sion and Queen were caught in another standstill.

"By the way, Mako-kins, Futaba told me about that scared look you had when she jump scared you at her place!" Sion reminded her.
"She what…?!

"Wish I would've been there to see your cute and timid face!"

Clenching her left hand, Queen roared and went for straight hook into Sion's gut. Sion narrowly dodged Queen's blow and distanced himself from her reach.

Sion wore a sly grin. "Heh, is that enough motivation? I know what buttons to press."

"I am so going to lecture that girl when this is over!" Queen gritted, recalling that night she and the Thieves first met Futaba.

Tennyo withdrew her ko-naginata as she and Engineer watched Queen chastising Sion. Engineer couldn't help himself but chuckle.

"What is so funny, Louis?" Tennyo curiously asked.

"Sion's having a fun time playing head games with Makoto. Also that nickname he gave her is just plain cute."

"You mean 'Mako-kins'?" Tennyo asked. "Yes, the old Sion used to call Makoto that, too."

"The old Sion is starting to sound just like our Sion. I wonder if your powers somehow passed some of his memories over to Skyler," Engineer speculated.

Tennyo nodded. "I don't know."

"And you're getting the hang of this, Hifumi. Skyler will be happy when you've fully honed your battle skills," Engineer said, readying his sword. "We've been doing pretty ok without our Blood Veils."

Taking a battle stance, Tennyo brandished her ko-naginata. "Yes, and I haven't required Io's assistance."

"Let's keep it up, Hifumi."

"Yes, agreed!"

Tennyo and Engineer quickly rushed each other. Engineer swung his sword. Tennyo countered his sword attacks with her ko-naginata. At one point, Engineer went to slash her from behind, but Tennyo quickly turned and blocked his sword.

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Stinger, Fox, Mona, Presto, and Oracle sparred against the largest spirit, Giant Toad. Giant Toad took out his big pipe and swung it at his adversaries. The group spread out and attacked from different angles. Stinger readied her bayonet and fired at Giant Toad. In response, Giant Toad shot out his tongue and swatted away the rounds fired his way.

Blanching, Stinger moved across and went fired more rounds. Giant Toad tongue lashed the bullets away and tripped her up with his tongue. Stinger landed face first. Fox and Mona quickly guarded Stinger. Fox drew out Usumidori katana. Mona conjured his Sudarshana slingshot.

"We've got you, Mia!" Mona cried out. With his slingshot, he fired and struck Giant Toad's forehead. After dazing Giant Toad, he let Fox dive into Giant Toad.
Fox unleashed multiple strikes on Giant Toad. However, that wasn't nearly enough to defeat Giant Toad. Oracle and Presto joined in to attack. Oracle jumped off a tree branch and slashed him from behind with her energy sword. Presto conjured Genbu to assist the three Phantom Thieves.

While the four fended off Giant Toad, Stinger slowly propped herself up. She seemed ready to invoke her Blood Veil, but restrained herself remembering the handicap that's been placed on her and the other Remnants. She grabbed her bayonet and rushed in to aid her friends.

"Make some room!" Stinger called out, jumping up and shooting Giant Toad with her bayonet.

Even though the bullets seemed to bounce off Giant Toad, they hurt him enough for the others to deliver painful blows.

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Tamamo, Noir, Hound, and Firebird surrounded Tachibana Muneshige and Honda Tadakatsu. When Muneshige swung his sword, he unleashed multiple flash-like strikes that drove the four back. Honda followed up by swinging his spear. Hound then drew out his greatsword and stopped Honda's spear.

Tamamo sprawled on all fours and summoned her Nine-Tails Guardian Spirit. Grinning wickedly, she beckoned her Guardian Spirit to attack Muneshige.

"Get up, Yumeko! You're not going to transform into that fox, are you?!" Firebird chastised Tamamo.

"Heheh, nah. I just like being all on fours. Don't mind me."

"God, you're such a freak." Firebird then conjured Suzaku to aid Hound against Honda.

Noir helped Tamamo's Nine-Tails spar against Muneshige. The lone Phantom Thief took out her Fleurs du Mal axe. She rushed from Muneshige's side and went to slam her axe into him. Muneshige quickly evaded Noir's attack. The Nine-Tails then slammed into Muneshige and knocked him aside. Taking advantage of the situation, Tamamo mounted Muneshige's back and chomped on his left shoulder. The samurai grimaced over Tamamo's unorthodox fighting style and grabbed her head, tossing her off him.

"Yumeko, be careful! You'll break your teeth like that!" Noir called out.

"Pffft! Yuck!" Tamamo spat. "Huh, well that didn't go well."

"You'd think?" Noir gawked.

Muneshige scoffed as he charged with his sword. "How barbaric can a woman be to bite a samurai's armor?!" As he went to attack Tamamo, the Nine-Tails blocked his way.

"Then, perhaps you'd like to take a proper lady on?!" Noir swung her axe at Muneshige, who then guarded with his sword.

Honda was in the middle of a scuffle with Hound. Hound swung down his greatsword and disarmed Honda's spear. Firebird directed Suzaku to launch small fiery blasts at Honda. Honda saw the fiery blasts raining down on him. He dodged the fire and kept his distance. Hound rushed at Honda and swung his greatsword. Honda quickly rolled away and snatched his spear off the ground. Honda got up ready to duel again.
Brave and Azure sparred with Yukimura and Masamune. Prior to the spar match, Brave summoned Janomecho. Azure brought out just Blue Dragon to assist her. On top of their Guardian Spirits, the two Spiritual Gamblers conjured new choice weapons to fight with. Brave wielded a spear. Azure conjured dual katanas.

Brave and Azure went head to head with Yukimura and Masamune. This would be the first time Brave and Azure were paired up. During the other training sessions, Brave would've been paired with her friends, Tamamo and Presto. However, Nekomata decided it was crucial for team members to work with others who they're not accustomed to working with. In Nekomata's view, this was to help build trust in others.

Swinging her blade, Brave kept missing her mark on Yukimura. Yukimura continued dodging her straight forward attacks.

Masamune had little difficulty countering Azure's dual katanas. He relied on his fast speed and sword to dodge Azure's predictable attacks.

Then, the ladies sent their Guardian Spirits to attack Yukimura and Masamune. As the spirits kept the samurai men occupied, Brave and Azure rushed to attack their adversaries.

"I've got him!" Brave shouted.

"No way, I've got mine first!" Azure cried out.

Brave and Azure kept pushing each other. They saw their Guardian Spirits were wearing down the samurai. As they pressed forward, the samurai noticed the women bickering. They decided to finish the match. Yukimura swung down his spear. Masamune slashed the air with his sword. The power from their attacks blew Brave and Azure back. The Guardian Spirits then returned to their summoners.

Shaking leaves off her, Brave snarled and berated Azure. "What the hell was that?! I had him!"

Azure growled. "You shouldn't have gotten in the way, you blonde bitch! I was doing just fine before your ass bumped into me!"

"Your not imply my ass is big, are you?!"

"If the panties fit…!"

"What did you say?!" Brave angrily cried as she lunged at and pushed Azure down. She got on top of Azure and reached for her eyepatch.

Azure grabbed Brave's hand and kicked her hard in the gut. As Azure got up, she went to punch Brave, but Firebird jumped in and restrained her. As Brave went for Azure, Presto pulled her back.

"LET ME AT HER!" Brave and Azure screamed with a fit of rage.

"C'mon, stop it, Mary!" Presto pleaded to her. "You and Midari are supposed to be working together!"

"That's right! We're on the same side here!" Firebird exclaimed, trying hard to hold back the frenzied Azure.
"Why don't I yank that other eye of yours so you can go blind, bitch?!!" Brave threatened Azure.

"Not if I tear every little strand off your head, you blonde bimbo!" Flipped out Azure, who wanted nothing more than to turn the blonde into a bald woman.

It didn't take long for the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, Tamamo, and the spirits to stop the in-fighting between Brave and Azure. It finally took Mina to effortlessly grab Brave and Azure. She lifted both ladies like nothing and tossed them down.

"Knock it off, you two! Unless you want me to kick your asses right now!" Mina snapped at Brave and Azure, quickly shutting them up.

"Seems a few here still need work on team dynamics," Nekomata observed Brave and Azure's differences.

Tamamo sat down next to Brave. "Hey, you and Midari will work things out."

Brave frowned and pouted. "Yeah, right. As if I'll ever team with her again."

Presto pleaded. "Please, Mary. I know you feel more comfortable when it's you with either me or Yumeko, but the purpose of the training was for us to work with different people. If you keep teaming with us, you'll get too comfortable relying on just us."

"Then, why not pair me with Itsuki, one of the Thieves, or Skyler's friends?"

Sion spoke up. "Because it was decided by the spirits. Besides, I'm already working with Makoto. And so far, we're having a blast. Aren't we, Mako-kins."

Queen scoffed. "Hn, speak for yourself, Skyler Jones."

Tennyo interjected. "And I've decided to train with Engineer to get a better understanding of his battle skills. It's an interesting lesson to learn each other's styles."

"The same applies with you and Midari working together," Joker said.

"Now, are you two gonna kiss and make up? Or, am I gonna have to shove both your faces together?" Mina, wearing a menacing glare, popped her knuckles as she conjured Saoirse to beat them down. Saoirse, too, sported Mina's intense look.

Sensing Mina's intimidating aura, Brave and Azure squeaked frightfully and turned to each other.

"Yeah, you two don't want to cross Mina," Panther said while rubbing her butt. "I learned that the hard way."

"Lady Ann? Do you need a massage?" Mona offered to treat her wounds.

"Nah, I think I'll be fine, Mona-chan!"

"So, can you two get along?" Presto asked the two ladies.

Sighing, Brave and Azure reluctantly reached over and shook each other's hands. After making a truce, the groups took a break from their sparring matches. However, that wouldn't be the end of the sessions.

Just then, Fox garnered everyone's attention. Oracle saw a few were too preoccupied recovering from their training sessions.
"Hey, Inari has something he wants to show us!" Oracle shouted, finally getting all eyes facing Fox.

"Than you, Futaba," Fox smiled. "Ever since we started training here, I've started painting a theme related to the spirits of this shrine."

"Oh, cool! Show us!" Skull exclaimed.

"What do you think? Yusuke paints some elaborate art," Presto said to his friends.

"Sure, why don't we have a look?" Tamamo nodded.

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A large assembly formed within Meiji Shrine. The Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, the Spiritual Gamblers, and the spirits watched Yusuke and Futaba in front of an art stand covered under a gray sheet.

"Sorry for the 15 minute wait, but we needed to prepare! Now, for your viewing pleasure, allow Inari to show you his latest masterpiece!" Futaba proudly announced to all. "Inari, why don't you show them our super awesome painting!"

"Our painting?" Yusuke raised a brow.

"Yeah, I collaborated and this painting is partly based on my ideas!" Futaba reminded him.

"So, it's a collaborator piece?" Ren asked.

"Well, she's technically not wrong," Yusuke sighed.

"C'mon, show us already!" Ann yelled out.

"Let us see!" Yumeko demanded the unveiling.

"Yeah, the sooner we can get back to training, the better!" Ryuji impatiently shouted.

With a gleam from her glasses, Futaba sneakily grinned. "Ladies and gents, behold! Inari and I's masterpiece! We give you, **Samurai Pocket Monsters**!"

With that, Yusuke ripped the sheet from the art stand. He unveiled the latest painting piece he's worked on. Everyone except the spirits recognized the Pokémon characters spread across the painting canvas. The painting also depicted numerous samurai figures on opposing sides with these Pokémon.

"Whoa, that's so cool!" Yumeko gleamed over the art piece.

"Hmm, not bad," Louis nodded. "What do you think, Skyler?"

"It's a nice mix of archaic figures with modern pop cultures," he critiqued the art piece.

"It's great, but I doubt Yusuke intended to have Pocket Monsters in this painting," Makoto plainly stated.

"Yeah, I think we can tell who suggested the Pocket Monsters," Haru smiled.

As Haru said this, the Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers veered toward Futaba, who whistled away playing innocent. She quickly cupped her ears.
"Oh, what do you guys ever mean? Nah, it was totally Inari's idea!" Futaba sneaked a grin.

"The Pocket Monsters was your idea and you know it, Futaba," Yusuke sighed with exasperation. "Though, in honesty, I wanted to draw something for the Pocket Monsters Tournament at this year's AnimeJapan."

"Mnhmm, and Inari asked me for some input. He wanted a nice clash between ancient and contemporary in one painting. He also wanted some kind of Red vs. Blue theme. So, I thought why not Red and Blue from Generation 1!"

"Well, the spirits seem to approve it," Ren pointed out as Willian, Hanzo, Okatsu, Nobunaga, Yukimura, Masamune, and the others surrounded the painting to give their artistic critique.

"*These Pocket Monsters they describe look like legendary beasts and Yokai to me,*" William assessed the character painting.

Standing opposite from each other, Yukimura and Masamune scanned the painting with their characters inscribed with specific team colors.

On the left side of the painting was Team Red, represented by Sanada Yukimura; Team Red's Pocket Monster roster consisted Mega Lizardon Y (リザードン) (Mega Charizard Y), Gallop (ギャロップ) (Rapidash), Butterfree (バタフリー), Fire (ファイヤー) (Moltres), Victini (ビクトニ), and Primal Groudon (グラードン). Yukimura eyed Mega Lizardon Y and nodded approvingly at his monster leader representative.

On the right side was Team Blue, represented by Date Masamune; Team Blue's Pocket Monster roster comprised Mega Lizardon X (リザードン) (Mega Charizard X), Gyarados (ギャラドス), Burungel (ブルンゲル) (Jellicent), Kairyu (カイリュー) (Dragonite), Bohmander (ボーマンダ) (Salamence), and Primal Kyogre (カイオーガ).

Yukimura and Masamune briefly changed heated glares.

"Hmm, is it to your liking, gentlemen?" Cautiously approached Yusuke, who was hesitant to get between them.

"Um, I think they're really into it, Inari," Futaba nervously chuckled.

Bowing their heads, Yukimura and Masamune both gave Yusuke's painting their seal of approval. Yusuke returned a customary bow to them.

"If they like it, then I'm sure the showrunners of that Pocket Monster tournament will approve," Ann said.

"Guess we'll see," Makoto added.

"We can't wait to see it on display at AnimeJapan for more people to see!" Mia cried out.

"*This AnimeJapan is a festivity you all celebrate?*" William asked the Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers.

"Yeah, you can say that," Skyler nodded.

"It happens yearly and people came dressed as characters," Hifumi briefly described the concept of the pop culture convention.
"Do they dress like us?" Nobunaga asked.

"Sure, but not y'all per say," Ryuji tried to explain clearer. "More like other versions of you. Like you, Nobunaga, there's many versions of you in books and TV shows."

"I see. So, we're translated into various different stories of our lives."

Nekomata chimed in. "It's time to resume training, my friends." He motioned over to Ren, Skyler, and Hifumi. "You three will face two opponents." He turned over to Nobunaga. "You and Nōhime."

Upon hearing this, Ren, Skyler, and Hifumi stood up and walked out. Nobunaga called Nōhime over.

"Looks like show and tell is over, you two," Makoto told Yusuke and Futaba.

"Let's check this out, Inari."

"Yes, this should be quite a duel."

After Yusuke showed off his latest artwork, Nekomata summoned Joker, Sion, and Tennyo forward. The trio then faced with their sparring opponents: Oda Nobunaga and Nōhime.

Nekomata declared. "Let this duel commence now!"

Once the duel started, Joker, Sion, and Tennyo spread out, splitting up Nobunaga and Nōhime. Nobunaga drew out his sword to fight Joker and Sion. Joker took out his Paradise Lost dagger and clashed with Nobunaga. With his Regicide Blade, Sion came charging to the side. Nobunaga barely sidestepped Sion's charge and took on the two blade wielders.

Spinning around, Nōhime unleashed an icy wind toward Tennyo. Tennyo quickly moved to the side, avoiding getting caught and turned to ice. Tennyo sprinted forward and slashed at Nōhime with rapid ko-naginata strikes. Nōhime conjured and tossed sharp icicles at Tennyo, who shattered them with a ko-naginata swing. Tennyo jumped forward and prepared to run her weapon through Nōhime. The Yuki-Onna quickly conjured an ice naginata and defended against Tennyo's ko-naginata. The maidens clashed and countered each other's fast strikes.

Meanwhile, Joker and Sion's teamwork proved effective against Nobunaga's adept swordsman skills. Sion spun with his Regicide Blade, clipping Nobunaga's sword out of his hands. Joker landed consecutive hits on Nobunaga with his dagger. Nobunaga tried and failed to keep up with the Phantom Thief's fast strikes. Joker then turned and knocked him back with a blow to his chest. Nobunaga fell down, having been bested by the Phantom Thief and Revenant duo.

After shattering Nōhime's ice shards, Tennyo unleashed a decisive ko-naginata slash that broke Nōhime's naginata. Tennyo then finished the duel with a ko-naginata slash, bringing the Yuki-Onna down to her knees. Tennyo quickly got behind Nōhime and lowered her ko-naginata's blade to the Yuki-Onna's throat.

"We concede to you," Nobunaga surrendered on their behalf.

"A fine duel, my friends," Nekomata acknowledged Joker, Sion, and Tennyo's battle prowess. "Even better that you never called upon your Persona manifestations. Well done."
"All this extra training has been a great help. We couldn't have gotten better without you, great spirits," Sion expressed his gratitude to William and company.

"Thank you," Tennyo bowed as William and the others did the same.

"So, what do you think, Nobunaga?" William queried to famed warrior and figurehead.

"They've shown me great aptitude in their fighting skills. I hope they apply what they've learned in the future battles."

"We won't let anything you've taught us go to the wayside, venerable ancestors," Joker said, putting away his dagger.

"Awesome moves, you three!" Futaba cheered them.

"Hell yeah! You kicked ass!" Ryuji exclaimed.

"I can't wait to see us utilize what we've gained through this training in the next Yami Matter. Whatever and whenever it might be," Louis said.

"Yeah, you can say that again," Makoto added, punching her right hand into her left palm.

After their sparring match, Joker, Sion, and Tennyo shifted back to their normal selves. Ren put on his glasses and approached Ann, who waited for him. Skyler and Hifumi sat together to treat each other's training scars, though they didn't suffer too bad injuries since they've not only gotten better at fighting, but avoided getting hurt for the most part.

"Some of us have gotten better, but a few of us need some work," Ann reminded herself after taking a loss in her sparring match with Mina.

Hearing this, Ryōta, Yumeko, and Itsuki turned toward Mary and Midari. "Yeah, like you two. We need to cast any differences aside." Ryōta plainly referred to Mary and Midari's heated scuffle during and after their sparring match.

Mary turned away and pouted. "Right."

Midari sardonically replied. "Whatever you say."

"You two will come to the shrine for more practice," Yuriko advised the two young women.

"And that's not an option for you either! I'll be there waiting for you two!" Mina harshly ordered Mary and Midari.

Yumeko chuckled. "Oh, that sucks for y'all!"

"While most of you have gotten better, keep in mind you're fighting enemies in their physical form. Some of you Phantom Thieves need to keep this in mind. Training your bodies is crucial." Mina advised the Thieves.

"That logic can be applied to us, too," Mia addressed on behalf of the Revenants. "We're a lot more vulnerable being more human and less like our original Revenant selves. We have to be mindful and not get too crazy, guys."

Yakumo concurred. "She's got a point."

Skyler added, having been reminded of their human vulnerabilities. "Yeah, but that allows us to
adapt and fight more creatively. We at least can bring out our Blood Veils when we need them most."

"Did you get all that, Io?" Hifumi asked the Vein Remnant resting inside her.

"Yep, I did!" Io happily responded in Hifumi's mind.

"Guys, I hope I won't become too much a burden," Ann addressed the Thieves.

"Of course, you won't, Ann," Ren assured his wife, kissing her hand.

"You think you need to work more? Hell, I've practically been too reliant on Prometheus! I gotta take extra training with that Amazon," Futaba muttered, referring to her physical sparring with Mina. "I have no doubt you'll do better than me, Ann."

"Thanks, I feel a little better hearing that," Ann tried to smile the best she could.

"Oh, Ann," Haru muttered, feeling genuinely sorry for her.

"Hey, here's a way to cheer you up, Lady Ann," Morgana poked in between her and Ren. "Let's have an outing together. I think we all earned it after all this training."

"Now that's a great idea!" Ryuji beamed over Morgana's suggestion for a group outing somewhere in town.

"Ooo! How about Akihabara?!" Yumeko suggested. "There's a lot of places we can explore and shop around!"

Futaba's eyes lit up. "I could go for shopping for new figurines! And I hear there's that Sailor Moon Café! I wanna try their themed burgers, candy, and smoothies!"

"That would be a great way to relax. I do want to see what I can find at one of the art shops," Yusuke said.

"Then, it's decided then?" Makoto turned to everyone. They all nodded in unison. "So, then it's unanimous then."

"Akihabara it is then," Ren decided on their outing. "Let's meet in six days and hopefully everyone is off that day."

"Sweet! Akihabara here we come!" Ryuji energetically declared.

In six days, the Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers anticipated their first leisure outing as an overall group. This would help them decompress after all the training, school, and work they've had to invest time and energy into as of late.

"Enjoy your leisure, my friends, but also be vigilant," Nekomata wisely reminded the urban warriors.

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_Akihabara (秋葉原)/Chiyoda, Tokyo (千代田区, 東京)/February 16, 2019 (2019年2月16日)/2:15 PM (JST)_

Six days have passed, the Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers met at Akihabara Station and headed out into the shopping haven for otaku culture. For some, namely the foreigners like Skyler, Mia, and
Louis, haven't explored much of this side of Tokyo. Some members of the group brought friends and love interests to tag along. Ryuji brought Miyako. Yakumo brought Emily Sue. Mia invited Shiho and Nicola. Nicola brought Shinya and Reiko.

Rather than go together to several places, the group split into smaller subgroups to visit places based on particular interests. For instance, Ren, Ann, Mia, and Shiho took Nicola, Shinya, and Reiko to an arcade. Ren and Shinya even renewed their friendly gaming competition. While Ann, Nicola, and Reiko cheered Ren and Shinya on, Mia and Shiho conversed in private and gotten to know each other.

Others explored various otaku-themed venues and electronic shops. Futaba and Yusuke took the Spiritual Gamblers to check out the latest trends based on otaku interests. This was also just an excuse for Futaba to look out and pick up a few figurines. She ended up picking up three figures: a new Kamen Rider Zi-O figure, an angry-faced Retsuko (Aggretsuko), and an Asuka Langley Soryu swimsuit model.

Skyler, Hifumi, Yakumo, and Emily Sue went to vicinity where a couple of waitresses dressed like maids flashed advertisements for a maid café. The four took pictures of the maids. They even took selfies with the maids.

Ryuji and Miyako took selfie pictures outside the Gundam Café.

Louis, Makoto, and Haru simply went sightseeing. They got away from the others and visited Akihabara's local Shinto shrine, the Kanda Myojin Shrine.

Sailor Moon Café (セーラームーンカフェ)/Akihabara (秋葉原)/Chiyoda, Tokyo (千代田区, 東京)/5:00 PM (JST)

After spending a good few hours exploring Akihabara's known spots, the groups converged to meet at the Sailor Moon Café. The themed café was decorated with cute decorum and memorabilia based on the popular magical girl manga and anime. The group members sat at a long table and scanned the food items on the list. Needless to say, the food and drink items were Sailor Moon themed.

"Let's see, there's the Luna and Artemis Burgers," Ren read one item aloud.

"They don't look that big to me," Ryuji scoffed.

"So? Let's have them, Ryuji," Miyako persuaded her boyfriend.

"Who wants Tuxedo Mask black curry?" Yusuke asked anyone.

"Oh, hey, Ren! I wonder how Sojiro would take to this curry?" Futaba snickered, pointing to the black-covered curry item.

"He'd say, 'That crap'll never beat my curry!'" Ren responded, doing his best Sojiro impression.

Ann laughed. "Yeah, that's something he'd say."

"The Sailor Moon and Chibi Moon smoothies look especially cute and delish!" Mia looked over the drink items.

"We could have those, Mia," Shiho suggested.
"By the way, you two in some ways remind me of Usagi and Mamoru," Haru addressed Ren and Ann.

"Now that you mention it, Joker does wear a mask like Tuxedo Mask," Hifumi pointed out. "And Ann used to have pigtails almost similar to Usagi's hairstyle."

"Well, minus the buns," Skyler added. "And Makokins shares the same name as Sailor Jupiter's civilian identity: Kino Makoto."

As her cheeks turned pink, Makoto scoffed. "Yeah, so?"

"Yeah, and Ann used to get bad grades in her subjects like Usagi did," Ryuji snickered as he irked Ann.

"Hey, shut up! You got shit grades, too!" Ann snapped. "Besides, I did well in the English speaking courses."

Everyone laughed as Ryuji and Ann snorted toward each other.

"And speaking of cats," Mia said, opening her backpack as Morgana poked his head out. "Morgana here is our talking magical cat."

"First off, I'm not magical and second I'm not a cat!" Morgana protested. Just then, Mia pulled out a crescent moon sticker and put on Morgana's head.

"There." Mia giggled.

"Awww, he looks so cute!" Yumeko, Mary, and Itsuki squealed happily in unison.

"Hah, I so gotta take a pic of this! This one's a keeper!" Ryuji tried to take a picture, but Morgana tucked his head inside Mia's backpack. "Hey!"

Miyako giggled over this. "That's so cute!"

"Y'know, we should look around this place a bit," Ann said, taking Ren around the themed café.

"Did you know what you wanted?" Skyler asked the two.

"Yeah! Put us down for the Luna and Artemis burgers!" Ann called out.

As Skyler put his and Hifumi's orders down, he ordered Ren and Ann the aforementioned burger platters.

Ren and Ann stood in front of a poster with Sailor Moon (セーラームーン) and Tuxedo Kamen (タキシード仮面) on it. The couple asked someone to take a photo of them with the poster. As Ren and Ann walked away, Moon and Kamen on the poster smiled and watched the couple walk off hand to hand.

Shinya, Nicola, and Reiko also explored the café. They passed by a life-sized Sailor Chibi Moon (セーラーちびムーン) cardboard cutout.

Louis took photos of Makoto and Haru standing next to Sailor Venus (セーラーヴィーナス) and Sailor Jupiter (セーラージュピター) cardboard cutouts.

Futaba watched a television screen showing various scenes from the Sailor Moon and Sailor Moon Crystal series, including Sailor Mars (セーラーマーズ) in action and Sailor Mercury (セーラー
マーキュリー) unleashing her trademark water attacks.

As they waited for their smoothies, Mia and Shiho looked at a Sailor Uranus (セーラーウラヌス) and Sailor Neptune (セーラーネプチューン) poster. Little did the others know, Mia and Shiho's fingers touched and started hand locking.

"Feh, where's the restroom?" Midari wondered as she searched for the women's room. Then, without even looking where she was going, she bumped into someone. "Ow! Hey, watch where you're…!" She balked at who she bumped into. "It's you!"

Yumeko, Mary, Ryōta, and Itsuki were also surprised with who Midari accidentally bumped right into.

"No way, you're here!" Mary exclaimed as she pointed to the individual.

"The idol from our old school is here?!!" Ryōta cried out.

Yumeko smirked. "Well, well, it's been a while, Yumemite Yumemi."

Yumemite Yumemi was as she appeared on television and the Internet. She was a fair-skinned young woman with long brown, slightly pinkish when light beams over it, hair styled into twin ponytails binded with white hair bands. She wore a frilly pink short-sleeved shirt, a light rose short skirt, and white high-heel platform boots. She had white bracelets and pink fingernails. Her blue eyes had white pupils shaped like stars.

"Oh? Hey, long time no see!" The idol woman greeted her old academy mates. Her perky smile adorned her face and the stars in her eyes sparkled as much as the pretty glitter on the posters and decorum inside the café.

"Ugh, what are you doing here?" Midari growled in Yumemi's face.

"Well, 'cause I wanted to! What a coincidence to see you all here!" Yumemi cheerfully said, ignoring Midari's pissed demeanor.

"A coincidence, huh? Is that Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta I hear, too?" A girl's voice chimed in. This girl finished watching a video of Sailor Saturn (セーラーサターン) on her iPhone.

"That voice…" Yumeko recognized the girl. "Ah! You're Yomozuki Runa!"

Yomozuki Runa got up from a booth. As she stood, she was a very short-statured girl, but has grown a few inches. Along with a light complexion, she had long platinum blonde hair. She came dressed in a white rabbit hoodie over over her choice civilian clothing: a short-sleeved green shirt and a white mini-skirt. She wore blue tennis shoes. Her fingernails are light pink. She took out a red lollipop she kept in her mouth and blew a pink bubblegum bubble, which popped back inside her mouth. Wearing a playful smile, her purple eyes scanned the Spiritual Gamblers and their friends.

"Hi! It has been a while, hasn't it?!!" Runa greeted them with a big grin.

"The two of you here at the same time?!" Itsuki exclaimed.

"Make that three apparently," a young man's voice interjected, garnering the Spiritual Gambler's attention away.

"Oh, I know that voice! Manyuda Kaede!" Yumeko revealed.
"I'm flattered you remembered my name. Well done, Yumeko."

Manyuda Kaede got up from his booth and confronted the Spiritual Gamblers. He was a tall pale-skinned young man. He still kept his white hair well-kept and neat. He now wore a new stylish pair of black thin-framed glasses. He wore a long-sleeved buttoned dress shirt, black pants, and black dress shoes. He carried a black blazer over his right shoulder. Most of the young women present were drawn to his good looks.

"Talk about a mad coincidence that you three are here with us!" Ryōta looked at three.

"Not exactly three I'm thrilled to see," Midari scoffed.

"Awww, don't be like that! I mean, it has been a while, hasn't it?" Runa said, her smile widened.

"Hey, Yumeko! Our food's out now!" Hifumi called out to the Spiritual Gambler and her friends. She noticed the three new faces. "Oh, are these friends of yours?"

"I see you've brought some friends we haven't met!" Yumemi giggled as she walked up and shook Hifumi's hands. "Hi, I'm Yumemite Yumemi! I'm sure you've heard of me?"

"I'm Togo Hifumi, and no I don't think so?"

"I'm an well-known idol?"

"Sorry."

Yumemi hung her head in defeat. "Seriously?"

Skyler approached Hifumi and glanced at the three individuals. "Oh, hi. Are you Yumeko's friends?"

"Friends, he says? Well, I suppose we're acquaintances," Kaede said, adjusting his glasses.

"And your hair's still white like before," Yumeko obviously pointed out Kaede's hair color.

"And you just noticed?! I'll have you know I've dyed my hair several times already!"

Yumeko laughed. "Oh really? Guess you can't go back to being black, right?"

Kaede scowled. "Insufferable woman."

Just then, the Spiritual Gamblers, Skyler, and Hifumi felt similar spiritual essences surrounding the three. They noticed Guardian Spirits materialize next to these three.

"Hey, you three have Guardian Spirits, too?!" Ryōta cried out.

"Well, this makes things interesting," Mary frowned.

"Oh cool! So, you three went to see Yuriko and the ancient spirits, too?" Yumeko asked the trio.

"We sure did," Yumemi smiled. "And we heard you have Guardian Spirits, too."

A pair of furred spirit hounds, resembling komainu statues, appeared next to Yumemi. The one on the left has gleaming pink fur. The other on the right has cyan fur. The dual spirits wore taiko (Japanese drums) around their necks.

"Those spirits belonged to Ginchiyo and Muneshige Tachibana!" Itsuki exclaimed.
"The Paired Raiken!" Midari identified the spirit hounds.

Runa's Guardian Spirit is a white moon rabbit. Its white fur had some golden radiance gleaming off its body. A blue cloth with two orange orbs on each side floated over its back.

"You have Okatsu's Guardian Spirit, Gyokuto!" Mary cried out.

Kaede's Guardian Spirit is a black and red centipede. As it raised the front of its body, it revealed a demonic red visage and yellow glowing eyes. A pair of sharp horns protruded from its head. Its venomous facial pinchers twitched. A large golden circular symbol with elaborate designs appeared floating over the centipede.

"And that's Bisha's Centipede! Who used to be Date Shigezane's Guardian Spirit!" Ryōta pointed to Kaede's spirit.

"Wow, this is super cool! I see our spirits are what drew us here together!" Yumeko gleefully clapped her hands once.

"So, are you here to fight us?" Mary cautiously eyed Runa, Yumemi, and Kaede.

"We're not afraid to throw down if that's what you're looking for," Midari gritted.

"What? Fight you? Why would the heck would we do that?" Runa blinked in confusion, pulling out her lollipop.

"We're not here to fight. I'm here because I invited these two to an event I'm putting on," Yumemi explained her reasoning. "I… I kinda need some volunteers who'd like to help put a big show on for me."

"What's this about a show?" Ann overheard the conversation. She stepped forward, striking a Sailor Moon-esque pose, legs spread out, her right arm raised overhead, and two fingers sticking in front of her face. "If you're looking for volunteers, I, Amamiya-Takamaki Ann, would be willing to help out an idol in need!"

Upon hearing this, Yumemi gleamed with joy. "Really?! You would?!"

"Me and my friends would love to," Ann nodded.

"What? Us?" Ren turned to her with a stupefied expression.

"This'll be fun. Let's make sure the others are on this!" Ann turned to Skyler, Hifumi, and the Spiritual Gamblers. "You guys are gonna help out, right?"

"Uh…” Before Skyler could finish, Yumeko shoved him to the side. Her eyes became starry and shiny like Yumemi's.

"Hell yeah! We're so in!" Yumeko favored this idea. "Sounds like it'll be fun! Right, guys?"

Mary scoffed. "Give me a break."

Itsuki chuckled nervously. "...well, I'm not so sure this is a good idea."

Midari folded her arms. "Count me out."

Kaede concurred with Midari. "Sounds like we can agree on something."
"C'mon, where's your creative spirit, guys?!!" Ann tried to liven up the mood.

"Skyler, we're in on this, yes?" Hifumi asked him.

"If you say so," Skyler shrugged. "I doubt most of the others will be agree."

"And you'll help, too, Ren?" Ann eyed Ren, who tried sneaking off. "You and Shinya had your fun at the arcade. Now, it's my turn!"

"I swear, none of you will regret this!" Yumemi gleefully cried out.

"So, where is it taking place?" Hifumi asked the idol.

"There's an idol stage concert being hosted by me outside AKB48 Café and Shop! FYI, it starts at 9:00. So, I suggest we get there early to prepare!"

"What time is it now, Ren?" Ann asked him.

"6:15 now."

"We'll need to finish eating and get over there no later than 7:30 then."

Skyler sighed. "I'm telling y'all. Not everyone's going to be on this."

Hifumi gently held Skyler's hand. "It'll be ok, Skyler. Let's just have a good time. That's what matters."

"Yeah, you're right. Let's give this a chance."

"Great! I'll let my agents know!" Yumemi excitedly said, taking out her phone and calling said agent.

"So, who's going to be the one to ask the others?" Ren turned to Ann, Skyler, and Hifumi.

"Don't worry I'll tell them," Ann offered as she walked by a Sailor Pluto (セーラープルート) poster and went back to their table.

"This could either be fun or a an embarrassment," muttered Skyler.

When Ann told the others about the stage show participation, everyone else had predictably mixed reactions. Half liked the idea but others weren't on board.

"No way," Makoto declined. "Besides, can you just imagine me dancing?"

"I could," Louis added in a positive light. "Don't knock it until you try it, Mako-chan."

"C'mon, we should do it. Besides, I'm looking at it as a way to get my face out there and promote Okumura products," Haru said, taking Makoto's hand. "Would you do it for me?"

Realizing she was outnumbered by those in favor, Makoto resigned to her friends' wishes.

"Perfect, and so there's no further objections?" Ann asked.

"We don't have to do this, do we?" Shinya asked.

"Nah, from the sounds of it, that idol girl wants just a few volunteers."

"Don't worry. Even if we don't participate, we'll cheer you on," Reiko added.
"You'll do it for me, Ryuji?" Miyako persuaded him.

"If my buddies are gonna make asses out of themselves, then I'll do the same," Ryuji accepted the stage show challenge.

"We're in, too, Inari. No 'ifs' or 'butts','" Futaba flat out told him.

"Um, I wasn't going to argue…" Yusuke looked away.

"This is great! Let's put on a great show!" Ann rallied her friends for tonight's event.

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**AKB48 Café (AKB48 カフェ)/Akihabara (秋葉原)/Chiyoda, Tokyo (千代田区，東京)/8:30 PM (JST)**

It was thirty minutes from showtime. An idol show was set up near AKB48 Café. Many of Yumemi's fans showed up in support of their favorite idol.

Yumemi peeked through the curtain and smiled. "We're drawing a nice and lively crowd. There should be more pouring in!" She looked behind her as the Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers sat waiting. "Ok, you better get dressed. I hope you're ok with the clothes we picked for you. We're sorry if it's not to your liking."

"It's not a problem! After all this all happened under short notice," Ann said.

"Yumeko, can you and your friends help being the backstage crew and curtain jerkers."

"Leave it to us!" Yumeko voluntarily responded.

"Can I leave?" Midari tried to walk away, but Mary grabbed her ear.

"Going somewhere? If I'm going to suffer this, you'll share my pain," Mary muttered. "And this would be a great way for us to 'get along' like the others want."

"Ugh, fine just don't piss me off."

As Skyler and Hifumi followed the other Revenants, the latter started to feel lightheaded. Hifumi nearly collapsed and leaned on some metal crates. Skyler quickly rushed to his girlfriend's side.

"Hifumi? Are you feeling ok?"

Hifumi looked to him as her eyes briefly turned gold like Io's. "We've just sensed Yami Matter materializing close by."

"Where?"

"Not far from this area. We have to warn the others."

Meanwhile, Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, Shiho, Miyako, Emily Sue, Itsuki, Runa, and Kaede stood in the crowds waiting for the stage performance.

"Ugh, when's it going to start?" Shinya groaned impatiently.

"9:00 from what we know," Nicola answered. "Don't worry, it'll come, Shinya."
"Yeah, you can afford to wait, Shinya. We had to watch you and Ren play games nearly the whole time," Reiko chided him.

"I'm just surprised Yakumo even agreed to do this," Emily Sue frankly said.

"Don't worry! The show'll start soon!" Runa assured the small group opposite from her and Kaede.

"Well, I'll be here to cheer for Ann and Mia," Shiho prepared to give support to her two friends.

"Ryuji! Give us a show!" Miyako shouted loudly for her boyfriend to hear.

As Itsuki turned to buy a drink, she bumped into someone in front.

"Oh, excuse me!" Itsuki openly apologized. She saw a man dressed in a canary yellow hoodie, black jeans, and tennis shoes. He appeared to be in his early-30s. She noticed he had a restless-looking face most seen on insomniacs. He also had pale features. She watched him walk by and went to get a drink from a vending machine. "Wow, talk about creepy."

The insomniac man approached a gang of three similarly dressed individuals, but each wearing differing hoodie colors to distinguish themselves. One wore a white hoodie. Another had on a black one. The third wore a green one.

After getting her drink, Itsuki went back to meet with Shinya and the others. She caught glimpse of the same man she bumped into and noticed him with the three other hoodie-wearing individuals.

"Looks like they're part of some gang..." Itsuki muttered until her Guardian Spirit, Suzaku, appeared to her visible eye. "What's wrong, Suzaku? You're getting bad vibes about these guys?"

"Hey, the show's about to start!" Shinya called to Itsuki.

"Oh, hold on!" She responded, taking one last look at the gang and slipped through the rowdy crowd.

"Hey, went to get a drink?" Shiho asked Itsuki.

"Yeah..."

"Is something wrong?" Emily Sue asked.

"No... well, kinda. I bumped into some guy who was rude and then I got some bad vibes from him. They're guys in multi-colored hoodies in the back of the crowd."

Hearing this, Shiho and Emily Sue exchanged concerned looks.

Meanwhile, in the backstage area, Skyler sat Hifumi down as she warned the Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers what she felt.

"There's another Yami Matter event happening?" Ren asked Hifumi, who rubbed her own forehead.

"Io told me it'll happen any moment and the people are in danger. The threat is near the crowds."

"Oh shit, that's where Miyako and the others are!" Ryuji freaked out.

"Speaking as a law enforcer, we can't let any bystanders get hurt! An evacuation has to happen!" Makoto solemnly vowed.
"But, how are we supposed to know where to find the ones behind this Yami Matter?" wondered Yusuke.

"Guys, Shiho, Emily Sue, and Itsuki are trying to tell us something!" Ann called out as she poked her head through the curtains.

Mia also peered through the curtains. "They're signaling to us for something!"

"They must've sound something suspicious," Skyler said. "I think we might've found our culprits, Hifumi."

As Shiho, Emily Sue, and Itsuki were getting their friends' attention, Shinya and the others noticed this.

"Hey, what's going on?" Shinya asked them.

"We're in danger," Itsuki warned.

"From what?" Nicola queried worryingly.

Just then, the group turned and saw the yellow hoodie-garbed gang leader facing them behind a crowd of ignorant masses.

"Sticking your noses where they shouldn't? Well, I can't let you live to tell," the yellow hooded individual threatened as his eyes glowed dark yellow. His cohorts each had glowing eyes.

The group then saw the shadow of a serpent materialize over the yellow hoodie-garbed man.

"No one in this crowd is getting out of the second Akihabara massacre alive," the man evilly smirked as the serpent's shadow enveloped him and transformed him.

The second Yami Matter Event has begun.

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**Chapter Soundtrack:**

*Nioh* 仁王 OST - *Kyushu Region Map Theme* - First song of Ch. 5.


Muramasa Rebirth {Okoi Chapter} OST - *Second Act ~ B Version* - Tennyo/Sion vs. Queen/Engineer.

22. *Mononofu II* - NIOH DISC 1 OST - Sparing with Giant Toad, Tachibana Muneshige, and Honda Tadakatsu.

*Nioh* OST - *Sanada Yukimura (Decisive Battle) 守望者* Defiant Honor DLC - Sparing with Masamune and Yukimura.

*Nioh* - *Okatsu II* (Soundtrack OST)


*Nioh* OST - *Oda Nobunaga & Date Masamune* - Sparing with Nobunaga and Nōhime.

*Muramasa: The Demon Blade* OST - Womanizing A

*Neurotech* - Compass

*Twister* (Final Remix) - *The World Ends With You: Final Remix* - Arriving and exploring Akihabara.
Röyksopp - *This Space* - The Sailor Moon café.
Kakegurui OST - *A Flower Without a Match* - Meet Yumemi and more Kakegurui cast.
**Persona 5 OST - Suspicion** - Hifumi senses a Yami Matter event and Itsuki bumps into the yellow hooded man.
**Persona 5 OST - Blood of a Villain** - The yellow hooded man confronts the auxiliary cast and promises a second Akihabara massacre.

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Cryptid Incursion; Dancing in Starlight (クリプチド侵入；スターライトで踊る)

Chapter Notes

Here's a link to the Fanfiction.net version and for those who want the original version, which will include detailed author notes.

Fanfiction.net link: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/13165382/6/Urban-Legends

Chapter VI

Cryptid Incursion; Dancing in Starlight (クリプチド侵入；スターライトで踊る)

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AKB48 Café (AKB48カフェ)/Akihabara (秋葉原)/Chiyoda, Tokyo (千代田区，東京)/8:55 PM (JST)

Fearful screams filled the nightly scene some lights were quickly taken out. The crowds erupted into a chaotic hysteria when they saw something resembling a giant snake slither its way through the obscured darkness. The yellow hooded individual ignored the screams as he and his cohorts walked up to Shiho, Emily, Itsuki, Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, Runa, Kaede, and Miyako.

"Why am I seeing a shadow shaped like a snake?!” Shiho cried out in terror.

"Oh god, so I'm not the only one?!” Miyako exclaimed.

"Is that some kind of Persona or Spirit Guardian?” Nicola wondered as he and Shinya stood in front of Reiko.

"I don't know, but I don't care! Reiko, stay behind us!” Shinya yelled out, not giving the hooded individuals any ideas.

"Since you apparently can see this shadow, we can't let any of you live,” the man smiled cruelly beneath his yellow hood. He quickly disrobed his hood, revealing his grotesque facial features.

Most of the group averted their eyes, but some were brave enough to see the man's entire left half of his face covered with gray reptilian scales. Both his eyes are yellow and the black irises in them thinned out, indicating his mood shifted into an aggressor state.

"We'll make humanity pay for casting judgment with those disdainful glares! And we'll make humanity as a whole pay for casting us out when we needed them most!” The man's yells morphed into the loud hisses of a serpent.

His other three colleagues came forward. These three took off their hoodies and revealed themselves. The one with the white hoodie looked like a boy with feminized features, especially the face. One could identify this individual as androgynous from first glance. Ze has short, ear-length platinum blonde hair and has pale blue eyes. Zir body was thin and modestly framed, making zir the smallest
of these four individuals.

The one removing the black hoodie was a masculine man with a large muscular upper body frame. This man was the tallest of the four individuals. He has short brown hair covering just the topmost layer of his head. He has the facial features resembling an ape. There were tufts of reddish brown hair covering his arms and chest.

After removing his green hood, the fourth one revealed to have the features of a wolf, especially the face, eyes, and teeth. He has orange eyes and thick black irises. Cream-colored fur visibly covered some areas his face and upper body. He had the average body build comparable to the snake man.

"You're in the way in our revenge against humanity for abandoning us and letting them turn us into these monstrosities!" The androgynous one ranted, implying they had been tampered with by an unknown source.

"We see those judging glares you're giving us. You're no different from the rest of humanity that've shunned us!" The wolf man snarled, expressing his disdain for even the group who've done no wrong to them.

Emily snapped back. "We did nothing to you! Who are you?!

Reiko stayed hidden behind her two friends. "What happened to make them this way?"

Nicola frowned as he glared down the four mutants. "I don't know, but their hostility is rubbing me the wrong way."

Shinya shouted back at the four. "Hey, we did nothing wrong to you! Don't take it out on us!"

"Stay back! We've got this!" Itsuki declared as she, Runa, and Kaede stood in front of the group.

Emily reached for her pistol. "The rest of you get behind me!" She beckoned Shinya & his friends, Shiho, and Miyako. "They look to have been escaped test experiments. Rumor has it, there's some organization that's helped in research and development of human soldiers. And it's said animals were also involved. Could it be?" She put two and two together.

"Human and animal experiments?" Shiho overheard, whispering. "How awful."

"So be it, you'll be the first victims of this second Akihabara Massacre!" The snake man declared as the shadow snake enveloped him. A dark red aura intensely radiated off his body. His yellow snake eyes glowed vehemently at the three Spirit Gamblers and their entourage. "Let's make them all pay, my friends! Let's make an example of these humans and send them a message we're not their tools!"

The androgynous individual's eyes glowed dark purple as black matter formed over zir. The Yami Matter resurfaced and began mutating zir. The Yami Matter fed off zir hatred for humans and used those intense emotions to distort zir humanoid form. Zir complexion became paler until ze became snow white. Zir legs became longer limbed. The back half of zir body gained the tail of a beluga whale. Zir head and face slightly resembled a beluga. Ze became something like a pale mermaid, but closely resembled a human-sized Ningen cryptid.

As the Yami Matter engulfed him, the ape man's eyes glowed red. The dark energies influenced the mutation that already changed him and distorted his appearance into something resembling a Hibagon cryptid. As he hunched forward, he grew into a 10-feet tall frame. The reddish body hair he had already quickly spread and covered his body, completing his wild ape look. He looked like a Hibagon, a Japanese variation of the cryptid Bigfoot.
With the Yami Matter influencing him, the wolf man went from bipedal to full-on quadruple Japanese wolf. His cream-colored hair spread over his body and became a full-on wolf's fur. However, his transformation was not complete. A second wolf's head poked out on the right side, giving him a two-headed wolf appearance. The wolf heads snarled and howled in unison.

"I don't even remember my actual name, but they named me Beluga Ningyo," the Ningen-like cryptid revealed zir name.

"I've been classified as Giga Nihonzaru," the Hibagon man said.

"Zwei Ōkami is what I've been called," the two-headed Japanese wolf referred to himself by his given subject name.

"What are those shadows that just covered them?" Emily asked the others.

"It's the Yami Matter we've had to deal with when it attacked that shrine and brought those demons to life," Itsuki informed her.

"Yakumo told me about something called Yami Matter, but this is the first I'm seeing it with my own eyes," Emily maintained her glare on the four cryptids.

"Well, we're not going to let them passed us," Kaede vowed as he nodded to Runa and Itsuki.

With that, the three Spiritual Gamblers summoned their Guardian Spirits. Suzaku appeared next to Firebird.

"Since we're giving out names, my codename is Bunny!" Runa announced as Gyokuto appeared next to her.

"And I'm Bishamon," Kaede calmly said as Bisha's Centipede materialized on his right hand side.

"Guys! Wait!" Ryuji was heard calling out to the group. "Miyako, you and the others get away from there!"

"Ryuji?!" Miyako turned as she and the group saw most of the Thieves and the Remnants helping getting some bystanders away from the now dangerous vicinity.

"C'mon, this way!" Makoto called out, utilizing safety measures learned as a police officer to get her friends out.

"You heard them. Get going!" Ren called out as he dropped in front of Firebird, Bunny, and Bishamon. He was in full Joker gear and pulled out his Tyrant Pistol. "We'll take it from here."

As Joker said this, Tamamo and Brave swiftly landed next to the Phantom Thief leader. Engineer, Noir, and Azure then appeared next to Joker's three-person team. Oracle also appeared to join with Firebird, Bunny, and Bishamon. Hound, Fox, and Yumemi then came forward.

Beluga, Giga, and Zwei prepared to attack, but their leader stopped them.

"Wait, these are the Phantom Thieves," the snake man muttered.

"We'll take it from here, Mako-chan!" Noir called to her partner as the police woman gathered Shiho, Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, Emily, and Miyako.

"Shiho, over here!" Ann called out to her friend.
"Ann!" Shiho hurried over to convene with her. "Where's Ren?"

"Don't worry. He's helping Makoto with getting these people out. C'mon, let's get going!" The blonde woman almost jerked on her friend's arm and raced forward.

Shiho cried out. "Whoa, alright then!"

Emily watched Hound from a distance and called to him. "Yakumo, be careful!" She reached Makoto and queried to her. "Need help with moving these crowds?"

"That'd be great. Thanks," the police woman nodded as she and Emily got the crowd moving forward.

With the crowds cleared from the vicinity, the Phantom Thief, Vein Remnant, and Spiritual Gamblers that were left confronted the four cryptids.

"Phantom Thieves, we've heard of your reputations," the snake man acknowledged them. "We might consider you heroes since you've rebelled against the corruption of humanity, but sadly you haven't prevented the people that turned us into the monsters you see before you."

"Who did this to you?" Joker asked.

"Doesn't matter now since we'll make examples out of you on our mission to punish humanity for judging and shunning us out!" Beluga rebuked against the Phantom Thief leader.

"We were outcasts before we became part of their revolting experiments," Giga conveyed disgust for the humans who've subjected them to the torturous experimentation behind the scenes of this unnamed organization.

"My, god, you four were experimented on?" Oracle gasped, feeling sorry for the cryptids.

"We don't need the pity of you humans," Zwei's left head snarled. Both wolf heads bared their sharp canines and growled loudly.

"But, you were once people, too! You can't blame us for what those monsters did to you!" Brave berated the four cryptids.

"We'll send a message to humanity. We'll start by killing you, Phantom Thieves, for not being there when we needed you the most!" The snake man smirked sadistically. His snake eyes widened as Yami Matter shrouded him.

Upon noticing the Yami Matter, Fox glanced over to Joker.

"Do you see that?"

"Yeah, their hearts are filled with hatred for humanity. The Yami Matter's fed on their insecurities and overtaken them," Joker focused intently on the Yami Matter-influenced cryptids. "But, these people aren't revived demons or enemies we've faced before."

"No, we'll actually be battling actual people," Engineer stated.

"Well, as far as I'm concerned, they're freaks now!" Azure snapped. "They already lost their humanity!"

Yumemi sneaked in between Bunny and Bishamon. She quickly summoned her Guardian Spirits, the Paired Raiken.
"Sorry we're late, but Singer's ready to fight!" Yumemi announced.

"Good to have you with us," Joker nodded.

"So, who are you?" Bishamon asked Joker. He looked at him up close. "Wait, you're Ren…"

"Yeah, but I trust you and your friend here can keep a secret? Yumemi already knows about me and my friends," Joker said, referencing he, Yusuke, Futaba, and Haru just revealed their identities to Yumemi to gain her trust.

"Sure, no problem," nodded Bishamon.

Just then, the snake man pointed to the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and the Spiritual Gamblers.

"I am Yaban Mamushi! If not even the Phantom Thieves can save us, then no one can!"

As war was declared, the four cryptids spread out and lured the group after them. The Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers immediately divided into four subgroups to take on each of the four cryptids.


When Yaban Mamushi got on all fours, he swiftly crawled around in snake-like motions. His entire body twisted and turned like a snake. Joker, Tamamo, and Brave dodged Yaban's rush attack.

Joker conjured his Persona: Jack Frost. Jack appeared as a snow elf wearing a dark blue Fool's garb, including a three-pointed Fool's hat, a neck piece with three bells, and shoes. Jack's black beady eyes blinked and his mouth twisted into a mischievous grin. Joker beckoned Jack to blast Yaban with Mabufu. Some ice expelled out of Jack and froze the ground Yaban crawled on. Yaban started slipping on the icy floor and shivered from the cold air freezing him.

"Hey, back me up, Mary!" Tamamo got on all fours and lunged at Yaban. She then attempted to go into Nine-Tailed Fox form, but the raw fox's power didn't surface. Realizing this, Tamamo moved out of Yaban's way and cursed. "Oh shit, I can't become the fox?"

"Probably because the fox needs rest after that alchemist guy took it outta you!" Brave yelled while attacking Yaban with her spear.

Upon realizing this, Tamamo sighed. "Fine, I can improvise. Nine-Tails come forth!" With that, she summoned her Guardian Spirit: the Nine-Tails. She then ran forward with the Nine-Tails following her lead.

Amid Joker and Brave's attack on Yaban, Tamamo and Nine-Tails both hit the snake man with a double body attack. Tamamo slammed Yaban back and Nine-Tails shot fire blasts at the cryptid. As soon as he recovered from their varied attacks, Yaban opened his mouth and expelled poisonous orbs that flew at the Phantom Thief and the Spiritual Gamblers.

As Joker took cover behind some speakers, he ordered Jack to freeze Yaban's poisonous balls. After his Persona did so, Joker jumped out and capped Yaban with a headshot. However, the shadow snake surrounding Yaban whipped forward and swatted the bullet down. Seeing this, Joker cursed through his gritted teeth.
"You're going to have to shoot faster and when I'm not even looking," Yaban chuckled, throwing the bullet back, which punched a hole through the speaker sitting behind Joker.

Brave summoned Janomecho to assist Tamamo's Nine-Tails. The two Guardian Spirits advanced on and attacked Yaban, who guarded with his shadow snake aura.

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Beluga used zir nimble body to swiftly move around Engineer, Noir, and Azure's attacks. The pale cryptid unleashed a water blast from zir mouth. Engineer cut through the water blast with his sword. Noir threw her Fleurs du Mal axe at the cryptid, only for the beluga-like Ningen to dodge the incoming weapon. Noir recalled her axe back to her hand and tried keeping up with Beluga's quick movements.

"Hold freakin' still!" Azure snarled as she fired gunshots at the cryptid.

"Allow me!" Engineer invoked his Ogre-Type Blood Veil. He then used his Revenant hand to reach up and grab Beluga's back tail. He then jerked on zir tail and started spinning around. He tossed zir into a pickup truck. With the gleam in his eyes turning red, Engineer meticulously eyed the cryptid.

As Beluga rose, Engineer rushed over and slashed zir. Screeching in pain, Beluga punched Engineer back with force. Engineer used his Revenant arm that absorbed the blow and protected his body from taking damage.

"I've got this! Come!" Noir declared as she summoned Astarte. She commanded Astarte, which fired Beluga with a One-shot Kill. The cryptid narrowly dodged being critically damaged by Noir's Persona.

Noir followed up by channeling energy into her axe, which glowed with light. The axe transformed into something resembling a 17th Century German Axe Pistol. Brandishing her newly produced weapon through axe training, Noir readied her newly conjured weapon and fired her Buster Axe technique, which exploded directly in front of Beluga. Following the explosive impact, smoke billowed out and obscured Noir from Beluga's sights.

As Beluga frantically scanned the area, Noir came dashing forward and quickly axed Beluga's side. Noir went off as an axe crazy glare smeared over her face. Beluga immediately withdrew from getting into close quarters with the axe wielder.

Then, Azure cut Beluga off and summoned Blue Dragon. The Guardian Spirit brushed Beluga away with a wind attack. Azure then charged at the cryptid and delivered quick successive slashes with her dual katanas.

"Not so fast now when we can slow your ass down!" Azure snapped as Engineer rushed by her and grabbed Beluga, slamming zir into a wall.

"You can't escape!" Engineer growled as his red eyes gleamed intently at the cryptid, who looked deathly afraid at the Revenant.

The cryptid suddenly had flashes of horrific scenes in zir mind. Ze saw fleeting images of zirself captured by men in black suits. Ze then saw zirself locked in a cage with others imprisoned in similar cells. Ze saw a blackened shadow with the light of the figure's glasses gleaming. The identity of his individual was unknown, but ze knew who this cruel individual was. The next image ze saw was being injected with a purple serum. Then, the most horrific image was zirself being mutated and as a result losing most of the hair ze once had.
The cryptid opened zir eyes and found zirself at Engineer's mercy.

"Say your prayers," Engineer snarled, preparing to crush Beluga's head.

Beluga closed zir eyes. "...do it then. Kill me."

Hearing the tone of defeat in zir voice, Engineer was taken aback. "What did you say?!"

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Bishamon beckoned his Bisha's Centipede to excrete poison from its mouth pinchers. Giga narrowly avoided getting caught by the centipede's poison spray and pounded the earth with tremendous force. The ground shook under the Phantom Thief and the three Spiritual Gamblers' feet.

"Hey, Sasquatch! Allons-y!" Oracle called to Giga, who charged at her. As Giga went for a straight punch, Oracle summoned her Persona.

As Prometheus guarded Oracle from Giga's punch, the Phantom Thief whipped out her laser sword. She used her laser sword to draw psionic energies from her Persona. Upon augmenting her laser sword, Oracle slashed through the air with her empowered weapon. A mischievous grin spread over the otaku's face as she tilted her laser sword's hilt.

After fighting off Prometheus, Giga charged Oracle's way. He went for a devastating right hand, but Oracle's laser sword produced a barrier. Oracle's Psionic Barrier provided enough defense power to withstand Giga's blow.

"Wow, I'm getting the hang of being an offensive fighter! Now to crank it up, Bigfoot!" Oracle openly irked the ape man with insults. She knew she struck a nerve when Giga pounded against the barrier. "Yeah, now keep your eye on my lightsaber!" She waved her laser sword and shoved said weapon through the barrier.

As the laser sword pierced through the barrier, it exploded into a barrage of green beams that crashed into Giga. Oracle's Psionic Storm bombarded Giga and knocked him back.

"Suzaku, burn him with your flames!" Firebird called on her Guardian Spirit.

Diving toward Giga, Suzaku unleashed a wave of flames that swept across and engulfed Giga. Giga quickly danced through the scorching flames. Bellowing like mad, the humanoid ape burst through the wall of flames and tossed a piece of debris at the phoenix. Suzaku flew up and avoided the debris being thrown its way.

Just then, a lightning bolt struck Giga head-on and neutralized him. The ape man quickly spotted the perpetrators: Bunny and her Guardian Spirit Gyokuto. Gyokuto conjured another lightning and blasted Giga with it.

Taking another lightning bolt to the chest, Giga dropped to a knee. As Gyokuto conjured another lightning bolt and hit the cryptid ape with it, Giga had similar flashes to his capture and being subjected to similar experimentation like Beluga. Blurred visions of him mutating into an anthropomorphic ape. The same insidious figure with the glasses haunted his mind.

Oracle went up to Giga and pointed her laser sword to his head.

"Give up, Caesar? So, are you and your Animal Crossing buddies gonna up and leave?" Oracle asked, waiting for a response.
"End me. Put me out of my misery," Giga muttered in self-pity.

"Um, what?" Oracle blinked as she couldn't believe what she heard.

Zwei rushed at Fox and attempted to tackle him. In response, Fox performed a few katas and produced nine clones of himself. Fox utilized his new Fox Shadow magic, allowing him to delve into his newly acquired passive abilities. Zwei didn't hesitate to attack each clone until he destroyed the last one. Fox quickly came out from the rear and cut him with his Usumidori katana. Zwei wailed and flipped away, landing on the hood of a car.

Opening their mouths, Zwei's two heads expelled purple beams, intending to hit Fox with them. Fox quickly sidestepped and conjured his Persona: Kamu Susano-o. As Zwei mounted a quick frontal attack on Fox, Kamu Susano-o defended with a Vicious Strike. The two-headed wolf cryptid barely dodged Kamu's attack, but Fox managed to blast him with his Heaven's gate gun. Shot in the side, Zwei yelped and rolled away on the ground.

As Zwei picked himself up, Hound charged and swung his great sword at the cryptid. Zwei pounced away and fired purple mouth blasts at Hound. Hound defended by madly swinging his sword to cancel out Zwei's attacks.

"You've got two heads, pup? Well, so do I," Hound said, conjuring his Hound-Type Blood Veil as the two hound heads materialized on him. The hound's heads snarled and howled, ready for a feeding frenzy.

Zwei cautiously paced around Hound and launched himself at the Revenant from the rear. The hound heads responded quickly to Zwei's sneak attack and knocked him back. When Zwei hit the ground, Singer emerged with her Guardian Spirits.

"Umm, stay down, you bad wolf!" Singer chided Zwei, who turned to face her and saw the Paired Raiken.

Having been reduced to a wounded animal, Zwei snarled as if he was being pinned to a corner. He snarled and prepared to lunge at her, but Singer beckoned her thunder hounds.

"Sic him, Paired Raiken!" Singer cried as the Paired Raiken raced at Zwei and vanished into flashing bolts of lightning.

Zwei was struck by the lightning fast hounds and electrocuted. While being stunned by the Paired Raiken's attacks, Zwei's mind flashed to blurred scenes of being locked in a solitary cage. He remembered being subjected to horrific experimentations and mutated into an anthropomorphic wolf. He distinctly remembered his genetic make-up being tampered with and mixed with the DNA sampling of the presumably extinct Japanese wolf.

Snapping back to the present, Zwei was on the receiving end of Kamu Susano-o's Myriad Slashes. Then, Hound used his hound heads to deliver a double bite to Zwei. Zwei fell hard bleeding and a wounded mess. Fox and Hound approached the beaten cryptid. Singer looked away, not one to partake in the sight of blood as the stench almost made her vomit.

"Make this easy on yourself. Surrender," Fox lowered his Heaven's Gate gun to Zwei's two heads.

"Go on then… shoot," Zwei's left head coerced the fox-masked Phantom Thief. "You and your gang have beaten us."
Singer gasped. "Please, you don't have to…"

Fox prepared to pull the trigger.

"Stop! Please, don't kill him!" Singer pleaded, to which Fox did and lowered his gun.

Whimpering, Zwei watched Yaban from afar about to go all-out against his adversaries.

"Sorry, Yaban. Looks like it's the end of the road for us," the wolf's right head muttered weakly.

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Yaban's snake shadow whipped out a long tail that knocked Tamamo back. Once taking Tamamo out of the fight, he primarily focused on Joker and Brave. The snake man unleashed another massive tail whip, attempting to knock away Joker and Brave in similar fashion, but the duo dodged Yaban's reach.

Joker called forth a large blue-green moth with beady red eyes and green & yellow antennae. It had wings made up of black, yellow, red, and green. As it further opened its wings, two ghoulish-looking eye markings were shown off.

"Take him, Mothman!" Joker beckoned as the large red-eyed insect glided over Yaban and cast Skull Cracker, not only stunning but confusing Yaban.

Upon receiving spiritual protection from her Guardian Spirit, Brave gambled on Janomecho to inflict wind attacks on Yaban. The wind blasts were enough to knock Yaban back. However, Yaban quickly recovered from Mothman's attack and turned to his opposition.

Brave checked on Tamamo. "Damn, he really knocked Yumeko out of this battle."

"Then, don't mind if I step in and take her place," Azure interjected herself into the Yaban battle. She ran over beside Brave, who was less than enthused to see her.

"Aren't you supposed to be helping your team?!" Brave chided her.

"We pretty much beat our freak. Now, we can bring down their leader," Azure turned facing Yaban. She summoned Blue Dragon and readied her dual katanas.

"God, you're such a show-off," Brave rolled her eyes and withdrew Janomecho.

"Hey! The wolfman is bleeding! He's bleeding and needs treatment!" Singer called out as she reached Joker's group. Her presence was enough to garner Yaban's attention as the shadow snake surrounding him sent another tail whip to seize the idol singer.

Upon seeing this, Brave and Azure shouted to her. "LOOK OUT!"

Azure scowled. "That airheaded dipshit!" She quickly sent Blue Dragon to save Singer.

However, Singer's Paired Raiken materialized just in time to stop the shadow snake's tail whip. Another tail emerged from Yaban's shadow snake and attempted to grab her by her feet. As Yaban was within reach of nabbing her, Joker rushed in and pulled Singer away. He blasted the shadow tail away with his Tyrant Pistol.

"Ugh, what the hell were you thinking?!" Brave harshly berated Singer, who cried with tears.

"These are still people we're hurting, aren't they?!" Singer asked them
"Pfft, what about the people you've hurt while putting on that bullshit 'sweet and kind' routine?" Azure called Singer out on her past transgressions.

"That's not a fair comparison. This is different! We're causing them horrible physical pain!" Singer turned to Joker. "Is this what we're supposed to do?"

Joker gave her the silent treatment as he intently watched the shadow snake's aura radiating off Yaban. Singer bit her bottom lip, trying to decipher Joker's moral compass. As Joker raised his pistol toward Yaban, his actions answered Singer's question.

"It's either them or us. We let them go and there's no telling the untold damage the Yami Matter controlling them will do here," the Phantom Thief plainly clarified his intentions to stop the Yami Matter no matter what. "If your heart's not in this, it's best you not get involved with us. We know what we've signed up for. Someone like you may just not be cut out for this."

Joker's words stabbed at her soft heart. Singer stepped away mulling over all the Phantom Thief blatantly told her without a second thought. Joker, Brave, and Azure stepped up to face Yaban.

"A fine speech, Phantom Thief," Yaban smirked darkly as the Yami Matter energies coursed through him. "You're right, our conflict is no place for the weak-hearted. And those who have any insecurities are easy pickings for the shadows." He said this as the shadow snake's tail whipped around, smacking the floor hard and dented the concrete, which frightened Singer. "Liabilities tend to slow you down."

Joker frowned and readied his pistol. "We're not here to listen to you run your mouth. Let's cut to the chase."

"Oooooh, as you wish!" Yaban hollered gleefully as the shadow serpent's aura darkened around him. "Come and try stealing my heart!"

As the Yami Matter snake filled him to the core, the cryptid man's body released a giant snake construct. This construct formed over the man, extended the cryptid humanoid's body length into 10 meters long frame. His snake body became rounder at the waist.

The group watched in horror as the snake man's scaly body instantaneously change from gray to dark green. He also gained spectacled black stripes that ran down his elongated back. His snake's eyes twitched and adjusted with his size growth. The snake's head became more crocodilian-like. Gone were his hind legs, but his front arms became stocky lizard limbs. When he opened his mouth, he bared sharp teeth much like a crocodile. A long forked black tongue flicked outward to taste the air of the 'wretched' humans near him.

The Tsuchinoko roared as the serpent's feral nature had taken over. His human speech was quickly replaced with a low snake hissing, which grew into low bellows and saliva drenched snarls.

Joker, Brave, Azure, and Singer backed off from the Yaban Mamushi's snake construct appearance. This construct formed over the man, extended the cryptid humanoid's body length into 10 meters long frame. His snake body became rounder at the waist.

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Joker, Brave, Azure, and Singer backed off from the Yaban Mamushi's snake construct appearance. Even with her dual hounds protecting her, Singer was scared for her life, but Joker, Brave, and Azure also helped to guard her. This helped lift Singer's apprehensive state.

"Don't show fear," Joker muttered without turning to Singer. "You do that and the Yami Matter will likely exploit your insecurities. You'll make it bad for yourself and worse for us."

Hearing Joker's advice, Singer gulped and gripped her chest, feeling her heart rhythm pound at an accelerating pace. She watched as Joker, Brave, and Azure battle the snake construct. Joker sent Mothman to blast Yaban with Mazionga. While Mothman's electrical shock barely dazed the
serpent, Brave's Janomecho and Azure's Blue Dragon devastated it with dual wind attacks.

Upon reflecting everything Joker told her, Singer found herself internally arguing over what it is right and wrong. It was a few years ago when she first got into the idol scene. To hide her real arrogant and calculating self, she created a sweet and happy-go-lucky facade personality to win over a fanbase, but in truth she abhored them for being 'filthy and sweaty as pigs'. She did this all to aspire to become like her favorite actress. All it took to make her realize her foolish errands was Yumeko beating her in a duel. That stage loss exposed her true nature to her fans, but when they still cheered her, she was relieved and felt the weight of burden lifted off her shoulders.

"My fans believed in me and they still do," Singer muttered as she looked at her Paired Raiken. "You two believe in me, right?" The thunder dogs barked in response. "You're right. Now, I have to believe in myself again. And maybe there is no saving some people, but I was saved." She eyed Yumeko, who was being carried on Nine-Tails's back. "Saved by you, Yumeko. Thank you. Ok, I won't let you down!"

As Singer and the Paired Raiken headed toward the battle, Joker already shot the snake construct's left eye, causing black blood to profusely pour out of the eye wound. The snake construct madly shook its whole body and snapped its jaws several times. As soon as it regained its bearings, the snake launched itself toward Joker and the Spiritual Gamblers. Mothman, Janomecho, and Blue Dragon guarded their summoners and pushed back against the snake. Singer sent her Paired Raiken to attack and blast the snake's head with thunder blasts. As the snake opened its mouth, long fangs popped out from its gums.

"Mothman, withdraw! Satan, come forth!" Joker called out as in place of Mothman was a blue-skinned behemoth with a demonic face, three blue armored wings & three thin membrane clear wings on both sides, two blue-skinned arms on opposite sides, three long tails - two skeletal tails and one green organic tail that resembled a dragon's, three sets of female human breasts fully exposed on its chest, and an elongated head crest covered with fin-like extensions.

The fallen angel bellowed and clashed with the snake construct. As the snake snapped its jaws, Satan grabbed the snake's mouth and pushed back.

"Foul abomination! Thou art not a match for me! Prepare for final judgement!" Satan boasted as it started crushing the snake construct's head.

However, the snake did attempt to resist and sprayed venom at Satan, who fired back with Diamond Dust, which dealt critical damage to the snake construct.

After being blasted by Satan's devastating attacks, Yaban's mind flashed back to brief images of himself being captured and locked in a cage with others like him. He remembered being captured nearly four years ago when the Phantom Thieves were fresh on the public's minds. He remembered meeting the ones later named Beluga, Giga, and Zwei. He most certainly remembered the horrific experimentations done to his body, mutating him into a man with snake features.

However, his mutation came prematurely and he retained some human characteristics. He was subjected to the cruel pleasures of a man whose glasses's gleam pierced through the darkness. Why? In the cruel man's own words, 'All in the name of science'.

Yaban's mind snapped back to reality. He watched as Satan crushed his snake construct's following a critical blow. The snake collapsed in a bloody heap as it hit the ground. The snake's bloodied body dissolved and in its place was Yaban, whose body was soaked in blood.

Joker, Brave, and Azure hurried over as they surrounded Yaban, who was too exhausted to move.
The snake man cryptid expended his energy to fight with all he had to give.

"It's over. Give it up now. Now, you can't commit your second Akihabara massacre," Joker lowered his pistol at Yaban.

Yaban managed to choke out. "...yes, it's over. You've won. Kill me now."

"First, we need answers. Who did this to you? And how did the Yami Matter influence you?" The Phantom Thief demanded. He pivoted and noticed the other groups interrogating the other cryptids in the same manner.

"And you better spill all, and not just your guts," Azure threatened with her gun out.

"I'm surprised we worked so well tonight," Brave teased Azure, who scoffed.

"Don't push it. Besides, I don't want us looking bad in front of Joker and his crew."

Singer approached her group. "Is he ok…?" As she noticed the blood, she turned away and vomited after the rancid smell got to her.

"Hey! Tough it out!" Brave cried out as she checked on Singer. "Sorry, I didn't to yell."

Singer nodded. "...it's ok. I just hate the sight of blood."

"Yeah, well this is pretty gory stuff. Can't say I blame you," Brave sighed.

Just then, Yaban was finally able to speak clearly.

"I don't know about this Yami Matter, but I remember… and I think my colleagues remember who made us this way," Yaban muttered weakly.

"Who turned you into like this?"

"It was…" Just then, Yaban's eyes glowed dark red as his whole body seemingly started violently convulsing. He looked like he was in the middle of an epileptic seizure-like episode. Then, black ooze seeped from his eyes and poured out his mouth.

Everyone else wore horrific expressions as the other cryptids went through similar intense seizures. Their eyes and mouth seeped with the same black ooze. The Phantom Thieves were quickly reminded of this happening to Okumura Kunikazu.

Noir watched horrifically. Having witnessed Beluga die like her father, Noir clamped her mouth and backed away. She almost wanted to vomit herself, but she fell into Engineer's comforting embrace.

"Holy shit… what the fuck was that?!" Azure exclaimed. "Like, was that blood coming out of their eyes and mouth?!!" She turned to the four Phantom Thieves, all but Noir didn't seem as shakened as the others. "I take it you guys seen this happen before?"

Fox answered. "Yes, Haru's father."

"And you've all just witnessed a mental shutdown," Joker revealed to them.

"So, a mental shutdown and then they just died?" Hound asked in confusion.

"The body can't live without the mind," Engineer wisely stated, comfortably holding Noir close to him.
"So, what now? The police are about to come," Firebird said.

"Yeah, we need to get out of here!" Runa cried out.

"Agreed or they're going to ask us a barrage of questions," Kaede nodded.

"But, our show…" Singer sadly muttered.

"Couldn't we move it to another location? Yumemi, you could probably post a message online to announce a new venue and time," Futaba suggested. "Though, honestly I don't see how any of us would be up for it after what you all just seen."

Shaking her head, Singer took out her cellphone. "I might be shook by all this, but I'm making good on my promise to give my fans a show, but yeah a new location would be best."

"And what about them?" Firebird asked. "We can't just leave them?"

Before Joker could say anything, the sound of tires screeched and two black vans pulled up out of nowhere. The group moved away as the van doors opened up. Three men covered in black riot gear stormed out and collected the cryptid bodies.

One of the armored guards beckoned the Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers off.

"You didn't see anything here," the man in the riot gear plainly told them.

"Didn't see anything my ass! What the fuck happened with these people?" Azure demanded, getting up in the man's riot face shield. She couldn't make out what the man looked like.

"Nothing you should concern yourselves with. We were sent to retrieve these specimens."

"Who sent for you to hunt them down?!" Engineer yelled out.

"They're property of The Consortium, but I highly doubt any of you will ever know who they are."

As the riot gear-garbed individual said this, he walked away and instructed two of his men to carry Yaban's corpse into the first van. The vans rushed off carrying their load and headed off for their destination.

"The Consortium?" Joker was befuddled with this. "Futaba, does this name ring any bells?"

"No, and I've got my fingers all over the Japanese network," Oracle replied.

"Sounds like a new enemy to me," Hound said. "Great, as if the Yami Matter wasn't bad enough."

"I wonder if they've been influenced by the Yami Matter," speculated Fox.

"Or, maybe they're influencing the Yami Matter," Noir wondered. "They could be a second coming of the Conspiracy."

The mention of the former organization of corrupt individuals reminded the Phantom Thieves of their previous conflicts. Just the thought of another organization full of corrupted people was the last thing they needed while on the case of learning more about the Yami Matter.

Just then, the group heard the sound of police sirens far off. This was a signal for them to depart and depart they did.

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After evacuating the crowds from the scene of the crime, the other Thieves, Remnants, and Gamblers reconvened and waited for the others to show. Makoto was notably worried for her friends, notably Haru, Louis, Ren, Yusuke, and Futaba. She especially had Haru and Louis on her mind.

After hearing the attack, Sae arrived quickly to check with her sister and her friends. Makoto explained all that happened related to the cryptid attack.

"So, Ren and the others stayed behind to stop those people?" Sae asked Makoto.

"Yeah, and we just got a message from them. They're on their way over."

"Well, thank goodness they're all ok," Sae then noticed some of the Vein Remnants and Spiritual Gamblers. "Are you and your friends involving other people in your Phantom Thief exploits?"

"Other people? Oh, you mean…" Makoto noticed Sae suspiciously glancing over to the Remnants and Gamblers. "Yeah, they know and are voluntarily helping us, sis."

"I see. All I ask is to be careful. This incident could've turned out worse than it did."

"Like the Akihabara massacre years ago? Thankfully, we prevented a second."

"But, what if something had happened to you, Makoto."

"But, nothing happened to me, sis. I helped direct crowd control and we got the bystanders out of that vicinity. There were no casualties."

Just then, Sae pulled out her work cell and answered. She heard a colleague on the other line explain about the blood covering the area where the cryptid battle was fought.

"There was a ton of blood at the location, but no bodies found?" Sae asked while nodding and hearing a fellow detective explain. "Right. Yes, close off the area and try to find whatever evidence you can find. Make sure the mess gets cleaned up."

Makoto paled upon hearing the mention of blood and missing bodies. She initially feared the worst, but felt much relief when she saw Ren, Louis, Haru, and the others arrive to meet with them. By the time the group came, Yumeko was already waking up on Midari's back.

"Huh? Where? Is the fight over?" Yumeko blinked in confusion.

"You were out that long," Mary sighed.

"Oooh, what did I miss?!"

"A really bloodless fight," Midari sardonically answered, completely lying through her teeth.

"Mako-chan!" Haru ran over and hugged her.

"Haru, you're… shaking?" Makoto noticed her lover trembling.

"You wouldn't believe what we saw go down," Louis tried to explain until Sae finished her phone conversation and interjected.

"Explain what? So, what happened?" Sae sternly asked. "Makoto told me you were at that stage show and stayed behind to fight some people who turned out to be some kind of monsters."

Ann approached her husband and hugged him. "What happened? I just heard there was a ton of
blood and they found no bodies."

Wearing a disturbed look, Ren nodded. "The creatures we fought were people experimented on. They were turned into creatures by some organization."

"What?" Ann gasped. "Who turned them?"

"Sae, do you happen to know of an organization called The Consortium?" The Phantom Thief leader queried to SIU Director.

"No, that name doesn't ring any bells," Sae dismissed the mention. "Though, I've heard inklings of new underground units seemingly involved in a ring of illegal activities, but nothing more than that. The Consortium sounds something similar to The Conspiracy."

"Sis, I'm willing to do my part in investigating the whereabouts and activities of The Consortium, but would you help us, too?" Makoto asked of her elder sister, who mulled over being involved in the Phantom Thieves' endeavors again.

"I'll do what I can, but I can't promise I'll find anything groundbreaking. These people who claim to work for The Consortium may just be covering up their organization's true name and intentions."

"You mean The Consortium may be just an incognito name?" Skyler asked Sae.

"Possibly, but I'll do what I can while I investigate this."

"Thanks, sis," Makoto smiled.

'And for all I know, you may end up finding them out before I uncover anything, Makoto," Sae genuinely smirked and hugged Makoto. "Thank god you're ok."

"Sis."

After the Nijima sisters embraced, the SIU Director turned to the other Thieves, the Remnants, and the Gamblers.

"All I ask is for you all to be careful. Listen to Amamiya Ren and company since they've done this all before."

Ryuji chortled. "Yep, and we're helluva a lot more the wiser now."

Ren noticed Shiho, Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, Emily Sue, and Miyako weren't present.

"If you're wondering where Shiho and the others are, we moved them to another location and came here to wait for you guys," Ann said. "But, we should meet up with them soon."

"Yeah, they've seen enough for tonight," Ren agreed with her wife's sentiments.

"Wait! Don't cancel your plans!" Yumemi pleaded to everyone trying to end tonight's festivities.

"If you're still asking us to participate in that idol show, did you not see what just happened back there?!" Mia reminded the idol star.

"Yes, but I've posted a message on all my social media platforms about the show's relocation. We're moving it as far away from that location," Yumemi informed them.

"So, where has it been moved?" Queried Hifumi.
Hearing this, Yumemi gently smiled as her star eyes gleamed.

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SEGA Game Arcade (セガゲームアーケード)/Akihabara (秋葉原)/Chiyoda, Tokyo (千代田区, 東京)/11:30 PM (JST)

Yumemi stood in stage with microphone in hand. Hearing her fans cheering her on, her energetic and lively smile returned to her.

"To all my adoring fans, I deeply apologize for that unfortunate incident, but thankfully it seems you've all made it here!" Yumemi energetically announced. "Now without further delay, the Dancing in the Starlight show must go on!"

The spotlight beamed across the idol stage. The seven obscured figures were revealed to all. Ren, Ryuji, Ann, Yusuke, Makoto, Futaba, and Haru briefly had their backs turned to the audience. Then, they quickly whirled around and met the audiences' gazes. The seven were fully dressed out in their given idol dance gear.

Ren wore a black t-shirt with a zero on the front of a black-and-dark gray striped logo print. The words 'Dance' are printed in white on the center of this shirt. He also wore what looked like a Shujin Academy uniform; the black dress shirt being buttoned to reveal his black shirt and the black pants with the red-and-white designs. He wore red gloves and shoes; the latter had black laces on it. There was a red rag hanging out the right pants pocket. Sitting around his back are black and red headphones.

Ryuji had on bright yellow shirt with an 'X' in black and on the center. He wore the same exact Shujin Academy pants that Ren had on. Around his neck is a torn up red scarf. His sneakers are yellow and light blue with matching blue laces. A pair of black sunglasses adorned his head. He wore golden chain bracelets on his wrists and a black belt with golden studs hanging behind his waist.

Ann wore long-sleeved crop top red sweater, revealing her midriff and navel. She had her long blonde hair loose. Centered on the shirt's front is the word 'Fire' is written in blue and red. She also wore red fingerless gloves that showed off her bright blue nails. She wore a skirt that looked like her old Shujin Academy skirt, which were coupled with fishnet stockings and red sneakers. The red sneakers had bright blue stars at the top of the sneakers and black laces. A black basketball hat adorned her head and a silver headphones around her neck. Other accessories included golden hoop earrings, a spiked bracelet on her left wrist, two golden bracelets on both wrists, and on her right wrist a pink bracelet to complement her other gold one.

Yusuke wore a bright ultramarine-colored buttoned shirt, which had the topmost button left open to reveal the top part of his bare chest. On top of the shirt, he wore a black studded blazer, dark pants with a white waist belt. He also wore red fingerless gloves and metallic silver sneakers.

Makoto was garbed dark gray tattered shirt with a black splatter pattern design and a Shujin Academy skirt. She also wore a chain attached to a black waist belt. She also wore thigh-length stockings connected to her skirt by garters and maroon sneaker boots. She had on a red scarf and matching colored gloves.

Futaba had on an outfit similar to her old casual clothing. She wore a white tank top with a red t-shirt underneath, black shorts, ripped thigh high black stockings, and a green sweat jacket. She had on a black studded necklace and dark gray high top shoes. She also had on black headphones. Embroidered on her green jacket several logos and emblems, including a notable black logo with the
Haru was garbed in a ballerina-like wardrobe, which included a black corset, bright pink puffy sleeves, black lace gloves, a white tutu under a Shujin Academy skirt, white tights, and black ballet heel shoes. She wore a red ribbon on top of her head.

The crowd came to life once again and cheered for the Thieves. At the front row, Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, Emily, Shiho, and Miyako were the loudest of the bunch.

Ryuji grinned. "Y'know, these are pretty cool outfits! I'll bet Miyako will love this!"

"Um, I think you're right," Yusuke pointed to the front row crowd where Miyako was visibly cheering and whistling for Ryuji.

"I have to admit these choice outfits are pretty stylish and very cute," Ann danced around in her dancing idol outfit.

"Yes, and this outfit certainly suits me," Haru said, showing off her ballet-themed wardrobe.

"Wow, these clothes take me back," Futaba flashed a big grin.

"So, we're dancing, right?" Ren asked the others.

"Well, yeah. At least that's what Yumemi said," Makoto said. "Sheesh, and we didn't even have time to rehearse. We're going to have to come up with moves on the fly."

"Don't worry, y'all!" Ryuji quickly busted a dance move. "We can sure as hell improvise."

"You're all looking good, especially you, Lady Ann!" Morgana yelped out behind the Thieves, sounding like a normal cat when anyone outside the circle of Thieves, Remnants, and the few Gamblers heard him.

"Thanks, Mona!" Ann smiled and blew a kiss to Morgana.

Then, the spotlight beamed on five other individuals sitting behind the Thieves. The spotlight revealed Skyler, Hifumi, Louis, Mia, and Yakumo, who were each dressed in distinguished idol dance gear.

Skyler wore a sleeveless dark shirt with a funnel-shaped collar. An indigo stripe trimmed with gold going down the middle. He wore a yellow sweatband on his left wrist. He had on white shorts held up by a loose-fitting belt. He had on black shoes with a similar indigo stripe outlined in gold as seen on his shirt. A pair of indigo headphones adorned his head and had an MP3 player tied around his neck.

Hifumi had on a red short-sleeved shirt that exposed most of her midriff. She wore a small yellow hooded vest and a low cut green colored denim skirt with a brown pouch hanging on her waist. Tied around her neck is a puzzle piece-shaped pendant. Hifumi wore a yellow bracelet on her left wrist and a ring on her pinkie finger. She also had on knee-length brown medium heeled boots with yellow stripes on the sides. Adorning her head is a brown newsboy cap.

Louis was garbed in a periwinkle-colored collared dress shirt, black jeans, and white shoes with black laces.

Mia had on a long-sleeved pink shirt with a skull and crossbones design; the skull is shaped like a heart. She also wore a black beanie cap with a skull pinned to it, beige cargo shorts, and black shoes
with yellow on the sides.

Yakumo wore a white tank top with a red shirt underneath, beige cargo shorts, and red shoes with black around the sides. His other accessories included a black beanie with a white skull face embellished on it, a black necklace with a skull, a black studded wristband on his left wrist, and a silver chain hanging from his left shorts pocket.

The crowd cheered on the Revenants, who greeted them back with hand waves and awkward smiles.

Skyler muttered. "These people sure love how we're dressed. I wonder why?"

Glancing over their outfits, Louis mulled. "Hmm, why do these clothes look so familiar?"

Mia interjected. "I remember! These outfits were worn by the characters from that one game! I think it was *The World Ends with You*!"

Hifumi blinked. "Yes, now that you mention it. These are the exact wardrobe."

The memories of the game suddenly resonated with the Revenants and Hifumi.

"Looking great, guys!" Futaba called out to the Revenants and Hifumi.

"You all look fantastic! Woo-hoo!" Yumeko cheered loudly.

"Knock them dead!" Ryōta shouted.

The other Spiritual Gamblers, Mary, Midari, Itsuki, Runa, and Kaede, helped Yumeko and Ryōta being the curtain jerkers and backstage crew.

"You can do it, Lady Mia!" Morgana cheered on Mia, who turned and gave a lovely wink to the black cat.

"Are we ready, my fans?! Let's get our dance on!" Yunemi shouted as she walked off the stage, leaving the Thieves and the Remnants to dance perform for the audience.

Skyler and Hifumi briefly turned to each other, holding hands and smiling together.

"Scared, Hifumi?"

"Not as long as I'm with you."

As *The World Ends with You* song *Calling* played from the stage sound speakers, the Phantom Thieves started their dance performances. Ren kicked things off and busted dance moves his friends never imagined he'd pull off. Ren shuffled his feet back and forth. He twirled around and stepped back a few steps. He got down on a knee and got up again twirling around. Ren had a hand out in front. Fans cheered on Ren's performance.

Ryuji then took center stage and moved along the rhythm beats. He shook his two arms, danced, and folded his arms to his sides. He moved forward and pointed to the crowd cheering him. He then pointed to Miyako cheering him and turned around shaking his booty a few times, which elicited laughs from his girlfriend.

As she took center stage, Makoto shuffled her feet around and danced. She spun a few times before bending and leaning down on her right leg. She then stretched out her left leg. Haru and Louis immediately got behind Makoto. Louis and Haru danced and shook their arms around. Haru did a
ballerina spin. Louis took Haru's hand and let her spin herself around before sending her toward Makoto. Haru fell into Makoto's waiting arms. Haru leaned back in Makoto's arms. The ladies' nudge their noses together. Makoto picked Haru up in her arms and danced around. Louis got behind Makoto, picking her up at the same time Makoto hoisted Haru in the air. Haru spread her arms out like wings.

Ann stood with back turned to the audience. She slowly raised her left arm to the air and turned her body sideways. She lowered said hand near her face akin to a 'JoJo' pose and quickly turned back around. She shook a leg and spun around facing the audience to perform a dance number. At one point, she blew a kiss to the cheering audience. She danced while gyrating her hips, arms, and legs. Ren quickly hopped in and danced with Ann. They performed a few dual dances. Ren and Ann came together and danced with their backs facing the other. When Ren put a hand out, Ann took it and they danced along.

Yusuke danced alongside Futaba. During their dance number, Yusuke formed a square with his fingers as if he's taking a picture or checking a painting. Futaba got behind Yusuke and gyrated her hips behind his back. Yusuke quickly spun around and saw Futaba innocently shuffling away. Yusuke turned back to the audience, shuffling his feet and flailing his arms about.

Futaba danced lifting her legs up. She tapped each foot behind the other. She continued her dance routine and then flashed two 'V'-shaped fingers in front of her face that was accompanied by a goofy grin.

Mia crossed one arm over another. Then, she busted out a few dance moves that baffled her brother Nicola. She turned around, shuffling her feet and made quick arm movements. She danced and bent her arms, jerking her elbows in pendulum-like swings across her chest. Mia spun around, bent down, and gyrated her hips, shaking her booty to the cheering crowds. Nicola felt further embarrassed seeing this loose and wild side of his overprotective sister. However, Shiho cheered for Mia and Ann's performances.

Yakumo got onto center stage and danced to the rhythm to the music playing. He moved his hands around and shuffled his feet. As he danced, Emily clapped and cheered him on.

Another song called *Long Dream* from the *The World Ends with You* soundtrack played out of the sound speakers. This brought Skyler and Hifumi to center stage. Skyler and Hifumi touched each other's hands, both smiling together. Skyler and Hifumi danced side by side, busting out some quick feet shuffling and spinning movements. As Hifumi held out a hand, Skyler took her hand. He twirled Hifumi around as he walked under her arm. They turned to face each other and exchanged nods. Skyler pulled Hifumi toward him. She got down on her knees with Skyler standing over her. She held her hands up.

Skyler grabbed her hands and pulled her up. He spun Hifumi toward him and let her fall into his arms. Hifumi kicked her right leg up and folded an arm over his neck. He leaned over and kissed her lips. Surprised but not the least bothered, Hifumi stood up, pulling Skyler toward her. She let Skyler into her arms and surprised him with a quick kiss to his lips. Skyler got behind Hifumi, folded his arms over her waist, and effortlessly lifted her up. The Shogi woman raised her arms up as if about to take off flying into the air. Skyler carried her for a few moment and then set her down. The couple danced a few moves before finishing and turning to face the cheering audiences.

The night was filled with an uplifting atmosphere that helped lighten the mood after what could've been a disastrous 'second Akihabara massacre'.

"Take a bow, you guys. They love your performances!" Morgana encouraged the Thieves and the Remnants.
With that, the Thieves and Remnants took the center stage and bowed for the cheering crowds. While the cryptid battle and The Consortium revelation was still fresh on their minds, this was what they needed. This Dancing in the Starlight event helped lift their spirits.

"With a crowd this awesome, who's ready for AnimeJapan next month?" Futaba reminded them of the big convention next month.

The group's response were smiles on their faces.

Io curiously queried in Hifumi's mind. "What's an AnimeJapan? Huh, Hifumi?"

Hifumi giggled, answering the Vein Remnant. "An event with lots of people like this and something I think you'll enjoy, Io."

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**Chapter Soundtrack:**

**Yakuza 0 OST - 06 Get Them** - The arrival of the Yaban Mamushi and his cryptid minions.
**Two Steps From Hell - Jump!** - Battle theme.
**Yakuza 0 OST - 17 One Eyed Slugger** - Midari's battle theme.
**Yakuza 0 OST - 10 Trouble Shooting Star** - Battle theme.
**Shin Megami Tensei IV OST - Battle C2 - (Challenge Quest Boss Battle)** - Last stand against Yaban Mamushi.
**Persona 5 OST - Mental Shutdown** - Joker and company attempt to interrogate the cryptids. Yami Matter intervene to mentally shut down and kill the cryptids.
**Mystery Extended - PERSONA5 the Animation Original Soundtrack Vol.1** - The interactions with Sae about The Consortium.
**Calling (Final Remix) - The World Ends with You: Final Remix** - Dancing in Starlight song played in sound speakers.
**Long Dream (Final Remix) - The World Ends with You: Final Remix** - Dancing in Starlight song played in sound speakers.

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Chapter Notes

Here's a link to the Fanfiction.net version and for those who want the original version, which will include detailed author notes.

Fanfiction.net link: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/13165382/7/Urban-Legends

Chapter VII

AnimeJapan; Welcome to Otaku Paradise (アニメジャパン; Otaku Paradise へようこそ)

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Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (警視庁)/Kasumigaseki (霞が関)/Chiyoda, Japan (千代田区, 東京)/March 9, 2019 (2019年3月9日) (Reality: March 9, 2021)/8:30 AM (JST)

Having communicated back and forth with each other, Makoto and Sae have constantly tried updating on leads about The Consortium's possible existence. Unfortunately, neither Niijima sister had any luck. Any possible hints of The Consortium's existence never turned up on their search engines. Sae has even tried utilizing her influence as prosecutor to find anything related to this secret organization.

"Still nothing," Makoto gritted under her breath. Her eyes scanned the search engine of her work laptop's web browser. "Shit. It's like this Consortium doesn't even exist. The only thing related that generally comes up is an organization for top-tier students, MBA programs, and corporation partnerships, but I've already run a check on that organizational network! Still nothing." She closed her laptop and massaged her side temples a few times. "Looks like we have our work cut out for us, sis."

Just then, a cup of coffee was placed in front of her without her notice. She quickly snapped out of her distressed trance and turned around. It was the male rookie officer who she used to train.

"Oh, for me?"

"Just thought you could use some. You seemed so high strung lately and so focused at your web browser, Ms. Niijima."

Makoto stared at her coffee and smelt it. "Did you put cream in it?"

"Yes."

She smiled and grabbed the cup. "You shouldn't have." She sipped it and watched him leave. "By the way, you don't have to call me Ms. Niijima."

The rookie officer faced her, modestly enthused he was acknowledged by her. "Then, what should I call you?"
"Makoto, or just Mako-san is just fine."

"Oh, if you insist, Mako-san. By the way, are you still going to AnimeJapan?"

"Yes, I'm going with my friends. Why ask?"

"Well, just thought you'd know two of our fellow officers are going to be there."

Hearing this, Makoto coyly smirked. "Let me guess, it's those officers I've still yet to see and apparently have the same names as anime characters?"

"You mean those two you kept bringing up and claimed weren't real? I remember you asked me about them, but their names escape me."

"Tsunemori Akane and Asada Shino. Don't you find it weird these two 'phantom' officers sharing those names never showed up here to work?"

He nodded dismissively. "I wouldn't know. In any case, no those aren't the two officers I was referring to."

"I see. What day are these two going?"

"March 24th."

Makoto smirked. "The same day I'll be going. I'll try to see if I ever run into them."

"I'm sure you'll have fun. Anyway, please don't get too overly stressed over work, Mako-san. Us officers have to look out for each other's well beings."

"Much appreciated. Thank you."

Just as he turned, he bumped into Takarada Minami, who was dressed in full police uniform. Minami got right in his face and sneered, slightly scaring him back.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Minami-san! I wasn't looking!"

Minami replied with a snarky grin. "Yeah, you should be sorry. You still haven't grown a spine around women." She walked by him and turned toward Makoto's direction. She and Makoto's eyes met. "And how is my favorite senpai doing? I heard you've been web browsing on the job."

Setting down her coffee cup, Makoto's brow ridges furrowed. "What of it? It's search for work. Are you going to rat me out for not completing my office work?"

"Oh, I'd never dare pull something like that behind your back, Makoto-senpai. I respect you so much to tattletell on my senior!" Minami said in the most unconvincing genuine tone Makoto has ever heard. "We're not in high school anymore. Besides, I have my own work I have to get done. Why would I get wrapped up in anyone's business? It'd be too much work for me!" She said, pulling up a chair and sitting next to Makoto. "Right, Makoto-senpai?"

Makoto casually sipped her coffee and responded. "Then, why don't you get back to work?"

"You're so right. I should be! By the way, I can't help but hear you have plans for a convention. Well, you and your friends have fun with that!" Minami chuckled as she got up from her chair and waved her off. "Later until lunchtime, Makoto-senpai."

As she watched Minami leave, Makoto muttered sardonically. "Yeah, like I'd ever hang out with
"There's something I don't like about her, Mako-san."

"Yeah, same here. She rubs me the wrong way. It's best we don't let her get under our skins," Makoto suggested as she turned around and opened up a file. "You better get to work or the boss will find you off track again."

"Right! You take care, Mako-san."

As he walked off and for good this time, Makoto eyed the file with the words 'Akihabara Incident - February 16, 2019'. She opened it. The file revealed distorted photos taken by security cameras showing the four Cryptids fighting the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and Spiritual Gamblers. Another photo showed a distorted image of the vans and the men in riot gear. She meticulously scanned the photos trying to piece together the connection between the Cryptids and the riot gear-wearing men.

She tapped her finger on her desk, studying the photographs.

"This is the best we have. There's not even video footage of these mystery men. It's like something's being covered up, but what? Who or what the hell is The Consortium?"

Yaksha Weaponries (ヤクシャの武器)/Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京)/March 13, 2019 (2019年3月13日) (Reality: March 13, 2021)/4:30 PM (JST)

"Wait, you want us to what?!!" Rin shouted as Louis and Yakumo, both standing in front of the counter, invited her and the others to the AnimeJapan event.

"Yeah, you guys could afford to close shop for a day to hang with us, right?" Louis asked the shop owner.

"As tempting and fun that'd be, I couldn't. We have a business to run here. Besides, I'd be losing business to Iwai if I close for a day."

Yakumo kindly reminded her. "Um, but you're strictly a weapons shop owner. Iwai sells more than just weapons at his pawn place."

"Yeah, while we may be cool, I still consider him competition to our business."

"But, it'd be fun if we all got together and hung out. Please say you'll come?" Mia tried persuading Rin.

Rin found herself making a tough decision. Does she close shop for a day to spend time with Skyler and the others at AnimeJapan or risk losing her business?

"Ugh, don't make this hard on yourself, Rin," Coco groaned as she emerged from the back with Davis. "We been hearing y'all yammering."

"Well, what should I do then?" Rin turned to the shop merchants.

"It's your call, Rin. Do you want to go to this convention or not? Davis presented her the obvious options.
"Personally, it'd be nice to get out and have some fun," Coco said, stretching her arms out behind her. She cringed lightly when she heard a pop in her back shoulders.

Rin placed a hand on her forehead and mulled over her choices. "Oh, shoot. You're not making this any easier."

"Do what your heart tells you, Rin," Skyler said.

"You'll come with us? Please?" Io pleaded with sad-looking eyes.

With that, all it took was Io's sad puppy eyes to entice Rin to make her final decision.

"You've convinced me. Ok, I'm in…"

"You mean, we're in, right?" Coco chimed in, poking Rin's right cheek.

"Ow, yeah! We're in! I just can't turn down someone giving him those cute puppy eyes!"

Mia turned to Io and raised a brow. "So, where did you learn to pick up that from?"

Hifumi giggled as she patted Io's head. "She watches a lot of YouTube. Her favorites are the cute animals she sees online, especially the dogs and cats. She learns everything she sees."

Skyler chuckled. "Oh yeah, there was an instance when she howled at the TV while we were watching Zootopia."

"Did it happen when those wolves appeared?" Mia asked.

"Yes, that's right! It was adorable we even recorded it with my phone!" Hifumi answered.

Mia fixed a deadpan glare at Io. "Uh huh. You're pretty slick, aren't you?"

Io rolled her eyes to the side and smirked. "I don't know."

"Alright, looks like we're all for March 24th," Louis informed everyone in the shop.

"Are we going to dress up?" Rin asked Coco.

"Duh. Of course, we are. We wouldn't go if we couldn't dress up," Coco slyly smirked and postured in a sensual manner. "Besides, with a smoking hot body like mine, it's begging to be in a cosplay. Davis, we need to find ourselves some good cosplay."

"We can look up references online."

"Great! Rin, you're going to dress up, too?"

Rin shrugged. "Sure, if you two are and everyone else is, I might as well."

"And we all have our cosplays ready, or have an inkling of who we want to dress like?" Skyler asked the other Revenants.

"Indeed," Yakumo nodded. "Emily and I picked our cosplays out. She's helping to make ours."

"My brother and I have ours almost done," Mia added.

"Mine should be coming into the mail soon," Louis replied.
"That's good. Hifumi has been hard at work with ours," Skyler said. "And if anyone's looking for some last minute adjustments to their cosplay, don't hesitate to ask Hifumi."

"Hifumi's making my cosplay, too! It's going to look really cool!" Io said, pulling Hifumi into a hug. "Will a lot of people take pictures of me, Hifumi?"

"We'll see when the day comes, Io, but I imagine they'll love yours."

Io's golden eyes gleamed with genuine happiness. "I can't wait for AnimeJapan!"

"I think you speak for all of us, Io," Louis chuckled over the Persona Vein's overly enthusiastic spirit toward her first anime convention appearance.

"And we'll have a lot of fun, won't we, Skyler?" Hifumi turned to her Revenant boyfriend, who smiled in response.

"Let's make it a day we can remember."

xxxxx

Café Leblanc (純喫茶ルブラン)/Yongen-Jaya, Tokyo (四軒茶屋, 東京)/March 17, 2019 (2019年3月17日) (Reality: March 17, 2021)/6:30 PM (JST)

"So, who's ready for AnimeJapan, y'all?!" Ryuji exuberantly yelled out, doing his damned best to get his friends hyped.

"It's seven days from now, Ryuji. We know it's coming up," Haru replied, seen sitting next to Makoto in a booth.

Morgana sarcastically chimed in. "Getting all work up and probably still hasn't found his cosplay."

"Hey, I found my cosplay, cat. I even had Miyako pick it out for me. You're all gonna like what I'm going as."

"Have the rest of you picked out your cosplay for the event?" Ann queried to the others.

"Yep. Mine's already shipped. I should have it in tomorrow in my mailbox," Futaba casually smirked.

"So, what time do you want to meet?" Ren asked the Thieves.

Yusuke asked "How about 10:00 AM? That shouldn't be too early for anyone?"

Makoto nodded. "That's perfect. I also made sure to take off from work that day and the next in case we want to come go back."

Overhearing the conversation, the old man chuckled hard. "You kids have a ton of energy to endure those crowds. I'm way too old to be caught up at those convention scenes. There's no way I'd keep up."

"Hey, don't knock it until you try it," Futaba playfully quipped to her father figure.

"You're right, but go have fun for me," Sojiro replied as he brought out coffee for his guests. "Now who asked for some of my latest Leblanc special coffee?"

"Right here, pops," Ryuji raised his hand.
"Us over here, too," Haru responded more politely than Ryuji.

Makoto picked up the cups for herself and Haru.

Ren sipped his coffee and licked his chops. "Mmm, your taste still hasn't changed much."

Sojiro almost scoffed. "I should take that as a compliment? What do you think I need to improve on?"

Ren replied gave an ironic smile. "Nothing. It's fine just like it's always been."

"Feh, smart-alec, if anything you haven't changed."

"That's not true, because he's a married man, a working job, and lives with me," Ann added after finishing her coffee cup.

"That's true. I'm glad you're both happy. In fact, you're all doing pretty well for yourselves, aren't you?" Sojiro smiled proudly at the Phantom Thieves. "Except... try your hardest to be careful with what's been going on lately, especially after that Akihabara incident. You had me worried knowing you were all going to be out there."

"We're still here, Sojiro. That's what matters," Futaba reassured him with a pleasant grin before finishing her cup.

"And here's to a safe trip to AnimeJapan, guys!" Ryuji raised his coffee cup.

"I can attest to that," Yusuke nodded in approval.

"I'll eat to that," Morgana added, lapping up a bowl of furry Sojiro made for him.

"So, let's be sure to tell Skyler, Hifumi, and the others what time we should meet," Makoto suggested. "Perhaps even a location where we can convene before we head out to the convention."

Ren nodded. "Yeah, how about we all meet here first? I'd say 8:30 so we can eat here and head on over there."

"Sounds like a plan, dude. If we can beat the crowds, we could get there by 10:00ish" Ryuji said.

"So, are we all in?"

The Thieves raised their coffee cups and cheered in unison. "Yeah!"

xxxxx

AnimeJapan 2019 (アニメジャパン 2019)/Tokyo Big Sight (東京ビッグサイト)/Kōtō, Tokyo (江東区, 東京)/March 24, 2019 (2019年3月24日) (Reality: March 24, 2021)/10:00 AM (JST)

The big convention day was here. Although, it was the second day of the March 23rd to 26th event, the 24th was the day the Thieves, Revenants, and Gamblers decided on being their big group meet-up. After having breakfast at Café Leblanc, the Phantom Thieves, the Revenants, and the Spiritual Gambler trio (Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta) met with the remaining Gamblers (Midari and Itsuki) and Revenants (Rin, Davis, and Coco).

The group arrived near the front section of the Tokyo Big Sight venue, the very location AnimeJapan is being hosted.
Needless to say, they were shocked by the unbelievably high number of attendees present. And this was merely outside the actual exhibition area. Based on their glimpses, they saw a variety of interesting and unique cosplay based on current and retro otaku-based entertainment. This year's AnimeJapan theme was ROCK (rock 'n roll).

A big red banner hung in full display over the entrance. Dozens of various anime characters decked in full rocker wardrobe, either holding electric guitars or microphones, filled the banner space.

In bold and filtered white letter font was the name of the convention:

**ANIMEJAPAN**

-2019-

"They went with the whole rock theme this year, huh?" Ryuji realized.

"Yep, but too bad we didn't think about cosplaying as rockstars," Futaba sighed. " Eh, not that it matters. What we're cosplaying as is good enough!"

As for the cosplays each Phantom Thief, Revenant, and Gambler wore, there was variety to be seen.

Ren dressed as Lelouch vi Britannia from *Code Geass* in his school uniform. Ann cosplayed as Alisa Ilinichina Amiella from *God Eater*. Skyler dressed as Shulk from *Xenoblade Chronicles*. Hifumi cosplayed as Yotsuyu goe Brutus from *Final Fantasy XIV: Stormblood*.

Makoto cosplayed as Tsunemori Akane from *Psycho-Pass*. Mia dressed as Illyasviel von Einzbern from *Fate/stay night*. Yakumo came as Terra from *Kingdom Hearts*. Louis cosplayed as Ikoma from *Kōtetsujō no Kabaneri*. Io cosplayed as Ayanami Rei from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Yusuke cosplayed as Yoko Kurama from *Yu Yu Hakusho*. Futaba cosplayed as Retsuko from *Aggretsuko*.

Ryuji cosplayed as Sun Wukong from *RWBY*. Miyako dressed as Tainaka Ritsu from *K-ON!*. Morgana came dressed like Jiji from *Kiki's Delivery Service*. Haru came as Violet Evergarden. Yusuke cosplayed as Yoko Kurama from *Yu Yu Hakusho*. Futaba cosplayed as Retsuko from *Aggretsuko*.

Mary dressed as Bloody Marie from *Skullgirls*. Ryōta cosplayed as Izumi Shinichi from *Parasyte -the maxim-*. Itsuki cosplayed as Webby Vanderquack from the *Ducktales (2017 series)*. Emily cosplayed as Coco Adel from *RWBY*.

Rin cosplayed as Marle from *Chrono Trigger*. Coco dressed as Cindy Aurum from *Final Fantasy XV*. Davis cosplayed as Dutch from *Black Lagoon*.

Shinya and his friends arrived a few minutes later after the main groups.

"Sorry, we're late, guys!" Shinya called out to Ren and the others. Shinya dressed as Shinn Asuka from *Mobile Suit Gundam SEED Destiny*.

"Sis, sorry, but our bus was delayed! We also had to pick up a friend along the way who was begging to come!" Nicola openly apologized. Nicola cosplayed as Yukine from *Noragami*.

Wearing a Pochama (Piplup) hoodie, Reiko giggled. "More like your friend, Nicola, but she's nice." She looked over to her opposite; standing between her and Nicola was a short-stature Chinese girl with neck length dark brown hair and put up in double buns. She wore a pink flower hairpin on the right side of her hair.
The Chinese girl cosplayed as Honda Tohru from *Fruits Basket*.

"Everyone, this is Li-Ming Xiuying," Nicola introduced his friend to everyone else.

"Hello, everyone," Li-Ming greeted them with a courtesy bow.

"Ah, this is that new friend you were talking about, Nicola?" Mia approached him and Li-Ming. She shook Mi-Ling’s hand. "Hi! I'm Nicola's older sister! Nice to meet you!"

Li-Ming awkwardly smiled, feeling rattled by Mia's hard shaking. "Yeah, same to you!"

"We're glad you can join us," Ren welcomed Li-Ming to the group. "All we ask is you have a good time."

"Yeah! We're gonna have a blast!" Futaba pumped her fist up.

"Hey, Li-Ming, you'll hang with us, ok?" Nicola whispered to her.

"Ok, sure," the Chinese girl complied. "But, I'm ok with us hanging with your sister and her friends. They seem nice."

Shinya snickered, itching the bridge of his nose. "Or, do you two need some alone time?"

Both Nicola and Li-Ming balked at Shinya's remark. "Um, what?!"

Reiko pinched Shinya's ear. "Be nice, Shinya."

"Ow, sorry."

"Ann!" Shiho called from the distance.

"Shiho! Over here!" Ann called back as Shiho arrived to meet with Ann and her friends.

Shiho, dressed as Kasumi from *Dead or Alive*, hugged Ann before turning to face Mia, who walked up to her.

"Hey, nice cosplay," Mia complimented Shiho's costume.

"Yeah, same to you. I'd say you look cute," Shiho genuinely smiled.

"Oh, you think so? Thanks," Mia blushed, taking Shiho's complimentary remark.

"C'mon, guys! What are we doing dawdling?! We've got a whole day to ourselves! Let's indulge ourselves, eat, play a shit ton of games, and take pictures of some awesome cosplay!" Ryuji rallied up his friends and their colleagues.

"Yeah, what he said!" Miyako joined in with her boyfriend.

Haru turned to Makoto. "Maybe we should divide into groups. What do you think?"

Nodding, Makoto replied earnestly. "That's a good idea. We can cover more ground and look for things we want to see."

Louis nudged between Makoto and Haru. "And you'll have me to accompany you, my lovely ladies." He said with hand on chin and left brow raised. This elicited a modest reaction from Haru but a slightly annoyed glare from Makoto.
Slightly intimidated by the crowd sizes, Io scanned the colorful variety of cosplays on display from people of all shapes and sizes. Being completely new to this situation, she wasn't sure how she was going to take it. However, Hifumi calmed Io's anxiety with a shoulder pat.

"Nervous?" Hifumi asked the Persona Vein.

"Just a little. There's so many people here! Will they like my costume?"

Skyler gave a hearty chuckle. "Like? Believe me, they're going to love your cosplay, Io."

"Hey, excuse me?" A random con-goer approached Hifumi, Skyler, and Io. "That's an awesome Ayanami Rei cosplay! May I take a pic of you?"

Upon hearing the con-goer's humble request, Io initially didn't know what to do. She glanced over to Hifumi and Skyler like a deer caught in the headlights. She's always had to ask permission as if they were her parents.

"Go on," Hifumi encouraged her.

Nodding, Io faced the con-goer and stood in a modest pose. The fan snapped four pictures with his high tech camera. Io then received a business card from the con-goer, who was a personal photographer.

"Wow, how lucky you are, Io. That wasn't just some random fan. You had a professional take pictures of you," Skyler said, reading the business card. "Let's be sure to call him to see if we can order your pics. What do you think?"

"Yeah!" Io happily replied.

"I think you'll be getting a lot of attention, Io," Hifumi's smile broadened.

Having witnessed Io getting noticed, the others were flabbergasted to say the least.

"Aww, geez. Looks like I've got competition," Mia sighed.

"At this rate, she's going to get more pros taking her pics than us!" Mary griped.

"We've gotta up our cosplay game now!" Futaba declared.

"You guys aren't really going to make this a competition, are y'all?" Ann queried, deeply concerned with how heated this could get.

"A little competition is always healthy. It makes for an exciting game," Yumeko snickered evilly, her red eyes creepily glowing much like the character she was cosplaying.

"We definitely need to hit up the Cosplay World area," Yakumo suggested.

"Yo, check this out, guys!" Ryuji pointed to a JoJo's Bizarre Adventure cosplay group showing off their postures. "Let's take a pic of these guys and ladies!"

"Oooh, I see Jonathan, Joseph, Jotaro, Josuke, Giorno, Jolyne, DIO… WOW! And they even have cosplayers posing as their Stands! Star Platinum, Crazy Diamond, Gold Experience!" Futaba cheered gleefully as she and Ryuji snapped photos of the JoJo cosplayers.

"Well, aren't you having fun, Futaba?" Yusuke chuckled over her otaku dreams coming to life. He then mentally reminded himself that there'll certainly be Phoenix Ranger Featherman R cosplayers
for Futaba to fulfill her fangirl fantasies.

"So, how about we split up into those groups?" Louis asked Makoto and Haru.

Both ladies responded. "Yeah, let's." They dragged Louis away.

"Well? Shall we get moving?" Ren asked Ann.

"Yep, there's so much to do and see," the blonde model grabbed Ren's arm and walked with him.

Skyler and Hifumi took pictures of a Neon Genesis Evangelion cosplay group that Io joined in. Io got between Shinji and Asuka cosplayers. After finishing the group shot, the Evangelion cosplayers briefly chatted with Io, asked her a few inquiries about the series, and asked for contact info to join their cosplay group. Io appeared confounded as she didn't have her own email address.

"Hey, easy, guys. She's a relative staying us from overseas," Skyler tried to diffuse the situation. "Tell you what. I'll give you my contact info until she sets up her own."

After finishing her chat with the Evangelion cosplayers, Io hurried over to Hifumi and smiled.

"They really like my cosplay, Hifumi! They want me to be part of their group!"

Hifumi patted Io's head. "That's great to know. Maybe they'll be your fans, or even friends."

"Really?"

"I think so."

Skyler walked back over to Hifumi and Io. "Just so long as some of the dudes don't start calling you 'my wife', we're good."

Hifumi chuckled. "They seem like nice kids. And they're not all boys."

"Yeah, but y'know boys like big and well-endowed chests," Skyler whispered to Hifumi as both noted Io's voluptuous breasts. "See what I mean?"

"Yeah…" Hifumi muttered.

"I'm ready to see more! More cosplays!" Io grabbed Skyler and Hifumi's hands, dragging them toward the entrance.

xxxxx

East Exhibition Hall 1/10:50 AM (JST)

As Mia and Shiho looked at some Kuroshitsuji and Tokyo Ghoul merchandise; Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, and Li-Ming took pictures of a Owari no Seraph cosplay group.

"Hey, don't the Owari no Seraph remind you of us?" Shinya asked Nicola.

"Besides the fact, the two male leads are have dark and blonde hair like us?" Nicola pointed out the obvious traits of them and the two Owari no Seraph characters.

"Maybe you two should've gone as Yuichirou and Mikaela from that show?" Reiko suggested. "Then, I can be Shinoa!"
Nicola turned to Li-Ming. "And who would you be?"

Li-Ming answered. "I guess Krul Tepes."

Shinya grinned. "Then, next time we'll go as the Owaru no Seraph characters!"

Shinya's friends cheered in unison.

Meanwhile, Morgana sneakily slipped through the crowds and hopped on Mia's right shoulder, startling her.

"Whoa! Only it's only you, Morgana," Mia said, stroking the cat's chin. "Don't scare me like that, ok?"

"Hey, doesn't Morgana belong to Ren?" Shiho asked Mia.

"Yeah, but Morgana's been visiting me lately. He keeps me good company," Mia said as Morgana meowed in Shiho's presence.

Shiho patted Morgana's head. "Say, why don't we look for the Ghibli booth? Since Morgana's Jiji now."

Mia nodded. "That sounds great!"

Morgana thought. *This is gonna be a long day.*

xxxxx

Elsewhere in Exhibition Hall 1, Ryuji and Miyako scanned through booths showing off Touhou Project-related art, figurines, and merchandise. They passed by some Tenchi Muyo and Inuyasha cosplayers.

"Hey, look at that, Ryuji!" Miyako pointed to a cosplay that caught both their eyes.

"Yo, it's dueling time!" Ryuji called out as he and Miyako spotted a big Yu-Gi-Oh! cosplay group.

Similar to the JoJo cosplay group, this Yu-Gi-Oh! group consisted of all the main protagonists: Dark Yugi, Yuki Judai, Fudo Yusei, Tsukumo Yuma, Sakaki Yuya, and Fujiki Yusaku. The group also included a Kaiba Seto, a Black Magician, and a Black Magician Girl.

"Man, all the lead stars of the series! Even Kaiba and Yugi's two magicians!" Ryuji took out his phone and snapped pictures of the Yu-Gi-Oh! cosplay group.

"That's not all! There's someone with a bunch of weird-looking things," Miyako pointed Ryuji to a Manjoume Jun cosplayer holding a flag artwork of the character's Ojama cosplaying as the Ginyu Force.

The Ojama were depicted as the following Ginyu Force member based on colors: Ojama Black - Ginyu, Ojama Yellow - Recoome, Ojama Green - Guldo, Ojama Red - Jeice, and Ojama Blue - Burter.

"I grew up watching the GX series. I was too young to remember the original with Yugi and Kaiba, but I did catch reruns of that one," Ryuji said.

"And they change lead characters every few years, don't they?"
Yep, they're on Yu-Gi-Oh! VRAINS now with Yusaku. But, GX was my thing!” Ryuji then called out to the Manjoume and raised a finger into the air. "Over here! Manjoume Thunder!"

The Manjoume cosplayer pointed to the air and yelled out his phrase.

"Hell yeah!” Ryuji hollered as he asked to join in the Yu-Gi-Oh! group for a photo-op. They honored him a place to take a picture with them.

"One, two, three!” Miyako snapped two pictures with hers and Ryuji's phones.

"Duel standby!” The group along with Ryuji shouted together.

xxxxx

East Exhibition Hall 4/11:45 AM (JST)

Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta entered the Aniplex booth. They scoured through the booth's displays and offerings. The trio saw and admired over some Fullmetal Alchemist figures, notably the Edward and Alphonse Elric ones. They even spotted some Black Rock Shooter figurines.

"Look, it's Celty!” Yumeko called out as she hurried over to the Celty cosplayer for a Durarara! duo cosplay shoot. "Mary! Ryōta! Get some good pics of us!”

"Geez, hold still!” Mary growled as Yumeko kept moving. As Yumeko stood still, she posed next to the Celty cosplayer and holding a fake knife.

"Yeah, that's a great shot, Yumeko!” Ryōta said, taking a few pics with his phone.

"Thank you for the pic, Celty. Do you have your head intact?” Yumeko asked the cosplayer.

"Hey, guys! Over here!” Itsuki called Yumeko, Mary, and Ryōta over. She showed them to a Yakusoku no Neverland poster promoting next year's second season release.

"We gotta wait 'til next year for that second season," Mary scoffed. "I can't wait that long."

Yumeko grinned devilishly. "Oh, it'll be worth it."

The Spiritual Gamblers turned as they spotted Midari and Davis getting together with other Black Lagoon cosplayers for a group shot. Rin and Coco snapped pictures of the Black Lagoon group.

"Hey, let me join in!” Yumeko called out before being restrained by Mary.

"Your character isn't even in that show!”

"So? I want in!”

Ryōta chuckled. "C'mon, we're supposed to have fun, Mary."

Mary sighed. "She's being rude if she cuts into their group shot."

"Eh? Thinking of cutting into my photo?” Midari snarled at Yumeko.

"Maaaaaybeee,” Yumeko responded innocently and nonchalantly.

"Well, too bad. It's over. Where to now?” Midari asked.

Rin gasped and her eyes gleamed over at a Devil May Cry cosplay group. "Oh my god! Oh my god!
It's Dante, Vergil, Nero, V, Trish, Lady, and Nico! She readied her cell and headed over to get good pics.

"Heh, I had no idea Ms. Shop Owner had a thing for pretty and hot half-demon dudes," Midari sardonically remarked.

Coco added with an irresistible chuckle. "She's still a fangirl for bishounen. You should see the yaoi doujinshi she has stashed away in her closet and under her bed. I've taken a look myself... and I've gotta admit, I can see why she likes them."

Davis grunted. "Good for you two, I guess."

Coco laughed. "Don't knock it until you try it, big guy."

"Sorry, but not my thing," Davis muttered. He paused as he noticed a Panty & Stocking with Garterbelt cosplay group. His dark cheeks noticeably got redder when he saw four gorgeous and hot models dressed as Panty, Stocking, Kneesocks, and Scanty. "Hey, you'll have to excuse me. I think I'll be right over here for a few." He feverishly whipped out his camera.

Coco rolled her eyes and laughed. "Oh boy, you go get 'em, big boy!"

Rin sighed at Davis' lewd behavior. "And you say I don't have any self control over my vices?"

"So, where to now, guys?" Yumeko asked Mary, Ryōta, Itsuki, and Midari.

"There's pocky calling for my name," Itsuki said.

"Ok, we can afford a place to sit down," Ryōta said.

"Good, I need to recharge my phone battery," Mary added.

"Then, after we get some rest, we're off to explore!" Yumeko openly declared.

xxxxx

**East Exhibition Hall 2/12:30 PM (JST)**

Mia, Morgana, and Shiho entered the Ghibli booth. They were greeted by Princess Mononoke and Spirited Away cosplayers. Mia let the Ashitaka and San cosplayers hold Morgana for a group shot. Needless to say, Morgana didn't like all the camera flashes going off, which dulled out his eyes.

As they came out of the booth, poor Morgana's eyes swirled around.

"Sorry, Morgana! I didn't know they'd be taking all those pictures of you, but I forgot pet cosplayers are pretty popular!" Mia tried apologizing to him.

"But, it's over now. You want to lie somewhere and get some rest?" Shiho asked, stroking the cat's chin.

*I wanna claw all their eyes out!* Morgana deviously thought.

xxxxx

**East Exhibition Hall 3/1:05 PM (JST)**

Ren and Ann were near the Sunrise booth. There they explored the Gundam section that showed the
franchise's timeline history and the various Gundam IPs. There were also numerous figures and collectibles of mobile suits on display, including from Mobile Fighting Legend G-Gundam, Mobile Suit Gundam SEED, Mobile Suit Gundam 00, Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron Blooded Orphans, and the Universal Century-related stuff.

After taking pictures of the Gundam figures, Ren and Ann were faced with a Code Geass cosplay group.

"Mind taking a picture of me with them, Ann?"

"Oh, sure! Give your best Lelouch pose."

Ren joined the Code Geass cosplay group as they stood in front of a movie poster for *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Re;surrection*.

"Here we go, Ren! One, two, three!" Ann took a few pics of her husband and the cosplay group.

After finishing with the Code Geass group photo, the couple went over to take pics of a Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann group waving the Gurren Lagann flag. They group shouted 'Pierce the Heavens!' in unison.

"Yeah! Pierce the Heavens!" A voice cried out behind Ren and Ann.

Startled, the couple turned around and were surprised to who they ran into.

"Whoa, no way! Mishima?!" Ann exclaimed.

Mishima surprised the two Phantom Thieves. He cosplayed as Lee Jianlang from *Digimon Tamers*. To further accentuate his cosplay, Mishima was seen carrying a Terriermon plushie.

"Hey, guys. Sorry, I kinda got into the moment there with the Gurren Lagann group. Couldn't help myself," Mishima apologized.

"It's all good. So, you came alone?" Ren asked.

"Well… kinda. Unless you count this plushie as company?" Mishima awkwardly chuckled as he held out his Terriermon plushie. "Look, it's not what it looks like. It's for my character cosplayer."

"No, we totally get it. Terriermon's a total cutie," Ann said, shaking Terriermon's hand.

"So, besides your obvious friend, anyone else with you?"

"Well, no, Ren. If you two want to spend time alone, it's ok with…"

Ren smirked and invited him. "You're more than welcome to join us. We can look for the others."

"Oh, thanks, Ren!"

Ann whispered to Ren. "Is it ok?"

"Just didn't want to let him feel left out."

"You're a good friend, Ren," she nodded in approval.

"C'mon, let's see if we can find the others," Ren beckoned Mishima as he and Ann walked off.
"Right! Hey, wait for me!" Mishima tried catching up as the crowds filled the area.

xxxxx

**East Exhibition Hall 7/1:35 PM (JST)**

"WOW!" Futaba's eyes lit up as she scanned the latest Phoenix Ranger Featherman R figurines in the Namco Bandai Booth. "I've gotta have at least one of these!"

"Then, indulge yourself, Futaba. This is your chance to get one or a couple," Yusuke encouraged his overly enthused otaku girlfriend.

"Since you said I can, then I will!" Futaba cried out. She then spent a couple of more minutes admiring all the other Super Sentai figures as Yusuke waited.

Futaba scanned the other figurines, consisting of Kamen Rider, One Piece, Dragon Ball, Naruto, Street Fighter, Kingdom Hearts, the various Final Fantasy series (VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIII, XV), Blazblue, and Vocaloid.

"So many to choose and only enough yen to buy with! Can't overspend! Must resist temptation!" The otaku found herself at a financial dilemma. "But, I know for sure I'm getting at least one Phoenix Ranger Featherman R figure!"

Hearing his girlfriend having a crisis, Yusuke sighed and folded his arms.

"This may take all day."

"Excuse me, Yoko Kurama?" Someone approached Yusuke.

"Yes?" Yusuke turned as he saw three ladies dressed as Kurama, Hiei, and Botan. Three other guys were with them cosplaying as Urameshi Yusuke, Kuwabara Kazuma, and Koenma. "Oh my…"

"We'd love it if you got into a group shot with us," the Kurama cosplayer asked.

"Well, I…"

"Please say you will!" The Botan cosplayer begged.

Glancing over to Futaba still glancing over the figurine collection, Yusuke complied and joined in their group shot.

"Hey, Inari! I've picked out the figurines I want! I'm almost rea-!" Futaba paused mid-sentence and saw Yusuke posing with the Yu Yu Hakusho cosplayers. "Hey, why didn't you tell me you were getting in a group shot?! I would've had my camera ready!" She whipped out her digital camera and snapped pictures of Yusuke and the group. "Smile, Inari!"

"This happened all too sudden," Yusuke tried to excuse himself.

"Whatever, I'm just glad you found the cosplay group just for you! I never thought we'd find a Yu Yu Hakusho cosplayer to pair with ya, but a whole group?! Jackpot, baby!" Futaba yelled out while feverishly snapping more pictures.

After finishing their group shot, the cosplayers thanked Yusuke, who returned to Futaba.

"So, you got your figurines?"
"Yep, all picked out. Just need to pay for them."

"Then, we can move elsewhere. I want to go to the artist galleries."

"Don't worry, Inari. We will. Heh, these pics are definitely keepers."

xxxxx

**East Exhibition Hall 5/2:00 PM (JST)**

Hifumi, Skyler, and Io looked around some Nintendo booths. Needless to say, Io enjoyed seeing the variety of Nintendo-related characters she's become familiar with during the past few months.

Io stood in the center and surrounded by Nintendo-related cosplayers. Among them was Mario, Link, Zelda, a few Fire Emblem characters, and Pokémon characters like Pikachu. A few other video game cosplayers, including a Sonic the Hedgehog, Solid Snake, Mega Man, Simon Belmont, Kirby, Donkey Kong, Bowser, and others amassed to form a large group shot. Io found herself still centered with the Super Smash Bros. all-star cast.

"Hifumi, Skyler! Look at this! It's the characters from that Super Smash game I play out!" Io called out.

"Stay where you are, Io! We've got you in a good shot!" Hifumi said as she took a few good pics of Io with the Super Smash Bros. cosplayers.

"Hehe, maybe we should get in, too," Skyler asked someone to take his, Hifumi, and Io's picture. He grabbed Hifumi's and rushed over her over next to Io.

The con-goer took a few pics of the trio surrounded by the Super Smash Bros. cosplayers.

After getting back his phone, Skyler showed Io and Hifumi the pictures. Io swiped one pic after another, smiling genuinely.

"Do you like them, Io?" Skyler asked her.

"Yeah, I like them," Io scanned a pic of her hugging Yoshi and Kirby.

"Where else would you like to go next, Io?" Hifumi queried to her.

"Hmm, oh! I want to play the games they have!"

Upon hearing this, Skyler turned to Hifumi. "Well, what do you think?"

"That sounds like fun. Let's go then!" Hifumi took Io to the gamers area.

xxxxx

In another side of Exhibition Hall 5, Ryuji and Miyako finished taking pictures of some Overwatch and Mob Psycho 100 cosplayers. They eventually found Ren, Ann, Makoto, Haru, Louis, Futaba, Yusuuke, and Mishima in the same area.

"Hey, are y'all having a bitchin' great time?!!" Ryuji asked the other Thieves.

"Hell yeah! Look at all the figs I bought!" Futaba showed off a bag full of figures she bought.

"A ton of people asked to take pictures of the three of us," Haru said, referring to her, Makoto, and
Louis granting photo shoots for con-goners.

"Oh, I didn't even see ya, Mishima! What's up, man?" Ryuji asked as he high-fived him. "Yo, is that Terriermon yours?"

"Well, my relative's…" Mishima was too modest to admit.

"C'mon, man. Don't feel bad if it's yours. We won't judge."

Mishima sighed as he kept the Terriermon plushie close to him. Before he can answer, the group noticed a pair of foreigners and heard them speaking a language resembling German dialect. The German couple dressed as Ouma Shu and Yuzuriha Inori.

"I can tell they're not from around here," Ann eyed the German couple.

"Well, duh, they're probably not from here, but what are they speaking in?" wondered Ryuji.

"German," Louis answered.

"Their cosplay choice is interesting considering that anime has not been spoken about for a couple of years," Yusuke noted.

As his ears caught a song playing in a speaker, Ryuji recognized it. It was David Whitaker's Ready to Go. "I remember that song from the show. Pretty kickass song, too."

Futaba smirked. "Hey, maybe that could've been a song for us Phantom Thieves."

"Hell yeah! That rapper's song would've been fitting us!" concurred Ryuji.

"I recall Guilty Crown being considered a Code Geass trainwreck rip-off," Ren remembered.

"Yeah, the best parts about that show was the animation, the music, and some of the character aesthetics," Futaba pointed out the positives out of the aforementioned anime. "Inori's design especially is very eye pleasing and no surprise there's still cosplays of her."

Ryuji scoffed. "Yeah, Inori's got a cute design, but I recall that 'Shoe' guy being a whiny and annoying bitch. He then elbowed Mishima's side. "Right, man? We're also better tag alongs than 'Shoe's' friend, what was his name, 'Soda'?"

Mishima chuckled modestly. "I guess so, I don't remember about that show much. Their names escape me."

Makoto added her own personal views. "I do remember that show had a student president. I think her name was Arisa? Yeah, but I'm a totally better student council president. That Arisa girl went completely crazy."

Futaba snickered. "And I bet you were a better leader than than tinpot leader Shu turned out to be!"

Louis snickered aloud. "Oh, you guys are giving me a laugh!"

"Oh yeah, there was that quirky hacker and navigator girl named Tsugumi. I do remember her. I did kinda see myself through her," Futaba pointed out. "I kinda wish she was real so we can trade hacking secrets."

Yusuke sighed. "Well, it's too bad she isn't, Futaba."
"Don't ruin my dream, Inari!"

Makoto then reminded herself. *Unless that character somehow becomes real, kinda like how 'Tsunemori Akane' and 'Asada Shino' apparently do at my workplace.*

"Mako-chan? Are you ok?" Haru waved her hand over Makoto's face.

"...huh? Yeah, sorry just zoned out there and got lost in the conversation."

"Yo, guys! Check it!" Ryuji garnered his friends' attention away as he got in between a 2B and 9S cosplayer pair.

"Oh cool, it's 2B and 9S from Nier: Automata!" Futaba took out her digital camera.

"There's also Kat from Gravity Daze!" Louis pointed to the Kat cosplayer. 'Mako-chan? Haru-chan? Do you mind?"

Haru nodded. "No, you go on."

Makoto shrugged. "Knock yourself out."

After taking a pic of the Kat cosplayer, Louis took another of her with 2B and 9S.

"Yo, Mishima, you gonna hang with us?" Ryuji asked him.

"If you don't mind?"

"Nah, man! You can hang with me and Miyako! We can leave our boy, Ren, and Ann by themselves!"

Ann rolled her eyes. "Gee, thanks, Ryuji."

"Catch y'all later!" Ryuji waved off with Miyako and Mishima following him.

"Hey, Ren. There's a Rem and Ram cosplayers over there!" Ann pointed to the blue and pink-haired maid-garbed twins from *Re:Zero - Starting Life in Another World*. She and Ren went to take pictures of them.

"How about we look over the other side of this section, Mako-chan and Haru-chan?" Louis asked the lady Thieves as they headed past a One-Punch Man booth.

The One-Punch Man booth had a poster with Saitama (サイタマ), Genos (ジェノス), Tatsumaki (タツマキ), Boros (ボロス), and Garou (ガロウ) on it.

For a moment, it seemed Saitama's eyes shifted and his lips curved into a smirk. The hero's gave his trademark intense smile before shifting back to his casual look.

As they explored the hall they were in, Ren and Ann spotted two cosplayers dressed as Ladybug and Cat Noir from *Miraculous Ladybug*.

"Hey, excuse me, but can I take a pic of you two? You look so adorable!" Ann took out her cell to take their pictures.

"Sure," the Ladybug cosplayer nodded as she and her friend posed together.

Ren read their badge names. The Cat Noir cosplayer's badge name is labeled: Pharaoh Brooks. The
Ladybug cosplayer's badge name: Princess Eri.

"Thank you!" Ann said as she hugged the Ladybug cosplayer.

"Where to now, Ann?" Ren asked his wife, who was still giddy over the Ladybug and Cat Noir encounter.

"Oh, uh... wherever. There's still a lot to see."

On another side of Exhibition Hall 5, Yakumo and Emily encountered an American Caucasian couple dressed as Nightwing and Batgirl from *Young Justice*.

"Oh, wow, you two came from the west coast of the United States?" Emily asked the American couple. She addressed the Batgirl cosplayer. "Nice to hear you're from the U.S. Air Force."

"I get stationed in Okinawa, but I'm here with him on my off-duty," the Batgirl cosplayer stated.

"And what do you do?" Yakumo asked the Nightwing cosplayer with the decent English he knew.

"Well... I don't really like to tell what I do outside work."

"It's ok. Sometimes we don't always like to tell where we work," Emily said. "Well, great cosplay and enjoy the event."

"Yeah, you two as well," the Batgirl cosplayer smiled as she and her partner walked away.

"Hey, Yakumo, let's go find Skyler and any of the others," Emily suggested.

"Sure, though they're probably caught up in all this madness. Where do we even begin to find them?" He scanned the dense crowds building up.

In the gaming area, numerous gamers from all walks of gaming life and experiences gathered to compete for casual fun and in tournaments. The popular fighting games being showcased included the latest known titles: *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate*, *Dissidia Final Fantasy NT*, *Dragon Ball FighterZ*, *Soul Calibur VI*, *BlazBlue: Cross Tag Battle*, *Street Fighter V: Arcade Edition*, *Tekken 7*, *My Hero Academia: One's Justice*, *Dead or Alive 6*, *Jump Force*, *Guilty Gear Xrd Rev 2*, and *Pokkén Tournament DX*.

"We have several ongoing tournaments, ladies and gents! For those just arriving, find yourself a good seat and watch some of the most competitive players contest to see who'll take home the prize!" An announcer yelled out through a speaker.

Another speaker played the *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* main theme, *Lifelight*, as con-goers filed into the fighting game tournament areas.

Ryuji, Miyako, and Mishima watched the *Dragon Ball FighterZ* tournament currently ongoing. They saw a player's name, *SSJ4Takeru-Cage*, pop up at the top of the ranking screens.

"Aw, dude, it's that guy. He's totally killing it in the FighterZ tournament again!" Ryuji said. "I'd hate to play that guy."

Mishima nodded. "Yeah. Me, too."
"Maybe if you practice enough, you can beat him, Ryuji," Miyako optimistically replied.

"Maybe if I trained for over 100 years… nah, no chance in hell."

In another side of the gaming area, Skyler, Hifumi, and Io watched a Super Smash Bros. Ultimate tournament occur.

"And it's another win for KHI-Nintendo!" An announcer hollered. "This player is straight up running through the competition and is set enter the semi-finals!"

Io cheered and clapped. "Yeah! Go! You can do it!"

Hifumi giggled. "Having fun, Io?"

Skyler casually smirked. "Maybe I should've entered so Io can cheer me on."

In another side of these two gaming tournaments, a third was being held for Dissidia NT. Futaba and Yusuke witnessed an unseen player from the Philippines named Nick-Ianime advancing to the quarter-finals.

"Wow, these international players are getting damned badass! Heh, maybe I need to step my game up?" Futaba chuckled.

"I'd much rather play Go. It's much more calm and relaxing," Yusuke sighed, which got him a finger poke to his cheek.

"Hey! This is a 'No Killjoy Zone', Inari!"

"Forgive me, Futaba."

"Ok, you're forgiven."

xxxxx

Exhibition Hall 7/2:50 PM (JST)

Along the way, Louis, Makoto, and Haru encountered cosplayers from various series; including Ouran High School Host Club, Death Note, High School DxD, Nanatsu no Taizai, Hunter x Hunter, Noragami, and SSSS Gridman.

"Excuse me, you two. I need to get some water," Makoto left to find a refreshment area. As she grabbed a cup full of water, she noticed two Japanese cosplayers she recognized.

One of them was a young Japanese woman with short neck-length black hair and cosplayed as Tsujimoto Natsumi from You're Under Arrest. The other was a young Japanese man with slightly longer black hair and cosplayed as Kimura Kōichi from Digimon Frontier.

"No way, it's them," Makoto muttered, recognizing the two officers her colleague referred to that would show up at AnimeJapan. She sees them often since they worked at the same station, but these two are part of a different squad.

The short-haired woman noticed Makoto and waved to her. "Ah, Niijima-san, you're here!"

"Surprise to see you here, too, Niijima-san." The Kōichi cosplayer acknowledged Makoto's presence as well.
"No, I heard from a colleague you two would be here," Makoto approached them.

Louis and Haru noticed Makoto conversing with her fellow officers.

"Look. Seems Mako-chan knows them."

"Might be working colleagues. Let's go greet them," Louis said.

"We just came out of the Toei booth since she's a big Dragon Ball and Digimon fangirl," the Kōichi cosplayer said.

The woman snorted to her work partner. "Hey, you're dressed like a Digimon character, y'know."

"I'm doing it just for you."

Makoto chuckled at their fun exchange. "Oh, you two never cease to make me laugh."

"Mako-chan!" Haru called out as she and Louis approached the three officers.

"Oh, hey, you two. Sorry to keep you waiting, but here's two colleagues of mine from work," Makoto showed Haru and Louis to them. "Allow me to introduce you two to…"

xxxxx

**East Exhibition Hall 1/3:15 PM (JST)**

Mia, Shiho, and Morgana ran into another foreign couple dressed as characters from *Higashi no Eden*. The couple were both 5'6 feet tall, slightly taller than most of the group members. One is a young Thai man cosplaying as Takizawa Akira. The other is a young Navajo woman cosplaying as Morimi Saki.

Shiho finished taking the couple's pictures. Then, she tried her best to speak in English. "This is a great way for couples from overseas to spend their honeymoon."

"Congratulations, you two," Mia addressed the couple in near perfect English.

"Thank you," the Thai man nodded.

"I had thought of coming dressed up like Julia Chang from *Tekken*, but he convinced me we go as a cosplay couple," the Navajo woman stated.

"Well, either way, you both look great," Mia smiled.

As the Navajo woman patted Morgana, she eyed Mia and Shiho.

"So, are you two together…?"

Without saying a word, Mia and Shiho's cheeks blushed pink.

"No judgement here. You two look cute together," she giggled as she and her Thai husband waved goodbye to them.

"See that, Shiho? If a foreign couple can notice…"

Shiho smiled. "I don't think there's any sense to hide it anymore."

"You're right."
Morgana interjected. "Anyway, don't mean to interrupt your moment, but shouldn't we already be looking for your brother, Mia?"

"Ah! Yeah, you're right! I hope he and his friends didn't get lost!"

Shiho added. "I'm sure they're fine, Mia, but if you want we can check up on them."

"Great, let's go then."

xxxxx

East Exhibition Hall 2/3:45 PM (JST)

Meanwhile, Shinya and his friends met with Skyler, Hifumi, and Io. They were near the Weekly Shonen Jump booth. In one section, there was a section dedicated to My Hero Academia/Boku no Hero Academia.

Io, Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, and Li-Ming stood next to a couple of the Wild Wild Pussycats cosplayers and a Godzillo cosplayer. Shinya and Hifumi took pictures of Io and the teens.

Splashed all over the Boku no Hero Academia section were posters, illustrations, and video scenes of the various characters from the series, including Midoriya Izuku (緑谷 出久), Bakugou Katsuki (爆豪 勝己), All Might (オールマイト), Iida Tenya (飯田 天哉), Todoroki Shoto (轟 焦凍), Uraraka Ochako (麗日 お茶子), Asui Tsuyu (蛙吹 梅雨), Yaoyorozu Momo (八百万 百), Kirishima Eijirō (切島 鋭児郎), Mineta Minoru (峰田 実), Tokoyami Fumikage (常闇 踏陰), Aizawa Shōta (相澤 消太), Shigaraki Tomura (死柄木弔), Kurogiri (黒霧), Toga Himiko (渡我 被身子), and Hero Killer: Stain (ヒーロー殺ころし ステイン).

Shinya whipped out his phone and watched a YouTube video of scenes from the Boku no Hero Academia: Two Heroes movie.

"Yeah, we had fun watching that movie, didn't we?" Nicola asked Shinya and Reiko.

"We sure did," Reiko recalled their hangout experience.

"You would've had a blast with us, Li-Ming, if we met then," Nicola addressed their Chinese friend.

"I saw the movie with my family, but I think I would've had more fun with you three."

"Hell yeah! Plus Ultra!" Shinya shouted.

"Plus Ultra!" Io cried out.

The group eventually headed over to the Toei Animation booth. They scoured through the sections displaying Toei's big titles: One Piece, Dragon Ball Super, Precure, Digimon, Saint Seiya, and Sailor Moon.

Io, Reiko, and Li-Ming got together and hugged a Gabumon cosplayer. Shinya posed with Super Saiyan Blue Goku and Vegeta statues. The whole group posed in front of a Thousand Sunny display. The girls posed with Precure and Sailor Moon statues.

Skyler wiped the sweat from his brow. "Whew, Io's sure making us walk around a lot."

Hifumi giggled. "Well, it is her first convention, Skyler."

Skyler shrugged. "Doesn't it feel like we're acting more like her parents?"
"She is like a child. I find it adorable."

Just then, Skyler's cell vibrated. He scanned the call ID.

"Who is it?" Hifumi asked.

"Louis, looks like he wants us to meet. Possibly to find a place to rest and eat."

"I see."

"Yeah, and Mia just texted me asking where her brother is. That's a sign that we should get at least most of us together and meet somewhere."

Hifumi nodded. "The eating area is probably the best choice to meet."

"Hey, guys! We're meeting the others over at the eating area!" Skyler called to Io and the teens. "Besides, Mia's been asking for you, Nicola."

Nicola sighed. "Oh really?"

Li-Ming inquired to Nicola. "Big sister problems?"

"No, she's just overly protective of me. Too overprotective."

Hifumi took a picture of Io posing with a couple of Mr. Osomatsu cosplayers.

"Ready to eat, Io?" Hifumi asked the Persona Vein.

"Yeah!"

xxxxx

In another section of Exhibition Hall 2, Ryuji, Miyako, and Mishima met with Yakumo and Emily. Ryuji and Emily got with a RWBY cosplay group. Their friends then took quick pictures of them and RWBY cosplayers.

Afterwards, they ran into a couple cosplaying as Tachibana Taki and Miyamizu Mitsuha (Kimi no Na wa.). Mishima took pictures of Ryuji, Miyako, Yakumo, and Emily with the Kimi no Na wa couple.

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**East Exhibition Hall 4/4:00 PM (JST)**

Ren and Ann found Futaba and Yusuke near the Aniplex booth. They met and took pictures of Fate/Zero, Fate/stay night, and Kill la Kill cosplayers.

"Hey, look there's some fans cosplaying as some of the Alicization characters," Futaba pointed to two couples; one couple cosplaying as Kirito and Asuna. The other cosplaying as Eugeo and Alice.

"Oh, from the new Sword Art Online season," Ann noted. "Yeah, so how about that recent sexual assault scene?"

Futaba shrugged. "Eh, the author even apologized for it."

"Look, it's Madoka and Homura!" Ann pointed to a lesbian couple cosplaying as Ultimate Madoka
and Devil Homura from Mahou Shoujo Madoka Magica. She took pictures of the cosplayer couple. "It's still nice to see Madoka recognition after all this time!"

Futaba nodded. "It's going to be about 10 years… well, if it weren't for the time screw-up we've been having."

"That no one else, but us notices," Yusuke reminded them.

"Hey, there's some Re:Creators cosplayers! Move aside, I've gotta get pics of them!" The otaku pointed to the group full of Re:Creators cosplayers. As she took pictures of the cosplayers, she saw they were rewatching clips from the show.

The videos from their phones showed YouTube clips of the Creation characters: Altair (アルタイル), Selesia Upitiria (セレジア・ユピティリア), Meteora Österreich (メテオラ・エスターライヒ), Kirameki Mamika (煌樹まみか), Mirokuji Yūya (弥勒寺優夜), Alicetaria February (アリステリア・フェブラリィ), Blitz Talker (ブリッツ・トーカー), Kanoya Rui (鹿屋瑠偉), Chikujōin Magane (築城院真鑑), Hoshikawa Hikayu (星河ひかゆ), Hakua Shō (白亜翔), Erina Talker (エリナ・トーカー), and Charon Seiga (カロン・セイガ).

"I love the cosplays, guys! Thanks!" Futaba waved to the Re:Creators cosplayers. She high-fived a Altair cosplayer and walked away.

The very same Altair cosplayer went back to watching a YouTube music video of her character. Altair's face on the phone screen gave a subtle smile before vanishing.

"Man, I tell ya guys, the Isekai genre is seeing a huge uplift in popularity thanks to Sword Art Online," Futaba informed Ren, Ann, and Yusuke.

"So, what shows are popping up these days like it?" Ann asked Futaba.

"Well, it's not really an Isekai, but ever heard of Goblin Slayer?" Futaba asked; when she mentioned this, cosplayers dressed as the Goblin Slayer, Priestess, High Elf Archer, Dwarf Shaman, and Lizard Priest posed for photographers.

"Vaguely?"

"What about The Rising of the Shield Hero?"

Ann nodded. "Heard of it, but no, haven't seen it."

"KonoSuba?"

"Oh yeah! That one was pretty hilarious!"

Yusuke asked Ren. "You know what they're talking about?"

"Nope, except Ann made me sit down to watch that KonoSuba show. It has acquired humor."

Just then, Ren's phone vibrated. He answered and got a text from Hifumi.

"Hey, Hifumi wants us to meet her and the others at the food court area. Want to go?"

"Man, I'm starving! I say it's break time!" Futaba stretched her arms out. "And my arm could use the rest from carrying these bag!"

"Allow me," Yusuke offered as he carried Futaba's merchandise bag.
"That's gotta suck having to carry her bags full of figurines and crap," Ren chuckled.

"I don't mind."

"Yeah, Inari doesn't mind! And this stuff ain't crap!" Futaba chastised Ren.

"Well, shall we get going? I think we're all a little starving," Ann chimed in.

"Right, let's get moving," Ren casually said, leading them toward the food area.

xxxxx

**East Exhibition Hall 3/4:15 PM (JST)**

Yumeko took a picture with a Zero Two cosplayer. Ryōta posed with a Sora and Shiro (No Game No Life) cosplayer duo. Mary snapped a picture with a Maka Albarn and Soul Evans cosplayer duo. Itsuki posed with a Rory Mercury (Gate: Jieitai Kano Chi nite, Kaku Tatakaeri) cosplayer.

The four Spiritual Gamblers then got together with a group of Attack on Titan/Shingeki no Kyojin cosplayers. They posed in front of a giant head prop of the Colossal Titan.

Midari, Rin, Coco, and Davis posed with some Cowboy Bebop cosplayers.

"What now?" Rin asked the others.

"Shit, it's your call. Me and Yumeko's groupies are just tagging along," Midari said.

Just then, the group saw a crossover cosplay face-off between Resident Evil and Apocalyptic Academy: Highschool of the Dead. Getting in between the anti-zombie groups was an Alucard (Hellsing) cosplayer posing with prop guns.

Midari sadistically grinned. "Fuck yeah, now this is my kinda shit!" She hurried in and joined the Resident Evil side.

Mary scoffed as she got on the Highschool of the Dead side. "Whoever you join, I'll be on the opposing side!"

"Oh, those two are always trying to out compete each other," Ryōta sighed.

"And what's wrong with that? Competition's always healthy for the fighting spirit," Yumeko smirked sinisterly. "It's what keeps us gamblers alive."

Rin caught a group of Devilman Crybaby cosplayers. Much like with the Devil May Cry group, Rin went into fangirl mode and asked for a quick photoshoot, including one shot of a yaoi kiss between an Akira and Ryo cosplayer duo.

"Ohhhh, thank you so much. My fangirl wet dreams have been fulfilled for life!" Rin's face turned red. Blood seemed to trickle down her left nostril. She almost fainted from the blood rushing to her head as Davis caught her.

"Geez, easy, woman!" Davis barked.

"I think this is exactly what Rin needed after all!" Coco laughed.

After everyone got their cosplay pictures done, Yumeko's cell vibrated and she caught Hifumi's text message.
"Hey, they're all heading to the food area, guys," Yumeko announced to her friends and the shopkeepers.

"Great timing. I'm starving," Mary said.

"Me, too. And my feet could use some rest," Itsuki added.

"So, are we heading over now?" Rin asked Yumeko.

"Yeah, let's go," Yumeko nodded as she grabbed Mary and Ryōta's hands. "Yay, you can buy us something to drink, Ryōta!"

"Oh, sure, anything y'all want!" Ryōta called out as he and Mary were dragged along by the crazy gambler.

"Hey, hold on!" Itsuki called out.

"Wherever you and your friends go, I go, Yumeko," Midari added.

Coco helped Rin up. "Feeling alright?"

Rin sighed, feeling lightheaded. "Just need a little water after that blood headrush."

"You're gonna need to sit out for the rest of the event, Rin. You don't want to go back to work feeling bad," Davis advised the shop owner.

"I'll manage…" Rin rubbed her temples as she leaned against Coco.

"Nope, a little rest will do you good, missy," Coco scolded her.

xxxxx

**Near the Food Area/5:20 PM (JST)**

When everyone met at the food court, they used this time to sit at a table and rest. Most picked up food to eat. Others showed off the pictures they took of the venue and the cosplays they encountered. Others, like Futaba, showed off their merchandise.

Sitting near the group, there were other cosplayers taking a rest, including a Kenshiro (Hokuto no Ken) cosplayer sitting with a Guts (Berserk) cosplayer. Ann, Haru, Hifumi, Io, Reiko, and Li-Ming took pictures with a Kinomoto Sakura cosplayer. Hifumi and Io took a picture together with a Doraemon cosplayer.

Hifumi stuffed a dumpling into Io's mouth. "How does it taste?"

"Mmm! Yummy!" Io expressed her liking of the tasty food.

"These dumplings are so good!" Mia ate another dumpling, sharing some with Shiho.

"So, are we still going to explore a little more after this?" Makoto asked the others.

"Duh, of course!" Ryuji replied.

"Some of us still haven't gotten to play in the gaming area!" Futaba said.

"You did ask for time off for tomorrow, right, Mako-chan?" Haru asked her lover.
"Yeah, I did. I just asked because I wasn't sure if we'd get everything done in a day."
Louis added. "And if not, you have an extra day off to spend time with Haru-chan."

"So, is Makokins up to play against me in some fighting games?" Skyler asked the officer.

"No, because those aren't my thing."

"Or, are you afraid I'll kick your butt hard you'll beg me to stop, Makokins?" Skyler investigated Makoto to take his challenge.

Crushing the juice can she finished, Makoto gritted. Her brows narrowed and her eyes seemingly burned with intensity. "You're on." She then got right up into Skyler's face, who casually shrugged her off.

Hifumi chucked seeing her boyfriend renew his 'friendly' rivalry with the Queen.

"Are Skyler and Makoto gonna fight?" Io asked Hifumi.

"No, it's just a friendly competition, Io."

"Any game you two had in mind?" Louis asked Skyler and Makoto.

"Anything with sheer brutality where I can mop the floor with his sorry ass," Makoto growled, not withdrawing her intense glare from Skyler.

"Heh, can I take the winner then? And I hope it's Skyler," a cool and sarcastic voice tone chimed in, which the Vein Remnants were familiar with.

"So, you're here?" Skyler sighed as he and his Revenant friends turned around to face two unexpected guests: Jack Rutherford and Eva Roux.

"Fancy meet you and your friends here, Skyler," Jack greeted them.

"We're thrilled to see you're all doing well since the last we met," Eva smirked.

Jack cosplayed as D from *Vampire Hunter D*. Eva dressed as Ivy Valentine from *Soul Calibur*.

"Jack and Eva, I take it you two didn't just come here to see us?" Louis asked them.

"What? We can't go and have casual fun at a convention like you're all doing?" Jack said.

As he saw Jack and Eva speaking to Skyler and the Revenants, Ren got up from his chair.

"Ren?" Ann asked with concern.

"It's those two that helped us back at Meiji Shrine," Yusuke glimpsed over at Jack and Eva.

As Ren headed over to the opposite end, he saw Skyler and his friends confront Jack. Mia and Yakumo conveyed utter disdain toward Jack.

"Come now. Is there any need for this much hostility?" Jack sardonically remarked, unfazed by the growing tension.

"I don't know you ask us, clown-ass," Yakumo snidely remarked.

"You're lucky there's people here, or I'd skewer you with my Blood Veil," Mia angrily whispered as
her eyes subtly turned red.

"Mia? What's gotten you riled up?" Shiho asked her deeply concerned. "Did they do anything to you?"

Morgana hopped on Mia's shoulder and whispered. "Listen, calm down. You're going to scare Shiho if you don't cool it."

Taking pause to notice Shiho's confusion, Mia closed her eyes and sighed. She reopened her eyes, which turned to their normal green.

"Listen, none of us want any trouble," Ren stepped in between Skyler and Jack.

"That's right! We're all here to have fun!" Yumeko intervened.

"So are we, but tell that to Skyler and some of his friends," Eva stated.

"Skyler, let's not do this here," Ren insisted his Revenant friend.

Before Skyler can give another remark at Jack, Io surprised the Revenants as she walked up to Jack and Eva.

"Io? C'mon, let's leave them be," Hifumi grabbed Io's hand and tried jerking her away, but Io wouldn't budge.

As Hifumi tried pulling Io away, Jack meticulously eyed them both. Io painstakingly glared over Jack's necklace orb. Skyler and Hifumi noticed her staring at the necklace orb.

"You seem interested in this," Jack pointed to this necklace orb. "As you're aware, this allows me to turn into that Drake you and your friends saw."

Io's face showed an intensity Hifumi and Skyler never see unless there's a battle involved. She quickly tried grabbing Jack's necklace orb, but he withdrew it from her reach.

"I know it's you who restored our memories, woman. The question I want to ask is how I got this orb. I doubt you had anything to do with it, but yet its presence is enough to cause a stir in you." Jack backed away from Io. He diverted his attention from Io and faced Hifumi. "But, you…"

Before he could get out another word, Io pushed Jack away and guarded Hifumi.

"Leave Hifumi alone!" Io hissed at Jack, who was deterred by the Persona Vein's defensive nature.

"Io, please. That's enough," Hifumi pleaded as she grabbed Io's hand.

"Jack, if you're going to bother my friends, you'd best leave now," Skyler darkly warned him.

"Same goes for us," Ren spoke for himself and the Phantom Thieves's behalf.

Watching his sister and the other Revenants getting into it with Jack, Nicola became transfixed by the ongoings. Shinya, Reiko, and Li-Ming noticed their friend appearing confused.

"I don't understand. This is the second time my sis and the others met those two people. They seem to have a problem with that man, especially Mia and Yakumo," Nicola meticulously eyed how heated those two were being toward Jack. "Now, Io seems to not like him. What's going on?" He tapped the left side of his head.
"Nicola?" Li-Ming tried to comprehend what he was talking about.

"Are you sure you don't know that guy, man?" Shinya asked him.

"N-No, I don't think so. That's why I'm confused why they seem to know him yet I've never met him."

Reiko queried. "That's strange. Maybe you have no recollections of him for whatever reason?"

"Maybe, but I don't know…" Nicola shook his head.

Rin, Coco, and Davis, too, noticed Nicola looking completely off about the situation.

"Is Mia's brother ok?" Rin wondered.

"Who knows?" Davis shrugged. "But, that Jack guy is getting his ass tossed if he causes anymore trouble."

"By who? You?" Coco openly chortled over Davis' intent to beat the hell out of Jack and kick him out of the convention.

"Hey, don't forget I work part-time security, too, while you're lounging in the back after shop hours!" Davis hounded Coco, who waved him off.

Rin added as they saw Eva approach Jack. "Looks like you might not have to throw anyone out, Davis."

Eva tapped Jack's shoulder and whispered. "Maybe we should leave them."

Jack narrowed his eyes at Skyler, Hifumi, and Io. *I still need to know if that Hifumi woman's reality altering power gave me this orb.* He closed his hand over his necklace orb.

Suddenly, the tension abruptly ceased by the sound of hands clapping. The Phantom Thieves, the Revenants, the Spiritual Gamblers, Jack, and Eva saw three women approach them. Of the three women, Igarashi Sayaka was among them. The members from each group recognized Sayaka, who was revealed as Shujin Academy's new principal. However, only the Spiritual Gamblers recognized the other two women.

"It's Sayaka again!" Ryōta cried out.

"But, the two other…" Mary frowned at the other two, who were identical twin sisters. She identified the loose-haired twin sister on the left of Sayaka. "That's Momobami Ririka."

Yumeko quickly identified the knotted-haired twin sister. "And Momobami Kirari."

Kirari had both hands inches from making a clapping motion. She gave a courtesy bow to the Spiritual Gamblers and their friends.

"Good day to you all. Please, let's not have any tension. An outing such as this should be for fun and entertainment," Kirari pleasantly addressed them. She looked up and smiled to Yumeko. "Ah, it's you, Jabami Yumeko. It's been a while."

"Hehe, you have no idea I've been hoping to lay eyes on you again," Yumeko sadistically grinned as she walked up to Kirari.

"Wait, Yumeko!" Ryōta yelled as he pulled her back.
"Let me go, Ryōta. I just want to say hello to Kirari!"

"Ohoho, still can't control your gambling urges, Jabami-san?" Kirari chortled. "Well, as much as I'd love to renew our gambling games, that'll have to wait."

"Oh…?" Yumeko blinked.

"So, what are you three doing here?" Mary queried.

"We're here because we want to see the convention scene," Sayaka replied.

"And we're involved with the sponsors of this convention, so we're here to prevent any incidents such as the one that was about to happen here," Ririka referred to the quarrel involving Skyler, Jack, and Io.

"Thankfully, friends among you stopped the incident and I was gracious enough to step in," Kirari said.

There was murmuring among the Phantom Thieves and Revenants.

"Wait, these three are involved with the co-sponsors of this event?" Haru whispered to Makoto.

"Sure sounds like it," Makoto murmured.

"Between being Shujin Academy's principal and apparently helping with this convention's co-sponsors, this Sayaka is sure a busy woman," Yusuke muttered.

"I recognize those twins," Ann eyed Kirari and Ririka.

"Who are they?" Ren asked his wife.

"Apparently they graduated from the same academy Yumeko and her friends did, but they're from a wealthy family that's deeply and politically involved," Ann revealed. "They were interviewed in a magazine I posed for."

"How politically involved are we talking here?" Shiho asked Ann.

"I don't know, but if they're involved with this convention's co-sponsors, they must have a ton of influence."

Hearing this, Makoto carefully noted. "Deeply politically involved, huh?" She shifted a look of suspicion on the Momobami sisters. *I wonder if they know or somehow tied to The Consortium.*

"Well, thank you for stepping in and helping us," Hifumi politely addressed Kirari.

"You're very welcome. Anything to cool off unwanted tensions," Kirari replied pleasantly. "By the way, I know you can see our Guardian Spirits, Yumeko. Likewise, me, my sister, and Igarashi-san can clearly see yours."

The Spiritual Gamblers were the first to see Kirari, Ririka, and Sayaka's Guardian Spirits. The icy butterflies materialized around Sayaka. The Atlas Bear appeared next to Ririka. Kirari had her peacock, Tengen Kujaku, materialize next to her.

"We already know Sayaka has her Usura-whatever," Mary said.

"Usura-hicho," Sayaka corrected her. "I forgot to tell you my codename. It's Frosthra."
Midari scoffed. "Like Mo-thra, except you got the ice-themed moths going for ya?"

Sayaka sighed. "They're butterflies, Ikishima-san. I see you're still the uncultured brutish sadist from the academy days."

Ririka did a courtesy bow. "My codename is Defender. My Guardian Spirit is The Atlas Bear."

Kirari had her hand around her peacock's neck. She breathed deep and purred with delight. "My Guardian Spirit is Tengen Kujaku. My codename is Mayura."

"Frosthra, Defender, and Mayura, huh?" Yumeko smirked. "Well, no matter what you call yourselves, I look forward to getting my gambling on with you three."

"Yes, but now isn't the time for us to reignite old flames, Jabami-san," Kirari stated.

The Phantom Thieves and the Revenants were taken aback by the three Guardian Spirits that were summoned. Besides them, no one else could see the Guardian Spirits.

Ririka scanned the crowds. "Seems the public already recognizes us. Should we go?"

"Not before we send an invite to Yumeko and all her friends here," Kirari said before turning to face the Thieves, the Revenants, and the Gamblers. "Honored guests and attendees, you're all cordially invited to take part in tonight's main event of AnimeJapan 2019."

"Main event?" Ren blinked.

"What does she mean?" Skyler wondered.

"I'm not surprised none of you know, because this main event is a private one. However, I feel it would be in your best interest to accept and participate," Kirari publicly informed them. "Tonight at 7:30 PM, I am hosting a private Pocket Monsters Tournament. It's not public for any players to join. Only the elites are invited, but in this case, we're willing to make an exception for Jabami-san and her friends." A sly smirked formed on her icy blue lips. "This would be a great way to get to know all of you as my new acquaintances. It'll also make for great entertainment for these audiences to see several members among you compete with each other."

"Us competing with each other?" Makoto asked as she and the other Thieves exchanged confused looks.

"Yes, why not? Surely you're all good sports and can handle a little competition amongst yourselves?" Kirari coolly responded, folding both arms over her chest.

"Who says we can't?" Ryuji scoffed. "Yeah, we accept your challenge."

"Whoa, hold on, dummy!" Ann snapped.

"Yeah, are you sure you want to compete against your friends?" Miyako asked Ryuji.

"I don't know," Skyler smirked as he glared at Jack and Makoto. "I don't mind a little heated competition myself. What about you, Hifumi?"

Hifumi wore a determined look. "I do feel my gamer's spirit being rekindled."

Io clapped. "Then, I'll cheer for you Hifumi and Skyler!"

Jack growled. "If it's a competition match you want, I challenge you to a Pocket Monster battle,
Skyler!

Eva facepalmed. "Oh boy, and why do I feel like you're going to get me involved, Jack."

"So, do you humbly accept my challenge?" Kirari smirked as she approached Ren, Hifumi, Skyler, and Yumeko. She whispered to them. "I'm sure you're aware my colleague, Sayaka, told you we're fully aware of your Phantom Thief identities." She acknowledged Ren, coolly smiling and staring him dead in his eyes.

Hearing this, Ren visibly frowned and said nothing.

"That silence is all the evidence I need," Kirari chortled ever so smoothly. She then faced Hifumi and Skyler. "And you two along with your colleagues have been lending the Phantom Thieves support against some rather interesting forces at work. Well, in due time, we'll be meeting again on a grander stage." She then veered to her gambling rival. "Isn't that right, Yumeko?"

Before any of them could retort, Kirari smirked and walked away, leaving them to mull over their impressions of the narcissistic woman.

"You want our answer? We accept," Ren responded.

"We all accept on our friends," Skyler added.

"Even if it's Pocket Monsters," Hifumi frowned.

"So, let's get our gambling on!" Yumeko ecstatically cried out.

Spinning around in dramatic fashion, Kirari turned around and smiled. "Wonderful. Meet us at 7:30 PM at the private conference arena. The stage is already set. All you need to do is come! Give us all a splendid show!"

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**Chapter Soundtrack**

- **Persona 5 OST - Suspicion** - Makoto researches The Consortium and scans through file on the Cryptid incident. Makoto's former trainee and Minami interject.
- **Shin Megami Tensei IV: Apocalypse OST - Hunter Association** - The Vein Remnants invited their friends to AnimeJapan.
- **Shin Megami Tensei IV: Apocalypse OST - Kohryu** - The Phantom Thieves hang out at Café Leblanc and chat about AnimeJapan.
- **The Hero! ~Ikareru Ken ni Honō o Tsukero~ (One-Punch Man Opening)** - JAM Project Heard in Sound Devices - AnimeJapan.
- **Tobu - Hope Heard in Sound Devices** - AnimeJapan.
- **Boku No Hero Academia OST - You Can Become a Hero (君はヒーローになれる)** Heard in Sound Devices - AnimeJapan.
- **Guilty Crown - David Whitaker - Ready To Go** - In AnimeJapan, Ryuji and Futaba listen and comment about the rapper that sings it, wonder if that same rapper could have made a similar song
about the Phantom Thieves. Also use for the cast commenting on Guilty Crown itself, knowing in 'Reality: 2021' it's going to be the anime's 10th anniversary.

**Re:CREATORS Opening 1 Full - SawanoHiroyuki[nZk] Feat. Tielle & Gemie**
- *gravityWall Heard in Sound Devices* - Scene of Re:Creators's presence in AnimeJapan.

**My Wings ~ Lacuna Coil** - Jack and Eva appear and confront the Vein Remnants.

**Kakegurui OST - Debating Truth** - Jack demands to know how he got his necklace orb and suspects Hifumi's Sophia reality-warping powers. Io defends Hifumi. Nicola questions why his sister and the Revenants are tense toward Jack.

**Kakegurui OST - High-strung Spirit** - Kirari's theme in meeting the protagonists.

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Chapter VIII

Pokémon Rumble; Post-Con Blues (ポケモンランブル; ポストコンブルース)

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AnimeJapan 2019 (アニメジャパン 2019)/Tokyo Big Sight (東京ビッグサイト)/Private Gaming Area/7:10 PM (JST)

A few hours have passed and it was time for one of AnimeJapan 2019's main event attractions, albeit one that came out of the blue following Momobami Kirari's announcement. Kirari personally invited the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and the Spiritual Gamblers as guests to participate in the private Pokémon tournament.

How this was to be decided was anyone's, except Momobami Kirari's, guess.

The Thieves, the Remnants, and the Gamblers entered the private Pokémon gaming area. It was a large space in a large open space usually reserved for big stage performances or special guest conferences. They saw Kirari, Ririka, and Sayaka standing in the center of a black taped ellipse shape on the floor.

"Welcome, we're glad you could all make it," Kirari greeted their guests. "The tournament shall start at 8:00, but we have enough time to go over the lay-out of tonight's event."

"How are we doing this? One on one matches? Or, will these matches be determined in pairs?" Ren asked Kirari.

"Good question, Mr. Amamiya-Takamaki!" Sayaka replied. "You'll be competing in pairs... against one another."

Upon hearing this, there was a bit of a stir and quiet murmuring among the three groups. Some were hesitant to duel the other, but others were none too fazed. In Yumeko's case, she was always thrilled to compete against anyone in a game.

"Come now. Don't be too concerned over breaking friendships. This is all in good fun, my friends," Kirari assured some of the most concerned group members. "Although, our viewing audience surely want to see some heated competition." She turned to a big screen showing numerous cheering and clapping con-goers anticipating the private event. "And we have a few guests who are most excited to see an exciting show."
"What?" Mary gritted as she and the others turned to a stage full of seats.

There were guests invited to watch the private tournament. Among them were men in suits and some youth wearing Pokémon shirts with camera equipment. Sitting far behind them were faces the Spiritual Gamblers and the others recognized: Nishinōtōin Yuriko, Yomozuki Runa, Yumemite Yumemi, and Manyuda Kaede.

"Look who's there! Even Yuriko's here!" Itsuki pointed out.

"Oh, hey, guys! Did you come to watch us?!" Yumeko waved to the other gamblers in the audience.

Yuriko was flabbergasted by Yumeko and company's presence. "You're all here to compete?!"

Taking a cherry lollipop out of her mouth, Runa smirked. "Heheh, well, well, this should be interesting!"

"Hey, give us a good show!" Yumemi energetically cheered them.

Kaede merely kept to himself and pretended not to acknowledge their presence, but Yumeko quickly got his attention.

"Hey! You going to say anything to me? Not even a hello?" Yumeko wondered with a shrug.

"Maybe he's too focused on watching us compete," Ryōta deduced Kaede's lack of interactions with them. Just then, he then just realized something and counted the members in their group. "Wait, but which of us are competing?"

"Surely, you don't mean all of us will be competing?" Makoto asked Kirari.

"Oh no, or that'd last us well past the late-night hours? Heavens no I wouldn't subject the audience to that long of an event without intermissions," Kirari replied. "This tournament will be decided with eight selected competitors matches in pairs." She opened her right hand, revealing an eight-sided die. "We will determine the pair match-ups with this. Pick your eight teams willing to compete."

"Eight teams out of all of us, huh?" Skyler scanned his own Vein Remnant team. He mostly scanned toward Hifumi and Io's way. "Well, throw my name in the ring. And it's a no brainer who'll be my partner." He extended a hand to Hifumi, who graciously accepted.

"Count me in," Hifumi nodded.

"I'm ok with sitting out and cheering you two," Io smiled.

"Very good. Any other volunteers?" Kirari turned to the others.

"If Skyler's competing, then I'm in!" Jack interjected as he and Skyler intensely stared each other down.

Eva sighed. "And I'll be Jack's partner." She shook her head and internally cursed. You just couldn't kept your damned ego in check, couldn't you, Jack?

"So, far, we have Skyler Jones/Togo Hifumi and Jack Rutherford/Eva Roux," Sayaka wrote the pairing names on folded paper. "I've marked them as Team 1 and Team 2."

"Excellent. Any others? Or, will we have to choose teams out of random?" Kirari raised a hand and looked for any other willing tournament pairings.
Ren lifted his glasses and put on his joker smirk. "Ann and I will compete, too!"

"That's what I like to hear." Kirari gave a smirk brimming with similar confidence as Ren's.

"I have Amamiya-Takamaki Ren and Ann marked as Team 3!" Sayaka announced.

Ann added. "Just a question, will we choose our own Pocket Monster teams?"

"You most certainly can. I see some of you brought your own Nintendo 3DS, but we have a few spare for you to use and select your Pocket Monster teams," Kirari answered Ann's inquiry. She pointed to a giant screen on the far left. "Once we hook your Nintendo 3DS with cables to our computers, we'll be able to project computer simulations of the Pocket Monsters fighting in your matches."

Ryuji was taken aback. "Whoa, sweet! We'll see our own monsters duel?! That's effing badass!"

Futaba raised her hand. "Oh, oh, Inari and I are competing, too!"

Yusuke balked at this. "Now hold on a minute…!"

"No take backs! We're winning this baby!"

"Oh dear," sighed the artist.

"Inari would be you?" Sayaka asked Yusuke.

"Yes, it's an affectionate name my friend here likes to call me by."

"I see. Ok, I have you two down," Sayaka wrote their names. "Kitagawa Yusuke and Sakura Futaba. You're Team 4."

Before Makoto could say anything, she saw Louis raise his hand.

"Haru-chan and I will compete as a team!" Louis called to Sayaka.

"Wait, hold on…!" Makoto objected as Haru caressed her face with a hand.

"It'll be ok, Mako-chan. I'm with someone I can depend on. Even if it was you he picked, I wouldn't object," Haru reassured her love partner.

Feeling Haru's touch comfort her, the officer smiled and willingly resigned Haru to be Louis's partner. "Go on. We're all here to have fun, right?"

"Yes! That's the spirit!" Haru nodded in approval.

"We have Team 5 determined," Sayaka jotted down Louis and Haru's names.

"Then I pick…" Makoto quickly turned and pointed to Yakumo. "...Yakumo as my partner!"

"Whoa, me out of random?!" Yakumo gawked as he heard Emily giggling.

"I'm ok with it. Besides, I'm not good with playing these type of games," Emily admitted. She pushed Yakumo forward. "But, I know I've seen you play a couple rounds of Pocket Monsters during breaktime!"

"Ok, I guess…" Yakumo scratched the back of his head. He modestly chuckled standing next to
Makoto. "Just wanted to let you know, I'm not well-versed at this."

"It's ok. Let's give it our best," Makoto smiled.

"Team 6 has been decided," Sayaka confirmed.

"Only two teams left. Who's next?" Kirari patiently waited.

Suddenly, Midari whistles innocently and shoved her foot onto Mary's butt. She promptly shoved her next to Yumeko.

"Here's two takers!" Midari announced.

"Hey, what's the big idea for, you one-eyed bit-?!" Mary angrily snapped as Yumeko pulled her into a hug.

"Yeah! It's you and me, Mary! We're gonna own this tournament!" Yumeko excitedly shouted, shaking Mary hard.

"...uh, I wouldn't be so sure…" Mary lowered her eyes and head. She then shot an incensed glare at Midari's way, who sneakily snickered and walked off like a thief in the night.

"Excellent! I'm so thrilled you two will be participating!" Kirari golf clapped a few times.

"Jabami Yumeko and Saotome Mary are Team 7," Sayaka wrote their names down on a paper slip.

Ryōta cheered for his two friends. "Alright! Give it your best, Yumeko and Mary!"

Sharing Ryōta's enthusiasm, Yumeko hollered. "Yeah! Piece of cake!"

Using her thumb, Mary made a throat slit motion across her throat. *Yeah, piece of cake. I wasn't ready for this!*

"And who'll be the last team?" Kirari scanned through the other members.

Ryuji slapped both cheeks with his hands. "Me and…!"

"Me and Ryuji!" Mia called out.

"Hey, I was gonna say me and Miyako!"

Mia pointed to Ryuji and fearlessly held her ground to the taller young man. "Too bad. You'll be teaming with me. Besides, Shiho said she doesn't feel up to it."

"Then, why not let me team with your bro or Shinya?"

"Because Nicola wants to see her big sis kick some Pocket Monster ass," Mia gave a confident smirk.

"Go on, Ryuji," Miyako encouraged her boyfriend to team with Mia. "I'll be watching and rooting for you both."

"Well, in that case…" Ryuji blushed as he imagined Miyako alluringly winking a lovely pink heart at him. He felt his heart pounding as if Miyako was about to become a Phantom Thief and steal his heart away. "Anything for you, Miyako! Mia, let's kick all their collective asses!"
Mia chuckled cautiously. "...ok, you changed your tune fast. Just make sure and keep your head out of the clouds."

"Mia Karnstein and Sakamoto Ryuji is Team 8! We have all our participating pairs decided!" Sayaka formally announced as she dropped the slips into a black can.

"Ririka, if you will draw out the first two pairings on the bracket board," Kirari shook the can with the team pairing papers and handed the can over to her twin sister.

Shoving her hand inside the can, Ririka randomly drew a pairing slip and opened it. "We have Team 3 facing Team 8!"

"Whoa, dude! We're facing each other!" Ryuji realized he and Mia would be competing against Ren and Ann.

Ann gave a thumbs up to Ryuji and Mia. "Let the best team win... or not. Can't wait to kick your ass, Ryuji."

"Yeah?! Well, we're both fired up! Right, Mia?!" Ryuji asked and paused when he saw Mia facepalm.

"Save it for the match," Mia sighed.

"Let's give it our best, Ryuji," Ren addressed his friend.

"Hell yeah, man!" Ryuji said as he and Ren high fived.

Ririka drew the next two pairings. "Next on the boards, we have Team 1 facing Team 6!"

Skyler and Hifumi turned toward Makoto and Yakumo. Skyler gave a taunting look that plainly annoyed Makoto.

"Good. Now, I can take you down, Skyler," Makoto replied with a devious smirk.

"Don't drop the ball, Makokins," Skyler retorted, causing Makoto's eyes to flare up.

"Hifumi, please don't take it personally when I beat Skyler," the officer gritted and raised a left-handed clenched fist.

Hifumi quietly withdrew herself from Skyler and Makoto's competitive staredown.

"Yeah, you read my mind, Hifumi," Yakumo backed away.

"Now, this is the kind of intensity I want to see!" Kirari internally relished in the heated tension in this competitive environment, reminding her of the gambling world she still proudly indulged in.

"The next pairings to face: Team 5 vs. Team 7!" Ririka announced.

"We'll be competing, huh?" Louis faced Yumeko and Mary's direction.

"Let's do our best?" Haru shook Yumeko's hand. She concealed her intimidating glare that would scare the pants of anyone with a sane mind.

"Yeah, let's have fun," Yumeko put on a genuinely happy smile while masking her competitive ecstasy.
"Just don't go overboard and cost us the match," Mary sighed.

"And last but not least, Team 2 faces Team Team 4!" Ririka formally announced.

Jack pivoted over to Yusuke and Futaba. "You two will just be stepping stones for us before I face Skyler!"

Futaba stuck her tongue out. "Bleh! That's if you and your big-breasted girlfriend can beat us first! Don't underestimate me and Inari's team dynamics!" She quickly and expressively struck a Neo Featherman pose. "Let's kick their butts, Inari!"

Yusuke frowned. "I don't like his attitude, so count me in. We'll defeat them with our special dynamic teamwork."

"Damn straight!"

Eva covered her breasts and blushed. *I'll show you, you ungrateful, flat-chested…!*

"The rest of you can sit in the audiences and cheer on your friends on We do encourage you to liven up the tournament scene," Kirari smirked as she turned to the screen that showed the private Pokémon tournament brackets.

**AnimeJapan 2019 Grand Pokémon Tournament**

Amamiya-Takamaki Ren & Ann vs. Sakamoto Ryuji & Mia Karnstein

Skyler Jones & Togo Hifumi vs. Shinonome Yakumo & Niijima Makoto

Louis & Okumura Haru vs. Jabami Yumeko & Saotome Mary

Jack Rutherford & Eva Roux vs. Kitagawa Yusuke & Sakura Futaba

Kirari clapped once. "Great job! We have determined our match-ups! Next, each of you will select your Pocket Monsters!"

"Oh, me first!" Ryuji whipped out his Nintendo 3DS. "I already have my trusty Pocket Monsters selected!"

Mia shrugged as she picked up a spare Nintendo 3DS. "Looks like I'll have to pick out mine."

Ren had his Nintendo 3DS already out. "And I have my team."

Ann took out hers. "Me, too! Glad I brought mine in case I needed to sit down and rest."

Skyler had his Nintendo 3DS ready. Hifumi picked up a spare Nintendo 3DS from a table and thoroughly scanned through a large selection of Pokémon to choose from. The others likewise did the same. Each of the pairings' selected Pokémon appeared on the big screen.

Skyler's team comprised of Latios/Mega Latios (ラティオス), Bangiras (バンギラス) (Tyranitar), and Lugia (ルギア). Hifumi's team consisted Latias/Mega Latias (ラティアス), Ulgamoth (ウルガモス) (Volcarona), and Houou (ホウオウ) (Ho-Oh).

Ren picked Darkrai (ダークライ), Sazandora (サザンドラ) (Hydreigon), and Absol/Mega Absol (アブソル). Ann selected Bursyamo/Mega Bursyamo (パシャーモ) (Blaziken/Mega Blaziken), Mahoxy (マフォクシー) (Delphox), and Gaogaen (ガオガエン) (Incineroar).
Louis chose Lizardon (リザードン) (Charizard), Gekkouga/Ash-Gekkouga (ゲッコウガ) (Greninja/Ash-Greninja), and Erureido/Mega Erureido (エルレイド) (Gallade/Mega Gallade). Haru picked Sirmight/Mega Sirmight (サーナイト) (Gardevoir/Mega Gardevoir), Gekkouga/Ash-Gekkouga (ゲッコウガ) (Greninja/Ash-Greninja), and Erureido/Mega Erureido (エルレイド) (Gallade/Mega Gallade).

Yakumo's team comprised of Hellgar/Mega Hellgar (ヘルガー) (Houndoom/Mega Houndoom), Fushigibana (フシギバナ) (Venusaur), and Waruvial (ワルビアル) (Krookodile). Makoto's team consisted Lucario/Mega Lucario (ルカリオ), Gaburias (ガブリアス) (Garchomp), and Hassam (ハサム) (Scizor).

Ryuji chose Goukazaru (ゴウカザル) (Infernape), Livolt/Mega Livolt (ライボルト) (Manectric/Mega Manectric), and Alolan Raichu (スイクン). Mia selected Spear/Mega Spear (スピアー) (Beedrill/Mega Beedrill), Kamex (カメックス) (Blastoise), and Glion (グライオン) (Gliscor).

Yusuke picked out Onigohri/Mega Onigohri (オニゴーリ) (Gengar/Mega Gengar), Doble (ドーブル) (Smeargle), and Suicune (スイクン). Futaba chose Metagross/Mega Metagross (メタグロス), Rotom (ロトム), and Jibacoil (ジバコイル) (Magnezone).

Yumeko selected Gangar/Mega Gangar (ゲンガー) (Gengar/Mega Gengar), Chandela (シャンデラ) (Chandelure), and Habunake (ハブネーク) (Seviper). Mary picked Garura/Mega Garura (ガルーラ) (Kangaskhan/Mega Kangaskhan), Amajo (アマージョ) (Tsareena), and Zangoose (ザンゴース).

Finally, Jack's team consisted Bohmander/Mega Bohmander (ボーマンダー) (Salamence/Mega Salamence), Groudon/Primal Groudon (グラードン), and Foodin (フーディン) (Alakazam). Eva's team comprised of Tyltalis/Mega Tyltalis (チルタリス) (Altaria/Mega Altaria), Airmd (エアームド) (Skarmory), and Kyogre/Primal Kyogre (カイオーガ).

"You've all made some excellent choices, but let's see how well your team dynamics play out," Kirari said. She then asked Ririka for the microphone and made her next announcement. "Our teams have selected their Pocket Monster teams! We will begin the tournament shortly! Guests, if we may ask you to take your seats."

Morgana, Io, Ryōta, Itsuki, Midari, Shinya, Nicola, Shiho, Mishima, Emily, Reiko, Mi-Ling, Miyako, Rin, Coco, and Davis sat in audience seats. They joined Yuriko, Runa, Yumemi, and Kaede.

"You can do it, Hifumi and Skyler!" Io cheered on her best friends.

"Take home the win for us, Yumeko and Mary!" Ryōta yelled out to them.

"Go, Ann and Mia!" Shiho cheered, holding Morgana, who poked his head out to get a better view with the chairs obstructing his view.

"Hey, are you ok with my sis playing in our place?" Nicola asked Shinya.

"Sure, I just want to see which Pocket Monsters she's gonna use. Smoke 'em all, Ren!" Shinya shouted.

"So, um, are you cheering for Nicola's sister or Ren?" Reiko queried.

"Uh... both? But, I can't cheer for my friend?"

Reiko shrugged. "No, but... oh, nevermind."
"Shit, just get it all out of your system, kids," Midari encouraged them, putting her feet up on top of an empty seat in front of her.

"Yeah, don't mind us. We encourage everyone to cheer and get invested," Runa added.

"Just not too loudly where I'm sitting," muttered Kaede.

"Yay! Give us a good show, everyone!" Yumemi got up and cheered loudly behind Kaede, not only startling him but making him cover his ears.

"This one will be hard to call," Mishima stated. "How many of them actually play Pocket Monsters?"

"We're about to find out soon enough," Shiho replied.

Before the tournament could start, Kirari cleared her throat. "My apologies, but I've neglected to inform you we've received your fanart submission, Kitagawa Yusuke."

"The one I submitted?" Yusuke asked the knotted-haired woman.

"Correct. We not only received it, but we've asked and paid for graphic designers and animators to create a video depicting the battle illustrating Date Masamune and Sanada Yukimura's Pocket Monster army."

Futaba's mouth nearly dropped. "What?! You did?! Man, you're so lucky, Inari!"

"I don't know what to say, but I'm flattered…"

"Why don't you be a judge for yourself?" Kirari smirked as the screen opened up to a CGI animation depicting Date Masamune's Mega Lizardon X vs. Sanada Yukimura's Mega Lizardon Y.

Everyone, from the tournament competitors and the audiences, witnessed Yusuke's illustration come to life on the big screen. Yusuke quietly witnessed other artists' visual adaptation of his original piece.

"This is so cute," Ann smiled as she and the others watched the battle animation play out as if it happened ages ago but with Pokémon involved.

"With this CGI animation, it's like I'm watching a video game. I'd rather be playing this," Louis commented.

"Well, what do you think, Inari?" Futaba sneakily grinned as she elbowed Yusuke's side.

"The depiction of my work is well made and they certainly put time in recreating everything I drew," Yusuke critically analyzed the CGI animation video. "But personally speaking, I prefer my traditional art."

Next, following the fan video of Yusuke's art, a new promo appeared on the big screen. The promo showed the newest starters for Pokémon Sword & Shield: Sarunori (サルノリ) (Grookey), Hibanī (ヒバニー) (Scorbunny), and Messon (メッソン) (Sobble).

"Wow, that's right. We got a grass monkey, a fire bunny, and an aquatic lizard. I sure wasn't expecting those," remarked Nicola.

"Isn't Hibanī cute?!" Reiko exclaimed.
"I'm kinda partial to Messon," Mi-Ling added.

"I'm so gonna rock with Sarunori!" Shinya boasted his choice starter.

Overhearing the kids chatting about the latest Pokémon, Davis muttered. "Feh, in my day, it was all about that Fushigidane, Hitokage, and Zenigame."

Rin overheard and balked at the big man. "You actually played Pocket Monsters? YOU?!"

Davis coughed. "...yeah, so what? I mean, I had a childhood. I wasn't always a boring old man."

Coco chortled, leaning over next to Davis with her elbow pressed against his. "Reminiscing those old days?"

"Leave me alone."

Morgana watched Pikachu on the big screen and grumbled. "...why do they think I sound just like that dumb yellow electric rat? At least, I can actually talk."

Shiho heard Morgana meowing. "Oh, what is it, Morgana? Hungry? Sorry, but all I have are raw sunflower seeds."

_Yuck!_ Morgana internally conveyed his disgust for the offering.

"How was that for some pre-show entertainment? Ok, it's well past 8:00 PM. Why don't we get the tournament started? Since, that is what we're here for," Kirari announced in her microphone. "Can we get the first two teams to come to the circle?"

Ren & Ann and Ryuji & Mia stepped forward inside the battle circle. The pairings' respective Pokémon appeared on the big screen.

Hifumi turned to Skyler. "Have you noticed?"

Skyler queried. "What? Is there something with our Pocket Monster teams?"

"No, it's not that, but you, me and Ren have Kaijū-themed Pocket Monsters."

"You're right. I have a Bangiras. You have a Ulgamoth. Ren has a Sazandora. That's like Godzilla, Mothra, and Ghidorah."

Hifumi smiled. "Exactly. Who would've thought?"

"Who knows? Maybe it means we'll be pitted against Ren and Ann if they can win this match."

As they waited for Sayaka to start their match, Ren and Ann prepared themselves for Ryuji and Mia.

"It's been a while since I played Pocket Monsters. Hey, want to know something?" Ann glanced over to her husband.

"What is it?"

"I had an Achamo (アチャモ) (Torchic) back during Omega Ruby. Luckily for me, it was a girl and I named her Sakura Kyoko."

"Oh."
"What do you mean 'oh'? I wanted to tell you what my starter was."

"And you named her after a character from an anime show?"

"Yeah, the redhead from Madoka Magica. Anyway, I'm using her again and she's fully evolved into Bursyamo. Welcome back, Sakura Kyoko! Let's kick some butt!"

Ren smirked. "Well, guess you're not the only one to name their trusted Pocket Monster. I've given my Sazandora the name Zmey Ghidrah."

"Zmey Ghidrah?" Ann blinked in confusion. "That's a weird name."

"Ghidrah is for Ghidorah because it has three heads and is a dragon."

"And the 'Zmey' part?"

Ren chuckled. "I was a weird and creative kid then."

Ann sighed. "Somehow, I can believe that."

"Yo! Are we gonna get this started?!" Ryuji called for Sayaka.

"Oh, mind your manners, Ryuji. This gives us time to strategize," Mia scoffed.

Sayaka stepped inside the ring. "My apologies. Ok, are both teams ready?"

"We were born ready!" Ryuji hollered.

"Bring it on!" Ann responded with an energetic vibe.

"Then, let the first match begin!" Sayaka officially decreed the tournament's start.

As Ririka sounded the buzzer, Ren, Ann, Ryuji, and Mia picked their first Pokémon to fight with. Ren and Ann brought out Sazandora and Bursyamo.

"Let's ravage them, Zmey Ghidrah!"

"Get ready, Sakura Kyoko!" The blonde called to her Bursyamo.

Ryuji and Mia used Goukazaru and Kamex to start off the Pokémon battle.

"Me and SaruKing are fired up!" Ryuji boasted.

"Let's water them down, Kamera!" Mia declared.

Hearing this, Skyler snickered. "Guess we're not the only ones using Kaijū-themed motifs and names."

Hifumi added with a genuine smile. "I suppose not."

The first Pokémon match was very competitive. Ren's Sazandora battled Ryuji's Goukazaru and Mia's Kamex was like King Ghidorah fighting King Kong and Gamera. Ann's Bursyamo provided back-up for Sazandora. The combatant's other Pokémon came into play, including Darkrai, Gaogaen, Livolt, and Spear. At one point, Ann's Bursyamo mega evolved into Mega Bursyamo and brought down Ryuji's Mega Livolt. The match ended when Ren's Sazandora took down Mia's Mega Spear.
"The first team to advance are Ren and Ann!" Sayaka announced.

Ryuji slapped hands with Ren. "Kickass match, dude! You totally kicked my butt out there."

Ann pumped a fist into the air. "Yeah! I knew to count on you, Sakura Kyoko!"

Mia shrugged. "Hey, our teamwork wasn't half-bad for a first time, Ryuji."

Kirari addressed Ren and Ann. "You two will advance to face the winner between Skyler & Hifumi and Yakumo & Makoto's match, which will happen right now."

With that, the second match pairings entered the battle circle. Skyler and Hifumi stood opposite from Yakumo and Makoto.

"You can do it, Mako-chan!" Haru cheered on her lover.

"If she can keep a cool head with Skyler in there," Louis chuckled.

Makoto fiercely glared down Skyler.

"Remember this is just for fun, Makokins," Skyler coolly smirked at the officer's way, trying to get under her skin.

However, Makoto shrugged off his smarmy collectiveness with self-confidence. "Yeah, I know, but don't cry to me when I kick your butt." She then turned to Hifumi. "Don't take this personal, Hifumi."

"No, this is all for fun. Let the best team win," Hifumi wore a cool smile that matched Skyler's.

"Since we're giving our Pocket Monsters nicknames, I've given my Bangiras the name Bangiraceous," Skyler informed Hifumi.

"Such a nice name. As for me, I've called my female Ulgamoth, Togo Sophia."

"That's a beautiful name, Hifumi."

"It's the name if and when I have a future daughter."

Hearing this, Skyler smiled approvingly. "You wouldn't have it any other way, huh?"

"None," Hifumi then turned and faced their opposition. Her cool demeanor was replaced with a fierce and competitive game face. "Skyler, I hope you've brought your A-game, because I don't intend to lose! My Shogi strategies are next to none! Fight with me and I promise my Shogi skills will win us this tournament!"

Skyler was a bit taken aback by his girlfriend's gamer spirit surface. "Yeah, sure I'm with you." He internally thought. Oh boy, when Hifumi gets like this, there's no stopping her.

On the opposite side, Makoto and Yakumo stared off at Hifumi's direction, both of them responding with awkward and confused expressions.

"S-She's really getting into this, isn't she?" Yakumo muttered.

"Hifumi really thinks her Shogi skills can be applied into Pocket Monsters?" Makoto was bewildered. She's exhibiting a great example of a Chūnibyō if I've ever seen one!
"Let the second match begin!" Sayaka declared as the buzzer went off.

Skyler and Hifumi picked Bangiras and Ulgamoth to start off. Makoto and Yakumo brought out Lucario and Hellgar. This match played out much more competitively. Unlike the first match that involved a lot of power-based moves, there was more strategy applied between Skyler, Hifumi and, Makoto. Yakumo slightly fell behind but managed to catch up. Makoto's Lucario lunged at Skyler's Bangiras.

"Give his giant dinosaur the fists of justice, Buchimaru!" Makoto called to her Lucario.

As Lucario went to pummel Bangiras, Hifumi's Ulgamoth unleashed a cloak of flames that forced Lucario to dodge and withdraw.

"Thanks, Hifumi," Skyler nodded to her.

"We're not out of this match yet, Skyler! We are the king and queen of our kingdom!"

"Yeah, we sure are…"

Hifumi's passionate eyes flared up. "Our monsters are our pieces, Skyler. We must not let these two have the satisfaction of beating us. However…" She veered over to Skyler with a fiery expression. "If we are to fall, we'll do so gracefully!"

The Revenant couldn't only see, but also sensed the Shogi player's fighting spirit engulf her. Knowing how deeply invested she can get into playing a game, he vowed to not let Hifumi down.

Skyler withdrew Bangiras and summoned Lugia. Lugia then attacked Makoto's Lucario. Flying into the air, Lugia unleashed a psychic attack that stunned Lucario. Yakumo's Hellgar tried coming to Lucario's defense, but Hifumi's fire moth intervened and prevented Hellgar's advance. Makoto switched out Lucario with Gaburias. At one point, after Hellgar mega evolved into Mega Hellgar, the dark hound and Gaburias took down Ulgamoth.

"No, Togo Sophia!" Hifumi called out.

"You've done it now, Yakumo and Makokins!" Skyler heatedly spat out at the two.

Makoto scoffed. "Yeah? We're taking down your giant lizard next, Skyler Jones!" She dropped a thumbs down, prematurely signaling his and Hifumi's imminent defeats.

Haru became deeply invested and favored her lover to win her match. Witnessing Makoto's competitive spirit, she became invigorated herself to give it her all in her match.

The second match continued on and invoked various emotional responses between the four players. Hifumi's fiery gaming spirit and strategies allowed her and Skyler to take down two of Yakumo and Makoto's Pokémon. Makoto quickly responded with ferocity as her trusted Mega Lucario beat Skyler's Latios.

In the final moments of the match, Yakumo's Fushigibana fell. Yakumo was eliminated, leaving Makoto to contend with Skyler and Hifumi. Makoto had Mega Lucario. Skyler's only monster was Bangiras. Hifumi was left with Houou.

Makoto noted Bangiras was worn out and only Hifumi's Houou was fresh.

"Ok, Buchimaru, we can end this right now!" She pointed to Houou. "Attack her Houou!" She watched Mega Lucario charge at Houou. Yes, I attack Hifumi's monster and she can't defend Skyler's
Bangiras. And his monster is too worn out to defend. Sorry, you had to be the one way for me to beat Skyler, Hifumi.

Hifumi smirked. "You forgot one thing, Makoto. My Houou is resistant to your Buchimaru's melee fighting blows and steel attacks."

Makoto realized this. Crap, I forgot… this is what I get for falling out of the game! "Buchimaru, stop! Turn your attack on Skyler's…!"

As Mega Lucario unleashed an attack on Bangiras, Bangiras barely evaded, allowing Houou to swoop in and blast Mega Lucario. Overwhelmed by her opponents' teamwork, Makoto was beaten.

"Skyler and Hifumi are your winners! They'll advance to the semi-finals!" Sayaka announced.

As they approached their opponents, Skyler and Hifumi complimented Yakumo and Makoto's efforts.

"It was a fine match, but it was ours to win," Hifumi addressed Yakumo.

"Yeah, you and Skyler are the team to beat," replied Yakumo.

Skyler walked up to Makoto and shook her hand.

"You're handling this better than I thought, Makokins."

Makoto shrugged and calmly smirked. "What's there to complain about? You know I almost had you, but your queen defended you. I know I can't compete with her. But, just remember she's just a queen. I'm the 'Queen'."

Skyler rolled his eyes. "Yeah, ok, but yeah you almost had me. If Houou weren't there, you would've beaten us."

"Glad we can agree. Wow, how often do we agree on anything?"

"Just every once in a while."

The officer then turned and bowed to Hifumi. "And thank you for an excellent match."

Hifumi returned a bow. "It was an honor. Perhaps a duel between a goddess and a queen?"

Makoto nodded. "I'd love that."

"That was a spectacular show, my friends! Wasn't that just a splendid show of competitive vigor and good sportsmanship?!" Kirari addressed the private audience in their seats and the public watching from screens. "But, the night is still young. We have two more quarter-final matches to go."

Sayaka called forth the next pairings. "Our next match will be Louis and Haru against Yumeko and Mary!"

Louis & Haru and Yumeko & Mary entered the circle. Having watched the first two matches play out, Yumeko's gambling spirit flared, which could spell doom for her team or the opposite team.

"Ready to get our gamble on, Mary?" Yumeko queried to her partner.

"Just don't screw this up for us."
"Well, this should be quite interesting," Kirari meticulously eyed Yumeko and Mary. "How will you do in this gaming environment, Jabami-san?"

xxxxx

8:50 PM (JST)

The third match was just as competitive as the second one. Strategies were utilized from both teams. While not experienced in Pokémon, Yumeko and Mary made the best with what they had. Yumeko played with a clear mind. Mary assisted Yumeko and used her monsters to defend Yumeko's. Gangar became Yumeko's favorite to play and even gave him the nickname 'Mr. Grin'. However, the gamblers fell short and lost to Louis and Haru. The match was decided when Louis's Lizardon used a **Fire Blast** on Yumeko's Gangar.

Even though the gamblers lost, Kirari was still invested in Yumeko and Mary's willingness to adapt to a new gaming environment.

The fourth match, while not as competitive, was still a fun and entertaining match. Jack initially didn't take Yusuke and Futaba seriously, believing he and Eva would win in quick and decisive fashion. However, Futaba and Yusuke applied their Pokémon skills; the former had to refresh the latter on some of the strategies. Once the Thieves started to take down a monster or two from their opposition, that forced Jack to get serious. At one point, Futaba insulted Eva's large breasts to get under the woman's skin and throw her strategies off. In the end, Jack and Eva rebounded and defeated the Phantom Thief duo. The match decided when Jack's Bohmander crushed Yusuke's Doble.

After his and Eva's victory, Jack intently glared toward Skyler and Hifumi's way. He smiled and pointed to Skyler. Jack then moved a thumb across his throat.

xxxxx

9:20 PM (JST)

"Now, we're down to our semi-finalists. And according to this board, Ren and Ann will face Skyler and Hifumi next. After that, Jack and Eva compete against Louis and Haru. The competition is truly riveting up!" Kirari then turned toward a camera. "Hasn't it been a truly spectacular show, connoisseurs?"

Sayaka beckoned Ren & Ann and Skyler & Hifumi to enter the ring. The two pairings did so and faced opposite from each other.

"Ren, whoever wins, remember we're still tight," Skyler stated.

"Yeah."

Ann winked to Hifumi. "Let's do our best, Hifumi."

Hifumi nodded. "Of course."

"Both teams are ready! Let the first semi-final match begin!" Sayaka signaled for the buzzer to sound off.

The match started with Ren sending Darkrai. Skyler summoned Lugia to attack Darkrai. The two monsters went back and forth, throwing dark and psychic blasts toward one another. Ann sent Mega Bursyamo to attack Hifumi's Houou. The fire Pokémon struck each other with fiery attacks.
"You can do it, Sakura Kyoko!" Ann yelled out to her Mega Bursyamo.

"Keep it up, Houou!" Hifumi shouted.

Mega Bursyamo jumped up and kicked Houou away. This dealt a devastating blow that knocked Houou around. As Mega Bursyamo went for a finishing blow, Houou flapped both wings and unleashed a fire wave that knocked Mega Bursyamo down.

"Houou, withdraw!" Hifumi commanded and replaced her firebird with Ulgamoth. "Let's rebound from this, Togo Sophia!"

Ulgamoth flew in and attacked Mega Bursyamo. Ann called to her Pokémon to dodge, which it did. Mega Bursyamo kept her distance from the fire moth.

Meanwhile, Ren's Darkrai was completely out maneuvering and neutralized all of Lugia's psychic attacks. Realizing Ren's dark Pokémon was immune to Lugia's attacks, Skyler withdrew Lugia and replaced him with Bangiras.

"Get him, Bangiraceous!" Skyler yelled out as Bangiras charged at Darkrai.

"Crush him, Darkrai!" Ren called out.

As the two Pokémon collided, Darkrai threw a darkness attack. Bangiras rushed head first through the attack and took little damage. Darkrai tried flying around the dinosaur-like beast, but Bangiras caught and pummeled Darkrai with physical blows. Ultimately, Darkrai fell to Bangiras.

At the same time, Ulgamoth took down Mega Bursyamo.

Skyler and Hifumi turned to each other. Both had fiery and passionate looks that Ren and Ann couldn't hope to match.

"Hey, um, Ren. I think we might be in trouble…" Ann gulped, nervously looking them down.

"Well, I'm not about to give up," Ren took out his next Pokémon: Absol.

"Right, me either!" Ann brought out Mahoxy.

The match progressed with exciting gameplay and strategies utilized. Ann found herself outmatched by Hifumi's wit and strategic plays. Ren and Skyler's match-up was fairly closer as neither player was willing to fall to the other. When Ren's Absol became Mega Absol, it dealt blows to Bangiras. Skyler replaced Bangiras with Latios.

"Ok, you're up, Chassés!" Skyler referred to Latios by his nickname.

Latios flew in and unleashed psychic attacks on Mega Absol, who dodged and fired a darkness blast. Latios dodged and quickly dove in, slamming into and tackling Mega Absol down. Mega Absol bounced back and jumped up throwing a darkness blast. Latios barely swerved out of the way. Mega Absol rolled up into mid-air and headbutted Latios.

"Hang on, Chassés!" Skyler called out to his Latios.

As the match continued, Latios rebounded against Mega Absol and mega evolved into Mega Latios.

The ladies' Pokémon battle reached its conclusion. Hifumi's Latias took down Ann's Gaogaen, decisively eliminating the latter from the match. However, Ann's efforts weren't in vain as her Gaogaen did take down Houou.
Hifumi watched Skyler struggle with Ren.

"Hang in there, Skyler!" Hifumi called out. "Amberwind, go and assist Chassés!" She referred to her Latias's nickname.

Latias assisted Mega Latiost against Ren's remaining monsters: Mega Absol and Sazandora. Latias and Mega Latiost double teamed to take out Mega Absol. Sazandora came in to try and take down the two psychic legendaries. Ren resorted to Sazandora's powerful Dragon Rush and Dragon Pulse to take down Mega Latiost. Skyler brought back Bangiras out to fight. Hifumi replaced Latias with Ulgamoth.

"Like straight out of a Godzilla movie. A three-headed dragon, the giant dinosaur, and the giant moth." Ren noted his Sazandora, Bangiras, and Ulgamoth on the field.

"It's all on you, Bangiraceous!" Skyler shouted.

"You have little power, Togo Sophia, but let's make the best of what we can," Hifumi encouraged her moth.

Ren fiercely gritted. "Take them down, Zmey Ghidrah!"

The three-way Pokémon went as expected. Bangiras and Sazandora physically clashed like the rival Kaijū they represented. Ulgamoth kept her distance and stayed in the air. When Bangiras tackled Sazandora back, the three-headed dragon unleashed Dragon Pulse. Bangiras dodged and struck back with a Rock Slide. After dazing Sazandora, Ulgamoth flew over and scattered fiery blasts from her wings. Sazandora rebounded and launched into the air to attack Ulgamoth. Sazandora struck down Ulgamoth, eliminating the fire moth. Latias returned to play and assisted Bangiras.

Toward the end of the match, Bangiras turned the tide of the battle against Sazandora. The dinosaur decisively took down the three-headed dragon with Stone Edge.

"Skyler and Hifumi have won and will compete in the finals!" Sayaka announced.

The pairings went up to congratulate the other. Ren and Skyler gave firm handshakes.

"That was an excellent match, Ren. That could've gone either way."

"Yeah, that was a battle among monsters, wasn't it?" Ren smiled.

"We'll be cheering for you two in the finals," Ann said to Hifumi.

"Thank you."

"You sure taught me a lesson, Hifumi. It was fun dueling you!" Ann said.

"Likewise, Ann."

"It's time for our next semi-final match! Jack and Eva against Louis and Haru!" Sayaka called for the two semi-final pairings to enter the circle.

xxxxx

9:40 PM (JST)

The second semi-final turned out decently. Jack and Louis dueled each other with serious intensity.
In contrast to her match-up with Futaba, Eva and Haru's exchange was much more polite and ladylike. Louis and Haru started with Gekkouga and Sirnight. Jack and Eva started with Groudon and Airmend. The match went back and forth. Louis tried utilizing strategies with his Pokémon to take down Jack's powerful monsters. However, Jack's Pokémon choices proved too strong for Louis. Haru found herself in big trouble when Tyltalis mega evolved into Mega Tyltalis. Mega Tyltalis took out Haru's Nymphia and Shaymin. When Mega Tyltalis wore itself out, Haru brought back Sirnight to take out Eva's monster.

The end of the match came when Jack's Bohmander took out Louis's Lizardon and Haru's Sirnight. After vanquishing their opponents, Jack and Eva had their sights set on their final opponents, Skyler and Hifumi.

10:00 PM (JST)

Kirari clapped. "What a most exciting tournament we've had. All of you, win or lose, have played valiantly and showed me you're all great players. However, all good competitions must come to an end. We come down to our finalists." She veered toward Jack and Eva. "Jack Rutherford and Eva Roux!" She then pivoted to Skyler and Hifumi. "And Skyler Jones and Togo Hifumi! Give us a finale for us to remember."

Skyler raised a hand. "Is there no prizes for the winners?"

"Sadly, no. We couldn't find any worthy prizes. Otherwise, we would've said so long ago," Ririka replied.

"In my eyes, everyone's a winner here," Kirari smirked. "Now, give us a good show, you four."

"Please enter the circle," Sayaka beckoned the pairings into the battle circle.

Skyler and Hifumi stood opposite from Jack and Eva. Jack and Skyler exchanged intense glares.

"We're taking home something greater than some silly carnival prize: warrior pride." Jack coolly smirked. "Your friends we beat already were just stepping stones for us."

Eva turned to him and smiled. "Now, let's not too badly about them. They gave it their all."

Skyler grunted. "She's right. They aren't stepping steps. Watching their duels gave me an idea how to beat you!"

Hifumi pointed to Jack and Eva. "You're facing the king and queen now!" She turned to the audience and spotted Shinya with an eagle's eye. "Shinya, your hat!"

Hearing Hifumi, Shinya looked confused. He got up from his chair. Hifumi walked over and asked for his hat. Shinya wasn't sure what to say, but Reiko and Nicola encouraged him to give her his hat.

"Here. For luck!" Shinya handed his 'GET SMOKED' hat to her.

With her eyes burning with passion, Hifumi put on the red hat and turned it sideways, which still visibly showed the 'GET SMOKED' in yellow font. She then put on a game face that everyone was taken aback by.

"Skyler, I'm ready to win!" Hifumi called out as she stepped inside the circle. She noticed Skyler giving her an awkward look. "...what? Is something wrong?"
"Uh… no! I'd say that hat looks great on you!"

She tipped the red hat and warmly smiled. "Why thank you."

Jack chuckled. "You got one weird girlfriend, Skyler."

Hifumi shot an intense and piercing glare at Jack. "Who are you calling weird?" She then psyched him out by throwing her hand across her face and doing the JoJo pose, which took all her friends and colleagues by surprise.

Eva sighed. "Jack, let's just get on with this match."

Jack blinked and shook his head. "...yeah, right. This lady's out of her mind!"

"Are you ready? Let the final match begin!" Sayaka called out.

As the buzzer sounded, Skyler and Hifumi summoned their Pokémon: Lugia and Houou. Jack and Eva brought out their Pokémon: Primal Groudon and Primal Kyogre. Lugia flew at Primal Groudon. Lugia unleashed a *Psyshock*, but Primal Groudon dodged and shot fire blasts. Lugia swerved away from Primal Groudon's blasts.

Houou flew around Primal Kyogre and unleashed *Sacred Fire*. Primal Kyogre countered with a *Hydro Pump*, nullifying the legendary bird's flames. Primal Kyogre mounted another offense and blasted Houou with an *Origin Pulse*.

"Heh, yes. My water monster beats your fire one," Eva smirked as Primal Kyogre dealt a critical blow to Houou.

"Houou, withdraw!" Hifumi recalled her firebird and summoned Ulgamoth. "You're up, Togo Sophia!"

Eva withdrew Primal Kyogre and brought out her female Airmd. "I see you've given your monster a nickname. Well, say hello to Aranea!"

Hifumi and Eva sent their Pokémon into battle. Airmd and Ulgamoth engaged in a quick aerial battle. Ulgamoth launched fire blasts. Airmd evaded Ulgamoth's attacks and went for an *Air Slash*. Ulgamoth barely dodged.

Meanwhile, Lugia took a critical blow from Primal Groudon. Skyler quickly withdrew Lugia and replaced it with Bangiras.

"Humph, withdrawing your monster for another? Does that mean you admit my Pocket Monsters are better than yours?" Jack coldly smirked.

"Not even. This match hasn't been decided yet. Besides your monster could use some rest."

"Very observant," Jack withdrew Primal Groudon. He then brought out Foodin. "Let's see how your dinosaur handles my psychic!"

Foodin waved its spoons around and attempted *Focus Blast* on Bangiras. Bangiras countered with a *Rock Slide*. This turned the tide of the match, resulting into Bangiras completely knocking the psychic out of the match.

"Hey, did you forget Bangiras is also a dark type and psychics can't beat them?!" Skyler chastised Jack, who didn't take this too well.
"Ugh, shut up…" Jack gritted as he made a mental note. *Don't slip like that again, you idiot!* He mentally chided himself over his folly.

Eva was flabbergasted her partner lost a monster already. "Jack!"

"I'd pay attention to the battle at hand!" Hifumi called out as Bangiras fired **Dark Pulse** at Airmid. Bangiras not only took out Foodin, but removed Airmid with its dark-based attacks.

"Yes, that's out of their monsters removed!" Hifumi pointed out.

"But, they each have two monsters. Let's not get prematurely celebrate yet, Hifumi."

Jack and Eva brought back Primal Groudon and Primal Kyogre to the battlefield. Eva sent Primal Kyogre to attack Bangiras and blasted the dinosaur with an **Origin Pulse**. Primal Groudon followed up with **Precipice Blades** to take down Skyler's Bangiras. Ulgamoth did try to defend Bangiras, but Primal Kyogre intercepted the fire moth.

"Sorry, Bangiraceous. At least you took down two of theirs," Skyler muttered proudly for his trusted dinosaur. He brought back Lugia out to play. "Hifumi, have Ulgamoth keep Primal Kyogre at bay!"

"Yes, of course! Fire can't beat water, but Togo Sophia can distract her monster!" Hifumi sent Ulgamoth in a bold effort to keep Primal Kyogre away.

This left Lugia to launch an attack on Primal Groudon. Lugia struck Primal Groudon with **Sky Drop** and knocked it out of the match.

"That's two of your monsters I've taken out, Jack! That just leaves you with one!" Skyler exclaimed.

"But, I took out one of yours and I'll take out another one of yours! This match is still young!"

Just then, Hifumi witnessed her Ulgamoth fall to Primal Kyogre's water attack.

"Sorry, Skyler, but Togo Sophia couldn't hold her monster too long," the Shogi woman regrettably apologized.

"It's fine. We still both have two monsters each. Jack has just one and Eva has two of hers. I'd say we should focus on eliminating Jack, but it's not always a good idea to underestimate a desperate player."

Hifumi nodded. "Yes, I know. He's going to bring out his ace."

Jack turned to Eva. "It's time I bring out my trusted dragon to play. You know which one."

Eva frowned. "Yeah, it's that time."

With that, Jack brought out his third and only Pokémon: Bohmander. "Let's end this match, Skywalker! Take no prisoners!"

"Skywalker?" Skyler muttered.

"I consider dragons to not be greater fliers, but can also walk in the sky and the clouds. Hence, the name Skywalker."

"Here I thought that was a *Star Wars* reference," remarked the Revenant.
"Pfft, yeah laugh it up, Skyler! Skywalker's going to be the difference maker!" Jack boasted. He then pointed to Lugia. "Why don't I show you? I'll start by removing your worn out Lugia from the battlefield!"

Bohmander flew at Lugia and took it out with *Dragon Pulse*.

"Now, we're two for two, Skyler!"

"So, we're both down to one monster each." Skyler quickly summoned Latios into play.

"If you're bringing out Chassés, it's time for Amberwind to come out," Hifumi said, bringing out her Latias. "And when these siblings are united, they can't be bested!"

"And when combined, we call them Amberwind Chassés," Skyler stated.

Eva scoffed. "Are we supposed to be impressed? Jack, let's finish them."

Jack replied. "Right, but you should bring your other monster out."

"Tyltalis, come forth!" Eva replaced Primal Kyogre with Tyltalis.

The four contestants witnessed their dragons fly into the air and captivate the audiences with their aerial maneuvers. Latios went into battle with Bohmander. Latias took on Tyltalis. Bohmander hit Latios with a *Fly* attack. Latios retaliated with a *Psywave*, which damaged Bohmander. Latias was struck by a *Sky Attack* from Tyltalis. As Tyltalis went for another flying attack, Latias dodged the dragon's assault. Latias blasted Tyltalis with a *Mist Ball*.

The dragon battle went back and forth. The contestants took turns trying to exploit their monster's weaknesses. The monsters either had to dodge or maneuver through their opponents' attacks.

When the match reached its midpoint, the four monsters pushed each other's limits and powered up into their Mega Evolution forms. Bohmander became Mega Bohmander. Tyltalis became Mega Tyltalis. Latios became Mega Latios. Latias became Mega Latias.

"This is it, Skyler! Our monsters have reached their critical points! One of us is coming out on top!" Jack declared this to be the turning point of the final match.

"Ready to give this your all, Hifumi?"

"If we fall, we'll do so with grace!" The Shogi woman boldly decreed.

Mega Bohmander and Mega Latios both flew high into the air. They flew around one another. Mega Bohmander launched a *Draco Meteor* at Mega Latios, but Mega Latios fired *Dragon Pulse* to cancel out the *Draco Meteor*. The dragons then unleashed flying attacks and dealt damage to each other.

Mega Latias and Mega Tyltalis flew around, dodging each other's attacks. At one point, Mega Latias hit Mega Tyltalis with a *Psyshock*, dealing a critical blow to Eva's Pokémon. Mega Tyltalis nearly collapsed after being taken down by Mega Latias.

Mega Bohmander hastily flew at Mega Latios and went for a dragon attack. Mega Latios had the same idea as well. Skyler and Jack both called out for the finishing blows. Mega Bohmander struck with *Dragon Claw*. Mega Latios unleashed *Outrage*. As the two dragons slid past the other, both fell in defeat. Skyler and Jack eliminated each other, leaving their ladies to finish the match.
"Take it, Hifumi!" Skyler called out to her.

"Yes, game, set…!" Hifumi watched as Eva brought back Primal Kyogre.

Mega Latias unleashed **Zen Headbutt** to take Eva's Pokémon out. Hifumi was the last contestant standing with only two Pokémon left.

"And match!" The Shogi woman proudly declared, turning Shinya's cap backwards and flashing a V with her fingers.

"Yes, and not only has the match been decided, but the tournament is over!" Sayaka shouted. "Your winners are Skyler Jones and Togo Hifumi!"

Hifumi ran over and hugged Skyler. The couple celebrated their victory. Much to their own chagrin, Jack and Eva walked off. The Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and Spiritual Gamblers (minus Yuriko, Kaede, Runa, and Yumemi) headed over to congratulate the tournament winners.

Io ran up to hug Skyler and Hifumi. She hugged them tight and lifted both into the air.

"Yay! You won! I knew you would!" Io gleefully cheered.

"Way to go, you two!" Ann cheered them.

"Damn, that was close!" Ryuji said.

"I thought for sure Jack had you beat with that dragon of is!" Futaba said.

"Excellent gameplay, you two," Ren congratulated Hifumi and Skyler.

"That'll show Jack the jackass! You two kicked his and Eva's sorry asses!" Mia boasted.

"Looks like my hat turned out good luck after all!" Shinya yelled out.

"Yes, and thank you," Hifumi took off the red hat and handed it to the teen.

"Thanks, guys, but it was just a game…" Skyler said as he watched Jack and Eva leaving. "Wait, Jack!"

Hearing Skyler call out to him, Jack briefly paused and turned his head.

"That was a great game. Just wanted to wanted to tell you and Eva…"

Jack scoffed and turned to face Skyler. "Save it, Skyler. When we meet again, it won't be in a silly kid's game like this."

Sighing, Eva crossed her arms. "I don't know. That was pretty fun. I'd be up for another Pocket Monsters game." She winked to the platinum blonde-haired man, who already turned his back to Jack.

"We're leaving, Eva. Let's go."

"Right," Eva nodded but not long before winking to Skyler and Hifumi. "I'd be up for another game if you are. Bye!" She walked off and followed Eva.

Io frowned toward Jack's way. "I don't like him."
Hifumi patted Io's shoulder. "I'm sure he and Skyler will resolve issues someday, Io."

Skyler sighed out of exasperation. "Easier said than done, Hifumi, but we'll see. That all depends on him."

"Well, even if he doesn't come around, you still have us!" Yumeko chimed in.

"Well said," Louis chuckled.

Observing Skyler and Jack's interactions, Kirari's smile curved outward as she became intrigued with their storied history. "Ahh, so much tension between those two, you could carve it out with a knife." She licked her blue lips and chortled. "Oh, I hope we can see those two clash again, but in a more open space."

Ririka approached Kirari. "What should we do?"

"Have no fear, sister. We've acquired all the data we need for The Consortium."

As the Thieves, Vein Remnants, and Gamblers continued their celebration with Skyler and Hifumi, Kirari approached them and clapped her hands.

"I'd like to thank you for participating in tonight's festivities," Kirari smirked. "So, sorry we couldn't provide any prizes, but know you will be recognized as this year's AnimeJapan Pocket Monster champions. Do know as the champions, you reserve the right to defend or relinquish your championships for next year's event."

Skyler turned to Hifumi. "Well?"

Hifumi nodded. "We'll consider it."

"Very well. I know it's getting late, so we'll allow you all to go home free," Kirari said. "Ririka, Sayaka, let us make our leave." With that, the trio headed out of the arena.

Biting her lip, Makoto took a chance and walked up behind the trio.

"Mako-chan?" Haru whispered.

"Hey, you three," Makoto stopped the trio from walking further.

"Can I help you with something?" Kirari queried with curiosity.

"You probably don't know, but I'm officer from the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department."

"Oh, a police officer? How can I help you, officer...?"

"Officer Niijima. I've been doing investigations on that attack in Akihabara."

"Yes, I recall. There were witness accounts of monsters that attacked?"

Makoto nodded. "And we've received camera stills of men in riot gear. We had some witnesses say those men referred to the creatures as experiments of some organization called The Consortium."

Kirari turned and blinked. "Oh?"

"Do you and these two know anything of the sort? Anything at all?"
The knot-haired woman replied, "No." She looked Makoto dead in the eyes as she said this. "I'm afraid I don't. If we do, we'll let you and your department know. Now, if you'll excuse us…" She gave a courtesy bow. "Have a good evening, Officer Niijima." She walked off with Ririka and Sayaka in tow.

Louis and Haru both approached Makoto. They watched the trio of ladies leaving Makoto with ambiguous thoughts.

"What's wrong, Makoto? Do you suspect something from those three?" Louis queried.

"Maybe, but at this point I'm not even sure…"

"Do you consider them suspects linked The Consortium we heard about from Ren?" Haru asked her lover.

"Possibly, but I'll need more proof than hearsay," Makoto said as Haru hugged her.

"Don't think too hard, Mako-chan. C'mon, we're going to celebrate Hifumi and Skyler's victory."

"Good idea. I'll look into this another time," the officer sighed as Louis and Haru escorted her away.

As everyone headed out of the arena, Io yawned on her way out.

"Getting sleepy, sweetie?" Hifumi smiled to Io, who rubbed her eyes.

"Need sleep…" Io felt fatigued and collapsed on Hifumi.

"Here. I'll carry you," Hifumi said as she gave Io a piggyback ride. "Skyler, I'll go on ahead to our place. You go ahead and celebrate with the others."

"Are you sure you two won't…"

Hifumi nodded and kissed Skyler's cheek. "I'll see you at the apartment." With that, she carried a merchandise bag in one arm while carrying Io on her back.

"Sounds like Io needs another recharge," Skyler smirked.

"Yo, man! We're having drinks! It's on me!" Louis called over to Skyler.

"Make sure Shinya and the kids get home, Mia and Shiho," Ann requested.

"Hey, it's my job as a big sister after all," Mia shrugged as Morgana stayed on her shoulder.

"Glad you've got the kids safety in mind like a responsible adult, Lady Mia," Morgana added. "Maybe you'd like to join us, Lady Ann?"

"Thanks, Morgana, but me and Ren are going to celebrate before we head home."

Shiho giggled. "Don't drink too hard, you two."

"Let's drink until we're shit-faced!" Yakumo yelled out.

"Some of us are going to drink responsibly, thank you very much," Louis pointed out.

"Good, or I'd arrest your sorry butt," Makoto gave a stern response.

"I'd like to see you try and arrest me!" Yumeko shouted.
"Hey, what did I just say?" The officer snapped at the Compulsive Gambler.


"I wouldn't put it past her," Mary rolled her eyes.

"I'd like to see you pussies try and outdrink me!" Midari boasted.

"You're on!" Ryuji shouted.

As the post-con blues kicked in, half of the group returned home, but most of the Revenants, half of the Phantom Thieves, and the Spiritual Gamblers went to a local bar to celebrate Skyler and Hifumi's championship victory.

Skyler and Hifumi's Apartment/Hamamatsuchō (浜松町)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/11:45 PM (JST)

Having returned home, Skyler closed the door behind him.

"Hey, guys! I'm home already!" Skyler called out, sounding audibly sober. "I didn't get to drink much after all." He walked into the dimmed living room and noticed Io's couch bed littered with magazines and stuffed animals. He smiled. "Looks like Io went to sleep inside you, huh, Hifumi?"

He headed straight for their bedroom and saw the door was closed.

"Hifumi?" He opened the door and to his surprise he saw something he didn't expect. His face blushed at the sight of fully nude Hifumi laying on their bed. A dark blue bathrobe lied on the edge of their bed, indicating that she had already bathed before getting into bed.

Hifumi let out a deep, heavy breath as she arched her body into a V-shape. She raised her chest and upper body off the plain white sheets of their bed. Skyler watched his nude girlfriend in an erotic posture. Hifumi's bare feet rubbed against the bed sheets. She raised her right left and foot into the air, opening her toes. In her left hand, she kissed a shogi piece. She had her right hand seemingly caressing her own crotch.

"H-Hifumi…" Skyler blushed at the sight of his goddess in her birthday suit.

Hearing her presence being addressed, Hifumi saw Skyler. Naturally, since it's Skyler who saw her, a smile adorned the woman's delicate features. Hifumi turned over and sat on the edge of their bed, indicating that she had already bathed before getting into bed.

Skyler watched his nude girlfriend in an erotic posture. Hifumi's bare feet rubbed against the bed sheets. She raised her right left and foot into the air, opening her toes. In her left hand, she kissed a shogi piece. She had her right hand seemingly caressing her own crotch.

"H-Hifumi…" Skyler blushed at the sight of his goddess in her birthday suit.

Hearing her presence being addressed, Hifumi saw Skyler. Naturally, since it's Skyler who saw her, a smile adorned the woman's delicate features. Hifumi turned over and sat on the edge of their bed. She got up and stood facing her Revenant lover. She walked up to him. He did the same. They walked toward the other until they came to a pause. The lovers exchanged looks. Allured by her gaze and knockout body, Skyler held her close to him. Hifumi folded her arms around his neck. They met face to face. Then, their lips met. They shared a passionate kiss. They kissed so passionately that their tongues met and kissed each other's necks.

"Hifumi…"

"Skyler… oh…"

Hifumi slipped both hands under Skyler's shirt and pulled it off. After removing his shirt, her right hand caressed the back of Skyler's head. Skyler continued kissing her, but Hifumi coerced him to put his face into her chest. She invited him in and gave him a breast to face smothering, causing him to blush red. Skyler then licked and sucked on Hifumi's left breast. Skyler moved his left hand over his
girlfriend's back. Then, with his right hand, he caressed her firm buttocks. Hifumi let out a sensual
gasp. Skyler effortlessly lifted Hifumi and mounted her on his lap. As he finished licking her other
breast, the Revenant leaned down between Hifumi's legs and leaned forward to examine her. He
licked her vaginal area, causing Hifumi to moan out sensual gasps and pants.

Skyler got up and fell down to lie back on the bed. Hifumi not only turned around, but she started to
feel wet. She couldn't wait to tear every fabric of clothing off him. She started by unbuttoning his
pants and throwing that off. She then removed his shoes and finally his underwear. She mounted him
and leaned her head near his crotch. Hifumi teased licking him, but instead held and fondled his
crotch. She went in feeling and tasting out her Revenant boyfriend. Skyler felt his crotch harden
much to Hifumi's delight.

Hifumi then turned around for her and Skyler to get in a 69-like position. Skyler leaned face first into
Hifumi's buttocks and licked her vaginal area. Hifumi was already licking and sucking on Skyler's
hardened crotch.

"Oh god…" Hifumi blushed, feeling wet from Skyler's tongue going inside her. She not only felt wet
from ecstasy, but her vaginal juices spilled out falling on Skyler's face and going into his mouth.
"Yes… oh… get further inside me, Skyler Jones…!"

Before he could, Skyler felt his crotch harden and twitching harder as if pumping something out
forcibly.

"Oh fuck… I'm coming…!" Skyler shouted as white cum came out and splattered all over Hifumi's
face.

Hifumi licked her boyfriend's cum from her face and lapped up every bit spilling out. Their faces
became covered in each other's sexual juices. Their bodies were covered in layers of hot sweat as a
result of their hedonistic intercourse. Hifumi and Skyler got out of their intercourse position and lied
next to each other. Hifumi sat up, wiping off and licking the cum that still covered her face. As
Skyler sat up, Hifumi smiled as the lovers shared another passionate kiss. As they lied on top of the
other, the couple transitioned their make out into a scissor-like intercourse. They held to each other's
leg while licking their feet and toes. Skyler's tongue licked every corner of Hifumi's sweet-scented
feet. This feet and toe licking session went on until both climaxed. It was Skyler, whose crotch was
inside Hifumi. As he climaxed into her, Hifumi felt her boyfriend's virile drive going inside her.

"Ugh, shit… I'm really coming… OH FUCK!" Skyler shouted as Hifumi panted and gasped hard.

"Yes, keep going… Skyler!"

As they got out of their second intercourse position, they experimented with a third. This time,
Hifumi was laying on their bed with Skyler on top of her. They held each other's hands, staring into
their eyes and moaning while still continuing their intercourse. Hifumi let out a hard gasp and cried
out happily as she's holding Skyler's neck and back. The couple climaxed for a second time. At one
point when Skyler's crotch went inside her. Hifumi threw her head back and opened her eyes. For a
brief instant, Hifumi's eyes turned gold, indicating that Io was inside her seemingly watching the
couple's sexual intercourse.

Skyler noticed this. "...Hifumi?"

Hifumi looked down as the gold in her eyes faded. "...yes?"

The Revenant just nodded. "Nothing, forget it." He smiled knowing Io was watching them. He
leaned down as he and Hifumi shared another passionate kiss.
When it was said and done, it was already 2:30 AM. The couple lied together in each other's embrace. They rested. Their bodies are covered in sweat and cum, but they were satisfied. Besides possibly Io, there was no else to watch them. It was a beautiful and hedonistic night between the Revenant and his goddess lover. Tonight, they were both champions in a battle game arena and in bed.

Morning would be just another day for them together.

And going forward, while they can't predict what'll happen to them, they would face life's pleasures and obstacles together.

xxxxx

**Chapter Soundtrack**

**Kakegurui OST - A Flower Without a Match** - Setting up matches and tournament.

**Persona 5 OST - My Homie** - Conversations among the audience members.

**Uncontrollable - Xenoblade Chronicles X OST Heard in Sound Devices** - The fan video in CGI like Death Battle's Pokémon vs. Digimon, showing Date Masamune's Mega Lizardon X vs. Sanada Yukimura's Mega Lizardon Y in AnimeJapan before the tournament starts.

**Pokémon Anime Sound Collection - Kanto Gym (Intense Action) Heard in Sound Devices** - Preparations of the tournament/First Matches.

**Pokémon Anime Sound Collection - Hoenn Elite Four Battle Theme Heard in Sound Devices** - Preparations of the tournament/Semi-Finals.


**Pokémon Anime Sound Collection - Groudon/Kyogre Battle Heard in Sound Devices** - Skyler/Hifumi vs. Jack/Eva first half such as Lugia vs. Primal Groudon and Ho-oh vs. Primal Kyogre, Tyranitar and Volcarona vs. Alakazam and Skarmory.

**Battle! (Lorekeeper Zinnia) - Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Heard in Sound Devices** - Skyler/Hifumi vs. Jack/Eva second half such as Mega Latias vs. Mega Altaria and Mega Latios vs. Mega Salamence in a Mega Evolution dragon fight (That the four Pokémon originated from the Hoenn region).


**VAMPS - VAMPIRE'S LOVE** - Hifumi and Skyler's after their lovemaking.

xxxxx
Chapter Notes

Here's a link to the Fanfiction.net version and for those who want the original version, which will include detailed author notes.

Fanfiction.net link: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/13165382/9/Urban-Legends

Chapter IX

Coming of Spring; Transitional Tranquility (春の到来; 過渡的な静けさ)

Okinawa Island (沖縄本島)/Beach/ March 25, 2019 (2019年3月25日) (Reality: March 25, 2021)/9:30 AM (JST)

Ocean currents splashed against the peaceful shore where a couple stood facing the beautiful morning sky. The couple wore their summer clothes.

"It's a gorgeous scenery, isn't it, Skyler?"

"Yeah."

"For as long as I've known you, you're not like other vampires. You would be ashes right now and I'd be carrying your remains around in a jar."

"Wow, morbid much, Hifumi?"

Hifumi giggled. "Sorry, but like I said you're not a normal vampire."

"Well, me and my friends aren't exactly the conventional vampires you and the public have come to know," Skyler said, firmly gripping Hifumi's hand. "I hardly even need to drink blood."

Hearing that, Hifumi put a finger to his lips. "But, just know if you ever feel you need to suppress your thirst." She pulled down a strap of her bikini top, exposing her neck to him. "I give you my full consent to drink me."

"C'mon, Hifumi…"

"No excuses, Skyler. I want you to be strong and healthy for me."

A smirk adorned Skyler's face as he and Hifumi leaned over for a deep romantic kiss.

 Shortly after, they were on top of each other on the beach, ignoring the waves crashing near them. Suddenly, the sun started to set. Skyler and Hifumi were right back to the intercourse they had. They kissed each other all over; from their lips, cheeks, and even each other's chest. Hifumi licked Skyler's left nipple. Skyler started sucking and even bit Hifumi's right breast, drawing out a little blood to lap up. Hifumi let out a low gasp and smiled.
"Yes, drink me, Skyler Jones. Don't hold back!" Hifumi erotically smiled as she threw her head back. She let Skyler get on top of her as he licked a trickle of blood from her breast.

Then, as they started to suck each other's nipples.

They finally awoke back in their bed.

Additionally, they saw Io laying on top of them. The couple then realized they were not sucking each other's nipples, but rather sucking on Io's enlarged breasts.

"...Io…?" The couple balked as Io greeted them with a playful smile.

"Good morning," the pale-skinned Persona Vein greeted them with a morning surprise. She saw that Skyler and Hifumi had awkward glances upon awakening up from their erotic dream. "What?"

xxxxx

Yongen-Jaya Park (四軒茶屋 パーク)/ Yongen-Jaya, Tokyo (四軒茶屋，東京)/March 31, 2019 (2019年3月31日) (Reality: March 31, 2021)/11:15 PM (JST)

Since the demise of the Yokai wave at Meiji Shrine, there have a gradual but slow rise of malevolent spirits causing mischief and even reports of a few human slayings. One of these malevolent spirits is the infamous urban legend, the Kuchisake-onna.

Yuriko advised the Phantom Thieves, the Vein Remnants, and the Spiritual Gamblers about meeting potential evil spirits. It's not yet certain if the Yami Matter have anything to do with this, but the groups were given caution.

Needless to say on this night, the Thieves, Revenants, and Gamblers had their first evil spirit confrontation and it just happened to be the Kuchisake-onna.

Joker, Panther, Sion, Tennyo, Skull, Stinger, Mona, Tamamo, and Brave faced off with the Kuchisake-onna. This malevolent spirit resembled a sickly pale-skinned young woman. Her eyes are glossy and pale blue. She wore her long black hair down her back and past her shoulders. She wore a beige overcoat, black leggings, black shoes, and a surgical mask that covered her mouth.

Taking out a pair of scissors, the Kuchisake-onna approached and asked the group. "Heeeey, am I pretty?"

"I don't know. You're wearing a mask, so how are we supposed to know?" Brave rebuked.

"Yeah, lose the mask and we'll tell ya if you are," Skull replied to the woman with the surgical mask.

Confused by their initial responses, the Kuchisake-onna growled. "Am I pretty?!"

"Hey, lady! Are you hard of hearing?! We just said we don't know!" Skull snapped at her.

Tamamo clamped both hands together. "Could you maaaaybe give us a little peek?"

Joker sighed as he conjured his Tyrant Pistol and shot Kuchisake-onna with it. The bullet not only went through the malevolent spirit, but knocked her back.

"Yo, what the hell, man?!" Skull balked at his friend wasting absolutely no time shooting the masked woman.

"Use your heads, guys. Our search is over," Panther shrugged as she readied her Naraka Whip.
"That's the Kuchisake-onna we've been searching for," Sion promptly stated as Tennyo summoned her ko-naginata.

Upon recovering from Joker's gunshot, the Kuchisake-onna growled intensely as her mouth seemed to twitch uncontrollably behind her surgical mask. The sound of her chattering teeth became unsettling to their ears.

"Looks like she wants some more," Stinger scoffed.

"I asked... AM I PRETTY NOW?!"

Skull had enough and shouted. "Geez, shut up already! No! You ain't pretty, how's that?!"

As Skull verbally blasted her a disparaging remark to her, the Kuchisake-onna growled.

"Dumbass, you shouldn't have said that!" Brave chided Skull. "Confusing her with a 'maybe' would've given us a chance to attack her!"

Tamamo nodded. "Yep, how do you not even know the urban legend of the Kuchisake-onna?"

The grisly woman uncovered the surgical mask she wore, revealing her mouth to be slit from ear to ear. Her lips were shaped like a Glasgow smile. When she opened her mouth, torn skin on the sides of her mouth seemingly ripped open and revealed razor sharp teeth.

"Well, am I pretty now?!"

Having seen the woman's real face, Skull freaked out. "GAH! HOLY SHIT!"

"Ugh, never mind that! Just attack her!" Mona shouted.

When she didn't get the response she wanted, the Kuchisake-onna fiercely attacked them with her scissors, howling like banshee. The four Thieves, the three Revenants, and the two Gamblers spread out and each of them evaded getting slashed by the Kuchisake-onna's scissor strikes. Panther tossed her Naraka Whip at Kuchisake-onna, attempting to disarm her scissors. However, the evil spirit vanished and teleported behind Panther.

"Duck, Lady Ann!" Mona intervened on Panther's behalf and shot the slit-mouthed woman with an explosive shot from his Sudarshana slingshot.

After getting shot by Mona, the evil spirit vanished in an instant and reappeared in mid-air. She pulled out two pairs of scissors and threw them like shuriken at Mona and Panther. Suddenly, a long scorpion's tail came out of Stinger's back and pierced through the evil spirit. Stinger had her Stinger-Type Blood Veil hit her mark and tried to drain the entity.

"Thanks for the save, Lady Mia!" Mona waved to her.

"Let's see you get out of this, you slit-mouthed...!" Before Stinger could finish, the Kuchisake-onna vanished and teleported away from the Revenant. "Ugh, damn it!"

Kuchisake-onna reappeared opposite from her adversaries. As she turned to flee, Joker, Sion, and Tennoy cut her off from the pass.

"Going somewhere?!!" Sion grunted as his red eyes glowed.

Taken aback by Sion's gleaming red eyes, Kuchisake-onna was confused. Not only was this the first time she's had a group of people fight back and counter her attacks, but seeing Sion's Revenant eyes
somewhat spooked her. Perhaps, she had morbid curiosity of the kind of people she was fighting. All her previous victims have been normal people until now.

Tennyo quickly rushed Kuchisake-onna and swung her ko-naginata toward her. Kuchisake-onna sidestepped Tennyo's attack and teleported behind Tennyo. Quickly taking out another pair of scissors, the spirit prepared to slit Tennyo's throat. Before she could commit to the deed, a demonic hand poked out through her chest. Some black ectoplasm exploded from her chest and spilled all over. The grass around them became soaked in Kuchisake-onna's blood. The spirit looked down at the Ogre-Type Blood Veil sticking out of her chest. She looked over her shoulder and saw Sion behind her.

Sion's red eyes once again glowed, which disturbed the Kuchisake-onna. Tennyo spun around with her ko-naginata and slashed the spirit with it.

After getting slashed by Tennyo's ko-naginata blade, Kuchisake-onna screeched loudly. Skull took out a bludgeon and clubbed Kuchisake-onna in the face with it. Kuchisake-onna fell and rolled away while rubbing the spot Skull smacked her hard.

"You keep askin' us if you're pretty? Well, how about me?!" Skull thumbed his chest. "Am I pretty to you?!"

Kuchisake-onna blinked in confusion over Skull reversing the question pertaining to his own handsome manly features.

Brave gawked. "Dude, you saying that just sounds wrong."

Panther nodded. "Narcissistic even."

Tamamo clapped. "No, he's doing something right! He's throwing her off!"

Stinger turned to Skull. "I guess you do know about the Kuchisake-onna legend?"

"Nah, but y'all suggested I try reverse psychology. So…" Skull quickly turned to the malevolent spirit and smirked.

Kuchisake-onna growled and picked up her scissors. However, Joker shot it out of her hands. "Do you think I'm pretty?!" Kuchisake-onna asked Skull.

"I wonder, do you think you're pretty?"

Kuchisake-onna once again blinked, completely befuddled by his query. "...do you think I'm pretty?!"

"Do you think I'm gonna shove this in your mouth?" Skull brandished his bludgeon.

"DO. YOU. THINK. I'M. PRETTY?!"

"Do you think even know who you're asking?"

The malevolent spirit snapped. "DO YOU THINK I'M PRETTY?!"

Then, Tennyo walked up to the Kuchisake-onna and replied nonchalantly. "You're average."

With a confused look, the Kuchisake-onna's head tilted to her left side. She seemed to space out, leaving herself open for the group to attack her at once. Tamamo conjured her Nine-Tails Guardian
Spirit and sent it to attack Kuchisake-onna. Brave brandished her spear and imbued her weapon with Janomecho's spiritual power. Brave rushed Kuchisake-onna and slashed her with multiple strikes, including on vertical slash that almost split her in two.

As Kuchisake-onna noticed the Gamblers' spiritually-based attacks seemed to harm her, the Thieves and Revenants closed in for the finish. Joker shot her again with his pistol. Panther ensnared her with her whip, enabling Mona to strike Kuchisake-onna with another slingshot attack. Stinger shot her scorpion-like Blood Veil and pierced it through Kuchisake-onna.

"Now let's end this!" Sion declared as he, Tennyo, and Joker converged their attacks on the immobilized spirit.

Tennyo summoned Io into battle. Io/Ivy materialized her halberd and slashed Kuchisake-onna with it. Then, Tennyo blasted the spirit with *Lightning Thorn*. Sion quickly dashed through and cut Kuchisake-onna with his Regicide Blade. As Kuchisake-onna fell to her knees, Joker put his Tyrant Pistol to her forehead. Kuchisake-onna looked up, staring almost fearfully at the Phantom Thief, who was a trigger away from shooting her.

"What did you ask us? Oh right, 'am I pretty?" Joker muttered, intensely glaring into the spirit's cold blue eyes.

"Do you think I'm pretty?"

"You're average. But, am I handsome?"

The Kuchisake-onna gave a blank expression. She then lowered her head as if trying to comprehend his question.

"Don't you think you've hurt enough innocent people?" Joker asked her. "We're not the ones who wronged you. It was the one who indirectly caused your suicide. Take it up with him in the afterlife."

"You mean…?" Before Panther could say anything, Tennyo interjected.

"Her husband who gave her those facial scars."

"Take your vengeance on him if you must, but leave this world and understand there's people who think you're still beautiful," the Phantom Thief leader genuinely said as his words seemed to touch the vengeful spirit. "It's ok. Let it all go."

Then, a white veil of light formed over the malevolent spirit. The light enveloped the Kuchisake-onna, changing her from the disfigured monstrosity into a woman garbed in a purple yukata with white flower embellishments. Her face was normal. She once again became the woman defined by her majestic beauty. The woman smiled as she vanished in the white beacon of light.

"Man, that was all it needed to take?" Skull sighed. "And here I was ready to bash her head in. Eh, can't be helped."

Panther smiled to Joker. "I didn't expect that from you."

"Well done, my friends," the sound of Yuriko's voice caught them by surprise. The group saw the shrine maiden approach them. "You've helped to release the anger and vengeance she's had pitted up inside her for the longest time."

"Yeah, good for her, but not so much for the victims she's hurt and killed," Brave said, conveying her disdain for the vengeful spirit's insidious actions against the innocence. "She can rest peacefully,
but her victims probably won't."

Yuriko nodded. "You're right, which is why I'm here to send prayers to the fallen and hope they'll rest in peace knowing the Kuchisake-onna has been exorcised." She clapped her hands and chanted a prayer.

"I still can't believe we stopped the Kuchisake-onna," Panther said.

"Dude, we used to hear gossip about her at the academy. Now, we managed to stop her!" Skull reminded Joker of the rumors about the Kuchisake-onna urban legend.

"Yeah, I remember. I hope that's the end of her."

Mona shrugged. "We can't ever be sure."

Tamamo added genuinely with a smile. "She looked at peace to me. Maybe she'll stop."

Sion checked with Tennyo and Ivy. "Are you two ok?" The ladies responded with corresponding nods. "That's good."

"Io, did you sense any Yami Matter influence with that spirit?" Tennyo asked the Persona Vein, who sat down beside her and leaned against her.

"No, I don't I did." Ivy replied. "You'll let me heal you two, right?"

"Of course, although we didn't get any injuries."

Sion chuckled as he patted Ivy's head. "Thanks, Io. Just for that, I'll let you feed off me." He offered to give his blood to Ivy.

"And mine, too," Tennyo interjected, offering her own blood to the Persona Vein.

"How about one at a time?" Ivy suggested.

Stinger started waking off. "Well, that was a fun night out. I wonder how many of these evil spirits will be out and about now that the Yami Matter is still on the loose."

"True, while the Yami Matter may or may not have an indirect influence on spirits like these, these spirits may be somehow drawn to the dark presence and that could bring them out from the shadows," Mona deduced about the possibility of the growing number of malevolent spirits to resurface due to the Yami Matter presence.

"One thing's for sure, we'll fight these evil spirits and make sure they don't cause any more trouble than they've already caused," Sion proclaimed as he faced Joker's direction. "Am I right, Joker?"

The Phantom Thief leader nodded. "Yeah, we'll stop as many as we can. Maybe fighting more of them will lend us clues where to find possible Yami Matter activity."

"Woo-wee! I'm spent! I can sure go for some Zzzzs," Skull remarked.

"Thank you all for helping take care of this spirit. There'll sure be others," Yuriko informed the group.

"Nothing to it, Yuriko!" Tamamo merrily chimed in.

"Ready to go, Mona?" Stinger asked as she waited for him.
"Yeah…" Mona paused, giving a momentary glance to Joker and Panther. With a wave, he headed off to leave with Stinger.

"Mona's gotten closer to Mia these days. What could she be feeding him that we wouldn't?" wondered Panther, unsure of what to make of Morgana's behavioral patterns these days.

"Who knows?" Joker smirked, watching Stinger and Mona having a friendly exchange with each other.

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Roppongi (六本木)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/Roppongi High School (六本木高校)/April 1, 2019 (2019年4月1日) (Reality: April 1, 2021) /8:00 AM (JST)

Following their opening orientation, Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, and Li-Ming sat in a circle of chairs to discuss their plans for the start of the school year, including joining clubs.

"Aw, right! We need to decide what clubs to join," Nicola said.

"That's right. Joining clubs is pretty much mandatory," Reiko pointed out. "I think I'll be joining the botany club."

"If there's a gaming club, I'll totally join that," Shinya grinned. He then lightly elbowed Nicola's side. "What do ya think? Wanna join?"

"I...I'll have to think about that one, Shinya. I mean, there's other clubs that pique my interests."

"Eh? Like what?"

Nicola simply shrugged. "Can't say. Maybe I'll surprise you?"

"C'mon, what could be more cooler than a gaming club?!" Shinya blurted out loud, to which a man in a suit entered the classroom and cleared his throat.

"I do believe homeroom has started, young man," the man addressed the teenage boy, who quickly plopped down in his seat. He set his briefcase on his desk and introduced himself. "Welcome to the new semester, ladies and gentlemen. I am your homeroom teacher Hojo Fujita, but refer to me as Hojo-sensei." Having introduced himself, he wrote his full name in Kanji on the chalkboard. "Yes, and you happen to be Oda Shinya, correct?" He asked the teenage boy.

"Um, yes, sir."

Hojo put on a calm and collective smirk that silenced Shinya. "I do believe we're going to have an interesting year, Shinya."

Upon hearing this, Shinya slipped inside his own seat. The giggling from other students filled his ears.

"First day in, and our homeroom teacher has your attention," Nicola remarked.

Li-Ming giggled. "Getting popular already, huh, Shinya?"

Reiko shook her head. "Shinya, Shinya, Shinya."

Shinya plopped his chin on his deck and muttered. "Oh man."
"So, who is this individual we're listening to, Futaba?" Yusuke asked the otaku, sitting opposite from her.

"Juzo Mido. And he's not just any individual, Inari. He's responsible for some amazing scientific researches."

"And why are we here? Me and Miyako could be walkin' through town or catchin' a flick. Hell, anything better than some boring lecture." Ryuji leaned back in his seat and yawned.

"Because Futaba invited us, dummy! Besides, it's a free to the public event!" Ann angrily chided her bored friend.

"Heh, don't worry, Ryuji. I knew you'd find it boring as sin," Futaba chuckled. "We can all get some Big Bang Burgers after this."

Patting his belly, Ryuji replied as he grinned from ear to ear. "Hell yeah, that's what I'm talking about that!"

Haru chuckled as she looked over to Makoto and Louis. "Would that be ok? I know we wanted to go for something a little more healthier?"

Makoto nodded and resigned. "No, that's fine. We haven't had Big Bang for a while now."

Louis sighed. "I kinda feel bad. It's because of my diet. I can consume solid foods, but I still require that blood diet. I don't want you two to hold back when we're out to dinner."

Makoto responded. "No, no, don't feel that way. Besides, I had to cut back since I train to keep myself in shape."

Haru added. "And I'm following Mako-chan's example! You're not the only one on a diet plan."

Louis couldn't feel any happier for his friends. "Oh my fair ladies, I couldn't be any happier hearing this." Then, his attention immediately shifted toward the stage as Juzo Mido appeared on the stage and holding a microphone.

Clearing his throat, Mido openly addressed the tonight's crowd. He noted a majority are university students, but there were also public guests, including the Thieves and Revenants. "Good evening, ladies and gentleman. I'm sure everyone in this auditorium knows or has heard of me, especially to all you science majors. But, for those who aren't in the know. My name is Dr. Juzo Mido. I am deeply involved with the latest of genetic bioengineering developments. I also have invested knowledge in the field of paleontology. Now, you're probably wondering. What would I, a bioengineer, want anything to do with paleontology."

"Heh, maybe he's found a way to bring back dinosaurs?" Futaba joked.

"Dude, no effin' way. He could do that?" Ryuji queried to Futaba.

"What? No! Ever heard of a joke?"

"This isn't the movies. It's feasibly impossible to revive animals who've been extinct for millions of
“Guys, you might to keep it down,” Skyler asked with a finger to his lips.

Taking a moment to scan his friends, Ren noticed the Revenants have been eerily quiet during Mido’s lecture. In fact, minus Skyler telling Futaba, Ryuji, and Yusuke to keep their voices down, none of the Revenants hadn’t moved from their seats and maintained piercing glares toward Mido.

Hifumi closely observed Skyler’s silent mood. She noted how intense his eyes looked and placed a hand over his. She caressed his hand to calm him down. Mido’s presence seemed to bother him and the other Revenants. Io, who came dressed in a white dress instead of her usual torn and bandaged wear, grabbed Skyler’s other hand and successfully calmed his nerves.

Suddenly, Yakumo and Emily got out of their seats. They walked out of the auditorium.

“Where could those two be going?” Makoto wondered. She turned to Louis. "And you've been acting intensely since this man started his lecture."

"Yeah, do you know him, Louis?” Haru queried to him.

"During my time in the university I attended, Dr. Mido often visited my school as a guest speaker various of times. He was also…” Louis stopped himself before finding the nerve to reveal his relation to the man. "He was a mentor and I admired him like a father figure."

"Oh, is that all!? I thought it was something serious. Like he might've done something to you or something." Haru said.

"Yes, well I admired the man for his brilliant scientific mind… but, that was before regaining my memories," Louis revealed, which captured Makoto and Haru's attention, making them completely forget that Mido was speaking.

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"Can you believe it, Yakumo? What is that man doing here?” Emily outright asked him.

"Your guess is as good as mine. You, me, and our group recognized him, and believe me I tried hard not to get up and cause a scene."

"I'm glad you didn't, especially with all those people in there."

Clenching his right hand, Yakumo balled it up into a fist and restrained himself from finding something to hit. Based off their nearly complete memories, he and the Revenants recognized some kind of connection with Mido.

"Easy now, Yakumo," Emily patted his shoulder and grabbed his clenched fist.

After taking a deep breath, Yakumo relieved himself of his anxiety.

"Could he have been pulled from time like us? That's the only other possible explanation.” Yakumo surmised to the possibilities of how old faces from their future world might've followed them.

"It's possible Hifumi’s power as Sophia might've brought others here than just our circle."

"Don't you also find it strange?"

"What?"
"I know this is probably based on the size of the crowd, but Mido didn't seem to notice us. This is just speculation on my part, but maybe he hasn't regained any of his memories unlike us."

Hearing this, Emily bit her lip and pondered over this notion. "Maybe, but it's hard to say unless we confront him."

"It wouldn't hurt if we do approach to ask him some science questions. If he can recognize us, then he probably has some inklings of old memories back." Yakumo stated as he and Emily turned only to suddenly freeze up when two individuals passed them by. He and Emily saw Gregorio and Cruz Silva walk by heading for the auditorium.

"Yakumo, you just saw..." Emily whispered, her eyes and mouth nearly dropped at the sight of Gregorio and Cruz.

"I recognize them. They're also from the future like us. I need to confirm your suspicions now!" Yakumo declared as he walked up to Gregorio and Cruz. "Excuse me!" He reached for Gregorio, who quickly turned and frowned.

"May I help you?" Gregorio queried, immediately befuddling Yakumo and Emily.

The way Gregorio reacted to Yakumo's approach, he didn't look like he even recognized him at all. In fact, based on Gregorio and Cruz's confused looks, the couple inferred that these two like Mido don't have their memories. Gregorio's shocked expression had Yakumo and Emily suspicious about him. Yet, he and Cruz don't recognize them.

"No, sorry. I thought you were someone else," Yakumo apologized, letting Gregorio and Cruz enter the auditorium.

As Gregorio and Cruz closed the door behind them, Yakumo sighed deeply and turned toward Emily, who walked over to converse with him.

"Unbelievable, those two didn't recognize us," gritted Emily.

"It's probably for the best. The last thing we need is for them to remember us and cause an unwanted scene."

"Yeah right, we should still watch them," Emily added.

"Good idea." Yakumo turned toward the auditorium doors and walked in to follow the Silva family members. They observed Gregorio and Cruz walking toward a pair of empty front seats. "They're sitting right close to where Mido is giving his lecture."

Emily nodded, watching Gregorio and Cruz sit down. "They probably reserved those seats."

"C'mon, let's get back to our seats and watch them from there."

With that, Yakumo and Emily walked in and found their still empty seats. Mia turned to them with concern on her face.

"What took you so long? Some of us were getting worried," Mia stated.

"You're not going to believe who we saw," Yakumo replied.

"Ok, who?" Mia queried. As soon as Yakumo told her about Gregorio and Cruz, she almost yelled out. "...what?! Those two are here?!" Her loud reaction caused others to give her irked glances. She
sighed and whispered. "Are you sure?"

"Look at the front row seats," whispered Emily.

As Mia poked her head over other people's heads in front of her, she barely discerned the large older man and his pale-haired daughter. When she saw them, Mia was at a loss for words. It didn't take long for the other Revenants to see the two individuals. Skyler and Louis were the most surprised, but it was Louis who was taken aback with Cruz's presence.

"Louis, are you ok?" Haru asked him, who noted his shocked reaction.

"It's her…” Louis quietly muttered, but Makoto and Haru were still able to hear him clearly.

"Her who? Do you know that white-haired woman?” Makoto inquired. Her red eyes scanned the front row seats where Gregorio and Cruz sat together.

"I'm surprised she's here…” Louis was still in a state of bewilderment.

"But, who is she?" Haru tried asking Louis.

"I don't think he's in the mood to answer," Makoto watched Louis staring off without so much as acknowledging the two ladies.

Skyler wanted to get up from his seat, but Io and Hifumi convinced him to stay. Io saw Skyler looking rather perturbed. He then got a quick text from Yakumo. Skyler read his colleague's message.

**Yakumo:** Did you see who's at the front row?

Skyler frowned and typed in his response.

**Skyler:** Yeah.

**Yakumo:** Me and Emily bumped into them in the hall. They don't recognize us.

Having read Yakumo's message, Skyler deduced that the Silva family don't have restored memories like them. He and the other Revenants also seem to suggest Mido doesn't have his memories back either. He sent a quick text message to Ren, who checked his phone.

**Skyler:** Hey, Ren, me and the others recognize some old faces.

**Ren:** Who?

**Skyler:** Mido and the two individuals sitting at the front. Large older man and a young woman with white hair.

**Ren:** Do you have names?

**Skyler:** Gregorio and Cruz Silva, they're from our future timeline.

**Ren:** Are you sure?

**Skyler:** Of course, I wouldn't be making this up. It has to be them!

**Ren:** Ok. Don't try and cause a scene. Futaba wouldn't like us to get kicked out.

**Skyler:** Fine.

**Ann:** Hey, what'ca texting about? ;)

**Mia:** I'd like to know, too! :D

**Futaba:** Really? Seriously, guys? During a lecture, too?! >:(

**Ren:** Heh, sorry. ;)

**Skyler:** We'll talk about this after the lecture then.
Hifumi checked on Skyler. "Is everything ok now?"

Skyler closed his phone and sighed deeply. "I should be fine now." She and Io both were relieved he was in a calmer state of mind for the time being.

The presentation moved forward with Mido unveiling an exotic-looking bird to the audience. It was pheasant-sized bird. It has a long neck, small head with a reddish brown crest, blue facial skin with red eyes, and a body covered with dark and light brown feathers coupled with white and yellow feathers. The bird was locked inside a cage.

"Yo, check out that bird!" Ryuji yelled out, much to the annoyance of the university students trying to listen to the lecture. This prompted Ann to chastise him very harshly.

"What a beautiful-looking bird. What is it?" Haru wondered.

"Looks like he's about to tell us," Makoto added.

"Yes, judging by the befuddled looks most of you seem to have, I don't blame you if you aren't aware this bird exists," Mido prodded the cage open. Then, after putting on a glove, he poked his hand inside to entice the exotic bird toward him. When the bird climbed on his hand, Mido showed off the exotic creature. "This is a hoatzin. I found this specimen during an expedition in the mangroves of the Amazon basin in South America."


"It's got such exquisite looking feathers," Yusuke noted its colorful plumage.

"Should he even bring that here? The poor thing has to be scared," Haru expressed concern for the hoatzin's anxious state of being.

Mido chuckled as he stroked the back of the hoatzin's neck feathers. "This happens to be my pet. This beautiful boy is named Eon. Say hello to everyone, Eon." He turned and showed off Eon the hoatzin.

"Pet? I'd like to rip that thing away from him if he even so much as hurts that thing," Skyler growled.

"Easy, Skyler. You even said Mido may not have his memories back," Hifumi said.

"Yeah, that's true, but seeing him there just bothers me."

Just then, Morgana poked his head out from Mia's bag. He climbed onto her lap and scanned the hoatzin.

"Hey, I know you're a cat and all, Morgana, but try controlling your temptation to run down and chase that bird," Mia said.

"What?! No, I don't eat birds!" Morgana snapped back.

Mido continued his lecture with Eon still perched on his arm. "Eon is a hoatzin, a rare bird that's endemic exclusively in the Amazon and the Orinoco basins in South America. As a paleontologist, this specific bird is an interesting case, but why? Well, as recent studies have determined, dinosaurs and birds are closely related. In fact, they couldn't be anymore the same species. Birds just happen to be the only surviving class of animals we call dinosaurs. There are a handful of species that exhibit dinosaur-like physical traits and appearances, such as the cassowary, the ostrich, and the shoebill stork. The hoatzin, like Eon here, is no different. However, it's now been discovered the hoatzin's
DNA has helped us determine that many modern birds are descendants of a raptor-like ancestor."

"Whoa, raptors? Like the ones from those Jurassic Park movies? Yep, I can see the similarities!"
Futaba gasped upon recognizing the attributes between a Velociraptor and a bird.

"And did any of you know hoatzin chicks have claws on their wings? They're the only living bird to retain such attributes from their dinosaur ancestors. Just like Eon here used to have claws on his wings."

"Geez, now this guy's tryin' hard to convince us his bird is a dinosaur," Ryuji scoffed and rolled his eyes at the notion.

"Well, that's what he said. And why is it hard to believe? Dinosaurs and birds have similar anatomies," Yusuke referenced. "This hoatzin is no different."

"Next thing you're gonna tell me they had feathers."
Futaba turned around and grinned. "Oh boy, you have no idea, Ryuji."

"Dudes, that makes them less scary."

Yusuke sighed. "Ok, try picturing an over 7 ton ground hawk with railroad spikes for teeth and charging at you at over 20 miles an hour. And that hawk has enough of a bite force equivalent to two automobiles being crushed on top of your body. Does that not sound terrifying to you?"

As he tried his best to picture such an animal described to him, Ryuji said nothing and turned back around in his seat. He mentioned nothing else about the matter.

The otaku snickered, winking to Yusuke. "Way to shut him up, Inari."

"I try."

Meanwhile, Morgana was silent, but for another reason. His glare came into contact with Eon sitting on Mido's arm. He showed suspicions toward the exotic bird.

"Is the bird catching your eye, Morgana?" Mia asked, whispering to him.

"Kinda…" Morgana frowned as the hoatzin seemingly turned his direction and gave him a similar glare. Then, his ears twitched and picked up on a raspy sounding breathing from Eon. "Huh?"

Eon the hoatzin then spoke. "You got a staring problem, cat?!" The tone of Eon's voice could be described as scratchy and throaty coupled with hissing. As he spoke, only Morgana could hear him. No one else in the audience, not even a member from the Phantom Thieves and Vein Remnants, could hear the bird verbally speak in a sentence.

Taken aback by Eon's voice taunt, Morgana practically jumped out of Mia's arms afraid and fell onto Ryuji's lap.

"Whoa, hey! The hell, man?!" Ryuji shouted.

"Morgana?!!" Ann cried out. "What happened?"

"Th-that bird just said something to me…!" Morgana gritted.

"It spoke to you?" Mia blinked in confusion.
"Hah! Yeah, right! We're supposed to believe that?" Ryuji laughed and teased at the cat's expense.

"Of course, you wouldn't believe me, idiot!" Morgana snapped at Ryuji.

"Talking animals shouldn't be surprising if Morgana's any indication," Ren said.

"But, I'm not really a cat! That thing is clearly still a bird. Ugh, such a freaky ass voice! Now, I'm not going to sleep well!"

Ann quickly grabbed Morgana and stroked his back. "Hey, relax. Besides we've already caused enough of a scene."

"Sorry about that, Lady Ann," Morgana sighed as he watched Mido putting Eon back inside his cage. "Stupid chicken."

"Could it be that hoatzin is not really a hoatzin, but a human like you, Morgana?" Haru wondered.

"No, that thing is still clearly a bird. I know I'm human."

Ryuji chuckled. "That bird totally scared ya, didn't it?"

Morgana angrily hissed. "Shut up!"

"That's enough, you two!" Ann harshly chastised them.

After a few closing words, Mido stayed for Q&As with audience members. The Phantom Thieves and Vein Remnants got up from their seats. Skyler and his Revenant cohorts specifically eyed Mido, Gregorio, and Cruz. Louis didn't stop attentively looking toward Cruz.

"So, you want to go down there and confront them?" Ren asked Skyler. "It's your call, but we might not get another chance unless we go down and see them."

"Might want to scratch that because looks like they're about to leave and they got security with them," Makoto pointed to the various bodyguards surrounding Mido and the Silva family.

"It's perfectly fine if we go now. We don't want to cause enough of a scene," Louis added, watching Cruz being escorted along with her father.

"Alright, if you say so. Just know we might not have another chance." Ren remarked as he adjusted his glasses.

"Like I said, I'm fine with this. Besides, according to Yakumo and Emily, Gregorio and Cruz don't seem to have their memories based on interactions. Chances are Mido doesn't have any restored memories like us."

Skyler nodded to Hifumi and Io. "Are you two ready?"

"I am," Hifumi replied. "Io?" She and Skyler noticed Io watching the Silva family and Mido leaving. "Io, we're leaving."

"Huh? Oh, I'm coming," Io broke out of her quiet trance to rejoin Skyler and Hifumi.

"Anyway, who's down for some Big Bang Burger?!" Futaba asked her friends.

"Are you buying for all of us, Futaba?" Yusuke sardonically teased her.
"What do I look like, Inari? A yen tree?"

"It's fine, we'll all just buy for ourselves. No big deal." Ren shrugged.

As everyone headed out of the auditorium, Makoto stopped to grab Louis' arm. This also prompted Haru to pause and turn around to see what her two friends were doing.

"Those names Gregorio and Cruz sound familiar. They wouldn't happen to be from the wealthy Silva family?" Makoto asked Louis.

"Yeah, that's right."

"Did you know them? I mean, not based on memories from that other timeline you guys came from, but based on relationships in this timeline?"

"All you need to know is Cruz and I kinda used to be an item, but we broke up. Then, I met you two."

Makoto sighed seemingly with relief. "Oh, I see then."

"Why do you ask, Mako-chan?" Haru asked her.

Nodding, Makoto smiled and nodded. "Just needed confirmation. Now, c'mon, who's up for some Big Bang Burgers?"

"I certainly don't mind," Haru replied.

Glancing over his shoulder, Louis eyed the auditorium doors and frowned. He wondered if he'll ever come across Gregorio and his daughter ever again.

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Shinjuku Toho Building/Toho Cinemas Shinjuku/Kabukichō (歌舞伎町)/Shinjuku, Tokyo (新宿区，東京)/April 26, 2019 (2019年4月26日) (Reality: April 2021)/5:30 PM (JST)

Upon entering their theater, the Phantom Thieves and Vein Remnants found seats and sat in anticipation of the Marvel Cinematic Universe's latest event: *Avengers: Endgame*. Joining them like with the *Dragon Ball Super Broly* movie were Shinya, Nicola and Reiko. Additionally, Li-Ming came with her three friends and sat next to Nicola.

Some of the members came cosplaying as the Marvel characters. Ren was dressed like Spider-Man. Ann cosplayed as Mary Jane Watson. Hifumi cosplayed as Captain America. Skyler was dressed as Bucky/The Winter Soldier. Makoto cosplayed as Iron Man. Haru cosplayed as Black Widow. Io cosplayed as Scarlet Witch.

"Dudes, this is really it. After all those Avengers movies, we're gonna be seeing the end of it all," Ryuji expressed his hype for this Avengers finale. "It's been a whole freakin' year since *Infinity War*!"

"Yes, time does fly when we're having fun, huh? Now that we've been active again," Haru said.

"Where did all that time go?" Ann added in her disbelief with the quick passage of time.

"Well, don't forget about the time reset thing caused by the Yami Matter," Makoto reminded everyone. "We should be 2021 now and we would've already seen this movie."
"Yet, the Yami Matter messing with the timestream somehow made us forget all that happened with pop culture things," Skyler added. "Because I would've remembered seeing this movie."

"At least we'll get to experience it again even if the Yami Matter made us even seen this movie!" Futaba said, sharing a big bucket of popcorn with Yusuke. "MmmpfIheardthismoviewas3hourslongmmmpf!"

Yusuke sighed. "Futaba, don't talk while you're eating. I can't even understand what you're trying to say."

As she swallowed her mouthful of popcorn, the otaku answered. "I said, I heard this movie was 3 hours long."

"3 hours? Geez, I hope none of you drank too much soda 'cause I ain't gonna have y'all run by me while I'm watchin' the damn movie!" Ryuji remarked.

"Has everybody used the restroom before the movie?" Louis asked everyone.

Mostly everyone showed hands to indicated they utilized the restrooms. Reiko noticed Shinya didn't raise his hand.

"Hey, you didn't raise your hand, Shinya! And you were just drinking a ton of soda!"

"What? I'm not gonna pee my pants! I can hold it during movies."

Nicola reminded him. "Yes, but this is a 3 hour long movie."

Li-Ming frowned. "Go to the bathroom now!"

"Ugh, fine. I'll be back!" Shinya rushed out of the theater to take care of his business.

"Gosh, what was he thinking?" Reiko sighed. "Oh, and Li-Ming, I really like your shirt. The animals on it are very cute!"

Li-Ming showed off her bright red shirt with miniature Zodiac animals. "Thanks, I bought this online. Since I'm a fan of the Zodiac animals and Fruits Basket, I thought 'why not?' My family and I are into the traditional stories."

Nicola smiled. "We should do something together for the Chinese New Year next year."

Li-Ming nodded in approval. "Yeah, that'd be great!"

Louis turned to Makoto, who was adjusting her Iron Man cosplay. "If you don't mind me asking, why did you choose to go as Iron Man? I figured you'd be Black Widow."

Makoto answered. "Well, for one, I let Haru be Black Widow. But, secondly…"

Interjecting, Skyler smirked as he listened to their conversation. "It's because I'm the Winter Soldier. And since my guy killed Tony's parents, this reinforces my rivalry with dear Makoks."

Makoto growled, biting her bottom lip. "You just love hitting my nerves do you?"

"I wouldn't be if we weren't friends, Makoks."

"And why did you go as Captain America, Hifumi?" Mia queried to the Shogi player.
"Well, I see myself as a propaganda hero much like Captain America. He's as a symbol for the United States while I'm the 'face' of Shogi players in Japan."

"But, that's only because the media illustrated you as the symbol for Shogi players," Ren said, recalling his previous conversations with Hifumi after they first met at the church.

"Yes. Also, we both almost bought into the lies we've been fed and we proved ourselves to be humble heroes at the end of the day," Hifumi went on, explaining the symbolic connection between herself and Steve Rogers. "That's what a character like him means to me."

"That's very nice, Hifumi," Haru nodded.

"So, what about you, Skyler?" Makoto raised a brow, giving him an irked glare. "Why else would you dress like the Winter Soldier?"

"Oh, Makokins. I thought you'd figure it out, but let me explain. Because in a way we're both super soldiers. Bucky was enhanced due to the Super Soldier serum. Me? I'm a Revenant. Revenants count as super soldiers enhanced through experiments. And since Steve and Bucky are best friends…"

Skyler then put a hand on Hifumi's shoulder. "Me and Hifumi cosplaying as them would symbolize our love for each other."

Hifumi blushed. "Heh, oh Skyler…"

Io gasped as the curtains opened. "The movie is about to start!"

"Hold up! I'm coming!" Shinya yelled out as he ran back to his seat. "Whew! Thanks, Reiko! I really needed to go after all!"

Reiko rolled her eyes. "It's because of all that soda and water you drank." She then handed him some M&M's candies. "Want some?"

"Yeah, don't mind if I do," Shinya took some chocolate candies.

Once the movie previews started, Io opened her box and saw the pizza laying in front of her eyes. She grabbed a slice and started licking the sauce as if it were blood, which elicited chuckles from the other Revenants.

"Oh, you're getting sauce on your face," Hifumi said, using a napkin to wipe Io's sauce-covered mouth.

"It's almost time. Man, hopefully these previews end," Ryuji remarked, sipping his soda. He handed popcorn to Miyako, who sat beside him.

"Thanks, Ryuji."

"Time to see how Spider-Man comes back," Ren said.

"Well, c'mon, it's obvious," Ann whispered. "Far From Home is coming out soon."

"True, but I want to see how the Snap gets undone."

"We're going to find out one way or another," Makoto stated as she shared popcorn with Haru and Louis.

The group ultimately quieted down once the previews were halfway through.
Already 20 minutes into the movie, the group were in utter disbelief when Thor beheaded Thanos. If they weren't already invested in the movie, this scene left them questioning where the movie events was going to lead.

Then, Futaba muttered quietly as a sneaky grin curved on her face. "...time travel."

Yusuke sighed. "Please don't, Futaba."

The group then became immersed once the Avengers went through the time travel shenanigans.

"So, *Back to the Future II* time travel is BS, eh?" Ryuji whispered.

"Man, I can't believe they went back to 2012!" Shinya quietly yelled.

"Sssh, why so surprised?" Nicola asked him.

"I still can't believe Thor got fat," Louis muttered.

"Dude, that was the biggest beer gut if I've ever seen one," Ryuji remarked about Thor's new appearance.

Haru sighed. "That poor guy lost everything."

The audience were shocked when 2012 Hulk smashed through the door, causing Tony to drop the briefcase and the Tesseract to fall out. They were more surprised when 2012 Loki snatched up the blue cube and teleported out of sight.

"Aw man… no way…" Ryuji facepalmed. "Now they gotta catch Loki?"

"No way, that can't be right!" Futaba shook her head in denial.

The scenes involving Thor meeting his mother again, Steve briefly seeing Peggy, and Tony interacting with his father elicited emotional responses from the ladies in the group. Even Reiko and Li-Ming were taken in by these moments.

Black Widow's sacrifice shocked the group. None of them saw this coming. Haru, who cosplayed as the character, had her mouth covered in disbelief.

After Hulk used the Iron Gauntlet to perform the second Snap, the group were relieved when it was confirmed to have worked. Then, that ray of hope was shattered when 2014 Thanos and his army time warped into the Avengers' main timeline.

"No way, they just brought back all their friends!" Shinya cried out.

"I knew this was gonna happen. Too good to be true!" Futaba said.
When Captain America held Mjølnir, the audience became captivated when he went to town against Thanos. Hifumi wore a enthused expression as she quietly cheered on Captain America being worthy to wield Thor's weapon.

The biggest moment of the movie came when all of Earth's heroes, including the revived ones, came out of Doctor Strange's portals to aid the Avengers. Ren was most pleased to see Spider-Man back as those revived from the previous Snap. When Cap muttered the words 'Avengers… Assemble', the group along with the audience were emotionally charged.

Some parts during the final battle had certain group members invested. The ladies were excited for the all-female Avengers scene. Io almost cheered when Scarlet Witch beat down Thanos.

The final moments when Thanos fought off Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, and Captain Marvel had everyone on the edge of their seats. Their hearts nearly stopped when Thanos almost did the Snap until Captain Marvel stopped him.

Then, the moment when it looked like Thanos was about to erase everyone with the Snap, nothing happened. All eyes were on Tony, who grabbed the Infinity Stones from the villain and fitted them in his Iron Gauntlet.

"And I. Am. Iron Man!"

Snap.

Thanos and his forces were dusted.

The theater was silent through the rest of the movie. Between Tony Stark's sacrifice and Steve returning to his beloved, the Thieves and the Revenants were speechless. The girls were in tears over the post-Endgame battle events. Even Ryuji was on the brink of tears seeing the end of this cinematic saga play out before his eyes.

The movie ended and the audience clapped for the end of Avengers: Endgame.

However, unlike their previous movie get together experiences, the Thieves, the Revenants, and their colleagues were still speechless.

"Dudes, I can't believe that's how it all ends!" Ryuji yelled out. "I knew either Tony or Steve was going to die, but man how that went down!"

Hifumi smiled. "In a way, I'm happy Steve didn't die. He got to be with his beloved and passed the shield to his friend."

Skyler turned to Makoto. "But, Tony did die. I'm surprised that didn't make you breakdown."

Makoto smirked coyly. "It wasn't until he died in front of Pepper and the others. And then that funeral. That got to me. Tony died a hero."
"I enjoyed Scarlet Witch and Captain Marvel beating up that purple jerk!" Io openly conveyed some of her favorite parts of the movie.

"Well, that was a movie, but wow that sure didn't feel like 3 hours," Mia pointed out how quickly the long-running time flew by.

"Good thing we all used the bathrooms before the movie started. Right, Shinya?" Nicola teased his friend.

"Oh, shut up," Shinya scoffed.

"And I told y'all time travel would come into play! But, nooo, a few of ya didn't believe me!" Futaba said this as she stared directly at Yusuke.

"Because I didn't think they'd implement that into the film. It was my speculation, but I didn't think they'd pull it off," Yusuke said.

"Whatever, Inari. Now, I gotta get some collectible figures for Iron Man and Spidey!"

"It's kinda sad that DC totally dropped the ball. They could've done more with their movies and built up Justice League to be big, but nope," Louis remarked.

"Yep, they totally blundered that, but hey they're trying now," Yakumo said.

"I had a great time, Yakumo," Emily added.

"Looks like we all did," Skyler said as he saw some people approach them. "Looks like they want to take pics of our cosplay."

"Then, why don't we give them what they want?" Hifumi offered.

With that, Ren, Ann, Skyler, Hifumi, Makoto, Ann, Haru, and Io posed together for an Avengers group shot. Ann especially embraced this opportunity to pose and show off her MJ cosplay. After taking a few photo shots, the group left the theater.


The Urban Myth characters, created by the influences caused by the Yami Matter, watched the audiences leave the theaters.

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*Skyler and Hifumi's Apartment/Hamamatsuchō (浜松町)/Minato, Tokyo (港区，东京)/May 1, 2019 (2019年5月1日) (Reality: May 1, 2021)*

"Welcome, mother and father," Hifumi greeted her parents as she opened the door for them.

"This is the place you're sharing with this man?" A near middle-aged woman with long brown hair and garbed in a turquoise-colored dress walked in. She had a very frugal disposition, which was a
contrast to Hifumi's demure demeanor.

"Yes, mother," the young woman nodded, bowing her head.

"Hifumi, it's been a long while. How beautiful you've become," a slightly older man with short dark hair. The sides of his head are faded with most of that hair having been shaved. He had a thinly trimmed mustache and goatee. He came dressed in a sharp dark gray suit coupled with similar colored pants, a black tie, and dark brown shoes. Unlike his wife, he had a more friendlier disposition.

"Father," Hifumi smiled as she kindly bowed to the man.

Mitsuyo sighed. "Are you coming in, Satoshi?"

"Of course." Satoshi answered his wife as they took off their shoes and entered the living room to meet with Skyler.

"Greetings, Mitsuyo-san and Satoshi-san."

As the couple sat down, Skyler set down a tray of tea and small sandwiches to dine on. Hifumi poured cups for herself, Skyler, her mother, and her father.

Sipping some tea, Mitsuyo set her cup down and cleared her throat. "So, Hifumi. Is this boy not the same one you showed us not too long ago? He looks familiar."

"That's because I am that same person. I'm Skyler Jones."

"But, wasn't your name Sion?"

"That's a nickname your daughter gave me. My real name is Skyler Jones."

"I see," Mitsuyo muttered while her brows furrowed and her tone suggested she was not pleased with being made a fool of. "What is it like being Hifumi's partner? Do you enjoy her company?"

"Yes, ma'am. I do."

"You speak our language quite fluently. I'm glad there's no language barrier between you two," Satoshi added, most pleased with his daughter possibly learning a second language.

"Hifumi's picking up on my English pretty well."

"Understand this, Skyler. I've been very hesitant to allow Hifumi to date any man she wants," Mitsuyo confessed her concerns for her daughter's choices. "This is most especially the case with foreigners."

"Mother!" Hifumi openly disproved her mother's disparaging remark.

"I was most shocked to learn an American man happens to be sharing a space with my daughter. I didn't know what to think. However, judging by how you conduct yourself and have taken care of Hifumi, perhaps you're not so bad. Satoshi seems to think so and he's convinced me to trust you to care for our daughter."

Hearing this, Skyler felt a heavy burden lifted off his back. He initially didn't think Hifumi's parents who entrust him to protect their daughter.

"Hifumi, are you happy in your current conditions living with Skyler?" Satoshi queried to the young
"I am, father. I couldn't be happier living anywhere else, but with Skyler." She leaned next to Skyler and grasped his hand.

"Then, we leave you to care for our daughter, Skyler Jones. Surely, you won't disappoint us," Mitsuyo stated.

"If Hifumi is happy, then we are, too," Satoshi expressed his approval of their relationship.

Having been given their blessing, Skyler and Hifumi exchanged genuine smiles knowing their relationship wouldn't be hindered by the Togos's approval or disapproval. This further cemented that Hifumi and Skyler would be in for a long-term commitment.

Watching her parents leave, Hifumi waved to them and closed the door. She and Skyler then embraced in each other's arms and kissed. Skyler had the back of his hands around Hifumi's waist. Hifumi's arms rested on Skyler's shoulders.

Just as the couple made out, an envelope slipped through the front door's letter slot. The couple heard and noticed the enveloped trimmed with silver lining. Skyler picked up the envelope and opened it.

"What is it, Skyler?" Hifumi asked. "It can't my parents forgetting to leave something for us, can it?"

Upon reading the letter, Skyler's brows furrowed. He handed the letter for her to read. She became shocked by whom the letter came from.

"Skyler, this…"

"We've been invited to a formal event… by The Consortium."

Chapter Soundtrack

*Mnemosyne OST - 12 - Purity* - Hifumi/Skyler's dream intercourse. Song immediately ends when they wake up and are actually sucking Io's breasts.

*Shin Megami Tensei IV OST - Battle B1 - (Midboss Battle Theme)* - A monster-of-the-week battle theme.

*Two Steps From Hell - Science* - Mido's first proper appearance with his science conference at Futaba's university. Song represents Mido's public image and reputation as a respected figure, unaware of his true personality alongside plans after Code Vein's release.

*Persona 5 OST - Suspicious Person* - Yakumo and Emily recognize Gregorio and Cruz passing by and confront them.

*Persona 5 OST - Suspicion* - Thieves and Revenants discuss about Mido, Gregorio, and Cruz. Suspicions of their appearances become apparent.

*Persona 5 OST - Big Bang Burger March* - Gang head out for Big Bang Burger.

*The Avengers - Theme Song Heard in Sound Speakers* - Audiences are about to see Avengers: Endgame.


Chapter X

The Consortium's Invite; Evening Dance Ball (コンソーシアムの招待；イブニングダンスボール)

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Shinjuku Central Park (新宿セントラルパーク)/Shinjuku, Tokyo (新宿区，東京)/May 25, 2019 (2019年5月25日) (Reality: May 25, 2021)/10:35 PM (JST)

Another urgent late-night incident meant a team of Phantom Thieves and Revenants answered the call. This incident was a similar situation like the Kuchisake-onna from the previous month.

Engineer, Hound, Queen, Noir, Fox, and Oracle stormed into Shinjuku's Central Park to confront the latest malevolent spirit: the infamous Kunekune, also known as the 'modern Yokai'.

The four Phantom Thieves and the two Revenants quickly surrounded the long, slender, white-bodied humanoid, which stood a staggering 8.5 feet tall. Its ghostly white skin looked like paper mannequin. Its visage had no facial features, except black circular eyes.

As they equipped themselves for battle, Queen gave command to attack the Kunekune.

"Take it down, guys!" Queen yelled out as she, Noir, and Engineer held their ground, granting the others an opportunity to strike the Kunekune.

"Come get you some!" Oracle yelled out, whipping out her yellow laser sword. Channeling her inner Star Wars fangirl, she showed off while spinning around her laser sword. An excited grin adorned her face as she charged at creature. "Yeah, here we go!"

"Stop showing off and attack, Oracle!" Fox shouted to her.

"Yeha, I've got this!" Oracle quickly rushed Kunekune and swung her laser sword at the urban legend creature.

Kunekune responded by twisting its slender body around. Oracle madly kept swinging, but Kunekune continued to twist itself around to throw her off. Growing frustrated, Oracle went for a straight stabbing blow, but Kunekune sidestepped her attack and got behind her. Before Oracle turned to meet its gaze, Fox intervened on Oracle's behalf and fired his Heaven's gate gun at the creature. Stunned by Fox's blast, the Phantom Thief quickly carved through it with his Usumidori
"I've stunned him, Oracle!" Fox called out.

Grinning like crazy, Oracle charged and shoved her laser sword through Kunekune's chest. Just then it looked like victory was at hand, Kunekune stretched its arms out and knocked both Phantom Thieves away.

Hound quickly produced his Hound-Type Blood Veil. The double hound heads snarled at the Kunekune. The left head snapped outward and grabbed the Kunekune's left arm. The other head seized the creature's body. The hound heads bit down hard on Kunekune trying to hold it in place.

"I've got a lock on it! Take it down, you three!" Hound called to Engineer, Queen, and Noir.

With that, Queen and Noir rushed forward. As they drew out their weapons, they split up and let Engineer ran past them. Engineer readily invoked his Ogre-Type Blood Veil. Engineer utilized his Revenant arm and grabbed a hold of Kunekune. However, to their dismay, Kunekune wiggled free from the Revenant's hold.

"Damn it! Don't let it get away!" Engineer shouted.

As Kunekune tried slipping away, Noir cut it off from escaping. Wearing a crazed smile, Noir readied her Fleurs du Mal axe. She lunged and hacked it with consecutive slashes, cutting it down to minimum size. Seemingly letting out a pained howl, Kunekune fought back by grabbing her axe. In response to this, Noir summoned her Ultimate Persona, Astarte. Astarte then blasted Kunekune with Triple Down. While the Persona blasted away the creature, Noir fired her Yagrush gun at Kunekune.

"Go for it, Queen!" Noir called out.

Hearing her name called out, Queen sprang out of a tree like a ninja and jumped high into the air. She clenched and channeled energy into her right fist. The Phantom Thief let out a deafening roar and dropped down to unleash her Nuclear Fists, hitting an aerial one-two combo on Kunekune's head.

After grinding the creature down, Queen beckoned Noir and Engineer to finish off the creature with an All-Out Attack. After finishing it, Queen, Noir, and Engineer struck a team battle pose.

"Done and done!" Queen declared.

Oracle summoned her Ultimate Persona, Prometheus, to restore her friends' energies.

"Great work, guys!" Oracle cheerfully said.

"Hey, look! I don't think that thing's done yet!" Hound called out.

The group turned around and watched Kunekune slowly rise. The Phantom Thieves and Revenants cautiously stood ready to attack. However, the creature's body twisted and faded in a blinding flash of light.

"Goodbye, Slenderman," Oracle remarked.

"Well, it was similar to that character," Hound added.

"Where do you think it went?" wondered Noir.
"Probably back to its spiritual plane," Fox deduced.

Shaking the creature's ectoplasm from her metal knuckles, Queen scoffed. "Who knows and who cares? We took care of business."

Engineer chuckled. "We sure did and then some. I still wonder if the Yami Matter are involved in bringing these malevolent spirits from their world and into ours?"

After calling off Astarte, Noir sighed. "Or, maybe they're just creatures that operate independently."

Hound withdrew his hound heads. "Well, that takes care of things here. Let's call it a night."

After calling off her Ultimate Persona, Oracle stretched and yawned. "Yep, I could use some shut eye. I haven't slept since last night."

Fox sighed. "Yeah, you should catch up on some sleep."

"Not my fault when I have all that homework and research!"

"It's called time management for a reason, Futaba."

"Yeah, yeah, quit lecturing me, Professor Inari!"

As he called off his Blood Veil, Engineer pivoted to Queen and Noir. He extended a hand to both ladies.

"Shall we get going. I'll escort you two to your apartment."

Queen and Noir both held hands and nodded.

"Thank you," Noir replied with a smile.

"Just try not to get too chatty, Louis," Queen coolly smirked.

"Heheh, don't worry, Mako-chan. We'll just talk about important things."

With that, the group split up and departed. Hound went his separate way. Oracle and Fox left together. Engineer, Queen, and Noir headed straight for the Roppongi area.

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Big Bang Burger/Shibuya, Tokyo (渋谷区, 東京)/May 31, 2019 (2019年5月31日) (Reality: May 31, 2021)/5:20 PM (JST)

Arriving at the fast food dine-in, Skyler, Hifumi, and Io met with Ren, Ann, Louis, Makoto, Haru, Ryuji, and Miyako. The group quietly discovered the latest happenings dealing with the malevolent spirits.

"Man, first the Kuchisake-onna and now Kunekune just last weekend?" Louis recapped them on the latest happenings.

"Dude, what the hell is going on? Why are these spirits just popping up and causing mischief?" Ryuji wondered after biting into his burger.

"Ryuji, ahem," Miyako pointed to the ketchup on the left side of her boyfriend's cheek.
"Thanks, Miyako."

"I'm suspecting the Yami Matter isn't directly involved with those spirits," Skyler inferred. "In fact, Io can't seem to trace any Yami Matter essence with these last incidents."

"Is this true?" Ann queried to the Persona Vein.

Io nodded. "Yeah, I can't sense anything where the essences are influencing these spirits. It's possible they're indirectly surfacing in response to the Yami Matter affecting this reality."

Ren quietly added. "So, they're not like the Yokai we fought at Meiji Shrine."

Skyler reminded the Phantom Thief leader. "No, remember those entities were influenced and revived by the Yami Matter. All we've faced have been independent evil spirits."

"Anyway, I think that's enough talk about evil spirits," Makoto proposed as she placed a letter on the table.

Skyler and Hifumi immediately recognized the letter sitting in front of them. They, too, took out the same invite letter sent to them by The Consortium. Likewise, Ren and Ryuji put letters on their table. The group suspiciously stared at the letters. The group put two and two together, recognizing that The Consortium have knowledge about them. Ever since the four Cryptids attack at Akihabara, The Consortium name has been constant. When the name was brought up to Sae, the SIU Director denied such a name exists, but has shed light on a possible underground unit involved with illegal activities. When Makoto confronted Kirari about it, the young woman denied to have affiliation with this organization.

The Consortium became a nagging thought in their mind. Not even Sae has been able to trace their point of origin. The shadow organization seems to be just another urban myth that's been kept under wraps from public records. However, the Phantom Thieves and Revenants are convinced they will meet the figureheads of this shadow organization soon.

"June 7th. That's a whole week away," Ren reminded them.

"Yeah, Futaba and Yusuke got letters, too," Ann added.

"So have myself, Mia and Yakumo," Louis informed them.

"Why would they want to invite us? And how would they know where we live?" Haru wondered.

"What I'd like to know is why would they expose themselves to us? What do they have to lose besides their secrecy?" Skyler was confused by this whole situation.

Ryuji grabbed his head. "Augh, this whole situation just sucks. We don't have to go do we?"

Ren sighed. "I'm going just to find out who The Consortium are."

Ann resolved. "Yeah, me, too."

Makoto concurred. "Haru and I are in, too."

Louis calmly chuckled. "I suppose we're all in this together, aren't we? Besides, we should go to relax and enjoy the atmosphere."

Hifumi turned to Ren. "The Roppongi Hills Mori Tower isn't a bad venue for a formal party event."
The Phantom Thief replied. "Yeah, it's a great location and we'll have plenty of room to move around."

Miyako patted Ryuji's shoulder. "Oh, we should find you a nice suit for the occasion!"

Ryuji grinned like a happy boy. "Heh, I know I can count on you, babe."

Skyler shook his head. "It's going to be an interesting night to be sure, but we won't have to wait much longer to learn who The Consortium are."

"Hey, guys!" The voice of Shinya called out from the other side of the restaurant.

The group turned to see Shinya walking in with Nicola, Reiko, and Li-Ming. They joined in and sat at a table opposite from the young adults.

"Shinya. What brings you here?" Ann asked him and his friends.

"I kinda invited them," Ren confessed.

"Yeah, to catch up and talk about the last movie we saw!" Shinya added. "Wasn't *Pokémon: Detective Pikachu* just an awesome flick?!"

"It was a decent movie. Better than the last couple of Pokémon animated movies," Nicola added his positive take on the movie. "Although, some of those Pokémon looked creepy and weird in live action form."

Reiko giggled. "But, most of them were pretty cute like Pikachu, Karakara, and those Fushigidane!" Her cheeks blushed as she showed off her Fushigidane plushie. "They were so cute I went and bought one!"

Li-Ming added. "We had a fun time watching the movie."

Ann nodded. "We're glad you accepted our invite."

Hifumi pivoted to Io. "And you enjoyed *Detective Pikachu*, too, right?"

"Yeah, it was a very cute!"

"But, man I can't believe you're inviting us to see *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* soon, Ren!" Shinya exclaimed. "I've only seen some of the movies on TV, but this one has Godzilla, Rodan, Mothra, and King Ghidorah in it! This is going to be an awesome movie to watch!"

Ren chuckled. "Yeah, I've been enjoying our outings."

Ann waved a finger to the preteens. "But, as long as bring your own yen to pay for your tickets and theater food."

Nicola chuckled. "Yes, we get your excited, Shinya, but you can wait two more days."

Makoto sipped her drink. "Well, you have fun, kids."

Io turned to Hifumi. "We're going to see it, too, right?"

"Of course, Io," Hifumi smiled.

"All three of us are going to see it together," Skyler interjected.
For a moment, Io briefly locked eyes with Nicola. She wondered if Nicola's full memories have returned to him yet, but judging by his inability to recognize her, that doesn't seem to be the case.

"Io?" Skyler waved a hand over her face. "You're spacing out."

"Huh?" The pale-skinned Revenant blinked thrice before shaking her head. "Sorry. I had something on my mind."

"Is everything ok?" Hifumi asked her.

"Yeah. Hey, how about we order those fries I like to so much?"

"Sure, c'mon," Hifumi got up and walked with Io to order them a basket of fries.

As the group members picked up their letters, they showed off their invitations to remind each other about June 7th, the day they'd finally meet The Consortium. They also remarked the event on their phone calendars.

Louis leaned over and whispered to Makoto and Haru. "Do you think The Consortium knows you're the Phantom Thieves?"

Hearing this, Haru covered her mouth. "Oh, I didn't consider that."

Furrowing her brows, Makoto almost bit her bottom lip. "Since the letters were specifically sent to us, I wouldn't be surprised. I'd advise extreme caution when we go. It's also very likely a trap."

The Phantom Thieves and Revenants took this warning to heart and settled for the unexpected.

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Roppongi Hills (六本木ヒルズ)/Roppongi Hills Mori Tower/Roppongi (六本木)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/June 7, 2019 (2019年6月7日)(Reality: June 7, 2021)/7:00 PM (JST)

The Phantom Thieves and Revenants walked into the formal ballroom dressed to impress. Each were dressed in their own respective choice of formal wear.

Ren wore a maroon red tuxedo with a black and white vest underneath. The back of his tuxedo split into two coat tails that helped authenticate the whole aristocratic look he was going for. He also wore white gloves and black dress shoes.

Ann came in a gorgeous corset red dress. Her dress didn't come with sleeves, instead starting at the top of her bosom line and went down to above her knees. The bottom of her dress was trimmed with black and white. She had on a pink boa that started on one arm and stretched over to her other arm. She wore a red rose on her hair. She wore black and red high heeled shoes.

Ryuji wore a black vest with a light gray long-sleeved dress shirt. He already had his sleeves folded up to an elbow’s length. He also wore a solid yellow tie with black spots, black dress pants, and black-and-gray dress shoes.

Yusuke came looking sophisticated as intended. He wore a dark blue unbuttoned dress shirt. Underneath the dress shirt, he had on black and white embroidered vest with a turquoise collar and cuffs hemmed into the very same vest. Additionally, he wore white dress pants and black shoes.

Makoto walked hand in hand with Haru. Makoto wore an elegant and long royal blue dress. The dress was so long it dragged across the floor. There was a side of the dress that had an opening,
which revealed her legs and black high heels for her choice footwear.

Haru wore contrasting lighter colors compared to her girlfriend's dress. She came in a cute pink dress that went down to her knees. Her top was a black corset top with a pink see through veil overlapping it. Her choice footwear are black high heels.

Futaba came in a sleeveless black dress with neon green embroidered designs, which looked like the designs seen on her Oracle outfit. Adorning the topmost part of her head is a tiny black hat. Her black shoes had neon green heel stilettos.

Skyler walked in with Hifumi beside him. Skyler wore a mostly black formal buttoned shirt trimmed with red and yellow. Two leather straps criss-crossed over the chest. Additionally, he wore black pants and dress shoes to match his dress shirt.

Hifumi came in a beautiful sleeveless white evening dress. The top of the dress started with two thin white straps converging and forming into the dress. The dress went down several inches above her knees. Her choice footwear are white dress shoes with clear heel stilettos.

Louis approached Makoto and Haru, offering his hands to them. He wore a white long-sleeved dress shirt with a red and red vest underneath. He had the top of his dress shirt unbuttoned to show off his vest. He wore matching colored dress pants and black dress shoes.

Mia came in a sleeveless lavender formal dress with a black feather-styled boa draped around the back of her neck. She wore her hair in stylized curly pigtails. Other accessories she wore included elbow-length white gloves and black high-heeled stiletto boots.

Yakumo wore a black long-sleeved dress shirt with a white and gray vest underneath. He maintained his hair in his usual ponytail style. He also match matching colored dress pants, and gray dress shoes.

The group were floored upon entering the ballroom. They marveled at the scenic venue and the assortment of food and drinks being served.

"Oh wow, all that food I'm seeing is not a dream?" Ryuji fell into a trance as he gleamed over the food layouts.

Ann quickly pinched Ryuji.

"Ow, hey! That hurt!"

"You said you were dreaming. Just wanted to check." Ann let out an innocent chuckle.

"The one good thing I can say about The Consortium is that they gave us VIP passes to this event. So, we don't have to pay for anything," Yusuke stated.

"So free food, drinks, and access to the art museum. Sounds good to me!" Futaba gleefully said as she grabbed Yusuke's hand. "C'mon, Inari, let's check out what they've got!"

"Hey, just because we have VIP passes, that doesn't mean…! Slow down, Futaba!" Yusuke wails were heard as the other Thieves and Revenants started to go their separate ways.

"Hey, Ren," Skyler addressed him. "You know they'll be here."

"Yeah, The Consortium invited us. Hopefully, they'll show themselves to us," Ren replied.

Hifumi took Skyler's hand. "We can worry about that later. Let's go and explore this place. I'm
interested in seeing the art museum."

"Sure, let's go," Skyler complied as he took Hifumi into the ballroom first.

"Guess we'll tag along with those two," Mia turned to Yakumo.

"I suppose. I'm supposed to find Emily here. So, we should find her."
Ann grabbed Ren's hand. "Ready whenever you are, sweetie."

Ren nodded and escorted them into the ballroom.

As they saw Makoto accompanied by Haru and Louis, Sae and Karen had a conversation with each other.

"Heh, so what's the story with my brother and your sister?" Karen smirked, teasing her friend. She wore a purple formal dress with a white scarf and black shoes.

"Makoto told me she's been in a relationship. I figured it was with Haru like I've always known, but seeing Louis with those two surprises me," Sae remarked calmly, watching the three talk with their friends. She came in a strapless long black dress, dark purple eyeshadow, and red lip gloss.

"Your brother is not just an intelligent young man, but he's quite the ladies man, Karen," a voice belonging to an older gentleman spoke up, garnering Karen's attention.

Sae and Karen turned to see a middle-aged man in a black business suit. He had thick eyebrows. He also wore a white-dotted red tie and white gloves. He had his black hair, which now had signs of gray showing on his sides, slicked back. His brown eyes scanned the ballroom crowd as he spotted Ren.

"In fact, Louis has been hanging around people who're helping to shape his character," the gentleman said.

"Yoshida Toranosuke, you're looking well this evening," Sae acknowledged the politician, who approached offering them glasses of red wine.

"Oh, thank you," Karen took her glass.

"So, are you two observing your siblings this evening?"

"Not really. They came here after receiving invitations in the mail," Sae said, taking the other wine glass.

"I see. Who sent the invites?"

Sae answered. "The Consortium."

Yoshida gave a confounded response. "Pardon? The Consort-what?"

"Exactly. It's some organization I haven't been able to trace during these past few months. Makoto and I tried searching for leads, but have come up short."

"This isn't like that organization that Shido Masayoshi was involved with?" Karen asked her.

"I couldn't tell you if we haven't been able to find anything, but there are no doubt cover ups being made to hide their activities."
"Hey, Karen! Look who I brought with me?" Louis called out as he walked up with Makoto and Haru accompanying him.

"Looks like you've been busy, little brother," Karen chuckled, which drew an intense glare from Sae. "Heheh, sorry my bad."

"Sis, listen, I know this looks like a surprise," Makoto reasoned with Sae.

"Why would you being with Haru and Louis bother me? You're an adult now. I just hope you know you're making a good choice."

"Well..." Makoto paused as she glanced over to Louis and Haru talking with Yoshida. "No, I know I made the right choice."

The SIU Director nodded. "So, about..."

Makoto whispered. "Sorry, I've still found zilch about The Consortium. It's like they're ghosts. We've scoured all over Tokyo and found no activity."

"If the Phantom Thieves can't even find them, that's worrisome," Sae said.

Yoshida laughed as he had a lively conversation with Louis. "Well, you've done well to meet someone like Ren. And you've done well to develop some leadership skills within your network of friends."

"Thank you. I couldn't have done it without your encouragement, Yoshida-san."

"I think you'd be very proud of him, Yoshida-san." Haru added into their amicable discussion.

"And how is your business doing, Okumura?" Yoshida asked the young businesswoman.

"It's going well. My business has been picking up and we're implementing a few more new locations. Thank you. I know there are quite a few other politicians like yourself, Yoshida-san, as well as business leaders like me and internationals attending this event," Haru scanned the room as she spotted a Chinese woman speaking with a businessman. "See? There's someone I recognize. Her name is Mei and she was quite interested in Okumura products. Although I'm surprised she would be considering how awfully the Chinese are treated here."

"Yes, I've seen her before. While it's already been documented that the Chinese and Koreans aren't fairly treated in Japan, I'd like to help anyone regardless of their ethnicity."

"You're a good man, Yoshida-san."

Well, I wish you nothing but success, Okumura."

"Thank you," Haru politely bowed.

"Hey, Haru. Me and Makoto are just about to head over to get some drinks. Want to come?" Louis offered Haru.

"Oh yes, wait up!"

As they watched the three head off to get drinks, Sae and Karen shared a chuckle together.

"Our siblings have grown up, haven't they?" Karen sighed happily.
"Yeah, they don't need us anymore."

"Hah, amen to that."

Skyler, Hifumi, Mia, and Yakumo explored the Mori Arts Center. After seeing some art pieces, they saw a large black man garbed in a security uniform. He was seen talking with the two officer cosplayers Makoto talked to at AnimeJapan. The young man and young woman were dressed in security gear.

"Hey, isn't that Davis?" Hifumi noticed the large man.

"Oh yeah, that's right. He said he'd be working security for tonight's thing," Skyler recalled.

"Looks like he's busy," Yakumo said. "We should let him be."

"Huh? Hey, y'all did show up like you said!" Davis spotted and waved to his Revenant friends.

"Yeah, we sure did! Hey, if you're busy, we'll leave you be!" Skyler called out.

"Yeah, I was just talking to these two here since they're working as extra security," Davis said.

Mia smirked. "Have fun, big guy."

"So, where to now?" Yakumo asked Skyler.

"Back to the ballroom then."

With that, the Revenants and Hifumi headed over to check with the others.

Davis barked at the two police officers. "And so that's how we're covering security tonight, you two. You got it?"

The short, dark-haired policewoman responded. "Don't worry. Leave this to us."

The longer, dark-haired policeman added. "We'll let you know if we see anything suspicious."

"Now, that's what I like to hear. Welcome to the security team."

Elsewhere, the Spiritual Gamblers explored the ballroom to get a good vibe of the place. They came in just a little before the Phantom Thieves and Revenants did. Like the others, the Gamblers came dressed for the evening festivities.

Yumeko came in a strapless black formal dress to match the tiny black hat on the crown of her head. She wore red lip gloss, a golden collar around her neck, elbow-length, red-striped black gloves and high-heeled black shoes.

Ryōta wore a light brown dress shirt coupled with a white vest underneath. He also had on matching colored pants an black dress shoes.

Mary came in a navy blue formal dress. She wore pink lip gloss, elbow-length, cyan gloves and high-heeled white shoes.
Midari came in a short-sleeved black dress that went down above her knees. She wore black wristbands, black rose lip gloss & fingernails, and high-heeled black shoes.

Itsuki came in a sleeveless yellow formal dress. She wore pink lip gloss, red fingernails, and high-heeled clear shoes.

"Wow, look at all this! I feel like I'm part of the crowd!" Yumeko merrily squeaked with joy.

"If you mean part of a crowd of rich people and some corrupt corporate suits, then why I don't see why I'd want to fit in," Mary remarked.

"C'mon, we've been involved in shady dealings before. These people have probably gambled more with their money in their line of businesses, it's like how we gamble," Yumeko reminded them. "So, we're no better than they are."

"But, did any of these rich fucks ever have to give up an eye like I did?" Midari pointed to her eyepatch.

"Who's to say? Some likely lost more than an eye," Itsuki said.

"Hey, check it out. Look who's here!" Ryōta garnered the young ladies' attention from the crowds.

The group saw a wheelchair bound, modest young woman with a pale complexion. She wore a sky blue dress, elbow-length white gloves, wore pink lipstick. She has short, neck length dark brown hair with a near perfect cut at the bottom. She has very well trimmed and sectioned bangs covering her forehead. Her brown eyes scanned the formal ball guests as they greeted her. She wore a blue blanket that covered her legs.

"Look, it's Totobami Terano!" Yumeko recognized the wheelchair bound woman.

"Well now, I wasn't expecting your presence here," Terano acknowledged the Spiritual Gamblers. Her serious demeanor hadn't left her face.

Sitting on Terano's lap is a small brown raccoon dog with its base body covered in a ball-shaped seal. A small Japanese castle is situated on its back. This is her Guardian Spirit: Narikama Tanuki.

"Hey, look at her lap! She has a Guardian Spirit!" Mary pointed to raccoon dog on Terano's lap.

"You're right! I can see it!" Itsuki exclaimed.

Midari meticulously glanced over the crowds and saw no disturbances. "Yeah, that's a Guardian Spirit. Otherwise, these people would've noticed and stared at the thing."

"Aww, how cute!" Yumeko walked over and patted the raccoon dog.

"Surprise seeing you here, Jabami Yumeko," Terano acknowledged the Spiritual Gambler. "If you can see my spirit, then you must have one, too."

Nodding, Yumeko showed off Nine-Tails to her. "That's right! Mine is right here!"

"Very intriguing. And I understand your friends have Guardian Spirits." Terano kept a collective demeanor.

"Yep, that's right."

Terano placed her fingers together. "That's very interesting."
Standing on Terano's left side is a young woman with shoulder length light brown hair. Her hair is styled in a twirlier fashion. She wore pink lipstick. Her choice formal wear is a light yellow formal gown. In her hair, she wore a green dragonfly brooch she received from Yumeko's sister when she was a child. Her light golden eyes met the gazes of the guests allured by her appearance when they remembered her having a more androgynous-looking appearance a few years ago.

"Batsubami Rei!" Yumeko recognized the individual.

"Good evening, Yumeko and company," Rei greeted them politely.

Rei's Guardian Spirit, Yatagarasu, appeared on her right shoulder. It's a black crow with red eyes and reddish markings beneath its underwings. A small red rope is seen tied around its neck with a black ornament. It gave a low caw when its gaze met those of the Spiritual Gamblers.

"Your Guardian Spirit is a crow?"

"Correct, Yumeko. You're looking well."

"Thanks. Same to you, too!"

Standing on Terano's right side is a young woman with a light brown tanned complexion. She had her long blonde hair tied into a ponytail by a mere clip that had yellow flowers. She wore a light emerald formal dress that matched her emerald eyes. She wore red lipstick. She wore elbow length white gloves. Of the three alongside Terano and Rei, she wore the most upbeat and cheerful expression. This is Terano's sister.

"Totobami Yumi?!" Ryōta exclaimed.

"Hi! I love your dresses!" Yumi cheerily greeted them.

A large saber-toothed tiger covered in a reddish ethereal aura and wearing a flame-wreath around its neck appeared beside Yumi. The beast also wore a necklace with ornaments like green and black orbs and a yin-yang ornament. This is her Guardian Spirit: Enko.

Coming from the left and opposite from the trio is a short statured woman with pink hair that she wore in two long pigtails. She wore a black formal dress styled in the Lolita fashion and elbow length black gloves. There are white accents seen on her dress. Her most notable features are her heterochromia eyes. Her right eye is dark pink while her left eye is a contrasting blue. She wore red lipstick and carried what looked like pale yellow stuffed caterpillar.

"Mushibami Erimi." Midari acknowledged the short woman.

"Hey, it's been a while, hasn't it?" Erimi greeted them with a devious grin.

Sitting on Erimi's right shoulder is a tiny mouse smoking on a pipe. It wore a ring-like ornament around its waist. The end of its tail looked like a flame. This is her Guardian Spirit: Hi-nezumi.

Terano patted the raccoon dog on her lap. "Since I've heard from Kirari's associates that her group and yours use codenames, we have codenames of our own. My codename is Tanuki-Ô if you can already surmise based on my partner."

Rei turned to the crow. "Yes, since my Guardian Spirit is a crow, you can call me Karasu."

Yumi showed off her saber-toothed cat. "Well, my partner is a tiger, so you can call me Shere-Khan!"
Erimi tapped the mouse's head gently. "My codename is Bebe."

Midari snorted. "The hell kind of name is Bebe?"

"The one that I came up with myself."

Yumeko clapped her hands once. "You all have such cute and wonderful-looking spirits!"

On the far left, a tall young woman came with a short-statured girl. From first glance, they appeared to be sisters based on the shape of their eyes and their similar dark blue hair.

The tall young woman, dressed in an elegant black sleeveless dress, had long back length hair that tied into a bun coupled with a very long hair strand on her forehead that reached her waist and black vacant eyes. She wore red eyeshadow around the corner of her eyes and similar colored lip gloss. She wore no gloves, showing off her red painted fingernails.

The shorter woman, dressed in a red sleeved dress, had her hair styled into a pair of odango buns. Her eyes were much like her sister's and even wore the same red eyeshadow.

"Inbami Miyo and Yobami Miri!" Mary exclaimed in shock.

"Mizuchi, come forth," Miyo commanded as a long-bodied, blue-scaled oriental dragon materialized beside her. The dragon had red fins aligned across its back, a red tipped tail, and red antlers adorning its head. "My codename is Melusine."

"I summon you, Aya-komori," Miri invoked her Guardian Spirit. A small black bat appeared on her left shoulder. It showed off its red wings. "My codename is Koumori."

Walking beside Erimi was a pale-skinned woman with long, black unsettled hair that hadn't been combed correctly. Her hair covered most of her head. She wore a black dress with long sleeves and a hospital mask that covered her mouth. She stood in a notably hunched position.

"It's that weird girl! Oh, what's her name?" Yumeko tried to remember the masked woman's name.

The surgically-masked woman muffled. "Warakubami Sumika." Then, she showed off a purple bodied spider with a round brown abdomen and green eyes. "And this is my spirit partner Itokuri. My codename is Arachne."

Accompanied by a large Saint-Bernard was a dark brown-haired girl. She wore a light blue sleeved dress. She styled her hair into two low pigtails. She had hazel eyes. However, her most distinguishing features are her thick eyebrows.

"Komabami Nozomi?!" Ryōta spat out.

"Yep, but you can call me by my codename, Shika," Nozomi addressed. "Shin-roku, come on out." As she beckoned her Guardian Spirit to come forth, a gray sagely deer with white tufts of fur hanging under its snout and golden flowers nestled on its antlers appeared.

Three more individuals came forward to meet with the Spiritual Gamblers and The Momobami Clan.

One was a tall, pale-skinned young woman with back length light silver hair. She wore a white tuxedo with a light blue bow tie. Her hair split in two at the end and went along her back. The split hair ended in twirls. She wore a stoic expression as her green eyes scanned the Spiritual Gamblers first before turning toward Terano.
"Look, it's Mira!" Yumeko waved over to the woman in the tuxedo.

"Honebami Miroslava," Terano smirked as she and the aforementioned woman locked gazes.

"I take you have Guardian Spirits like me?" Miroslava asked Yumeko.

"Yep! And we can definitely see yours," Yumeko acknowledged.

Miroslava walked by Yumeko, Ryōta, Mary, Midari, and Itsuki. They saw a large blue bull spirit wearing a golden rope tied around its neck.

"Since you're able to see my Guardian Spirit, mine is Fuse-ushi. And my codename is Nandi," Miroslava revealed to Yumeko and her friends.

The second individual was a large young man garbed in a red tuxedo coupled with similar colored dress pants and a black tie. He had his usually spiky pink hair combed and slicked back for the formal occasion. He has some notable thin black facial stubs on his cheeks and chin. He wore silver earrings and a thorn necklace.

"Hey, wait up," the young man followed Miroslava as Yumeko approached him.

"Hey you!"

"Yeah? Don't you even remember my name?"

"There's a lot of names to remember. But, I think you're name is…" Yumeko stopped to think.

The young man sighed in an annoyed tone. "I'm Obami Ibara." He then buttoned his the collar of his tuxedo and folded his sleeves back. "But, I know you can see my Guardian Spirit!"

"Yeah, I see it!" Yumeko chirped as she and her friends saw three blue sharks floating around Ibara as if they were swimming.

"You've got three sharks hanging around you!" Itsuki exclaimed.

"Yeah, aren't they cool? They're called Isonade. And my codename in case you're wondering is Wani," Ibara proudly stated as he walked over to meet with Miroslava.

"And what about your Guardian Spirit?" Mary turned to the third member that accompanied Miroslava and Ibara.

The third individual was a young man, who was a few feet shorter than Ibara, with neck length dark blue hair. His hair had long bangs and a notable little curl poking out the right side of his head. He wore a black tuxedo coupled with similar colored dress pants, a red dress shirt under his tuxedo, and a black tie. His dark eyes met those of Mary and smiled.

"Why don't you see for yourself?" The young man showed off a green-feathered spirit hawk wearing a red head cloth which ended with two knots. "This is Daiba-washi. My codename is Taka." He bowed politely and made his way over to where Ibara went.

"Right, Taka as in hawk. I totally get it. Ok, so all of them have Guardian Spirits now?" Mary was flabbergasted.

"Is it any surprise? They all probably were informed by Kirari and her associates to meet with Yuriko at Meiji Shrine," Ryōta pointed out.
"Yeah, that's how I ended up with my Guardian Spirit," Itsuki nodded.

"That's correct. The entire Momobami Clan came to my shrine to receive their Guardian Spirits." A voice belonging to Yuriko herself chimed in, causing the Spiritual Gamblers to turn and face the shrine maiden wearing a white and rose dress. She wore a pink rose on her hair. "Did I come too late?"

"Nope, you came just in time!" Yumeko casually responded to the shrine maiden.

"Look at this, Yuriko. The whole Momobami Clan are here," Mary showed her to The Hundred Devouring Families amassed in one spot.

"Yes, I hope they can manage to keep themselves and their Guardian Spirits in check. Though, knowing Terano, she may want to contest Kirari using their Guardian Spirits to see who devours the other and takes over as the head of the clan," Yuriko said.

"Well, thankfully no one, but us, the Thieves, and the Revenants can see the Guardian Spirits," Itsuki said.

"Who gives a shit? Let those two fight and take each other out. I don't care either way," Midari crudely remarked.

"I hope I can duel Kirari and the other members of the Momobami Clan with my Nine-Tails! Just the thought of it excites me!" Yumeko enthusiastically added. Her red eyes were already flaring to match her inner gambling enthusiasm.

Ryōta replied with a nervous chuckle. "Probably best you don't. Not here at this party."

Mary scoffed. "Yeah, no kidding. We don't want you causing a scene and get us kicked out."

Yumeko blinked. "Oh yeah. We got those invites because of The Consortium, but where are they?" She scanned the ballroom for suspicious activity.

Watching the Spiritual Gamblers and the other Momobami Clan from afar, Kirari, Ririka, and Sayaka bided their time. Kirari wore a teal formal dress with elbow length white gloves and kept her hair styled in the knotted fashion. Ririka wore a similar colored dress, but distinguished herself from her twin sister with keeping her back length hair down. Sayaka wore a dark purple formal dress with no sleeves.

"They're all here, Lady Kirari," Sayaka addressed the Momobami woman.

Sipping a little champagne from a glass, Kirari's blue lips curved into a sly smirk.

"Yes, I know. Why don't we go and say hello?" Kirari said.

"Sister, look. They're here, too," Ririka pointed to the Phantom Thieves and Revenants, all of them scoured through the formal party.

"Yes, now things are getting more interesting," Kirari smirked coolly.

Spotting Kirari in the distance, Terano gave a scowling expression, which Rei, Yumi, and Miroslava carefully noticed.

"She's got that intense look," Yumi gasped.

"And when she gets like that, there's only one reason for it," Rei stated.
They quickly spotted Kirari conversing with Sayaka.

"She best keep away if she knows what's good to her," Terano growled between her clenched teeth.

"Please, calm down, sis," Yumi pleaded to Terano.

"Sorry, I'll try my best," the wheelchair bound woman relaxed and sighed deeply after a deep breath.

As the evening progressed, more guests started to pour in and sections became crowded, forcing some to move around. Skyler, Hifumi, Mia, and Yakumo ended up meeting Emily, who came in a dark red formal dress, white high-heeled shoes, and wore light red lip gloss.

"Guys, you're not going to guess who I saw," Emily brought their attention over to a man dressed in a dark green formal suit and pants coupled with a white and gray vest underneath and a red tie. Eon the hoatzin is seen perched on his left shoulder.

"Mido?!" The Revenants yelled quietly while not drawing attention to themselves.

"Yeah, but look who he's talking to," Emily showed them the two individuals.

Jack and Eva are seen conversing with Mido.

Jack wore a white tuxedo with a black and gray vest underneath. He had on matching white pants, a white cap trimmed with silver, and black dress shoes.

Eva came in a dark red v-necked mini-formal dress coupled with a white feathered boa draped along her neck and shoulders. She had on purple lip gloss, rose eyeshadow, a pair of elbow-length white gloves, and shin-length black leather boots.

"Jack and Eva?" Skyler muttered quietly. He turned to Emily. "Did you hear what they were talking about?"

"Not much, except I was able to make out one detail. They're apparently working as mercenaries."

"For who though?" Yakumo wondered.

"The Consortium maybe?" Mia deduced.

"I don't know. That's all I can tell you."

Skyler nodded. "That's fine. Good job gathering intel for us, Emily."

"Sure, anytime."

Hifumi whispered to Skyler. "We should be mindful and not look suspicious. Let's distance ourselves from them."

"Good idea. C'mon, we'll talk about this elsewhere," Skyler gathered the group and headed away from Mido, Jack, and Eva's location.

As they passed by, Yakumo and Emily recognized a face from the AnimeJapan event. It was the American Caucasian who cosplayed with his American girlfriend. The Caucasian man was seen garbed in a gray dress shirt with khaki-colored dress pants and brown leather shoes.
"Hey, Emily, doesn't he familiar?"

"Uh, yeah! He's that American we met and take photos of with his girlfriend!"

"I wonder why he'd be here? Is he someone important?" Yakumo speculated.

"He's the CEO of his family's company in the United States," Louis chimed in as Skyler and his group saw Louis, Makoto, and Haru convene with them.

"What?! We were talking with a CEO?!" Emily exclaimed in disbelief.

"But, he seemed and talked so casual with us," Yakumo recalled their interaction.

"Well, he was like that, too, when we briefly chatted," Louis said.

"Louis, you're not going to believe who's here," Skyler muttered as he turned Louis toward Mido's far off direction.

"Why am I not surprised?" Louis frowned upon seeing the bioengineer/paleontologist.

Makoto approached Louis. "Hey, we can move elsewhere if you want."

"No, I'll be fine, Mako-chan. I appreciate it though."

Unbeknownst to Skyler and his entourage, a man and his daughter watched him during a conversation with a French couple and their daughter over business. The ones watching Louis and his group were Gregorio and Cruz.

Gregorio was garbed in a form-fitting black buttoned suit with medals clipped on the left side of his pectoral area. He wore matching colored dress pants and dark brown boots. The cuffs of his sleeves had golden metal trimmed around them.

Cruz came dressed in a gorgeous pale blue dress. She wore elbow-length white gloves with embroidered flower designs on them. She had on an ivory necklace adorning her collar and pale blue earrings.

"Father, look," Cruz showed Gregorio toward the Revenants' direction.

"So, I see," Gregorio's brows furrowed as his gaze met those with Skyler and Louis, but he kept his gaze firmly on the latter.

"Gregorio, sorry I forgot to ask if you and your daughter would like to see our daughter perform?" The French man queried to his business colleague. "You know she's a prima donna for an opera company."

"Yes, where is she performing if I may ask?" Gregorio inquired while his attention stayed on Louis.

"Oh, the Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall in two weeks. My wife and I have some tickets."

"Thank you, you can drop them off when we meet again," Gregorio bowed. "Please, pardon me."

"So sorry, but we'd love to come see your daughter perform," Cruz bowed to the French couple. She briefly faced the white-haired French girl, who came dressed in a long-sleeved silver dress. "We'll talk more about your performance over lunch."

The French girl waved and blew a kiss. "Of course. Au revoir, Cruz."
As the Phantom Thieves and Revenants turned to relocate from the ballroom, Gregorio and Cruz casually approached them.

"Louis, my old friend. It's been a while," Gregorio addressed the Revenant, who recognized the man's deep voice and slowly turned to meet his stern gaze.

Upon meeting Gregorio and Cruz, Louis nearly froze, but he regained confidence to face them. Skyler walked over to Louis.

"Hey, you don't have to talk to them if you don't want to."

"No, I'll be fine, Skyler," Louis nodded.

"Oh god, it's him," Emily whispered to Yakumo.

The Phantom Thieves and Revenants had a brief and quiet staredown with Gregorio and Cruz. Then, Gregorio raised his hands, almost causing the members to cautiously stand their ground. The man's hands clapped together. This drew the attention of some of the guests.

"What's the big idea, Gregorio?" Louis frowned. "You aren't one for theatrics."

"What? I can't express my thrill to see you again, old friend."

Louis scoffed. "Have you forgotten? I've broke off my ties with you."

Makoto and Haru walked up to Louis. The two ladies pivoted toward Cruz's direction, who quietly stood beside her father.

"That must be…" Haru whispered as Makoto finished for her.

"Cruz Silva, the daughter of Gregorio. I don't have much info on her since she hardly makes herself known to the public." Makoto plainly answered her girlfriend.

Noticing Louis with Makoto and Haru, Cruz gave a cold glare as if she were irked by the two ladies' presence near him. She walked over to Louis.

"Louis, you're looking well."

"Yeah, same with you, Cruz," Louis firmly stared her down.

"What's the story between you two?" Makoto asked Louis. "C'mon, spill."

Gregorio interjected with a pompous chuckle. "Go on. Tell these lovely young lady friends about your formerly arranged marriage with my daughter."

"Wait?! Arranged marriage?!!" Makoto and Haru exclaimed in unison.

"You were supposed to marry this woman, Louis?!!" Ann questioned him.

"I think you should tell them, man," Skyler suggested as he noticed the other members in their group, specifically the ladies dying to know the backstory between the Revenant and Gregorio's beautiful daughter.

"Go on, Louis," Cruz gave her approval to speak about their past relationship.

"Guess there's no sense hiding it," Louis sighed, modestly rubbing the back of his head. He gave in
and explained. "Cruz… Well, Cruz was my old flame while I started college. I met her during a professor's lecture. We shared similar subjects. What started as simple study sessions turned into dates. Imagine my surprise when she tells me she's the daughter of a known politician."

Gregorio proudly smiled. "That politician being me. Cruz told me she found her soulmate and begged me to meet Louis."

"Yes, and then the three of us met over dinner," Louis delved into their backstory. "What started as pleasant conversations later turned into heated debates. Cruz ended up getting caught in the middle of our disputes."

"You just couldn't handle someone who had different viewpoints from yours, Louis."

Louis scoffed. "More like I disagreed with some of your extremist viewpoints. I also didn't appreciate having your daughter involved in our debates."

Cruz quickly got in between Louis and Gregorio. "Please, not here, you two."

Upon hearing Louis's backstory, Haru remembered being in a similar situation. She saw herself through Louis. Gregorio and Cruz reminded her of her own father and Sugimura. However, she could discern from Cruz's demeanor that she wasn't a controlling abuser like Sugimura. Cruz seemed to have genuine and affectionate love for Louis.

"Louis…" Haru whispered to him.

"It's ok, Haru," Louis smiled to her before shifting an intense gaze toward Gregorio. "I don't want any trouble tonight on this fine evening." He then put an arm around Makoto and Haru. "Me and my friends are here to have a good time."

As she saw Louis hold the two ladies, Cruz lowered her eyes.

"Louis," Cruz murmured as her soft tone drew her old flame's attention for a moment. "I really thought everything had gone as planned. I...I looked forward to our marriage and being your wife."

"I know, and there's no doubt you've been a wonderful wife, but there was no way your father and I could mend our differences over political matters. Besides, I'm just not cut out for the world of politics, which is marred with corruption within the system."

Gregorio smirked. "Only because a bleeding heart can't handle the cut throat nature of the political realm."

"Please, enough," Cruz pleaded as she extended her hand to Louis. "If we're still not going to marry each other, then could I ask for a dance? This once?"

As he stared at Cruz's hand offer, Louis didn't know to say. He had broken ties with her and Gregorio sometime ago. He glanced over to his friends. Then, he eyed Makoto and Haru.

"Whatever you do, we won't hold it against you," Haru softly smiled as if giving him some encouragement.

Makoto merely shrugged. "It's your call, but we don't really expect you to cozy up with them again."

Taking his girlfriends' suggestions to heart, Louis walked beside Makoto and Haru. He took their hands and smiled.
"Sorry, but I already came with dates, Gregorio. You're going to have to do better than convincing your daughter she still has a chance with me."

Gregorio scoffed. "You haven't changed."

"I still won't forget the dances we had together, Cruz," Louis put on a collective demeanor as he walked away with Makoto and Haru.

"Just a minute, Louis," Gregorio was heard growling until Cruz calmed her father down. The scowl on his face faded and replaced with a calm smile. "I suggest none of you and your friends go anywhere. Unless you'd like to know about that invite we sent you to your mailing addresses."

The Phantom Thieves and the Revenants fell silent once Gregorio brought this to their attention.

"Yes, I take it that by silence you know what I'm referring to," Gregorio chuckled. "Please, this way." He showed the Thieves and Revenants toward the nearest balcony.

When the Thieves and the Revenants followed Gregorio and Cruz outside, the Spiritual Gamblers watched their friends leave.

"Hey, where the hell are Ren and the others going?" Mary wondered, keenly observing their friends heading outside the balcony.

"Beats me. I don't like this," Ryōta whispered.

"Ooooo, whatever it is should be interesting," Yumeko smirked.

Just then, Kirari, Ririka, and Sayaka walked by and turned to meet the Spiritual Gamblers.

"Oh, hi, Kirari! You're looking beautiful tonight," Yumeko acknowledged the Momobami clan leader.

"Thank you, dear Yumeko, but we know perfectly well you've been involved with the Phantom Thieves," Kirari whispered to Yumeko and her friends. "Don't like you're surprised, don't you remember? We've been monitoring your all for sometime."

"We? As in…?" Mary stopped herself as she quickly realized.

Kirari answered for her. "We are The Consortium." She waved off the Spiritual Gamblers as she, Ririka, and Sayaka went to meet with the others on the balcony.

The Spiritual Gamblers were almost at a loss for words. However, this revelation intrigued Yumeko's curiosity. She wanted to know more.

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Outside on the balcony, the Phantom Thieves and the Revenants met with Gregorio and Cruz. Also joining the politician and his daughter were Mido, Kirari, Ririka, and Sayaka.

"The invites were sent by us. So glad you could join us, Phantom Thieves," Gregorio addressed Ren and his group.

"Hold on, you know we're the Phantom Thieves?!" Yusuke was taken aback.

"No effin' way you'd know who we are!" Ryuji angrily protested. "What? Did you send spies on us?"
"No, because they're the ones we've been pursuing the whole time," Ren stated. His frown faded, quickly replaced with his Joker-esque smile. "Isn't that correct? The Consortium?"

Kirari calmly chuckled. "Oh, we, The Consortium, have been watching you since the last year, my friends. Additionally, we know you're Persona users."

Makoto scowled toward Kirari. "And you deliberately lied through your teeth when I asked if you had any affiliation with The Consortium."

"Of course, I did, Officer Niijima. You wouldn't be so gullible to believe I'd give my affiliation away and endanger our organization's existence? No, we've been done to stay hidden in the shadows. After all, that's the entire point of being a shadow organization."

"So, what now? You know their identities. You're going to reveal to the world who they are?" Skyler confronted The Consortium with important queries.

"Don't be silly, boy," Mido replied. "The Phantom Thieves's identities shall remain secret to the public. After all, you are Tokyo's famed urban legends."

Gregorio walked over and confronted Ren. "It's also interesting to see you've befriended Skyler and his friend Louis. Their little group have turned to your side to help deal with the recent supernatural events that have occurred." He extended a hand to the Phantom Thief. "Amamiya-Takamaki Ren, it's truly an honor to meet the leader of the Phantom Thieves of Hearts. I know you're the one who helped jumpstart the Phantom Thieves movement and amassed like minded individuals to join your cause to battle the wrongdoings caused by the corrupted system created by Shido and the Conspiracy." He kept his hand out waiting for Ren to shake his hand. He noticed Ren being surrounded by the other Phantom Thieves.

The Phantom Thieves gave serious and almost intimidating glares at Gregorio. The large man maintained his stance against their piercing glares and lowered his hand.

"So, you've been documenting us for a while. Then, you're aware of what we've done a few years ago?" Ren asked Gregorio.

"By changing people's hearts and bringing down a shadow organization who've attempted to corrupt the Japanese political system. The Consortium is well aware. We know you've recently been dealing with a spread of supernatural entities beyond human comprehension." Gregorio pointed out the Phantom Thieves' previous accomplishments. "You've etched your names as urban legends in the eyes of the public."

Hifumi whispered to Skyler. "I'm amazed he knows all of this if my power as Sophia unknowingly brought him, his daughter, and you guys from your own timeline to this one."

Maintaining his gaze on Gregorio, Skyler muttered. "Well, Sophia's power altered reality. So doing so altered his memories and somehow while being part of The Consortium he learned about Ren and his group after hearing of their accomplishments."

"Yet, he, his daughter, and Mido don't have memories of their original timeline?"

"That's awfully looking like the case, because they'd immediately recognize us as the enemy if they had their memories restored. Somehow, Io's presence didn't trigger any inklings of memories," the Revenant theorized while trying to fit the pieces together.

"Pardon, is everything ok here?" The voice of Jack was heard as he and Eva passed by the Phantom Thieves and the Revenants.
"Jack?" Skyler was surprised to see him and Eva.

"Wait, I saw you two with…" Yakumo pointed out as Jack and Eva stood between Gregorio and Mido.

"What's going on here, Jack? Eva?" Skyler demanded an answer.

"Oh, you know these two?" Mido was surprised to hear of this.

"He and his friends are acquaintances of ours. We somewhat go a long way back," Jack smiled composedly, which irked some of the Revenants, especially Mia and Yakumo.

"Yeah, we're real besties aren't we, Jack-ass?" Mia cracked a cruel smile, taking any chance to throw verbal shade at Jack.

"Be glad we don't beat your ass while we still can," Yakumo said.

"Guys, stand down," Louis beckoned the two tense Revenants away. "Jack, Eva, what's your business with Mido?"

"We're hired mercenaries for Mido-san and Gregorio-san. That's been our line of work as of late." Eva replied.

"That's right. I know that doesn't sit well for some of you. Don't take it personally. It's just business," Jack stated as he stood boldly and crossed his arms.

"We'll keep that mind," Skyler kept a tense glare on Jack. In his mind, he mused whether this may possibly be bad for him and his friends. He also considered the 50/50 odds Jack and Eva's presence may inadvertently end up triggering Gregorio, Cruz, and Mido's memories. If that were to happen, Gregorio and Mido may consider sending the two to hunt him and his friends.

"For some reason, the tension feels so thick here. I don't know why," Mido muttered.

"Probably because of us," Jack smirked. "Anyway, it's best me and Eva leave." With that, he and Eva started to leave, but Skyler briefly stopped them.

"Wait…"

"Don't try and convince us to drop out. We made our choice, Skyler."

"Yes, don't worry about us. Be more concerned for your girlfriend there and your group. You have the Yami Matter and the supernatural entities that have been surfacing lately," Eva lectured him.

As Jack and Eva made their leave, the Phantom Thieves and the Revenants were left mulling how to best deal with The Consortium, even though the group already reassured they'd conceal their secret identities from the public.

"Well, it was a pleasure to meet you, Phantom Thieves and company. Whether you wish to view us as your enemy or ally, it's up to your own perception, but we will make contact again." Gregorio stated. "And it was good to see you, Louis. Now, I know you've been involved with the Phantom Thieves."

"So, does that mean you've lost respect for me?"

"Quite the contrary, young man. I'm most interested where your relationship goes the further down the rabbit hole you go. Tread carefully." Gregorio warned as he, Cruz, Mido, Kirari, Ririka, and
Sayaka left them.

"Louis, take care," Cruz muttered as she passed by him, Makoto, and Haru.

"We'll be seeing each other again, friends," Kirari said, giving him a subtle and sensual smile before turning to leave with her two associates.

The Phantom Thieves and the Revenants watched the The Consortium leave. They questioned whether they were to be trusted or not. The Revenants didn't seem keen on giving them the benefit of the doubt. The Thieves were on the fence, but mostly leaned on supporting their Revenant friends.

"Skyler, whatever happens with them, we'll be ready," Hifumi said, pressing a hand on her chest. And Io's telling me they can't be trusted."

"Yeah, I'm not about to take my chances, even if one of them was Louis's ex," Skyler said, turning toward Louis.

"You needn't worry, Skyler. I'm over Gregorio and his dealings. I've moved on with these two as my support."

Makoto and Haru both smiled hearing this from their partner.

"Well, that sure soured my mood," Futaba groaned. "You guys ready to blow this stand?"

"I'm just about done. Besides meeting The Consortium, I only ever came to view the exquisite art museum." Yusuke nodded.

"Then, let's call it a night. Anyone else want to stick around can do so," Ren said, turning to Ann.

"We could walk around this place a teeny bit before we leave," Ann said, putting an arm over Ren.

"Want to keep looking around, Hifumi?" Skyler asked her.

"Just a bit wouldn't hurt," Hifumi nodded.

"Well, I'm ready to leave," Mia shrugged.

"Same here," Yakumo added. "Emily, you want to come to my place?"

"Sure. I've had enough of being here after what just happened."

Hearing all his friends electing to stay or leave, Louis pivoted over to Makoto and Haru. He clasped his hands together and put on an innocent smile.

"So, how about we do something a little different, you two?"

"What do you have in mind, Louis?" Haru queried.

"Yeah, spill," Makoto folded her arms.

"Well, why don't we book a hotel for us three?"

Makoto and Haru exchanged looks before looking back at their partner. "Tonight?"

"Unless you two have any other suggestions? I just thought since you two live here locally."

Then, Makoto and Haru had similar devious thoughts in mind. They turned and placed their hands
on his shoulders.

"We'd love to come! And we know just the place, too!"

Louis stared nervously at the two ladies, feeling a tad bit concerned.

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Hotel IROHA (六本木)/Minato, Tokyo (港区)/11:30 PM (JST)

Following the formal party and the tense meeting with The Consortium, the Phantom Thieves, the Revenants, and their cohorts went home for the rest of the evening. However, three of them decided to book a room at the local Hotel IROHA. The impression of their room was filled with a romantic vibe. The furnished room had a large queen-sized bed with room for three, a dressing room, a bathroom with a spacious bathtub, and chandeliers based on Japanese paper.

However, the only source of light Louis had on was a lamp sitting beside their queen-sized bed.

Louis booked a room for himself, Makoto, and Haru. After meeting with Cruz and her father Gregorio, Louis needed some time to decompress and he didn't feel like taking the long route to his place. Since Makoto and Haru lived locally in Roppongi, he suggested for them to relax at Hotel IROHA since the rooms have space for more than three and the services were said to be exceptionally great.

Wearing nothing but his dress pants and a robe, Louis sat on a reclining chair and leaned back on it. A glass of red wine sat on a small table beside him. He took a sip from his wine, which stained his mouth as if he were drinking blood. He licked the sides of his lips and swallowed the remnants of the still fresh wine. The taste of the wine relaxed him.

"Man, what a night that was…" Louis let out a deep breath and sighed. "I never I'd see Cruz and her old man again. That was just awkward." He also couldn't wrap his head around the notion that Cruz and Gregorio are members of The Consortium. "I don't believe it, but why am I not surprised? I'd expect Gregorio would have connections with such an organization."

"Talking to yourself in there, Louis?" Haru could be heard giggling in a dressing room.

"Go easy on him, Haru. He's been through a rough night. I'd be just as upset after what happened tonight." Makoto lightly chided her girlfriend as she got dressed along with her.

Drinking another sip, Louis sighed. "I'm not upset, Makoto. I'm just trying to get over the idea of Cruz and her dad with a secret organization that have investment in us."

"Don't worry, Louis. We'll help get your mind off tonight's events," Haru assured him. "Hey does this look good on me?"

Makoto chuckled from inside the dressing room. "Of course. C'mon, let's show Louis our surprise for him."

Listening to their conversation, Louis smirked. "Now, what surprise do you have planned for me, ladies?"

"Close your eyes first," the couple insisted, to which he respectfully complied and closed his eyes.

As a small chuckle escaped his lips, Louis tried to think about what this surprise could be. The atmosphere of the entire hotel was romantic themed. He wondered if there'd be some erotica
involved. He heard the dressing room door open and the clicking of heels from the ladies.

Keeping his eyes shut, a sly grin adorned Louis’s face.

"Can I open them now?"

The ladies further teased him by simply not responding. Makoto and Haru got together, pressing their chests against the other and deviously smiling together.

"You can open them now," Haru giggled.

When Louis finally opened his eyes, he saw the ladies wore near identical outfits. Both ladies wore black caps trimmed with two horizontal red lines. They wore similar tube tops, but Haru's was black and white pinstriped and Makoto's was a solid red. Two black bra straps on Makoto's tube top connected to a spiked collar adorning her neck. Haru wore a black collar not connected to anything. The girls also wore similar black forearm-length leather gloves and short black leather skirts.

Staring seductively in each other's eyes, the couple pivoted over to Louis, who was speechless by their choice outfits. He never expected to see this side of Makoto of all people.

"Well, what do you think, Louis?" Haru asked him with a purr.

"Now, this is a pleasant surprise, ladies."

Makoto replied with a sneaky grin. "Pleasant surprise you say?" She glanced over at Haru and put a hand under her chin. "What do you say we give him the time of his life, Haru-chan?"

Haru caressed Makoto's left cheek and smiled. "Let's not disappoint him, Mako-chan."

With that, the ladies set their seductive gazes on Louis and approached him. Makoto pulled Louis off his chair and pushed him onto their queen bed. Makoto then grabbed the wine glass they were drinking and sipped some.

"Hmm, not bad, but don't you think champagne would work better?" Makoto asked.

"Don't worry, they brought us some," Haru picked up the champagne bottle on a cart. She got a cork opener and popped the champagne bottle's cork off. As bubbly champagne came pouring out, she poured some over Louis's bare chest. Haru got down and licked some of the champagne off his chest. Louis felt her tongue rubbing off his body and let out a small chuckle, revealing his ticklish side. "Ah, see that, Mako-chan? Louie is ticklish."

"Seems our manly partner has a soft side," Makoto deviously smirked as Haru handed the bottle to her. She got on top of the Louis and poured more champagne over his body.

While being drenched in champagne, Makoto lapped up some of the champagne off Louis's body. Resisting the urge to chuckle, Louis failed to keep Makoto from making him laugh. Makoto placed the bottle aside and got off of the Revenant.

"Ok, that was weird…" Louis wiped the champagne off his chest and drenched robe.

"Oh, you think this is over?" The officer openly teased him.

"This is just beginning, Louie," Haru addressed him with a pet name specifically for him.

"Just the beginning?" He asked as the couple pulled him up.
Makoto pulled Louis over to her and kissed him. Once they locked lips, Makoto slipped a tongue into Louis's mouth and kissed the sides of his face. She then lightly pushed him toward Haru. Haru kissed Louis in similar fashion, but Haru slipped a hand behind Louis and squeezed his left buttock. Makoto walked over and slapped Louis's right buttock, which made a whiplash-like sound. The slap felt like a jolt to his butt.

Makoto beckoned Haru over. The lesbian couple then kissed and placed their arms around each other's waists. Mesmerized, Louis watched the young women feeling each other out. When Makoto and Haru were locking lips for a sensual kiss, Louis wanted in and walked up to join them. His lips were caught in a three-way struggle trying to kiss Makoto and Haru. The three competed over who'd kiss who first. Louis's lips met Makoto's first. Then, Haru went in to sneak a kiss to Louis. Makoto lightly snarled and kissed Haru. The three lovers settled on an erotic threeway kiss. Their tongues slipped into each other's mouths and vyed over sexual dominance.

After pulling away from each other, they started to take off each other's clothing. After throwing off their hats, Makoto and Haru took off their tube tops, revealing their breasts. Louis removed his robe and invited them to take off his pants. The couple complied to his wishes. Haru crouched over and opened up his pant zipper. Makoto pulled down Louis's pants. Louis was now standing in nothing but black boxers. The ladies removed the rest of their clothing. Now fully nude, Makoto and Haru openly invited Louis to pleasure them. Not one to turn down an invite from his favorite ladies, Louis approached them.

When Makoto turned, she got on their bed and flashed her butt. He got behind Makoto and with one hand grabbed her buttocks. He squeezed Haru's right breast. Makoto turned her head and gave him a handjob.

"Yeah, that's the way, Mako-chan. Grab it hard."

Makoto added with a grin. "Yeah, I see you're getting hard down there." She had Louis's hardened penis in her hand.

The three got on the bed. Makoto was still giving him a handjob. Louis sucked on their breasts. Louis let out a moan as Makoto made him ejaculate. White cum splattered on the girls' faces. After licking the cum off their cheeks, they licked and sucked on Louis's hard penis and testicles. Makoto and Haru placed and fondled their breasts over Louis's midsection, massaging their man's dick. They shared another threeway kiss.

"I'm impressed with how big your penis can get, Louie," giggled Haru.

"What? You thought with me being akin to a vampire meant my dick would be small?"

"No, I wasn't thinking that."

Makoto got off the bed and turned around, bending over in front of Louis. He saw her giving him a full moon coverage.

"Well, what are you waiting for? Give me all you got, vampboy!" Makoto turned her head, giving him an intense sensual look.

Louis humored Makoto as his dick touched Makoto's anal hole, causing her to blush and moan. His cock teasing miffed her a little. As Louis was about to insert, Makoto turned and shot him an intense glare, her cheeks a full blush of red. She had the sternest but cutest tsundere look Louis had ever seen.
"Hey, what are you stalling for?! Just get inside me already!"

Ordered by his 'Queen', Louis shoved his penis firmly inside Makoto's vagina and banged her in doggy style fashion. Haru got under Louis and sucked on his testicles. During Makoto's threesome with Louis and Haru, Makoto managed to smile during the intercourse.

"Oh god, yes! That's more like it! Fuck me hard, vampboy!" Makoto screamed with delight. "Now, tell me who's the best girl? Who's the best girl?!"

Louis gritted his teeth while thrusting his penis inside her. "...you are…"

"Who am I?! Say my name!"

"Makoto!"

"That's not good enough! What's my name?!"

"Q-Queen! Queen Makoto!"

Wearing a satisfied smile, Makoto moaned loud and hard after each thrust. Makoto knew she'd be competing with Skyler over who'd make love to their lover first. In her mind, Makoto feels like she'd beaten Skyler by having two lovers she can control.

After that, Haru and Makoto got into a 69 position with Haru on the bottom of them. Louis continued thrusting into Makoto's while both licked Haru's pussy. Makoto was on the left side and Louis was on the right. Makoto's right arm wrapped around Louis's neck. As they licked her midsection, Haru let out a sensual gasp and blushed. Haru licked Makoto and Louis's pussy and dick.

Haru then fondled Louis's buttcheeks with her right hand and fingered him with her index finger before she playfully spanked him. Louis's felt his dick inside Makoto release cum as he climaxed. Haru felt her midsection get wet.

Louis lied down between Makoto's breasts only for her to embrace him from behind. Makoto felt her breast nipples harden. Louis had an intercourse with Haru with her on top of him. Makoto rewarded Louis with a passionate kiss and wrapped his upper body with her right arm. Makoto caressed her boyfriend's chest with her right hand.

Louis's right hand held Haru's back. He slid that same hand and fingered Haru's buttocks. At the same time, Louis's left hand held Makoto's left hand. Haru wrapped her left arm around Louis's neck while her right hand firmly held Louis's and Makoto's left hands. Finally, Haru climaxed as her fluids splattered over Makoto and Louis. The three shared a threeway kiss before falling asleep in each other's arms out of exhaustion.

A couple hours later before the crack of dawn, Louis awoke finding himself asleep with Makoto and Haru on his opposite sides. Before he got up from his bed, he felt two hands grab him. He turned as Makoto and Haru held his hands.

"Hey, where do you think you're going?" Makoto sternly asked.

"We're not done yet, Louie," Haru teased him with a playful and sensual smirk.

The three entered the bathroom. Louis, Makoto, and Haru jumped inside the hot bathtub. The hot water relaxed and cleaned their bodies. Louis reached for a bottle of body oil and placed some in his right hand. He rubbed Makoto and Haru's backs with the oil.
"Right there," Makoto exposed her left shoulder to Louis.

The Revenant massaged some oil on Makoto's shoulder. Haru lifted her left leg up and rubbed some oil on it. Makoto leaned back with Louis and Haru sitting beside her. The couple were able to help lift Louis's spirits after tonight and this erotic night exemplified their trust in each other. Louis was never more happy than before with their enriched friendship.

"Mako-chan, Haru-chan. Thank you. After tonight, I deeply value our bonds." Louis expressed gratitude to his two girlfriends.

Makoto and Haru genuinely smiled and nodded.

Haru asked her lover. "So, how often do you want to do this, Mako-chan?"

The police officer tapped Haru's chin. "As long as we want and if Louis is available."

Louis raised a wine glass. "Anytime." As he said this, Makoto and Louis raised their champagne glasses and tapped it to Louis's wine glass. "Let our new relationship enrich a beautiful bond between us."

Before sipping their glasses, Makoto and Haru chimed in. "Yes!"

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**Chapter Soundtrack**

**Shin Megami Tensei IV OST - Battle B1 - (Midboss Battle Theme)** - A monster-of-the-week battle theme.

**Detective Extended - PERSONA5 the Animation Original Soundtrack Vol.2** - The protagonists discuss about The Consortium's invitations at Big Bang Burger.

**Kakegurui XX OST - The Momobami Clan** - As the song title states, the debut of the Momobami Clan.

**Kakegurui XX OST - Waltz of Trickery** - Discussion among the Momobami Clan and Yumeko meeting old acquaintances/rivals.

**Shin Megami Tensei IV OST - Distress** - The Consortium reveal themselves to the Phantom Thieves and the Revenants.

**CRISIS OST - Hiroyuki Sawano - Ignore the Nation... Awake My Identity** - Jack and Eva arrive and the Revenants mull over whose memories have returned and whose haven't.

**CRISIS OST - Hiroyuki Sawano - public-AN** - The Thieves and Revenants take in the news after meeting The Consortium.

**Final Fantasy VIII - Waltz for the Moon** - Evening Dance Ball

**Final Fantasy XV OST - 67. Starlit Waltz** - Evening Dance Ball

**Bad News - Pokémon Detective Pikachu OST** - Louis feeling troubled with his relations with Cruz and her father.

**Thomas Bergersen - Autumn Love** - Louis/Makoto/Haru's threesome.

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Hello, Miura Beach; Beautiful Boy Lovers (こんにちは、三浦浜；美しい少年愛好家)

Chapter Notes

Here's a link to the Fanfiction.net version and for those who want the original version, which will include detailed author notes.

Fanfiction.net link: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/13165382/11/Urban-Legends

Chapter XI

Hello, Miura Beach; Beautiful Boy Lovers (こんにちは、三浦浜；美しい少年愛好家)

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Near Hakubutsukan-Dobutsuen Station (白ぶつかん道別店)/Ueno Park (上野公園)/Taitō, Tokyo (台東区, 東京)/July 5, 2019 (2019年7月5日) (Reality: July 5, 2021)/11:45 PM (JST)

It was another late-night escapade and that meant another melee with a vengeful spirit. Arriving near the abandoned train station, Joker, Sion, Tennyo, Stinger, Mona, and Queen confronted another infamous Japanese urban legend: Teke Teke.

"Heads up, guys!" Mona warned the group as a sickly pale-skinned young woman whose entire lower body half was missing.

The sound the spirit made while dragging her upper torso mimicked a scratching noise, akin to a teke teke sound.

"Is that the Teke Teke?" Sion inquired, intensely glaring down the vengeful spirit.

"It fits the description we were given and the sounds she's making," Queen replied, readying her metal knuckles.

"The infamous spirit of a young girl who died after falling on a railway and was cut in half by a speeding train," Joker informed them on her backstory.

The half-bodied woman's lower half was covered with blood. She wore a dirty, torn old school girl's uniform. Her hair was back length and black, coupled with strings of black hair covering most of her face. The group could discern the woman's glowing yellow eyes, which set their unworldly gaze on them. She let out a loud croaking sound and brandished a sharp-looking scythe covered in her victims' blood.

"Judging that creepy look she's got going, she's in no mood for a chat," Stinger remarked as she put on her mask. Her eyes turned blood red and her metallic scorpion tail materialized behind her back. She struck first and shot her Stinger-Type Blood Veil at Teke Teke, who quickly dodged to the side. "Damn it!" She pulled out her rifle.
"I've got you covered, Lady Mia!" Mona fired Teke Teke with his Sudarshana slingshot. His shot caught Teke Teke's forehead and knocked her around.

"You're mine!" Stinger fired a rifle shot that tore through Teke Teke's head, blowing off a chunk of her face.

Despite a quarter of her face torn off, Teke Teke snarled in response. She retaliated and rushed the group with her scythe. Swinging her scythe at the group, she nearly tore off Stinger's lower half, but she jumped up and batted away the ghost's scythe with her metal scorpion's tail. Teke Teke quickly crawled away.

"Going somewhere?!!" Queen roared, driving Anat toward the spirit. She hopped off her Persona and punched Teke Teke. After disorienting the spirit, Anat shapeshifted into her humanoid form.

The demoness blasted Teke Teke with a Flash Bomb. After damaging it, Sion and Tennyo took turns attacking it. Sion slashed at the spirit with his Regicide Blade. Tennyo struck the vengeful spirit with her ko-naginata. After taking their attacks, Teke Teke screamed with fury and recalled the scythe back to her hand. Once regaining her weapon, she fought back as her scythe collided with Sion's blade and Tennyo's ko-naginata.

Joker quickly intervened and fired his Tyrant Pistol at the spirit. The bullet knocked Teke Teke far back. As Teke Teke slowly got up, Tennyo readily blasted her with Lightning Thorn. Sion prepared to take out Teke Teke with his Ogre-Type Blood Veil. However, Queen had other ideas and got in between the couple.

"Queen, what are you doing?" Tennyo asked her.

"I've got her," Queen shot a fierce glare at the spirit. She rushed Teke Teke and unloaded punches with her Nuclear Fists, pounding her with a series of combo punches. She then kicked Teke Teke into the air and spiked her like a volleyball.

As Teke Teke was left lying, Queen went down for the finishing blow, but the spirit phased out of her reach. Queen surveyed the area, but Teke Teke was already behind her and lifting her scythe to strike the Phantom Thief with. Sion quickly intervened and pushed Teke Teke away with his demon's hand. He saved Queen from getting her torso sliced in two.

"You owe me for that, Mako-chan," Sion sardonically remarked.

"Yeah, thanks," Queen whipped her hair back.

Tennyo called upon Io, who readied her halberd. Once putting on her mask, Ivy rushed Teke Teke and attacked her with her halberd. Teke Teke countered Ivy's strike with her scythe. The two exchanged consecutive strikes, both countering the other's attacks. When Teke Teke phased and reappeared behind Ivy, Tennyo charged in to help, but Ivy quickly jumped over Teke Teke's scythe slash. Ivy then kicked Teke Teke's face and knocked her down. Seizing this opportunity, Ivy bound Teke Teke with her Ivy-Type Blood Veil. The spikes from her Blood Veil not only bound, but disarmed the scythe from Teke Teke. Tennyo then fired another Lightning Thorn that struck Teke Teke.

"Great work! Now, let's finish this, Lady Mia!" Mona called out.

As Teke Teke phased through the thorns, the spirit stumbled toward the scythe. Once she reached for it, Joker shot the weapon from her reach. Teke Teke then saw Stinger and Mona running at her. Stinger shot her metal scorpion tail and stuck it through her chest. As she lifted Teke Teke up, Mona
summoned his Ultimate Persona, Mercurius.

"Attaaack!" Mona howled as Mercurius hit Teke Teke with a **Lucky Punch**.

Taking a full blow from Mercurius, Teke Teke was brought down. However, the spirit attempted a counterattack. She recalled her scythe and tossed it at Mona. Mona attempted to call Mercurius to defend him, but Stinger stood in the way.

"Stay down, Mona!" Stinger instructed.

"Lady Mia!" Mona watched as the scythe stab her in the back.

The others rushed in to attack Teke Teke. While the Thieves and Vein Remnants engaged the spirit, Mona tended to Stinger, who ripped the scythe from her back.

"Lady Mia, you didn't need to be so reckless!"

"I know, but she was aiming for your little cute self," she smiled and painfully winced at the same time.

"Hang on. Let Io heal you."

"Thanks, but I'll be fine… my self healing may be not up to snuff like it used to, but I'm not totally helpless," Stinger slowly stood, ignoring the fact she had a nasty wound on her back.

"Sorry, but you're wounded and I can't let you fight like this. You stay behind me, Lady Mia!" Mona showed his chivalrous side. He sent Mercurius to attack Teke Teke.

As Mercurius headed straight for Teke Teke, the other Thieves and Remnants moved away. Mercurius struck Teke Teke with a **Miracle Punch**. This devastating force was enough to bring Teke Teke down.

"That'll show you to hurt my friend!" Mona mouthed off the vengeful spirit.

Suddenly, Teke Teke popped up to attack Mona, but a metal scorpion tail went through her head. Teke Teke collapsed. Stinger then grabbed Mona with her tail and brought him over to her.

"Lady Mia, take it easy now," Mona suggested.

"I'll be fine… well, when Io fixes me up."

"Don't worry, she can take care of that wound," Tennyo nodded to Ivy.

Ivy sat next to Stinger and treated her wound with a healing Gift, a property often treats the wounded during and after a battle. The other Thieves and Remnants surrounded Teke Teke, who was coming to her senses. Joker shoved his pistol to her head.

"It's over. Go back to the other side and never cause mischief here again," Joker threatened with his finger on the trigger ready to cap her if she dared to attack.

"Just know your victims won't rest in peace because you killed them," Sion reminded the spirit.

Tennyo nodded. "Consider your chance to repent."

Mona addressed Teke Teke. "You hurt my friend, but thankfully she's not fully human so she'll be fine. You better reflect on your actions."
Wearing a defeated look, Teke Teke tucked her head as if she were being lectured by the adults in her lifetime. Then, her body glowed with white light and vanished in an ethereal flare.

"And hopefully she learns her lesson and never comes back," Queen scoffed.

"Is Mia going to be ok?" Joker asked Mona.

"Yeah, Lady Mia will be fine! Nothing a little healing from Io can't handle!" Mona boasted. He then turned and winked to Stinger. "Right?"

Stinger genuinely smiled back. "Yep, you're right. Thanks Mona-chan."

After Mona and Queen called off their Ultimate Personas, the group left the abandoned station and stormed out of Ueno Park.

"Are you going back with Mia?" Joker asked Mona.

"Yeah, it's where I'm staying now."

"Heh, is she spoiling your ass rotten with sushi and fried shrimp?"

Mona scoffed. "Maybe, what is it to you?"

Joker replied with a sardonic smile. "'Cause I think I'm seeing a bit of a gut on you."

"Hey, shut up!"

Joker laughed. "I'm kidding. Look, I'm just glad she's taking care of you. Just know, me and Ann miss you and you're welcome to come back anytime you want. Our home is yours."

The feline-looking creature crossed his short arms. "Hm, maybe if only to surprise my Lady Ann."

"Your Lady Ann?" Joker said in an irked tone and raised a brow.

"Mona-chan, are you ready to go?!" Stinger called out from the distance.

"Well, take care, Ren. Say hi to Lady Ann for me!" Mona waved to Joker as he followed Stinger.

Watching the two leave, Joker smiled. "I'm glad you've found a place to call home, Morgana. We'll be waiting if you ever need us."

As he reached her, Mona hopped on Stinger's shoulder.

"Everything ok, Mona-chan?"

"Yeah, just telling dummy over there not to make Lady Ann cry."

Hearing this, Stinger giggled. "Still lecturing him like a little boy?"

"He's still a kid to me, but he and Ann have been happy with each other. I don't want to get in their way."

Stinger stroked Mona's fuzzy chin. "If you ever want to go see them, don't hesitate, ok?"

"Thanks, Lady Mia."

"Now, to see if Nicola's back home like he promised he would."
"Knowing him, probably."

"What was that?" Stinger raised her voice.

"Ah! It's just a joke! Honestly!"

xx

Karnstein Residence/Roppongi (六本木)/Minato, Tokyo (港区, 東京)/July 7, 2019 (2019年7月7日) (Reality: July 7, 2021)/9:20 AM (JST)

"Good morning, sis," Nicola walked into the kitchen, having just woken up. He saw Mia making omelets and sausage. "Oh, smells good!"

Mia quickly turned with spatula in hand. She gave him a stern look that would frighten a child. "You were out late again, weren't you?"

"What? No, I wasn't. I already was in bed when you came home."

"Uh huh, but you still came home late."

"How can you tell?"

"Cause you look dead tired and didn't take a bath last night."

"Ok, but what if I just didn't tell like taking a bath last night? I'll do it after breakfast."

Sighing, Mia hugged Nicola. "Look, I know Shinya's your best friend and he's a good kid, but you two need to mind how late you're out, especially during these nights lately."

"So, did you and the Phantom Thieves fight another urban ghost?"

"Yeah, and that's why I'm against you and your friends being out so late."

Recognizing the potential dangers, Nicola nodded. "Alright, fine, I promise to come home before sunset."

"I'm glad to hear that. Now, are you hungry? Your plate's done!" Mia put an omelette topped with strawberry sauce, sausage, and wheat toast.

"Thanks, sis," Nicola took his plate. From the corner of his eye, he spotted Morgana. "Morning, Morgana."

Morgana responded with a cat's meow and walked over to rub against Nicola's leg.

"So, is Morgana staying with us for good?"

"Yeah, looks like he's staying here. He's grown attached to us."

"He sure is." Nicola watched Morgana walk into the kitchen.

"By the way, Shiho's coming over," Mia reminded him. "So, you might want to hurry up eat and wash up. She's going to be here in half an hour."

"And tell me that on such short notice, sis?!"
"Whoops," Mia remarked as she watched Nicola eating his breakfast. She looked down and put a bowl of fried shrimp in front of Morgana. "Enjoy, Mona-chan."

"God, you spoil me so much!" Morgana said as he woofed down on the fried shrimp.

Half an hour has passed and the doorbell rang. Mia raced over to answer the door. Before opening it, she took off her apron and fixed her hair. She opened the door and was met with Suzui Shiho's radiant smile.

"Good morning, Mia."

"Shiho! Come in, I've been waiting for you," she offered Shiho entry into her residence.

Surveying the entrance and the dining area, Shiho noted while taking off her shoes. "Did you redecorate for whatever reason?"

"Maybe I moved around a few things? I'm not too particular where I want my things placed."

"Oh, and here I thought you tidied up the place just to impress me."

Realizing Shiho may be onto her, Mia changed the subject. "...oh, hey I made us breakfast! Would you care to have some?"

"That's why I'm here," Shiho was then led into the dining area. She saw two plates all with the same food items Nicola had earlier. "Wow, it looks so delish."

"Help yourself," Mia offered Shiho a seat.

"Thank you, Mia," she sat down and scanned the breakfast meal sitting in front of her. "You really outdid yourself here." She picked up her fork and saw Mia sitting next to her. She bit into the scrambled egg and smiled after every bite. "Oh, it's so good."

"I'm glad you like it, Shiho. I wanted to make sure it came out just right."

"And you cooked them well. Everything about this is delicious. You didn't have to go all the way for me."

Mia placed a hand over Shiho's hand. "But, I wanted to."

Shiho blushed and genuinely smiled, feeling moved by Mia's touch. This was unlike the uncomfortable caressing she had gotten from an abuser. No, this was the comfortable touch of her closest friend outside of Ann. Shiho hadn't realized it but her hand was holding Mia's. The two became drawn to each other as their gaze met. They leaned forward for a kiss.

"Hey, sis, I forgot to mention I'm meeting Shinya somewhere today!" Nicola interrupted their moment, causing Mia and Shiho to withdraw and resume eating their breakfast like nothing happened. He noticed the table slightly rattled after the two ladies quickly withdrew from the other.

"Is everything ok here?"

"Yeah, heh we're fine," Mia waved him off. "So, run along and hang with Shinya."

"Hi, Nicola! Did anyone tell you you're a cutie?" Shiho smiled to him.

"Li-Ming does everytime I see her," Nicola blushed.

"Your friend has great taste in men."
“Right, I better get going. Later you two!” He headed out the door.

Mia sighed. "So, who do you find cuter? Me or my brother?"

Shiho giggled. "Sorry, I didn't mean to make you jealous."

"Who's jealous?"

"I just can't over you being shorter than Nicola."

Hearing this, Mia grimly smirked. "Hey, let's not go that far."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" Shiho openly apologized. "All I'm saying is your brother is cute in a handsome guy kind of way, but you're cute because…"

Waiting for a response, Mia blinked. "Yeah? I'm cute because…?" She anticipated her friend to finish her statement.

"Because I really like you."

"Tell me something I don't know already, Shiho."

Just then, Shiho noticed Morgana from the corner of her eye and beckoned him over. The black and white cat walked over to rub against her leg. Morgana definitely recognized Shiho as Ann's closest friend. Shiho picked up Morgana and sat him on her lap.

"So, is Morgana actually staying with you? I thought he belonged to Ren?"

"Ren and Ann live in a place that doesn't allow animals. So, Ren let me take in Morgana. He noticed Morgana started hanging around me often. So, I took him in and it also helps the apartments here are more lenient with allowing house pets." Mia answered as she picked up their plates.

"I see. That would make sense, I guess." Shiho said as she stared at Morgana. He meowed at her. "So, are we still on for the beach trip with Ann and the others?"

"Yep, I'm pretty excited. Are you?"

Shiho beamed. "Yeah! I picked out a really cute swimsuit. What about you?"

"I have mine all set to go."

"Great, I can't wait for Miura Beach."

As she washed their plates, Mia smiled and murmured. "Me, too, Shiho."

xxxxx

Miura Beach (三浦海岸)/Kanagawa prefecture, Tokyo (神奈川県, 東京)/July 14, 2019 (2019年7月14日) (Reality: July 14, 2021)/10:30 AM (JST)

One week later, the Thieves and the Revenants went to Miura Beach, the same place the Thieves took Futaba after helping clear her Palace and release her insecurities. The location was perfect for a summer getaway from the usual Tokyo routines.

It was a beautiful and bright Sunday morning, but also crowded. The Miura Beach was packed with crowds. There were also an array of varied colored umbrellas and tents on the sandy shores.
However, this was no sweat for the Thieves, the Revenants, and their friends. They were able to secure a decent spot for them to relax on. Shiho, Miyako, and Emily were among those friends invited by the Thieves and Revenants. Even Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, and Li-Ming joined them with their parents' permission.

Walking out of the dressing stalls, Ren, Ryuji, and Yusuke headed down a path to survey the shoreline.

Ren wore navy blue swimming trunks and black & white flip flops.

Ryuji wore bright red swimming trunks with white drawstring hanging loose. The right side of his trunks had black and white designs. He wore blue flip flops.

Yusuke wore a light gray long-sleeved hoodie, navy blue colored and white polka dotted swimming trunks, and dark blue & white flip flops.

"Dudes, this was like the best idea for a location change!" Ryuji breathed in the air. "I never would've suggested coming back here!"

"You can thank Ann for suggesting we come here," Ren acknowledged his wife's choice.

"Well, the ladies sure are happy we brought them here," Yusuke said, observing Futaba taking a selfie with Ann, Makoto, and Haru.

Ann wore a bright two piece multi-colored bikini and red flip flops. Her bikini had flowered designs brightly embellished on her bikini top and stringed bottom.

Makoto wore a white bikini top and a stylish bikini skirt. She also wore high-heel sandals.

Haru wore a green colored, white polka dotted green swimsuit halter dress, which cut off a few inches above her thighs. She also wore a white summer sun hat and high-heel sandals.

Futaba wore a yellow colored and pink dotted two piece swimsuit. Her swimsuit bottom had a frilly skirt that covered most of her waist area. She also wore red flip flops.

As they watched the ladies taking pics with each other, Hifumi, Skyler, and Io sat under an white and blue striped umbrella.

Hifumi wore an elegant black and white striped bikini top and a thigh-length black swimming shorts. She also had on dark brown sunglasses and black and white sandals.

Skyler wore black cargo swimming shorts and black sandals.

Io wore a white embroidered two piece bikini. The top barely cling tightly against her enlarged breasts as if they were about to give out and become fully exposed. Her bikini bottom was thin and barely covered her waist. She was barefooted.

"If you two want to go take selfies with the others, you're more than welcome to," Skyler encouraged Hifumi and Io.

"Are you sure?" Hifumi queried to him.

"Yeah, go on!" He beckoned them off. "I'll be just fine here."

Taking Io's hand, Hifumi got up and walked her toward Ann and the other girls. As Hifumi and Io approached them, Ann happily invited them in for group selfies. Covering her chest, Io was hesitant
to join.

"It's ok. We can start with just them taking our pics, Io," Hifumi said, holding Io's hand.

After much convincing, Hifumi and Io took simple duo pics.

"You two look so cute together!" Ann took a picture of them with her phone. Hifumi then gave Ann her phone to take another picture of them.

Gazing over Io's 'Ioobs' from a distance, Futaba compared her chest size with the pale-skinned girl's. She felt sort of envious of how such a quiet and innocent girl could possibly have enlarged breasts. Then, she, being the group's big otaku, recalled such characters exist in anime and manga.

"Hmm," Futaba observed Io.

"What is it, Futaba?" Haru asked her.

"Sometimes I do wonder if Io is a walking and breathing 2D character. No normal girl have knockers that big."

Haru chuckled. "Don't be silly."

Makoto added with a chuckle. "Am I hearing jealousy?"

The otaku scowled. "...what?! No!" She turned away and covered her chest. "I can't believe it's been a few years since you guys brought me here. Remember?"

Ann smiled. "How can we forget? It was after we rescued you and let go of all your insecurities."

Makoto nodded. "And when you awakened into a Phantom Thief."

"And I can't thank you enough," Futaba openly embraced Ann and Makoto.

"Well, I wasn't there to see that all happen, but after all I've heard I'm glad you're now free spirited and no longer confined in that box you've kept yourself in, Futaba-chan," Haru said.

"Hearing this from you all, I'm happy to know I'm not the only one who positively influenced by Ren," Hifumi added as she scanned the beach. "Being here it brings back good but also some painful memories."

"What do you mean? Did something happen?" Makoto asked her.

"Do you remember our school trip to Hawaii?"

"Yeah. Of course, we do. Why?" Ann queried to the Shogi woman.

"You see, during our trip there I was harassed by a couple of foreigners," Hifumi explained.

"That's right. They were trying to hit on you, weren't they?" Makoto recalled Ren telling her.

"Yes, but thankfully Ren whisked me away before the situation could've gotten worse. I'm thankful Io wasn't around then." Hifumi wished she had forgotten about those foreigners.

Nodding, Futaba chimed in. "Yeah, between her and her huge assets, those foreign pervs would've taken advantage over her."
"No kidding. Doesn't matter if they're Japanese or foreigners, pervs will prey on any woman they can get their grubby hands on. I totally understand." Ann reproved sexual harassers considering her and Shiho's horrible history with one. "But, yeah good on Ren on bailing you out of that one, Hifumi. My hubby's a dependable guy."

"Yes, and since then I've been hesitant to approach foreigners until Skyler proved me wrong," Hifumi said this as soon as Skyler approached her with two popsicles.

"What about me?" Skyler overheard.

"Oh, Skyler!" Hifumi was taken by surprise.

"Yay, fruitiscle!" Io squeaked with joy as Skyler handed her a raspberry flavored popsicle. She bit into it and drained some of the juices like it were blood.

"And here's yours Hifumi," he handed his girlfriend a blueberry flavored one.

"Thank you, Skyler," Hifumi bit into her popsicle.

"Hifumi told me all about that incident. If I had been there, I would've knocked them right on their asses," Skyler claimed what he would've done given the situation if he was in Ren's place.

"I'm sure you would've, Skyler. I would've done the same if Hifumi wasn't there." Ren chimed in as he, Ryuji, and Yusuke approached the group. "And I didn't want her to get hurt if a fight did break out."

"Not to mention we were on a school trip," Yusuke stated. "Hifumi and I were originally intended to fly with our school to Los Angeles, but weather circumstances prevented that and we ended up in Hawaii with the rest of you."

"Right and I even asked Ren here if he was tryin' to make a move on her! I thought for sure he was gonna get a chick before me!" Ryuji chuckled, elbowing his best friend in the side.

"But you eventually ended up with me, Ryuji-kun," the sound of Miyako's beautiful voice perked Ryuji's ears.

As Ryuji turned, his face turned red with zest. Miyako wore a purple two piece bikini, a white summer hat, and white high-heel sandals.

"Heh, you wanna splash in the water with me?" Miyako offered.

"Do I?! Hell yeah I would, babe!" Ryuji eagerly ran into the sea water as he and Miyako played in the water. He kicked up water at her.

Having seen this, Ann had an idea and grabbed Ren's hand. "This looks like fun. You wanna join in?"

"Right now?"

"Yeah! C'mon!" Ann pulled Ren along as they walked into the water.

"Hell yeah, the more the better!" Ryuji hollered as he splashed water toward Ann and Ren's way.

"Like hell you're getting me wet, jerk!" Ann laughed and kicked water back at her former Shujin Academy classmate.
Makoto and Haru exchanged looks as they decided to not get involved. That is until someone walked up behind them.

"You two don't want to get wet? Can't say I blame you," Louis chimed in.

Louis wore cargo swimming shorts with a mix of shades of light gray and black green. He also wore brown sandals.

"Louis. Where have you been?" Haru turned to ask him.

"Looking for a place to sit under the shade. You two are more than welcome to join," he offered them a place to keep away from the ocean and sun.

As Makoto and Haru turned around, they saw Louis sitting under an umbrella offering space for them to sit down. Haru grabbed Makoto's hand and sat her down. Louis offered sunscreen lotion for the ladies. Haru gladly accepted as she rubbed lotion on herself and on Makoto's back.

Not too far from where the Thieves and Revenants were, Yakumo and Emily watched some people, including a few couples, playing volleyball.

Yakumo wore dark gray men's swim shorts and black flip flops.

Emily wore a dark red two piece bikini with a white towel covering her waist. She had on white flip flops and back sunglasses.

"Hey, we should ask the others if they want to play volleyball," Emily suggested.

"That sounds like a fun idea," replied Yakumo.

"Yeah, doesn't it? Maybe we can ask Skyler is he's up for it."

"If we can find him," Yakumo surveyed the beach.

"What do you mean?" Emily was confused.

"I mean, I don't see him anywhere."

"Hmm, maybe he went for a swim?"

Sure enough, not only was he out of sight, Skyler was swimming underwater with Hifumi. As the couple swam, they held hands. Hifumi briefly let Skyler go and swam a couple of feet away. He watched her swimming toward him. He became mesmerized by how adept of a swimmer Hifumi was, as if she were a water maiden. He even pictured her as a mermaid.

Hifumi got close and gave him an underwater kiss. Skyler returned an underwater liplock. After they kissed, they popped out of the ocean. Skyler poked his head out. Then, Hifumi poked out and threw her head back as her wet hair flowed outward.

"How was that?" Hifumi asked, squeezing the sea water from her hair.

"That was incredible. You kiss even better when we're underwater."

Hearing this appraisal from her lover, Hifumi modestly smiled. "Oh, c'mon. You can be honest."

"I was honest. Your kiss is better when we're underwater."
Hifumi gave a coy smirk. "Well, maybe we should go to the beach often during our outings and kiss in the ocean. Well?"

Skyler chuckled. "Hey, whatever you want." He glanced as he noticed his Revenant friends waving to him and Hifumi. "Let's go see what they want."

"What do they want?"

"Who knows? But, let's go see. Knowing Louis, he probably wants us to play a game with him and the others."

"Race you to the shore then!" Hifumi started paddling her way toward the shore.

"Hey, who said you can get a head start?!" Skyler quickly swam to catch up with the Shogi player.

Elsewhere on the beach, Mia and Shiho shared space under an umbrella. Both lied next to each other on a spread towel. Morgana lied down comfortably next to Mia.

Mia wore a black swim halter top. There was a heart-shaped crest cut out at the center most of the halter top. She had on red sunglasses with black lenses and clear high-heel sandals.

Shiho wore a dark blue two piece bikini with a towel around her waist, pink sunglasses, and brown high-heel sandals.

"This was such a great idea. I needed to get away from the mundane city side," Shiho said, spreading suntan lotion on her arms and shoulders.

Lifting her sunglasses down, Mia watched Shiho putting on lotion.

"Mind if I rub some lotion on your back?"

"Oh, sure. Thanks," Shiho gave Mia the suntan lotion bottle.

As she got behind Shiho, Mia rubbed lotion on her back. She paused and briefly glanced over the back of Shiho's bikini top strap.

"Say, do you mind if I unhook the back of your top? Y'know so I can put lotion…"

"Say no more," Shiho gladly undid the strap while holding her bikini top. She let out a relaxed sigh as she felt Mia caressing her back. "That feels good."

Just then, Ann walked by and greeted the two.

"Hey, how's it going? Shiho, you having fun?"

Morgana perked his head up. "Lady Ann!" He still sounded like a normal cat from Shiho's point of view, but Ann and Mia heard what he really said.

Shiho replied with a relaxed smile. "Wouldn't have it any better. What's up, Ann?"

"We're looking for people to play some volleyball with us. You two wanna come along?"

"Sure, sounds like fun!" Shiho gladly accepted.

"Eh, I don't know…" Mia hesitated, but Shiho grabbed her hand.
"C'mon, it'll be fun. You and me can be on the same team with Ann."

"Well, now that you put it that way. Sure," Mia nodded as Shiho dragged her along. "But, what about my brother and his friends?"

"Oh, they're fine. Look," Shiho pointed her to Shinya and his friends building a sand castle. Shinya wore a white t-shirt, red swimming trunks, and brown sandals.

Nicola wore a long-sleeved white hoodie, brown cargo swimming shorts, and black sandals.

Reiko wore a yellow one piece swimsuit with cute white and red flowered embroidered designs on them. She wore pink sandals.

Li-Ming wore a white one piece swimsuit with symbols of the zodiac animals, each in various colors: red, blue, black, and yellow. She wore a yellow summer straw hat and white flip flops.

Seeing her brother and his friends were playing safely, Mia's state of mind was at ease.

"You're awfully protective of your brother, aren't you?" Shiho queried to the blonde-haired Revenant.

"I'm his legal guardian and the only family he has willing to watch him."

"I see, but don't you have any other family to help?"

"Not really and besides it's complicated. I'd rather not get into that."

Shiho smiled and nodded. "I understand. Well, what I'd like to know how your brother and Shinya met. How long have they been friends for?"

"More or less a few years. It all started when I took Nicola to an arcade in Akihabara one afternoon. They were barely in their first year of junior high and much smaller than they are now." Mia explained, reflecting to the instance when Nicola and Shinya first met.

xxxxx

Gigolo Arcade/Akihabara (秋葉原)/Chiyoda, Tokyo (千代田区, 東京)/Flashback/July 10, 2018 (2018年7月10日)/1:30 PM (JST)

A few years ago, Nicola was brought into an arcade full of games and young people playing these various games. Mia escorted her little brother along to play numerous games. At one point, Nicola ditched her sister to find a game to play on his own. As he came upon an arcade machine called House of the Dead: Scarlet Dawn, he saw a small boy his age. This boy, a young Oda Shinya, had a red cap with 'Get Smoked' in bold yellow.

"Hi, um… can I play with you?" Nicola meekly asked Shinya.

"I don't really need the help."

"Please?"

Shinya sighed after Nicola pestered him a few times. "Sure, fine. Grab your gun!"

As Nicola joined in, he grabbed his control gun and stood next to Shinya. Shinya already noticed the nervous kid was a novice. Starting with the first stage, he taught Nicola how to shoot. Nicola initially
struggled, which slightly irked Shinya, but he stayed patient with Nicola.

At one point, Nicola cried fearfully when a swarm of zombies came out of a room. Then, when they reached the Chariot boss, Nicola had forgotten to reload.

"Hey, you gotta reload quick!" Shinya reminded him.

"Oh no, look out!" Nicola cried out.

The Chariot boss got Shinya. Shinya realized he was fresh out of credits. The words 'Game Over' bled over the screen.

"Ah damn it! Look at what you made me do! I knew I shouldn't let someone who sucks at games play with me!" Shinya harshly yelled at Nicola, making him cry.

"Mia! He swore at me!" Nicola cried out in tears.

"Mia? Oh shit, don't tell me you brought…" Shinya realized Nicola can easily run over to get his sibling to confront him. "Hey, you don't have to do! Look! I'm sorry! Please stop crying, ok? See? I'm not cussing anymore!"

Nicola ceased his crying and wiped his tears. "Y-Y-You're not mad at me?"

Shinya sighed in exasperation. "No, it was just a dumb game anyway. Besides, I can't always win them all the time, right?"

"You're so good."

"Yeah, but hardly anyone bothers to play with me. You're the first one besides an older friend of mine. He had trouble with some games, but he got really good and we became game buddies."

Hearing this, Nicola felt much better knowing someone else played games with Shinya.

"Look, I'm sorry I got mad at you, but I take gaming very seriously. I shouldn't take it out on you."

"No, it's ok. This game was kinda scary though."

Shinya chuckled. "Oh, you haven't seen anything. If we had gotten further, you'd probably be crying more."

"I guess that's a good thing."

Shinya extended a hand to Nicola. "Put it there. I'm Oda Shinya. What's your name?"

Nicola murmured. "N-Nicola…"

"Eh? I can't hear ya. Louder."

Clenching his hands, Nicola yelled out. "Nicola Karnstein!" He quickly grabbed Shinya's hand and shook it.

"Heh, nice to meet ya, Nicola. So, who's Mia?"

"My sister. She brought me here."

Shinya gulped. "Uh… your sister?"
"Nicola! There you are!" Mia called out as she pulled him into a hug. "You had me worried! Don't wander off like that!"

"I'm ok, sis! I was playing with Shinya here!"

"Shinya?" Mia then noticed the boy with the red cap. "Thank you for keeping my brother here. He tends to wander off whenever I'm not looking. And that's not often."

"You're welcome, miss."

"Oh, just call me Mia, Shinya," she winked to him. "I like your cap."

Usually not flustered to show off his hat, Shinya turned it around and grinned.

"How often do you come here, Shinya? Maybe I should bring Nicola here often."

"Well, a lot since it's summer break, but I normally come here on the weekends."

"I see," Mia then veered toward Nicola. "Well, what do you think? Want me to bring you here to play with Shinya?"

Nicola nodded. "Y-Yeah! I do!"

Shinya patted Nicola's shoulder. "Don't worry. I'm gonna make you into my apprentice. Learn from me and you'll be a hardcore player just like me!"

The boys shared a handshake. It was then the boys routinely saw each other every weekend at Gigolo Arcade. The training was rough in the beginning, but with time Nicola honed his gaming skills. Shinya even helped Nicola overcome his fears of the graphic violence and monsters on the screens. He and Shinya formed an unstoppable partnership. One day, Ren came for a surprise visit and was introduced to Nicola. The three even played several games together, including *House of the Dead: Scarlet Dawn*.

Shinya was later entrusted to come over to play with Nicola's place. With Shinya involved in Nicola's life, Mia had little to concern herself with as it relates to her brother.

xxxxx

*May 5, 2019 (2019年5月5日) 4:00 PM (JST)*

As the two boys entered junior high together in their second year, they maintained their friendship. They also often faced challenges in academics and with bullies. Nicola had little issues with academics since he got good grades, but bullies were an entirely different issue. He was the target for these bullies.

One day, Shinya had seen enough and stepped in to defend his friend.

"You three dipshits want to pick on my friend? You deal with me!" Shinya balled up his hands into fists and beckoned the bullies to come at him. His voice was slightly deeper having went through puberty. He had grown several inches and wore his boy school uniform.

"What the hell, Oda? Mind your own business! This blonde-haired fairy princess is our business!"

One of the bullies, a rotund preteen boy with a near shaven head, scoffed.

"You take that back!" Shinya snapped.
Seeing his friend stick up for him, Nicola got up. "Shinya…" He addressed him in a softer but also deeper voice than it used to be a few months ago. He, too, wore his boy school uniform. He raised his head and wiped the blood from his lip. "Thanks, man."

"What are friends for?" Shinya nodded.

Nicola balled up his fists and stood up to the bullies. "And who are you calling a fairy princess? What? Are you jealous of my good looks? At least the girls find me attractive."

"Yeah, so? I'm gonna mess your face up so bad, they ain't gonna like ya no more! Get 'em, boys!" The rotund bully sent his two flunkies to handle Shinya and Nicola.

In short order, Shinya and Nicola beat them up easily. The big bully was flabbergasted by how effective a team Shinya and Nicola were.

"You want some of us, Porky?!" Shinya yelled at him.

Shaking his head, the big bully ran off like a chicken and left his flunkies behind. Shinya and Nicola turned to high five each other. In fact, they got so close to each other their noses met. Realizing this, Shinya quickly withdrew his face from Nicola and coughed.

"So, um, wanna hit up the local arcade before curfew?" Shinya asked.

"Sure."

May 28, 2019 (2019 年 5 月 28 日 )/8:45 AM (JST)

"Class. Please welcome our transfer student," Shinya and Nicola's homeroom teacher brought in a young female student dressed in her uniform.

"Good morning. I'm Hanami Reiko," the girl bowed and introduced herself after writing her name on the board.

Upon seeing Reiko, Shinya's face blushed. His heart beat quickly. Nicola noticed his friend aimlessly staring off at Reiko's direction.

"You may sit behind Oda Shinya, but I'd advise not to talk to him much, Ms. Hanami."

Reiko walked by Shinya and Nicola. She took her seat behind Shinya and tapped his shoulder.

"Hey, the teacher said I'm not supposed to talk to you too much?"

Shinya said nothing as he realized Reiko was casually walking to him.

"Uh, are you ok?" Reiko blinked in confusion.

"Oh, don't mind him. He's very chatty once you get to know him. Right, Shinya?" Nicola playfully teased his best friend, who shook his head and came to.

"Oh, hi. Reiko, right?"

"Yep. Pleased to meet you."

Shinya blushed and smiled like a fool. "Heh, maybe we can give ya a tour of our school?"
"That would be nice."

"And I'm Nicola. It's a pleasure to meet you, Reiko," Nicola genuinely greeted her.

"Same here. I hope the three of us can be friends."

Shinya kept a dreamy gaze on Reiko as he ultimately developed a crush on her.

xxxxx

 Miura Beach (三浦海岸)/Kanagawa prefecture, Tokyo (神奈川県, 東京)/July 14, 2019 (2019年7月14日) (Reality: July 14, 2021)/11:00 AM (JST)

"Shinya? Shinya, look out!" Reiko's voice shouted hoping to snap him out of his trance.

A volleyball flew at and smacked Shinya's forehead. The teen yelped out and rolled around while covering his forehead.

"Ow! Man that's gotta hurt!" Nicola cringed as he checked over Shinya. "Hey, are you ok?"

"You spaced out for no reason, Shinya! What were you thinking?" She chided Shinya and helped lift him off the ground.

"Sorry, guys. I wasn't paying attention, ehehe."

Li-Ming rolled her eyes. "Well obviously."

As Reiko helped Shinya over to grab some ice from Mia's cooler, Nicola and Li-Ming watched Shiho pick up the volleyball.

"I'm so sorry! That was my fault! Tell Shinya I'm sorry!" Shiho openly apologized to the teens as she headed off to meet with Mia and the others.

Meanwhile, most of the Thieves and Revenants played a competitive but fun set of volleyball matches. Ren, Ann, Mia, Shiho, Skyler, and Hifumi played against Louis, Makoto, Yakumo, Emily, Ryuji, and Miyako. Needless to say, despite Skyler and Makoto's constant taunts, the Thieves and Revenants enjoyed their leisure activity. Futaba, Yusuke, Haru, Morgana, and Io watched from the sidelines.

After helping ice his head bump, Reiko helped Shinya over to finish building their sand castle. As they continued their castle build, two teenage boys walked by and knocked over their sand castle.

"Hey! What the hell?!!" Shinya yelled out.

"Our castle! Those two jerks just walked through and stepped all over our sand castle!" Li-Ming cried out.

"Excuse us!" Nicola called out to the two teens.

The aforementioned teens turned to face them.

The teen on the left was a tall, dirty blonde-haired teen with coffee brown eyes. He was garbed in a gray long-sleeved hoodie and black swimming shorts.

The other teen opposite from the blonde was a moderate-sized black-haired young teen. He wore a short-sleeved buttoned summer shirt and green swimming shorts.
Both had seemingly lethargic looks coupled with black shadows under their eyelids. They looked restless like they hadn't gotten any good sleep. There was dullness in their eyes.

"Did we do ruin your castle?" The blonde asked them.

"We're very sorry… but we haven't been ourselves lately," the dark-haired teen muttered lifelessly.

"Hey, check it out," Li-Ming whispered to Nicola. "They look tired."

"Yeah, and their movement is pretty uncoordinated. Aso judging by their faces, there look drained," Nicola meticulously noted.

"Maybe you two should get some sleep! Cause you ruined our castle!" Shinya harshly chided them.

"But, we just apologized. What more do you want…" The blonde paused as he grabbed his forehead. "Ugh! Takumi!"

"Haruki?!" The dark-haired teen tended to his friend, but he too felt a pulsating pain.

Bystanders paused to see what was going on and saw the two teens writhing in pain. A man approached them, but Takumi pushed him away.

"Please, get away from us!" Takumi exclaimed as he continued holding his head.

"Guys, look!" Reiko pointed to a dark purple aura shrouding the two teens.

"Shit, this is what happened with those hooded guys at Akihabara!" Shinya remembered the hooded individuals covered by the same dark auras before they turned into cryptids.

"Takumi… please, hold me… it hurts…" Haruki reached for his friend.

"Don't give in… Haruki…" Takumi leaned over for comfort.

Suddenly, the dark purple shadowy auras enveloped the teenage boys and transformed them. They have been infected by the Yami Matter. Shinya and his group warned the bystanders and beckoned them to flee. However, it was too late. Haruki and Takumi transformed into 15-foot high long-necked, flippered plesiosaur-like creatures.

Takumi became a light gray bodied plesiosaur with navy blue spectacled marks. He became the Kussie, the Japanese lake monster said to live in Hokkaido's Lake Kussharo.

Haruki became a light green-skinned plesiosaur with black stripes from the back of its neck down to its back. He became the Issie, the Japanese lake monster rumored to lurk in Lake Ikeda, on Kyushu Island.

"Oh crap! This wasn't what I expected!" Shinya exclaimed in shock.

"We need to get these people away from here!" Nicola shouted. "Reiko, Li-Ming, help us out!"

The two girls nodded and helped draw the crowds away.

It didn't long for the Thieves and Revenants to notice the source of the commotion. They, too, were shocked to see two plesiosaur-like creatures screeching and attacking the crowds.

Io quickly stood as her golden eyes glowed. "I sense Yami Matter. Yami Matter are influencing those two monsters!"
"Are they really humans, Io?" asked Hifumi.

"Yeah, the Yami Matter turned them into monsters."

"So, they could be just like those cryptids we dealt with in Akihabara," Ren realized.

"Look, what's crucial is getting those people out of there!" Skyler declared.

Mia then realized where the cryptids attacked. "Oh god, that's where Nicola, Shinya, Reiko, and Li-Ming are! We need to get to them now!" She hastily headed forward.

The Thieves and Revenants followed Mia into the conflict. As they approached, the loud screech-like roars and yelps from the Issie/Stellar Ikeda and Kussie/Tidal Kussharo sent the panicking crowds running from the area. Mia spotted her brother with Li-Ming. Reiko was on the ground after she accidentally got shoved down by someone in the crowd. Shinya hurried over to grab Reiko, but in doing so they were cornered by the Stellar Ikeda.

As Stellar Ikeda reached to bite Shinya, Reiko pleaded.

"Stop! Please don't attack us!" Reiko begged.

Stellar Ikeda briefly halted and let out another screech-like roar. Then, a projectile shot out of nowhere and exploded in the cryptid's face. Stellar Ikeda yelped out painfully. It turned its long neck and spotted two of the Phantom Thieves: Mona and Skull.

When Tidal Kussharo neary attacked Nicola and Li-Ming, a rifle round blasted the ground between the cryptid and the two teens. It also pivoted its long neck and spotted the shooter. It was Stinger with Oracle.

"Nicola! Get yourself and Li-Ming to safety!" Stinger instructed him.

"Ok, let's get moving, Li-Ming," Nicola grabbed the Chinese girl's hand.

"Wait! That monster is a human boy! Don't kill him!" Li-Ming called out.

"We'll try, but we can't make any promises," Stinger replied. "Ready?" She turned to Oracle, who nodded and invoked her Ultimate Persona, Prometheus.

"Here we go! Defenses up!" Oracle bestowed *Marakukaja* to the four-person party and increased their defenses. "And power-up!" She increased everyone's attack powers with *Matarukaja*.

After receiving their attack and defense boosts, the four split into two teams.

While the four engaged the plesiosaur cryptids, Ren, Skyler, and the others helped lead the crowd away from getting caught in the fighting.

With her Persona out, Oracle summoned dual energy swords and rushed toward Tidal Kussharo. Prometheus quickly opened fire and blasted the cryptid plesiosaur. Tidal Kussharo yelped and swiped its tail at Oracle. Oracle hopped over its tail. Stinger quickly fired a rifle shot the ground the cryptid stood and scared it. Stinger then invoker her Stinger-Type Blood Veil and stabbed its side. Tidal Kussharo let out a high-pitched screech.

Skull quickly ran at Stellar Ikeda and smacked its side with his bludgeon. The cryptid drew air from its surroundings and fired a charged particle laser. The air blast exploded with the ground, knocking Skull down.
"I've got you, Skull!" Mona intervened and shot Stellar Ikeda with his slingshot. An explosive ball smacked the plesiosaur's head and disoriented it. Mona "Show your might, Mercurius!" He summoned his Ultimate Persona.

Mercurius attacked Stellar Ikeda. The plesiosaur blasted Mercurius head-on. The Persona retaliated with *Garudyne*, hitting the plesiosaur with heavy wind attack.

"Ugh, that's it! I'm gonna knock you out!" Skull yelled and invoked his Ultimate Persona: Seiten Taisei.

Seiten Taisei landed a *Headbutt* and zapped the cryptid with *Ziodyne*. The electric attack neutralized and critically damaged the cryptid enough to knock it over.

"Uh oh! They went a little too far trying to stop him!" Reiko said.

"Hey, it's either him or us," Shinya stated.

Meanwhile, Stinger and Oracle subdued Tidal Kussharo long enough to put it down. However, seeing its friend being taken down incurred the cryptid's fury. The dark aura surrounding Tidal Kussharo fed off its anger and augmented its power. Tidal Kussharo fired a powerful water blast from its mouth, repelling Skull and Mona back.

"No wonder he's mad, he's just seen his friend get hurt!" Nicola shouted. "Sis, you and Oracle have to stop him before he goes crazy!"

Taking heed of her brother's plea, Stinger avoided the cryptid's water blasts. She timed each blast and hopped away. She then used her metal scorpion tail and grabbed Tidal Kussharo's long neck. She tried wrestling the long-necked cryptid, but it reared its head back and dragged her forward.

"Hang on!" Oracle shouted as she sliced at the side of the plesiosaur's head and wounded it.

The cryptid let out a screech-like roar and pulled away. Stinger then used her tail's strength to flip the plesiosaur on its back. Stinger pulled her metal tail away and looked to finish it off, but Mercurius swooped in and landed a *Miracle Punch* to the cryptid's belly, delivering the knock out blow.

"Whoooa! Bonafide Monafied!" Oracle cheered Mona's Persona knock out finish.

"Hey, are you two ok?!" Mona called out to Stinger and Oracle.

"We are now," Stinger replied.

"Hell yeah, that'll show those two!" Skull hollered.

"Hey, look! Those black waves surrounding them are reviving them!" Oracle warned as her visor scanned the Yami Matter influencing them. "Their energy levels are fluctuating!"

"Well, let's keep them from recovering!" Mona declared.

Then, Stinger suggested. "Maybe I should use my Gift to heal them? Maybe it'll help cure these two of the Yami Matter?"

"It's worth a shot, Lady Mia. Go for it." Mona nodded.

As Stinger utilized her Gift on Tidal Kussharo first, the long-necked cryptid's mind flashed to darkened images of he and Haruki being captured against their will and locked in cages. Takumi
recalled he and Haruki were runaways that left an orphanage. He remembered a man in a white coat offering them food and hospitality. It was a ruse as a man in riot gear pulled them in. That happened three years ago.

He specifically remembered all the horrific experiments a man with glasses did to him and Haruki, as well as to other cryptids like Yaban, Beluga, Giga, and Zwei.

Likewise, Stellar Ikeda recalled every instance he lovingly consoled Takumi after the 'horrible monster' experimented on him out of sheer curiosity and cruel pleasure. They cried every night hoping the horrible pains and anguish would end.

Haruki remembered the night they were eventually dumped into an offshore location. He remembered the cruel man's own words, deeming them, 'Cut our losses with these two failed experiments.'

After being dumped into the ocean, the boys nearly drowned and this invoked their transformations into plesiosaur cryptids. They spent the rest of their lives in each other's care. In the ocean, they lived like plesiosaurs, but on land they blended with people in their human forms. They turned to thievery to survive and vowed they'd one day get revenge on the man who turned them into monsters. The Yami Matter took advantage of the boy lovers's insecurities and corrupted them.

Today, Haruki and Takumi were purified from the Yami Matter. They awoke surrounded by Stinger, Oracle, Mona, and Skull.

"W-What happened…?" Haruki asked as he veered to Takumi, who was also regaining his bearings.
"Takumi! You're ok!"

"Haruki, oh thank god!" Takumi cried as he and Haruki lovingly embraced.

Shinya, Nicola, Reiko, and Li-Ming walked up to the two cryptid teens.

"Thank goodness you two are ok. We were worried," Reiko said.

"But, the Phantom Thieves and Remnants here helped stop you two," Nicola informed them.

Upon realizing what Nicola said, Takumi sighed. "So, we changed into our monster forms and blindly attacked again, didn't we?"

Haruki added. "We can't explain what's happened to us, but something took control of our wills and caused us to turn violent. I swear, we're not like this!"

"We know. Even when you trampled over our castle, you two were being apologetic." Shinya said.

"It was that black aura that took control of you, but thankfully these people purified you," Li-Ming acknowledged the three Thieves and the Remnant.

Stinger interjected. "Actually, I was the one who cured you two of those dark auras. You should be fine now."

Haruki and Takumi both bowed. "Thank you, miss."

"Nothing to it, but please just call me Stinger." She then looked down and winked to Mona.

"I'm Haruki."

"And I'm Takumi."
The boy lovers genuinely greeted them. "It's a pleasure and thank you for saving us."

"So, where are you two going to do now?" Reiko asked the two teens.

Takumi and Haruki got up and shrugged.

"Who knows? We're as free as the oceans and the winds now. We'll go wherever we want," Haruki said as he grabbed Takumi's hand. "Just as long as I'm with him."

"Same. I'm never letting you go, my love," Takumi turned to Haruki and walked away with his lover.

"Hey, you don't think those two will..." Skull didn't get to finish as Mona nodded.

"Nah, we removed the real source of the problem. Without the Yami Matter influencing them, they're docile," Mona plainly stated. "They shouldn't be attacking anyone else like today."

"I hope you're right," Oracle said.

Stinger turned to Nicola. "Are you and your friends ok?"

"We'll be ok, sis. Thanks," Nicola replied. "Hey, Shinya. We're close friends, but don't you think those two are so intimate?"

"If you think we'll be that intimate, you better think again, dude!" Shinya folded his arms and scoffed. "I like ya, but not that much!"

Reiko giggled. "Oh, I don't know. You two fit the standards for a yaoi couple."

"What?!" Shinya balked. "Take that back, Reiko!"

Nicola chuckled as he walked up behind Shinya and whispered in his ear. "Maybe we should try, eh, Shinya?"

"Whoa, ok I draw the line, man!" Shinya whipped around and backed away.

Nicola, Reiko, and Li-Ming laughed together as Shinya's face blushed mad red.

"Hey, look! They're leaving!" Skull pointed to Takumi and Haruki standing near the coast.

The teen boys turned and smiled. With their hands locked, they held each other and shared a passionate kiss. They caressed each other's bodies and pulled away, nudging their noses. After their kiss, they fell into the ocean and transformed into their plesiosaur forms. They swam off and departed for a new home far away.

"Goodbye!" Nicola waved to them.

"Have a safe journey!" Reiko called out to them.

"Heh, hope they find a peaceful home," Shinya added.

Stinger, Oracle, Mona, and Skull saw the other Thieves and Revenants return.

"Well, that was quite unexpected, wasn't it, Lady Mia?" Mona said.

"Yeah, but I really wanted a full day of rest and relaxation," Stinger sighed. "I hope Shiho isn't too
As she bought two water bottles, Mia returned to meet with Shiho, who waited for her near under their umbrella. She handed Shiho her bottled water.

"Here."

"Thanks, Mia. I'm sure glad everyone's ok."

"Yeah, and luckily they didn't need to call for a full evacuation. Most of the people were able to come back."

Shiho sipped some water. "I don't know, I think I prefer less people around us."

Mia concurred. "I can't argue with that."

"Say, Mia."

"Yeah?"

"We've been friends for a couple of months now and have gone out together."

Mia nodded. "Yeah, we have." She paused as Shiho held her hands. "Oh?"

Shiho replied with a seductive smile. "I really want to prove how strong our friendship has been, Mia Karnstein." She unzipped the tent behind them. "Well? What do you say?"

Not one to disappoint her best friend, Mia entered the tent with Shiho. They sat opposite from each other and placed their palms against the other. The ladies maintained deep eye contact and grasped each other's hands. Mia and Shiho leaned over and kissed. After a few teases and many chances blown by interruptions, there was nothing to stop their first kiss.

Mia and Shiho's kiss became a passionate one. They leaned on each other with Mia sliding her hand on Shiho's buttocks. Shiho put both arms around the back of Mia's neck. The blonde-haired Revenant then undid Shiho's top and tossed it aside as she leaned down, licking Shiho's breasts and up to her neck. Shiho let out a relaxed gasp, feeling moved by Mia's loving touch. Mia was on top of Shiho as the lovers gazed into each other's eyes.

"What do you see in me, Shiho?"

"Maybe because while I consider my friend, Ann, to be drop dead hot, you're cute and I don't know... there's something about simple cuteness I find sexier. Not to mention you're just gorgeous up close."

"Really? Because that's how I felt when I first met you, I was trying to figure out what drew me to you. Was it your personality? Your hot body? Or, something in between, but I've figured it out," Mia then leaned down and whispered in her ear. "It's your willful spirit. You willed yourself to stand and walk again. That's a woman I can love and respect."

"Then, take me, Mia Karnstein. I'm all yours."

"No, we're here for each other," she grasped her lover's hands, licked her neck, and kissed her on the
lips.

Shiho returned a kiss and folded her legs around Mia's waist. The two continued their erotic intercourse inside their tent and with no one to interrupt them.

"I love you, Mia Karnstein."

"I as well, Suzui Shiho."

They once again passionately kissed and established their true love for the other. A romantic relationship between a Revenant and a human.

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Chapter Soundtrack

**Final Fantasy XV OST Volume 2 - 87. Daemons - Heart of Evil** - Another MOTW theme for vs. Teke Teke in prologue scene.

**Persona 5 OST - Have a Short Rest** - Mia talk with Nicola and invites Shiho into her home.

**Persona 5 OST 63 - New Beginning** - Having fun at the beach.

**fiKAieldJOU (Ocean Day)** - *Xenoblade Chronicles X* OST - Hiroyuki Sawano - Hifumi and Skyler's underwater kiss scene.

**Persona 5 OST - My Homie** - Flashbacks with Shinya and Nicola first meeting at the arcade. Reiko meets the boys.

**Re:Creators OST - BRAVE THE OCEAN** - vs. Haruki and Takumi.

**fiKAieldJOU (Ocean Night)** - *Xenoblade Chronicles X* OST - Hiroyuki Sawano - The aftermath of the beach and Cryptids. Mia and Shiho share their first kiss.

**Lacuna Coil - Purify** - Mia and Shiho's romantic intercourse.

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